

March Against Monsanto, October 12, 2013

My name is Paule Hjertaas

I am the President and spokesperson for the Saskatchewan Network for Alternatives to Pesticides, SNAP @ www.snapinfo.ca . I would like to thank Connie for asking me to speak today.

In 1987, after lunch, I was driving my young son to gymnastics on a very hot day in late May. The windows of the car were open and the ventilation on so we would not roast. For those young people here, this was mostly before air conditioning in most cars. I got to a street corner in Regina, and, very suddenly, felt paralysed. I could still move some but I was numb everywhere. There was no feeling left anywhere in my body.

Someone had told me about a local spray truck that was an old army truck. I looked in the mirror and there it was. I had just driven by it. This was the time when the city and everyone was still widely using very toxic insecticides like *diazinon* to spray elms for caterpillars, which is likely what had been sprayed then.

I came home, washed, and made a dr's appointment for later in the afternoon. The doctor confirmed that my sensory nerves were not working, and neither did I have any reflexes. His comments were *"If you were not so sure this was from spraying, I would diagnose you with MS"* (However, he thought that I should have had a smaller episode with lesser symptoms previously.)

I could hardly keep any food in. My weight dropped to 89 pounds. I became quite dyslexic and had a lot of trouble writing and typing. I was getting confused, what chemical sensitivity patients describe as brain fog. With my nerves affected, I was also quite accident prone. My fatigue and fibromyalgia significantly worsened. I had trouble looking after my 2 young children. I was scared. Very, very scared...

The dr wanted to see me again a few days later.

By then, the feeling was coming back. Have you ever sat on your hand and been numb? You know the pins and needles feeling that come after? Imagine that feeling multiplied for several days, all over your body. That is called neuropathy. It is atrociously uncomfortable and painful.

On the way out of the dr's office, Wascana employees were spraying herbicides along 23rd Avenue. I had the car windows shut and the ventilation off, but the symptoms started all over again. It was repeated many times per year in the spring and fall, the 2 main spraying seasons in Regina, for many years. I became so sensitive that I could

“feel” every sprayed lawn for 2 weeks after, driving by with the car windows shut and the ventilation off. I mostly quit riding my bike as I would encounter spray 2/ 3 of the times I went out. My life became a roller coaster of short healthier periods in the middle of a sea of symptoms.

I often got sick driving through rural Saskatchewan too. It became a worrying trip to get to Condie, the Qu’Appelle Valley or Buffalo Pound. Saskatchewan uses over 1/3 of all pesticides used in Canada. We are steeped in them.

In 2006, this experience, and a lifetime of researching pesticides and their effects on health led me to start the Saskatchewan network for Alternatives to Pesticides, SNAP, a non-profit group. You can find SNAP at <http://www.snapinfo.ca/>. SNAP has a lot of info on pesticides from bee die-off, roads of exposure, health effects, to alternatives to pesticides. It is also a portal for a lot more reliable information.

As most gmo crops are herbicide resistant and 90% of gmo crops are Monsanto crops resistant to RoundUp, SNAP also has an extensive section on gmos.

There is mounting evidence that RoundUp **widely contaminates water, soil and food.**

Evidence also indicates that Round-Up and the Round-Up ready crops **kill life in soil, harm animal and human health.**

In addition, gmo crops have not fulfilled their promises: they **do not increase yields**, and they breed **weed resistance**, which requires additional use of herbicides.

RoundUp makes plants susceptible to **diseases**, which requires more use of fungicides.

GMO seeds **persist** over 10 years in soil.

And, of course all of you must know that there is not yet any **labeling** of gmo foods.

In addition, the media and the internet is full of Monsanto’s examples of bad citizenship such as not taking responsibility for pollution and health effects of their products, falsifying research, suing farmers whose fields were contaminated with *RoundUp* ready seeds, their opposition to gmo labeling in foods, and much more. I understand that their 1998 efforts to dismiss Dr Arpad Pusdai in Scotland is perceived as the beginning of a strong anti- Monsanto movement.

My personal experience with pesticides led me to a lifetime of learning about their negative health effects and my conclusion is that GMO crops led by Monsanto are a real worry.

