

2011 Legislative Session: Fourth Session, 39th Parliament
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON COSMETIC PESTICIDES
MINUTES AND HANSARD



MINUTES

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON COSMETIC PESTICIDES

Wednesday, October 26, 2011

9:30 a.m.

Douglas Fir Committee Room
Parliament Buildings, Victoria, B.C.

Present: Bill Bennett, MLA (Chair); Rob Fleming, MLA (Deputy Chair); Scott Fraser, MLA; Barry Penner, Q.C., MLA; Michael Sather, MLA; John Slater, MLA; John Yap, MLA.

Unavoidably Absent: Ben Stewart, MLA

1. The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.
2. The following witnesses appeared before the Committee and answered questions:

BC Landscape and Nursery Association

- Jeff Foley, Vice-President
- Blair Veitch, Treasurer
- Hedy Dyck, Industry Development, Nursery and Retail

BC Agriculture Council

- Reg Ens, Executive Director
- Garnet Etsell, Chair

Certified Organic Associations of BC / Island Organic Producers Association

- Randy Pearson, Board Chair

National Allied Golf Association - British Columbia

- Jerry Rousseau, Executive Director, Western Canada Turfgrass Association
- Kris Jonasson, Executive Director, British Columbia Golf
- Douglas Ferne, Director – NGCOA Canada, BC Chapter

Invasive Plant Council of BC

- Gail Wallin, Executive Director

3. The Committee adjourned to the call of the Chair at 12:02 p.m.

The following electronic version is for informational purposes only.
The printed version remains the official version.

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
COSMETIC PESTICIDES

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2011

Issue No. 4

ISSN 1927-0410

CONTENTS

	Page
Presentations	39
H. Dyck	
J. Foley	
B. Veitch	
G. Etsell	
R. Ens	
R. Pearson	
J. Rousseau	
K. Jonasson	
D. Ferne	
G. Wallin	

Chair: * Bill Bennett (Kootenay East L)

Deputy Chair: * Rob Fleming (Victoria–Swan Lake NDP)

Members: * Barry Penner (Chilliwack-Hope L)
 * John Slater (Boundary-Similkameen L)
 Ben Stewart (Westside-Kelowna L)
 * John Yap (Richmond-Steveston L)
 * Scott Fraser (Alberni–Pacific Rim NDP)
 * Michael Sather (Maple Ridge–Pitt Meadows
 NDP)

** denotes member present*

Clerk: Kate Ryan-Lloyd

*Committee
Staff:* Morgan Lay (Committee Researcher)

Witnesses: Hedy Dyck (B.C. Landscape and Nursery
 Association)
 Reg Ens (Executive Director, B.C.
 Agriculture Council)
 Garnet Etsell (Chair, B.C. Agriculture
 Council)
 Douglas Ferne (National Allied Golf
 Association, British Columbia; National Golf
 Course Owners Association Canada)
 Jeff Foley (B.C. Landscape and Nursery
 Association)
 Kris Jonasson (National Allied Golf
 Association, British Columbia; Executive
 Director, British Columbia Golf)
 Randy Pearson (Certified Organic
 Associations of B.C.; Island Organic
 Producers Association)
 Jerry Rousseau (National Allied Golf
 Association, British Columbia; Executive
 Director, Western Canada Turfgrass
 Association)
 Blair Veitch (B.C. Landscape and Nursery
 Association)
 Gail Wallin (Executive Director, Invasive
 Plant Council of B.C.)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2011

The committee met at 9:31 a.m.

[B. Bennett in the chair.]

B. Bennett (Chair): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the world of cosmetic pesticides — the Special Committee on Cosmetic Pesticides.

My name is Bill Bennett. I'm the Chair of the committee. To start this morning, I would like our committee members to introduce themselves, starting with Michael Sather over here.

M. Sather: Michael Sather, MLA for Maple Ridge–Pitt Meadows. I'm the deputy Environment critic for the NDP.

S. Fraser: Scott Fraser. I'm the MLA for Alberni–Pacific Rim, Vancouver Island. I'm the critic for aboriginal affairs.

J. Yap: Good morning. I'm John Yap, the MLA for Richmond–Steveston and Parliamentary Secretary for Clean Technology.

J. Slater: John Slater, MLA for Boundary–Similkameen.

B. Penner: I'm Barry Penner, MLA for Chilliwack–Hope, father of Fintry, husband of Daris and co-owner of Ranger the cat.

B. Bennett (Chair): A smoking-hot cat.

R. Fleming (Deputy Chair): Rob Fleming, Deputy Chair of the committee and MLA for Victoria–Swan Lake.

B. Bennett (Chair): To my left are Kate Ryan-Lloyd, who's the Deputy Clerk, and our very capable researcher, Morgan Lay, over here further to the left.

We're really tight for time today. We haven't left, really, much time between submissions, so we're going to ask you folks to introduce yourselves and get started. You have 15 minutes. You have half an hour in total. We're anticipating you're going to spend in the order of 15 minutes on your submission, but if you spend more than that, it's okay. At one half-hour we'll have to end it and move on to our next submission.

I don't want to spend time here this morning going over our terms of reference. Can I assume that everyone has read the terms of reference for the committee?

Some Voices: Yup.

B. Bennett (Chair): With that, I'd like you to launch into your half-hour slot. The clock is ticking.

Presentations

H. Dyck: My name is Hedy Dyck. I handle industry development for both the retail sector and the wholesale nursery growers in B.C. BCLNA represents over 700 members throughout B.C., all the way from Prince George in the north down to the border and east into the Kootenays.

J. Foley: My name is Jeff Foley. I'm the current second vice-president of the B.C. Landscape and Nursery Association. I have a landscape contracting business that does the landscape maintenance of 234 strata and commercial properties. Last summer I employed over a hundred people.

B. Veitch: Good morning. I'm Blair Veitch, treasurer for the B.C. Landscape and Nursery Association, and also area manager for the Davey Tree Expert Co. for western Canada. We employ about 300 people in the green space industry here.

J. Foley: Thanks for the opportunity to provide this presentation. The use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes is both a complex and a difficult issue to deal with, particularly considering the emotion of the public on one hand and the scientific basis for registration and use of pesticides on the other.

Trust and competency of regulatory agencies like the PMRA, our ministries and people that work within the industry are in question. Rather than throw stones, we're focused on solutions to help us all achieve our goals of safe food, a green canopy to help mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and help with the climate change, and also support public health.

The BCLNA has a long history of successful partnerships with the government of B.C. We instituted one of the first ITOs, enabling lifelong learning through a system of apprenticeship. We also partnered with the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture, Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the forest sector when we faced the threat of *Phytophthora ramorum*.

We continuously partner with the B.C. Society of Landscape Architects, municipalities and other key stakeholders to write what we think is the definitive bible of landscape standards. This provides a basis for good plant health and sustainable landscapes in B.C.

[0935]

The way we do business has changed. Smart operators have already embraced the move to IPM to minimize the use of pesticides. We're using drought-resistant plants and varieties that are less susceptible to pests and diseases.

Input costs like fertilizers, pesticides and supplies are high. The increase in minimum wage continues to have a considerable effect on nursery, landscape and garden

retail companies. With a tight economy, we cannot increase our prices. It's the same business with higher costs and more competition. Then we have emerging invasive alien species to further challenge our environment on all fronts.

Before global trade really took hold, there was some movement of pests into North America. This slide shows incursions over a three-year period. This is the enemy now. This slide shows incursions in just the year 2009 alone. We are facing exponential influxes of pests and diseases. This should be a big consideration in the debate about the cosmetic use of pesticides. Our industry is often the first one that sees a strange bug, whether it comes in with a customer to a garden centre or whether a landscape crew notices a defoliant on a plant.

We're talking about pests that come into the environment, into our homes and gardens from the outside, from imported foods, plants and wood packaging. These new pests may threaten our food supply and our forests.

At BCLNA we have an ad hoc slogan that we are the original green industry. Plants clean the air, moderate temperature and increase oxygen. As we all know, the earth needs more plants growing in an environment that supports health with good soil, moisture and space.

There's a lot of funding going into the planting of urban forests. Keeping these urban forests healthy is not cosmetic. Initiatives to mitigate climate change by increasing the green canopy are critical to the environment. Keeping this canopy healthy is not cosmetic.

