



B.C. testing the waters of a cosmetic pesticide ban

Written by Mike Jiggins

BRITISH Columbia is the latest province to initiate proceedings which could lead to a province-wide ban on cosmetic pesticide use on turfgrass.

From B.C.'s throne speech in September: "British Columbians will be consulted on new statutory protections to further safeguard our environment from cosmetic chemical pesticides." The Integrated Environmental Plant Management Association (IEPMA) of Western Canada has alerted those sectors of the industry which could potentially be affected by the discussion of a ban, urging them to help distribute petitions against a ban and to contact their local elected officials to state their opposition to any such plan.

One of the targeted groups which could help IEPMA's campaign is the Western Canada Turfgrass Association. Its new executive director, Jerry Rousseau, has barely had time to get settled in his new position after recently succeeding Bob Wick, and now finds himself in the midst of steering an organization through one of the industry's most trying times. If British Columbia follows Ontario's template, it will be a trying time, indeed.

For now, however, IEPMA, with the help of the WCTA and other stakeholders, is attempting a pre-emptive strike. It has produced an online petition directed to Premier Gordon Campbell and Environment Minister Barry Penner which states in its preamble: "It is my belief that both homeowners and professional applicator companies should be able to use any pest control product that has been registered by Health Canada as safe to use when label recommendations are followed. Health Canada's respected Pest Management Regulatory Agency has the real experts on this subject. Their conclusions should be the foundation on which decisions are made regarding cosmetic pesticides."

Rousseau has contacted his membership, urging them to notify golf club members and customers, surrounding homeowners, and sports field user groups about the petition, and the need for them to sign it and send it.

It will be a formidable challenge for IEPMA, the WCTA and others to get through to the powers that be if what has already happened in Ontario and Quebec is any indication of what is apt to happen.

According to IEPMA, getting the petitions signed by the right people will be a "numbers game" since the Suzuki organization has launched similar petitions of its own, but with the opposite request.

"We have to show the Premier that there are more people wanting the legal and proper use of pesticides than those opposed," states an IEPMA support letter which has been circulated to WCTA members. "The misinformed anti-pesticide groups are pressuring the Government and its representatives on an ongoing basis, so we have to ensure that our point of view is heard loudly and clearly."

We wish the WCTA and IEPMA well in their endeavours. They face a tough road ahead.

To access the petition, visit <http://www.iepma.ca/noban.html>.