As an industry, we're very aware of the benefits of green spaces and gardens. In addition to the aesthetics of a beautifully executed landscape design, there's been a new study from the University of Illinois that confirms that ADHD kids benefit from playing outside on lawns. The study is called *Could Exposure to Everyday Green Spaces Help Treat ADHD? Evidence from Children's Play Settings*. They're specifically talking about lawns, not playground equipment.

Horticulture therapy is used in many seniors homes to increase mental and physical health, and we all know personally that a good workout in the garden is a healthy activity. We all want to ensure that the landscape is a safe and healthy place to be.

It is sad to acknowledge that there are some less reputable members of the landscape industry. It's an industry that is unregulated, with sometimes no requirements other than a pickup truck, a rake and lawnmower. There are significant issues of professional standards, including failed landscapes and poor health.

Many of these people work under the radar of municipalities with no licences or permits. They will also spray for pests, often with just a backpack sprayer. Our association, the BCNLA, gets calls from frustrated homeowners and commercial complexes where work is second rate, but few people ask for credentials, and often the cheapest price wins.

B. Veitch: To that end, in 2001, of course, the ministry put out the IPM manual, and in 2004 it really got in place. In 2005 the BCLNA began a project that addressed the issue of the pesticide bans for cosmetic use,, while realizing the need for qualified and trained resources for people to turn to for IPM in the landscape.

The steering committee included industry, government, health organizations and

educators. Its purpose was very clear from the start: to deal with the issue of pesticide management on a scientific basis through integrated pest management; also, to minimize the use of pesticides; and to retain and use the good bugs, our friends in nature that help us control other pests and disease.

This program was designed to address the basic good practices for plant health. The B.C. Society of Landscape Architects and the B.C. Landscape Association joint-ventured and created the *B.C. Landscape Standard*. This book is mutually supportive of Plant Health B.C. in that it endorses the right plant in the right place, taking care of it properly with good plant health care and thereby reducing the need for any pesticides.

[0940]

The benefits of the program. First, you have a group of people who have a level of training and understanding about pest management through integrated pest management. This is different than just spraying. What you need for that is just an applicator's licence. This takes it far beyond. This program supports the IPM model.

The last piece is figuring out what needs to be done, what product or method that works for the specific situation. That's done through timing, through charting and through frequent site visits to understand what the plants are going through, to understand all the environmental effects on the plants, etc.

The way that we thought we could educate people and bring this program into fruition is through accreditation, through training and learning, and then after the training module is executed, audits both internally and externally through an independent body.

The other benefit to this program is that it's funded by itself. It requires no funding once it's up and running. It runs itself and funds itself and does not require money from provincial or federal governments.

As far as implementation of this program, if it was brought to fruition, it would take about one year to bring it into a full operational system. The issues would be sending out the information to the industry, getting the training out to them and organizing it and, of course, getting the accreditation process done.

It provides a good conduit to the Ministry of Environment as well as CFIA when an incursion of invasive species is detected, such as giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed. In eastern Canada we see a big influx of the Asian longhorn borer and emerald ash borer, and our company deals with that a lot in the eastern U.S. and

[Page 41]

Ontario. It's critical to be able to control those types of things.

The BCLNA supports the pharmacy model for pest control at the retail consumer level. We're as concerned about misuse as anybody at the homeowner level with regulated products.

The next two slides are just to kind of promote some thinking and to... Essentially, this lawn has been devastated by multiple things. The original pest was the chafer beetle, and they're yummy, so they provide a smorgasbord for crows, raccoons and skunks. They come in and rototill the lawn.

I guess, at this point, is it cosmetic? Is it plant health? At what point do we decide a

cosmetic problem is a health issue? At this point this lawn needs to be completely replaced, so that requires trucks and Bobcats and large equipment roaring up and down our roads, congesting our highways and roads even further when this problem could have been mitigated early on.

Here we have a hedge that a year ago was a minor cosmetic issue, maybe could have been controlled, was left and is now at the point where it needs to be removed and replaced to retain that green space that was originally there.

While we support the ban of cosmetic pesticides, we also as a profession understand that at some point we need to take care of our green space. We want to retain our urban forests and our urban landscape for the enjoyment of all and for the improvement of our environment overall.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present to you. That ends our presentation. If there are any questions, we would be willing to answer.

B. Bennett (Chair): Thank you very much. I appreciate that. You're right on the money in terms of your time. We have questions from MLA Penner.

[0945]

B. Penner: Thank you very much for your presentation. I'm just curious. What is your definition of cosmetic pesticide?

J. Foley: I don't think there is a cosmetic pesticide per se, but I think what we're talking about is the use of pesticides for cosmetic reasons.

B. Penner: Right at the end of your presentation you said that you support a ban on cosmetic pesticides, so I was wondering what you meant by that. You also noted that some of these plants were suffering for lack of being treated.

B. Veitch: Yes. Essentially, a cosmetic pesticide is simply used for cosmetic purposes, for a pest that is not going to cause any due harm to the plant health-wise — strictly a cosmetic issue.

B. Penner: So what you showed us here was not really an issue dealing with cosmetic pesticide use because you just gave us some demonstrations of how plants actually suffered and potentially died for want of treatment.

B. Veitch: That's correct.

B. Penner: So that's not what you were referring to when you say that you support a ban on cosmetic use of pesticides.

B. Veitch: No. Through IPM, it's very critical to monitor plants on a regular basis, to understand plant physiology, to understand the environment that they are living in and thereby make decisions on whether to treat or not to treat for any given pest or disease problem.

M. Sather: For the municipalities that now have bans on cosmetic pesticides, are there any impediments to the treatment of invasives such as the giant hogweed, or is that allowed within those municipalities?

H. Dyck: Currently it's a public health issue, because particularly for the giant hogweed, if you touch it, you're in big trouble.

M. Sather: What about other invasive species?

J. Foley: As you guys know, each municipality has a differently worded bylaw, as it stands. One common issue our industry comes up with is that there are different rules, and they are interpreted differently. We have got opinions from some municipalities that they are not in favour of us controlling plants like giant hogweed or other weeds on the noxious weed list with products like glyphosate.

J. Yap: In your slide 15 you state you support the pharmacy model for pest-control products at the retail level. Could you expand on that, how you see that working?

H. Dyck: I worked in retail for many years, and a lot of the garden centres will tell you horror stories about people who are coming in. They have absolutely no idea. They've found some bugs. According to them, all bugs are bad, and they just want a spray. They take something off the shelf to take it home, and it can be the vinegar solution, or it can be 2,4-D. We've had people tell us stories about how they wanted to do some spraying of weeds, so they sprayed the yard with Roundup.

We really support the pharmacy model for everything, right down to schedule 5, the most minimal use, because (1) there's no point in people putting things on when it's absolutely going to do nothing, (2) they haven't figured out what it is they need to deal with and (3) they haven't applied IPM. You know, five aphids on a rose bush is not

[Page 42]

going to kill you, but if you have aphids in a rose bush that are infesting the whole thing and getting into your fruit trees, that's a whole different story.

A lot of the public is not educated, and that is a critical piece. The pharmacy model would basically force them, like you do in a regular pharmacy, to go to somebody at a garden centre and say, "This is what I've got," and the guy will say either, "Okay, take some Safer soap and spray the aphids," or he'll say: "That's not a problem" or "That's a good bug, and you shouldn't be spraying at all." People don't know this.

J. Yap: So who would be the equivalent of the pharmacist in that model, some certified pesticide person?

H. Dyck: Well, the Ministry of Environment already has the pesticide dispenser's requirements for the schedule — I think two-plus. You could do it for everything. It's already there.

R. Fleming (Deputy Chair): I just wanted to ask Mr. Foley or perhaps Mr. Veitch. You were talking about the pattern of different bylaws in British Columbia. Mr. Veitch mentioned something about Ontario and your equivalent organizations there.

[0950]

We have seven provinces now that have a cosmetic pesticide ban in place. I'm wondering: when you are dealing with the example I think you've used this morning of hogweed, which we know well in British Columbia, in provinces that have a legislative ban, what is the mechanism by which your members can address that problem? Is there a ministerial exemption that can be applied for and secured? Is it something you continue to work on with municipal governments, or is it through, in the case of Ontario, the Ministry of the Environment there?

B. Veitch: I can't answer for invasive plants for Ontario, but I can answer for alien invasive pests — the Asian longhorn borer, the emerald ash borer. Special exemptions were put in place to do trunk injections on a lot of the hardwood urban forests, and of course, for the emerald ash borer, specifically the ash trees that are getting killed.

Even the product that is being used in Ontario is under a special use permit, because it had, up until then, not been part of the regulated products in Canada. But it's the only product that will control emerald ash borer.

R. Fleming (Deputy Chair): So in your experience and with your knowledge in Ontario when these sorts of occurrences happen, the ministry and the legislation is flexible enough to allow industry and companies like the ones you represent to address that and to respond?

B. Veitch: Yeah. In Ontario, the law that's in place there was enacted with an exemption for trunk injections. I'm not an expert on Ontario, but what I know is that they do have an exemption for trunk injections and some other applications on canopy treatments, but I'm not sure about the other applications.

S. Fraser: Thanks for the presentation. Following up on Rob's question. It's been partially answered, but I was wondering: do you have similar sister organizations in other provinces that already have cosmetic pesticide bans of some sort? I just wanted to know in general how that changes operations for your members and if they're in another province, for similar members there.

B. Veitch: Again, I can only speak to Ontario. That's the only place I have any experience with, and I don't have a lot of experience with that. Essentially, it's been a very good thing, with the exemptions that have been put in place and with the ability to treat alien pests and diseases when required. I think that's an essential part of it.

S. Fraser: Okay, then, a different question. Earlier in the presentation you referred to the map of the invasives, the increase of invasive species into all of North America on the

map, and that was related to imported food products and such.

Obviously, if we're going to reduce pesticide use, one of the means for that would be to reduce the amount of invasive species that enter the province, in this case. Do you have any thoughts, any ideas about how regulations could be tightened up to ensure that there's a reduction of invasive species? Should there be a better inspection process? Do you have any idea? I'm speaking with total ignorance here.

H. Dyck: First of all, B.C. should be self-sustaining in its agriculture.

S. Fraser: Yeah, all right.

B. Veitch: But CFIA is pretty much working with that and are the experts.

H. Dyck: The issues with the imports are everything. We're talking about dunnage. We're talking about food imports. We're talking about global trade. We won't get into it now, but CFIA now has a designation, or the U.S. has a designation that threatens to affect Canadian exports of nursery stock into the U.S. called "not authorized pending pest risk assessment." It's called NAPPRA, and it comes out of NAPPO.

[0955]

What they're going to do, basically, in the U.S. is if they don't know what kind of pests could be on those plants coming in, they're going to cut you off. So they're

[Page 43]

effectively cutting new innovation, new varieties of plants. Even in Canada we import a lot of the tiny, tiny seedlings from places like Israel, Africa, South America. What the U.S. is going to do is say: "Regardless of where these plants come from, if they even come through Canada, we're not going to let them into the States."

There are a whole lot of international issues surrounding invasive species, but the problem is that some of them we already have here, and some of them are becoming indigenous, like Himalayan blackberry or Scotch broom or giant hogweed.

B. Bennett (Chair): I'm curious about a clarification, following up on, I think, MLA Penner's original question about your stated opposition to cosmetic pesticides. It sounds to me — and I wrote down what you actually said — that it's not actually the pesticide that needs to be banned; it's the way that pesticides are applied.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think what you said is that there are pests that can be left alone. There's a quantum to be calculated into your decision about whether you need treatment or not. Like you said, if there are four aphids on my wife's rose bush, perhaps she can leave it alone. If it's going to infest our fruit trees, maybe not.

Is that a fair characterization of your position? It's not really the chemicals. It's how they're applied?

H. Dyck: Well, we support IPM. Integrated pest management is pretty well a five-step

process to figuring out what it is, how much of it there is, what you need to do with it. Least harm first. Like go out there with a soap, or take your fingers and squish the damn things instead of spraying things. And if all of a sudden it goes crazy, then you have to do something. But you don't just....

I come from many years of selling chemicals and fertilizers. I saw misuse of fertilizers by most of the farmers, because they were afraid to use less. Now the costs of chemicals and fertilizers have gone sky-high because of the cost of petroleum products. Nobody's using it. They can't afford to use it the way they used to. They all pretty well use IPM. They all have people in the wholesale industry who actively — it's their job — basically go out and figure out what the pests are, if they are at a threshold where they need to spray and what it is they need to do with it.

Nobody does what we used to call calendar spraying, which was: "It's the first of May. We gotta spray." We can't afford to do that. Nobody does it anymore. For John Q. Public, they're so afraid of doing anything right now that they have the potential to injure the commercial agriculture, and that is one of our big issues. It's about putting the sense into pest control.

J. Foley: I do think that you summed up our position fairly well. It does come down to use, and it's the Plant Health B.C. model that we're talking about, which we feel would separate responsible IPM users from less educated or less professional applicators.

B. Bennett (Chair): We've got about a minute and a half. I'm going to let the former Environment Minister ask one last short question — with, please, a short answer.

B. Penner: Thank you, Bill. I'll try to do that.

I'm just trying to clarify in my own mind exactly what your position is. I heard Mr. Veitch appear to say that he's advocating for the Ontario model, but then I also heard you say you prefer the IPM model. My understanding is that there's quite a difference.

So perhaps just for my benefit — and perhaps I'm having a slow morning — you could just clearly articulate whether you are advocating for the Ontario model here in British Columbia or if you think there's some other way we should go about it, noting your comments that in fact you need to use these products at times for plant health and that you don't consider, as I understand it, plant health to be a cosmetic issue.

B. Veitch: I'll apologize for that misconception. We support plant health care, so our primary objective is to care for plants, keep them healthy, keep them green, keep them alive and part of the landscape.

[1000]

We do that through the IPM model, and that's the premise of Plant Health B.C. It takes the province's own designed integrated pest management system and puts it into practice through accreditation and through audits to ensure that anybody who is out there taking care of plants is crossing their t's, dotting their i's and doing a very, very good job of ensuring that our plant health care is through the IPM model.

Does that answer your question?

H. Dyck: There is also the New Brunswick model of plant health care — like Plant Health B.C. — which basically is the same as ours. Plant Health B.C. is the accreditation program for professional landscapers to do the major work in the landscape.

Cosmetic is the pretty stuff. We don't need to spray for pretty stuff. You can use whatever, but where does pretty stuff go into serious business? That is not for us to decide. That is for you as legislators to decide.

B. Bennett (Chair): That's an excellent way to end your submission. Thank you very much. It was a great presentation.

Committee members, thanks for the questions.

Our next presenters are the B.C. Agriculture Council.

Good morning, gentlemen. Welcome to our committee. I have kind of dispensed with the normal explanations of the terms of reference and that sort of thing. Were you in the room when the committee introduced themselves?

[Page 44]

A Voice: Yes.

B. Bennett (Chair): Okay. Well, in the interests of making best use of our time, then, I'm going to ask you to introduce yourselves and then get started on your presentation. You've got a half-hour in total, and whatever you leave after your submission up to that half-hour mark we'll use for questions.

G. Etsell: Thanks very much for the opportunity. My name is Garnet Etsell. I am chair of the B.C. Ag Council. Beside me is Reg Ens, our executive director.

The B.C. Ag Council. Just for the committee members' interest, we are the umbrella farm organization for the agricultural industry. We are a council of commodity groups, and through our members, we represent 14,000 of the 20,000 farm families in the province. Those 14,000 families generate about 96 percent of the farm-gate receipts, so for all intents and purposes, we represent commercial agriculture.

Generally, this discussion around cosmetic use of pesticides on urban and residential areas is really outside of our purview, but it's because there is an interface with agriculture that we are certainly concerned with the discussion. Hence, we value the opportunity to present here.

Invasive plant species really are a concern to agriculture, and I think the presentation before you.... By the way, BCLNA is a member of ours, particularly with respect to the nursery side of that industry. You saw from their slide the comments around invasive species. That has a huge implication for agriculture.

I guess our concern, to really speak to Mr. Penner's question, is around the outright ban of chemicals. We certainly support BCLNA's position in terms of what they call their pharmaceutical or accredited use when it comes to residential and urban applications, because you're dealing, generally, with an unknowledgable, unsophisticated user in the case of the urbanite.

If we were to do an outright ban.... Often mistaken for wildflowers, for example, is the fact that they are and can be invasive species. Because we have such a tight interface between agricultural lands and residential lands in B.C., it is really important that we control at that interface.

In the Okanagan you've got people that have fruit trees in their backyards that are right next door to apple orchards, and so if we don't properly contain those pests, it can cause great harm to the industry.

In B.C. we did develop in 2003 an invasive plant strategy for British Columbia. The agricultural industry was very much involved in that process and supports it.

In a report that was released in February of 2009 entitled "Managing Risks to Canada's Plant Resources," the Auditor General, Sheila Fraser, called for greater protection of Canada's crops and forests, given that the associated industries are worth \$100 billion a year. Our agricultural industry in the province of B.C. generates a farm-gate receipt in excess of \$2.6 billion. We're an important economic driver, and so it's important that we preserve our ability to produce food and agricultural products.

Any proposal to limit or to ban or curtail the use of pesticides for urban cosmetic purposes must fully consider the potential limitations it imposes on the ability to control weeds, pests, plant diseases and related problems in sectors such as agriculture and forestry. I think, for that reason, we support very strongly the BCLNA's position that.... We don't want to do an outright ban, but we are certainly supportive of the idea that accredited use and proper use of pesticides be implemented.

There was talk of integrated pest management. Integrated pest management works best when it's managed on an area-wide as opposed to a property-specific application. Things like the Okanagan sterile insect release program are certainly the types of programs that work well.

Again, we support the idea of integrated pest management. In fact, agriculture uses integrated pest management extensively. We use it because it makes economic sense. It makes environmental sense. One of the buzzwords in agriculture now is biodiversity. We want to encourage that, because by doing so, we not only deal with the bad bugs, but we keep the good bugs. By doing so, we reduce our input costs.

There was comment about farmers in the previous presentation. The comment is quite correct. The cost of chemical inputs is increasing. We talk in terms of the four Rs. You want to apply these things at the right time, the right place, the right product and in the right quantity. As pressure has come on farmers to be able to make a profit, we certainly subscribe to that philosophy.

B.C. does have a unique rural landscape compared to other provinces. Only 5 percent of our land base is suitable for agriculture. Almost 75 percent of that agricultural activity takes place in the Lower Mainland, and the other large area is the Okanagan, both of which certainly interface strongly with our urban population. So these sorts of discussions around the banning of cosmetic pesticides are certainly of concern to us.

Finally, I think we need to.... You know, it can be assumed from the emotional discussion that takes place that we don't have control. We do have control over the use of pesticides. There is the Pest Control Products Act, which is amongst one of the most modern and rigorous pesticide acts in the world. The Canadian pesticide regulatory process

underwent an exhaustive review in the 1990s, with new legislation coming into force in 2006.

[1010]

Together with the provincial Integrated Pest Management Act and regulations for agricultural use, and the

[Page 45]

occupational health and safety regulation that's administrated by WorkSafe B.C., the new legislation provides a rigorous regulatory framework for pest control product usage in the agricultural sector. That is why we are not averse to the proposal that's being put forward by BCLNA in terms of implementing that same rigour to the urban user.

BCAC encourages the committee to apply the science-based approach to any further provisions that may be considered with respect to the cosmetic pesticide issue and to fully consider the unintended consequences that may have serious implications for the food-producing sectors.

With that, I'll open it up to your questions.

B. Bennett (Chair): Thank you very much. Just let me take a moment here and get.... I've got Slater and Fraser. Is there anybody else at this point? Okay.

J. Slater: Thanks, guys. A good job. As I think you're aware, I was a commercial greenhouse grower in my former life. I was also on council when the SIR came into being back in 1990, when the town of Osoyoos donated the land. The codling moth issue was huge in the Okanagan, as I'm sure you're aware.

You'd say that yes, we can do this on an IPM industrywide, but when you get communities in the Kootenays that are saying, "Look, the SIR program isn't working for us," or you have a Mac tree or a Red Delish tree a block and a half away from the farms and it's full of codling moth....

Unfortunately, a lot of the municipalities and the regional districts don't go around as much as they did back in the '90s, when we first started the program. The bins that are coming from the Kootenays that are putting apples in them come to the Okanagan, let out the eggs, let out the flies. How can we do a better job of controlling stuff like that? You know, that apple tree in that backyard.... When the wind blows, it goes and it'll destroy a ten-acre orchard in a heartbeat. So how do you do that under the new regime?

If we eliminate cosmetic pesticides to kill those codling moths on a one-off basis — whether it's a B.C. Landscape Association that comes in and sprays or some qualified person or the guy who's a retired orchardist that has a few trees in his backyard but doesn't take care of them and goes away for the summer or whatever — how do we deal with that?

G. Etsell: Well, that is the problem. You've articulated precisely what our concern is in terms of what happens if we go to an outright ban — absolutely. I think it speaks further to our need to properly monitor, and I think in your comments you hit on that.

One of our concerns as the B.C. Ag Council is that we have reduced the funding for

agriculture in general, and we have reduced our capacity to do basic infrastructure. I would classify monitoring for invasive species as being part of our infrastructure that is absolutely critical. Those things are disappearing.

We have reduced agriculture to the point where the Ministry of Agriculture — and I'll say the Ministry of Environment — has actually... I think the critical mass of those ministries to do the job that's so critical has been diminished past that critical threshold, so I'm glad you asked that question.

R. Ens: I think the other comment on dealing with the consumer, the urban resident, is just an education and awareness perspective — this vision or this perception that pesticides are all evil; Safer soap is a pesticide — and looking at how we work with them to ensure that they do have local, healthy food. If we can prevent outbreaks of diseases and pests, we can produce better-quality local food for consumer choice.

[1015]

G. Etsell: I don't think you'll find that the B.C. Ag Council advocates for indiscriminate pesticide use, but I will say that one of the concerns I have, even with the proposal of BCLNA, is that if we make it so rigorous and so costly for an urban resident to deal with the apple tree in their backyard, have we really solved the problem or have we made it worse?

S. Fraser: Thanks for the presentation. I agree with your assessment of the critical mass of ministries that maybe are not meeting the needs they should be.

Getting to the crux of it. Garnet, you talked about the urbanite interface and that the pests don't know boundaries. I understand all that. I guess our role in dealing with cosmetic pesticides is largely urban. I mean, it's not dealing with the agricultural sector as such. There are different rules for that.

One of the things we have to look at is that interface, whether it's with agriculture, whether it's with private forest land. The government has spray programs in certain areas too. Sometimes all this is happening in the same watershed.

We had a presentation by Health Canada, Lindsay Hanson, as you're aware. I didn't get a lot of comfort that anyone seems to have a handle on or is actually monitoring the amalgamated use of various products for cosmetic use in the urban setting. Also, often in the same watershed there's agriculture. There's forest activity there. You know, there are other things happening.

That's kind of where my concern is as far as our role in dealing with cosmetic pesticides. It is the urban interface.

The urbanite might already be faced with exposure to pesticides — through waters, through air, through whatever — from other uses, including agriculture. Then for

[Page 46]

them, who are usually laypeople, to go out and apply pesticides.... Again, I'm not comfortable with Health Canada's position. No one seems to know all the numbers there.

Garnet, you did say that you think we have control over the use of pesticides. Is there any passing of information so that a municipal government would know what was being

sprayed or how much on the boundaries of the community that might affect urbanites as such?

It's a long way around a question.

G. Etsell: Not really. I'm a strong proponent of benchmarking. I don't think we do enough benchmarking, quite frankly. I would agree with you. I don't think that sort of benchmarking has been done.

I do want to speak to your comment, though, in terms of: "Well, we're dealing with the urban, and so we'll restrict our views to that."

The problem is that if you come down with the conclusion that you're going to do an outright ban of cosmetic pesticides, what that may well create is a small problem that starts in that urban interface. We are so global today in our interactions. The centre of Vancouver is not necessarily that far from farmland. A problem that could easily be managed on a small scale could quickly blow out to being a very costly remedy at the farmland.

I guess it's a caution. Be careful of the unintended consequences.

M. Sather: I think the use of terms here is maybe a bit misleading, maybe unintended. My understanding is that we're not contemplating the outright banning of any cosmetic pesticides as such, but rather the unnecessary use of those. It certainly is restricted to urban areas. Notwithstanding that, there are obviously interface issues with agriculture.

[1020]

I would think that some of the issues that you've talked about and that MLA Slater has talked about would be in the "necessary" category, perhaps, rather than the "unnecessary" category in terms of the use of pesticides. I don't know that for a fact, but I would think that that would be something that we'd be looking at, rather than turning a blind eye to a problem like that.

G. Etsell: Well, I'm glad to hear you say that.

B. Bennett (Chair): Okay. We do have another question from the Deputy Chair.

R. Fleming (Deputy Chair): I appreciated your frank comment about one of the things that you see as being a risk to plant resources in British Columbia in your industry and others: a reduction in staff and the capacity of the province to step in and do prevention work and also intervene where it becomes necessary. That's certainly something I've heard. It's not the purview of this committee, but I think it's obviously part of your presentation that you made this morning.

I'm wondering if you can give any real live examples. You've presented something of a very much worst-case scenario about the interface between urban properties contaminating agricultural lands. I wonder if you can give any real-life examples in British Columbia where we have municipalities that actually do have cosmetic pesticide bans in place.

Maybe comment, too, if we're talking about different products here. I think that for some of these moth infestations, these are not things you can get off the shelf at a hardware store and apply as a homeowner. I could be wrong.

We now have six or seven provinces, as well — some with more significant percentages of their province as arable land in agricultural production — that have cosmetic pesticide bans in place for residential homeowners. Some of them have been in place for the better part of a decade, and I'm simply not aware, in the extensive review of literature I've done, of how the policy implementation has been done, that the kinds of occurrences you raised the spectre of this morning have in fact happened.

G. Etsell: First of all, you're talking to a turkey farmer, as opposed to a horticulturalist. I'm going to ask Reg. I don't know what his answer is, but I know he has had interaction on this pesticide issue with the B.C. Cattlemen. I have heard that there has been an increase in invasive plant species that are infesting our rangelands. I don't know.

Reg, have you...?

R. Ens: I guess, to the question directly, no, I'm not aware of an urban-related one. But a recent situation that the B.C. Cattlemen raised was in relation to Crown land and rangeland, where Crown land rules around controlling invasive plants.... The regulations that were there allowed for control of the invasive species, but the delay in getting approvals, registrations — the bureaucracy that had to take place — meant that the control wasn't as effective, that in some cases the spread of the weed and the problem actually got worse.

It isn't the scary horror story per se, but it does sort of indicate that if we don't have an effective way of controlling problems immediately or reacting quickly, it can cause economic and larger-scale problems. The story from the B.C. Cattlemen's perspective was: "If we could have dealt with those issues on a Crown land range where the problem was identified quickly, we wouldn't have had to spray or deal with a much larger geographic area." That's not a direct answer to your question.

G. Etsell: I think that in response, too, we don't necessarily have all the answers. I'm going to take that ques-

[Page 47]

tion back, and if we can develop some specific examples, we will and we'll send them to the committee.

B. Bennett (Chair): It's a good question. I agree, Deputy Chair.

We do have the invasive plant species group coming in later this morning. That would be an interesting question to ask Gail Wallin.

[1025]

I have a question. You focused, quite understandably, on the impact of pests in the agriculture industry. That's what I certainly would expect you to do. But as an organization, have you assessed the potential negative impact of pesticide use on the public in any sort of general way, on either groundwater or physical contact with it? Are you satisfied with the advice from Health Canada? Do you have a position or an opinion on that?

G. Etsell: As a provincial umbrella organization, no. But our individual commodity members, as I did indicate, have all embraced the idea of integrated pest management. It goes to both economic sustainability and environmental sustainability. Agricultural systems work well and most economically if they're dealt with on an integrated pest management model.

I go back to my university days and my professor saying: "Look, the objective is not to absolutely obliterate. The idea is to control." If you can control the pest, you are much better off economically than if you try to obliterate. That is certainly the model.

Food safety programs have become integrated into all of our production models. What you're talking about in terms of what the impact is on the public, well, they are the consumers of our products, and food safety is absolutely a key consideration to our production programs.

B. Bennett (Chair): Okay. Well, thank you very much for your presentation — another good presentation. We appreciate you coming in, and we don't mean to rush you out, but we're going to move on to our next presenter. Thanks again.

G. Etsell: Thank you.

B. Bennett (Chair): Our next presenter is the Certified Organic Associations of B.C., Island Organic Producers Association — Randy Pearson, board chair.
Good morning, Mr. Pearson.

R. Pearson: Good morning.

B. Bennett (Chair): I'm not sure that you were in the room when our committee introduced themselves.

R. Pearson: No, I just arrived a few minutes ago.

B. Bennett (Chair): As soon as everyone gets their coffee, I think I'll get everyone to introduce themselves again, just so you know who you're dealing with. Just give us a minute.

Mr. Pearson, on my left is the Deputy Clerk, Kate Ryan-Lloyd, and our capable researcher, Morgan Lay, over here to my furthest left. Perhaps I'll let this side of the table introduce themselves first.

R. Fleming (Deputy Chair): Good morning, Randy. I'm Rob Fleming, the MLA for Victoria–Swan Lake and the Deputy Chair of this committee.

M. Sather: Michael Sather, MLA, Maple Ridge–Pitt Meadows.

S. Fraser: Scott Fraser, MLA for Alberni–Pacific Rim. Welcome, Randy.

J. Yap: Good morning. I'm John Yap, the MLA for Richmond–Steveston.

J. Slater: Morning. John Slater, Boundary–Similkameen MLA.

B. Penner: Good morning. Barry Penner, MLA for Chilliwack-Hope.

B. Bennett (Chair): And I'm Bill Bennett. My riding is Kootenay East. Welcome to the committee. You have a half-hour in total. You can spend it however you want to spend it, but if you want to leave some time for questions at the end, that'd be great.

R. Pearson: Okay, thank you. My name is Randy Pearson. I'm a member of the Island Organic Producers Association and the alternate board representative to the Certified Organic Associations of B.C. I have a market garden farm in Saanich, and I was selected to come here today because although the executive of COABC, one of those, would love to have attended, it was a bit of travel. I reside in the area, so they asked me to make the presentation. So on their behalf, thank you very much for the invite, and I'll commence.

[1030]

I'll just run through our mandate and purpose. Our purpose is to promote organic agriculture and to provide education on organic agriculture and organic foods, to represent members in matters relating to the Agri-Food Choice and Quality Act of British Columbia, to develop and administer an organic certification accreditation program for members, to grant permission for the use of the phrase "British Columbia certified organic" and the program symbol on agricultural product labels certified by members, to ensure there is a pool of qualified certification verification officers, to facilitate research and

[Page 48]

marketing activities on behalf of member organizations, to provide information to the public on behalf of the members, to develop and maintain an improved list of materials and standards for use in organic agricultural products certified by members, and to be responsible for incidental matters related to the above-referenced activities.

The Certified Organic Associations of B.C. is an umbrella organization representing organic-certifying agencies in the province. COABC is empowered by the British Columbia organic agricultural products regulation, under the British Columbia Food Choice and Disclosure Act, to implement an organic certification accreditation provincewide. COABC was incorporated under the Society Act in March of 1993.

The certification accreditation program is an industry and government partnership program which is industry-driven and industry-regulated, with government providing oversight authority. The main objectives of the program are to provide consumer confidence in the organic product certification, to increase market share and to support regional development of organic food production, processing and marketing.

We are pleased to have this opportunity to make a presentation to the special legislative committee on the sale and use of cosmetic pesticides. In starting, I will take a quote from our vision statement. "COABC's approach to food production is based on care for the earth. We recognize that as human beings, we are one creature amongst many that are all interrelated and interdependent."

Our statement of principles is based on healthy practices and protecting our natural

environment. The elimination of the unnecessary use of chemical-derived pesticides in our province is a goal we strongly support. It is the term "unnecessary" that should be given the greatest consideration in this consultation process.

Synthetic and biological pesticides are prohibited under the B.C. and organic standards unless they are listed in the *Organic Production Systems: Permitted Substances Lists*. Our production management practices override any necessity to use prohibited substances to manage weeds, pests and diseases.

COABC's presentation today will encourage the special committee to recommend a wide ban on synthetic pesticides sale and use.

A case for a pesticide ban. In 1991 B.C.'s survey of pesticide use concluded 5,039,977 kilograms of pesticides were purchased and applied in that year. The report is 20 years old. However, it is the only one available on the Ministry of Environment website. Although the study is dated, there isn't any reason to believe that there has been a decrease in pesticide sale and use in B.C.

A 2002 University of Victoria environmental law and policy study compared the environmental records of Canada and Sweden. Pesticide use by Canada was reported at 29.206 million kilograms in 1994, and Sweden reported 1.527 million kilograms for 1997. Although Canada has more arable land, both countries generate 2 percent of their GDP through agriculture.

A very interesting point to consider. The UVic research found that Sweden had decreased pesticide use by more than 80 percent since 1980 by charging special taxes on pesticides and aggressively promoting organic agriculture.

It is widely recognized that toxic pesticide uses and misuse cause human health problems and negatively impact the environment. I draw your attention to a list of research compiled by the Organic Trade Association, which focuses on protecting the next generation.

[1035]

The Canadian-U.S. studies are hyperlinked. Many of the short research summaries refer to the organophosphate pesticides. In 1999 Health Canada's pest management regulatory agency, PMRA, announced a re-evaluation over organophosphate pesticides.

Malathion, an organophosphate pesticide. This pesticide is currently being used in B.C. and is listed on the Ministry of Agriculture website as an emergency registration for application on stone fruit, berries and grapes.

On November 14, 2000, the PMRA issued a re-evaluation of malathion. An April 2003 PMRA fact sheet provided information on the acceptability of malathion for mosquito control. The PMRA issued a November 5, 2010, communication advising of a proposed re-evaluation decision on malathion.

The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development delivered a report to the House of Commons in 2003. Paragraph 1.58 of the report. The re-evaluations of selected organophosphate pesticides, malathion included, had been delayed, and the commissioner's audit was critical of the delays and stated in part that Canadians may be unnecessarily exposed to these pesticides.

The final PMRA decision on the sale and use of malathion has yet to be issued. It's been 12 years since the 1999 PMRA decision to re-evaluate organophosphate pesticides in

Canada and eight years since the commissioner's report.

A re-evaluation decision on diazinon, another organophosphate pesticide, was issued on November 4, 2009. Diazinon's use on apples is included in the phase-out. However, malathion was listed as one of the alternative pesticides. A final decision allowing a long-term phase-out for use on apples.... The number of years of long term doesn't appear to be defined by the PMRA.

Malathion is an organophosphate pesticide that contains petroleum distillate. It's a highly toxic substance that can destroy aquatic organisms. Malathion was first registered in 1953. Malathion was selected for tracking as it is currently being used in B.C., and it was recog-

[Page 49]

nized as a pesticide that required federal agency re-evaluation. This example is one pesticide of many being sold and used in B.C.

The commissioner's 2003 audit report, at paragraph 1.1:

"Despite substantial improvements in some areas over the last eight years, the federal government is not adequately ensuring that many pesticides used in Canada meet current standards for protecting health and the quality of the environment. The range of weaknesses we identified raises serious questions about the overall management of the health and environmental risks associated with pesticides."

Paragraph 1.5, in part:

"Health Canada has done only limited research on the health effects of pesticides, despite the federal government's stated priority in this area."

We strongly recommend that the members of this special committee review the contents of this critical report. The report's conclusions are worrisome, and it gives us no comfort that Health Canada is protecting us and the environment from toxic pesticides.

The broad brush of synthetic pesticide applications. Surface and groundwater collects the residues of the pesticides. Aquatic life is negatively impacted. Domestic and wild animals absorb and ingest the toxins. Birds feed on pesticide-laden seeds and insects. Nature's living creatures drink the polluted water. Beneficial insects are destroyed along with the targeted pests. Pollinators that are so critical to natural plant life and agricultural crops perish from many of the toxic pesticides.

Many studies link the sale, use and misuse of toxic pesticides to human health problems. The apparent safe use of synthetic pesticides is directly related to the strict adherence to the application instructions. Health Canada doesn't know if these application instructions are being followed.

[1040]

Rural and urban farming and local food security. Many organic farms are situated in rural areas. However, many of our small-scale producers are located in semi-rural areas and close to residential areas. We see a growing trend towards urban backyard farming and community gardens producing food for personal use and commercial market garden sales. Synthetic pesticide use on nearby properties can physically move beyond the intended area and contaminate the food production land of those small-scale producers and home gardeners.

Organic crop production standards require an eight-metre buffer zone or permanent hedgerow to prevent contamination by prohibited substances, if the danger exists, thereby making it impractical for a small-scale producer or backyard gardener to protect their food crops from unwanted pesticides. If contamination by prohibited substances occurs on organic land, there is a 36-month ban on organic crop production in the affected area.

Apiculture. Organic standards require the location of beehives at least 3,000 metres from sources or zones of synthetic pesticides and from flowering crops treated with prohibited pesticides.

Contamination of surface and groundwater. Organic producers are very concerned about water quality and are required to monitor irrigation and washing water for prohibited substances, including pesticides.

Conclusions. The organic sector is convinced that the current sale and use of synthetic pesticides in B.C. and in Canada are detrimental to human health and the ecosystems of our province and country. We cannot continue the unsustainable practices of applying pesticides to artificially manage and control the environment around us.

Monocropping, the cycle of chemical fertilizer applications and the cycle of pesticide applications all contribute to destroying the living soil and unbalancing the lives of insects, birds and amphibians. Plants existing in poor soil and poor environmental conditions become stressed and become targets for disease and pests. More pesticides are then added.

The desire for beautiful landscape properties to please ourselves or tourists, the economic need to produce apples without insect scars or to golf on weedless turf seem only achievable if we apply synthetic pesticides. The argument is that it is an economic necessity.

The federal government has the responsibility to protect human health and the environment against the use and misuse of pesticides. However, the record shows we cannot leave it up to the federal government politicians to make managing that process a priority.

The acceptable risk policy in registration and re-evaluation of pesticides is biased in the interest of shortsighted economic consideration. They're unsustainable in the long term.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's pest management centre is responsible for identifying sustainable pest control strategies. The public consultation process in carrying out their mandate is crowded with biopesticide industry representatives. Organic sector representations are needed.

The Swedish strategy to increase the financial costs of synthetic pesticide sale and use, along with aggressively promoting organic agriculture, appears to be worth investigating.

We strongly believe the solution to eliminating the use of dangerous pesticides in B.C. is greater use of organic management practices. The government of B.C. needs to apply the precautionary principle in banning synthetic pesticide sale and use. The federal government's acceptable risk policy is bad for us and bad for the environment.

The terms of reference, specifically the elimination of the unnecessary use of pesticides in B.C., should be closely examined in that respect. Can organic management practices make the use of toxic pesticides unnecessary? We say yes, and we should move public policy in that direction.

Recommendations. COABC requests that the special committee recommend a ban on the sale and use of synthetic pesticides not listed in the *Organic Production Systems*:

Permitted Substances Lists in the residential, commercial — including golf courses — institutional, and government sectors in B.C. The ban should have a short-term phase-in period.

Two, COABC requests that the special committee recommend a high-profile public education program on the negative impacts of synthetic pesticide use and on the alternative methods of managing unwanted weeds, pests and diseases. The educational program for alternative methods should incorporate B.C. organic standards, organic management practices and integrated pest management systems.

[1045]

Three, COABC requests that the special committee recommend an extended transition period and ban on synthetic pesticide sales and use in the agricultural sector, the transition period to include an organic management education program, incentives and industry targets for decreasing the applications of synthetic pesticides during the transition period. The transition program should include financial disincentives for synthetic pesticide sales and use.

Four, COABC further requests that the special committee recommend organic sector representatives be invited to participate in all consultation processes related to banning the sale and use of synthetic pesticides and for identifying and recommending alternative strategies to manage pests.

Respectfully submitted by the COABC executive.

B. Bennett (Chair): Thank you very much, Randy. We've got about 13 or 14 minutes for questions.

B. Penner: Thank you, Mr. Pearson, for your presentation. I noticed that throughout your presentation you appeared to distinguish between pesticides and synthetic pesticides. My understanding is that synthetic pesticides are a by-product of petroleum products. I'm not sure if that's correct. I'm just wondering what, in your mind, the biological difference is between a pesticide and a synthetic pesticide.

R. Pearson: What I've used is the definition in the Canadian organic standards and the B.C. organic standards in that it's a manufactured pesticide. In regards to the biopesticides, there are certainly some that are organically acceptable and some that aren't. They go through the committee stage at the national level and the B.C. level. By and large, we in B.C. replicate what's done nationally so that there's no conflict between the regulations.

B. Penner: Just a couple of follow-ups. Your understanding is that there is a difference in how the biology works or the biological impacts that occur from a synthetic pesticide versus a non-synthetic pesticide? Or do they have the same result?

R. Pearson: No. The biological ones, which are being developed.... I know there are trials that are being used on various crops.

I'll give you an example of one. It is not approved by the organic sector at this point. It's dealing with wireworm on potatoes, for example. It's going through a trial period. For the

biological development on that substance they've put in there to kill the wireworm, will it kill the earthworm as well? That's what is being looked at. You can't replace a synthetic pesticide — with a petroleum distillate included in it — with a biological one that may do the same thing and kill the beneficial pesticide.

So that's the nub of it all in regards to organic. We want to make sure that yes, use a pesticide if necessary, depending on the level of the problem. But again, what is the impact to the beneficial insects as well? That's what is looked at in the organic sector.

B. Penner: One of your other comments pertained to, I think, what you said Sweden had done — increased the price point for synthetic pesticides. I presume that's subscribing to the supply-and-demand theory that, all things being equal, if the price of a product is higher, people will tend to consume less of it. Is that what you were driving at?

R. Pearson: Well, I just looked at the UVic study. It dealt with ten environmental indicators, and one was the use of pesticides. It didn't elaborate a lot on that particular Swedish model around pesticides. But it certainly is interesting. I know there are risks to that, and if the costs are too much, people find a way around it.

So it's something worth investigating. Sometimes money isn't.... It's education that's needed rather than only financial disincentives. At the same time, they were aggressively promoting organic agriculture.

[1050]

The Swedish example should be looked at, I think. I can't provide a lot of information on that because there wasn't a lot in the UVic study.

B. Penner: We heard earlier from the landscape association. Their belief is that the price of synthetic pesticides has increased significantly, and that's resulted in a reduction in use simply for that — the same point that you were demonstrating or referring to in Sweden, that the higher price tended to discourage use of the product.

I just did a quick calculation here. I think you referred to a report from 1991 that was on the Ministry of Environment website about the amount of use. The average price of oil in 1991 was about \$20 U.S. a barrel.

[Page 51]

This year, so far, it's been \$87 per barrel, which is about a 435 percent increase — of course, not taking into account inflation.

I would think that that would provide a significant disincentive for people to use synthetic pesticides, if they're extracted from petroleum products. That 435 percent increase in price would be a certain amount of a market signal, I would think. But I get your point that perhaps what's required is an even greater signal, if that's what you're desiring.

B. Bennett (Chair): Can we move to the next questioner, please?

S. Fraser: Thank you very much, Randy, for this. Thanks for pointing out the Swedish

example. It's something that I certainly would like to investigate further, and also the Auditor General's report from 2003. I wasn't aware of that, so again, thank you very much for that.

I've been to a number of organic farms and very much appreciate the work being done by your members and the understanding they have of the web of the ecosystem and how everything's linked.

I guess the question is around this. You touched on this. It's not easy to have and keep an organic status. That label is coveted, and it's difficult to get because of — I'm assuming, from what you said — amongst other things, the potential exposure from outside uses of pesticides and herbicides.

I'm just wondering: do you have real examples of your members losing organic status or not being able to achieve organic status because of proximal use of herbicides and pesticides that might infringe the regulations to be qualified for organic?

R. Pearson: Well, I can't give you any examples right here.

S. Fraser: But there are?

R. Pearson: There will be. Like I say, there's a 36-month ban on that particular area that's been contaminated.

Just backing up to your first comment around difficulty to achieve organic certification. It isn't difficult. It's a matter of understanding what nature needs to have a healthy soil and making sure that you don't use any of the prohibited substances. It's hard work and knowledge, and it pays off.

J. Yap: You've made a number of references to the impact of pesticide use and misuse, relating it to human health problems. You do have an appendix here. Unfortunately, we only got this late yesterday, so I haven't had a chance to go through and look at the appendices — just your report.

As an association, are there any studies, in particular, that you're aware of or that your association holds up as the studies that really show the link between use of pesticides and the impact on human health?

R. Pearson: Let me get back to you on that one. I will check with our office in Vernon and see if there's one. I made that request, and I got the list from the Organic Trade Association. I noticed there were, I think, three on that list that were Canadian-U.S. studies.

J. Yap: Okay. I thought just maybe, off the top of your head, you knew of a really definitive one. But if you can get back to us on that, that would be great.

R. Pearson: Yeah, I can get back to you on that. Okay?

J. Yap: A follow-up question on the study that compared Canada and Sweden, which other colleagues have referred to. I know you looked at it as part of the Victoria study of 2002.

I'm curious. I'll have a look at it as well. But when you look at it.... It looked at, I guess, various aspects of environmental performance. Pesticide use was one of them. Did the study also look at impact on health? In other words, any potential change or comparison between Sweden and Canada?

R. Pearson: No, I didn't see that in there at all. It was an environmental study, and it took ten indicators: climate change, you know, and pesticides in....

J. Yap: So it just focused on pesticide and not tying the level of pesticide use to health.

R. Pearson: No, it didn't. It was a report card in comparing Sweden and B.C. Both are northern countries, so there were a relative number of commonalities there.

B. Bennett (Chair): We still have about four minutes left. MLA Fleming, did you have a question?

R. Fleming (Deputy Chair): Randy, thanks for your comments this morning and some of the examples you gave the committee members about re-evaluations and the experience with PMRA. I appreciate the discussion around malathion. It's a concern — for a product that was first registered in 1953, as you pointed out — that it's been identified but is still relatively available on the market and potentially in wide use. I'm going to look into that myself, but thank you for bringing it to our attention.

One of the things that you raised in your background facts in the document you gave to committee members was around pesticide use. The statistic of how many million kilograms of pesticides were used in British Columbia in 1991 is indeed 20 years out of date.

[Page 52]

We had a presentation from the Ministry of Environment here at the outset of committee hearings, asking what the trend line is on cosmetic and overall pesticide use in B.C. We were surprised, I think, to hear that the ministry actually has no idea. They don't track that at the retail point of sale. They could — they have the authority to do so — but they don't. This is more of a comment than a question. I just wanted to leave that with you. I think you and others and committee members are interested in knowing that.

In most provinces that now have bans, and most provinces in Canada do have bans on cosmetic pesticide products, the consumer trend line was to see quite a significant decrease in pesticide use. In other words, the legislative process was catching up with public opinion.

I think the good news in that is that education around pesticide use is happening formally, informally in the media and in other places through horticultural groups, through community gardening — all sorts of things in the urban environment.

I think we will ask the Ministry of Environment to come up with some way to determine what's happening with pesticide sales in British Columbia. If they are able to provide anything that is meaningful, we'll be happy to share that with you.

B. Bennett (Chair): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Pearson, for coming before us and representing your organization. Thanks for your presentation. We appreciate it.

R. Pearson: Thank you again for the opportunity.

B. Bennett (Chair): Our next witness is the National Allied Golf Association. I believe there are three presenters. While the presenters are setting up, let's take about a four-minute recess.

The committee recessed from 10:59 a.m. to 11:02 a.m.

[B. Bennett in the chair.]

B. Bennett (Chair): Committee, I think we'll reconvene. Not every member is back, but they'll be back shortly. We want to try and stay to the schedule as much as we can.

Maybe you folks were probably not here when my committee introduced themselves earlier, or were you? Were you here?

D. Ferne: Yes, we were here.

B. Bennett (Chair): Okay. We can dispense with that, then.

Why don't you folks go ahead and introduce yourselves and then get started. You've got 30 minutes, and you can spend it, really, however you want to. But if you wanted to leave some time at the end for questions, I think that would be appreciated by committee members.

J. Rousseau: Well, thank you very much, committee, for allowing us the opportunity to present. We are the National Allied Golf Association, B.C. chapter. We are an umbrella organization of all the golf industry sectors in the province. That includes the golf course owners and operators. It includes the golf course professionals. It includes golf course superintendents. It includes golf course managers. It also includes the players themselves. The Western Canada Turfgrass Association, which I represent, is the education and research body not only for the golf industry but the turf management industry in general.

So I'm going to let Kris lead us here with a bit of a background on the economic side of the golf business.

K. Jonasson: We've provided everyone with a copy of an economic impact study that was produced and released last year. We can run through the numbers, although I'm sure you're all capable of reading. But the purpose of putting that document together was to indicate to the general population that the golf industry is a significant economic player within the province. We contribute somewhere around \$1.8 billion of economic activity, and we employ some 47,000 people around the province of British Columbia.

We're somewhat unique as a sport in that we're one of the few sports that does not really rely on a tremendous amount of government funding. To a large extent, we build and maintain our own golf courses, mainly as facilities that are either owned and operated by a

society or owned and operated by an individual. In the case of some progressive municipalities in the province, owned and operated by a municipality.

[1105]

You'll see in the presentation that we make reference to areas of the province, like Kimberley, that went through a total reorganization of their economy due to the closure of some mines and really have reinvented themselves as a tourism destination through a combination of investments in golf facilities for summer recreation and ski facilities for winter recreation.

I think that as the province moves forward, we will have opportunities throughout the province to see areas open up for resource development. Then, if they're going to continue, they're going to have to change into something. Providing infrastructure for a community to thrive and grow is something that the golf industry has always participated in and we think is important to the future of the province.

J. Rousseau: The presentation that we're bringing to you today was also brought in May for the inaugural

[Page 53]

Golf Awareness Day that we did. So most of you have probably seen that already.

Thank you, Kris, for that introduction to the golf industry. Golf is a massive contributor to B.C.'s economy, as Kris said. B.C.'s golf industry is a longstanding supporter of healthy living and charitable causes. British Columbia's golf courses are conscientious environmental stewards.

We've already talked about the dollars here, so I'm going to just move on.

Hundreds of thousands of British Columbians play millions of rounds of golf at more than 300 golf facilities across the province. There's a golf course in every sector of your constituencies. From our northern borders all the way to the south, east and west, there are a lot of golf courses. A lot of people play golf in this province.

A quarter of all those rounds in B.C. are played by tourists, including non-local British Columbians and visitors to the province. Golfers spend \$330 million in travel related to golf rounds. So just a little score card there for you. Pardon the pun.

K. Jonasson: We're also involved in programs throughout the province to help get kids more physically active. We're as concerned as everyone is with the overall health of the children in our communities.

What you're seeing in that picture is a typical school program that we run. We currently are running it from kindergarten through grade 7. It's an introduction to the sport. It's an opportunity for us to come into the school and work with the kids.

I think what's instructive there is that we are using new and innovative ways of introducing the game. What you see there is a full gymnasium of children all participating in an activity at the same time.

I think it also should be said that we do actually have some studies that relate to the playing of the sport of golf and the overall health of the community. There was a major

study done, coincidentally in Sweden as well, that followed a half a million golfers for 20 years and did in fact prove that on average, golfers live about five years longer than the general population. That came as quite a shock to a lot of people.

Surprisingly, or not so surprisingly, the more golf you play, the better your chances are of having a long life. Part of that has to do with the fact that better golfers and people that play a lot generally tend to walk. They do carry their clubs. Walking and carrying clubs burns a lot of calories. That's a great message to get out to kids, but it's also a great message to get out to our seniors.

I think everybody has concerns with the impending health care costs and what's facing us in the future. We think that getting people more physically active is one of the things that we should all be looking at. Certainly, golf wants to contribute in that area.

[1110]

J. Rousseau: Golfers do live longer. I guess, with my game, I should probably already be dead, then, if we extrapolate that the other way.

Golf, by participation, is the most popular sport in Canada — 15 percent more popular than hockey, even. Golf courses — back to the little bit of the dollar figures here — \$4.7 billion. Golf courses and driving ranges generated gross revenues of \$4.7 billion in 2008. That's more than skiing, health and fitness centres and amusement parks combined.

What we're really here to talk about, obviously, today is how a potential pesticide ban would affect the golf industry. We just wanted to lay that out a little bit so that you know what we are before we get into that.

Frankly, the golf industry in B.C. is opposed to further restrictive legislation dealing with pesticides. We do not distinguish between cosmetic pesticides and non-cosmetic. These products are all registered at Health Canada, not necessarily by use. These active ingredients span different uses, whether it's agriculture, landscape industry, horticulture, etc.

We support and are confident in Health Canada's requirements to register pesticides. We also support an ongoing and dynamic evaluation system at Health Canada. We expect that to not be stagnant. We expect it to continue to develop as the technology gets better, and we do appreciate their re-evaluation process of chemicals and active ingredients that are already registered.

We would note that in the ornamental sector, which golf is only a very small percentage of, under half a percent.... The ornamental sector is already a small percentage of pesticides being used in this country when we compare to agriculture or forestry.

We do have programs in place in the golf industry over and above legislation. For example, in B.C. we have the IPM Act. It came in, in 2003. Audubon has a program for golf, specifically. It's called cooperative sanctuary program for golf courses. That is a volunteer program to further enhance environmental stewardship on golf courses. In B.C. we currently have nine courses certified through Audubon, and dozens more are in the process of being certified.

They're not the only program that's out there. There are a couple of others. Green Links is one, and there's a new one coming out of the U.K. called GEO that we're quite interested in, as well.

Golf course superintendents focus on turf and wildlife preservation techniques based in sound science. We're trained in soil chemistry, fertility and maintenance practices in

accredited diploma programs at B.C. post-secondary institutions and others. Kwantlen University in Langley has got a great horticulture program. Olds College in Alberta, Guelph University in Ontario and several others have excellent horticulture management programs. So we're talking about trained individuals here.

[Page 54]

The golf industry collectively allocates significant funds toward research programs. So our own programs are dynamic as well. We're not just sort of sitting on our hands, so to speak. In fact, I think a lot of our goals are the same as many of the presenters you've seen earlier, in that IPM, I guess in it's ideal end point, would be zero pesticides. IPM encourages us to minimize their use and avoid their use if at all possible. We support IPM as well.

I don't think I need to talk too much more about integrated pest management. We call it plant management. You've heard a lot about that already. Feel free to jump in if there are questions on that.

I'm not sure where we're at with time, Mr. Bennett.

B. Bennett (Chair): You are about halfway through your half-hour increment.

J. Rousseau: I'll show you the photos that we brought to just give you an idea of what happens. A lot of our members will tell me this, and I know from experience — I'm a former golf course superintendent — that nobody wants to put this stuff down if we don't have to. It's necessary for our business. We've got studies to show that as well, actually — that non-use of synthetic chemicals won't allow our business to continue.

[1115]

Here's a photo of a golf course I used to work at, actually. These are the kinds of things that can happen to a golf course.

We are in a situation where, due to the nature of golf, we can be more susceptible to turfgrass diseases that the average home lawn or commercial landscape might not be — in particular, fungus or fungi. In Canada snow mould is a big concern, especially in the western province of B.C. here. We've got a lot of problems with what we call pink snow mould.

Conversely, we don't actually have a lot of weed problems. I think there's a public perception out there when you see a green golf course that a lot of things go on. That's not necessarily true. In fact, I don't know too many golf courses that are completely weed-free. We have quite a high tolerance for that, and due to the nature of the lower mowing heights of greens, that takes care of a lot of the weed problems. They just won't survive at that height of cut.

How integrated pest management relates to the golf business. We have a lot of cultural practices that we use. I probably don't need get into all of them, but again it comes down to pesticides being used as a last resort. So if you're a golfer and you're out there, and there are holes punched in the greens in the fall, that's one of our cultural practices. If you see sand on the greens or the fairways, that's another one, again, just to reinforce the notion that these pesticides are a last resort. Having said that, these are federally approved products sprayed by accredited and certified personnel.

Another photo of the situation where a golf course was devastated pretty badly.... This obviously is a negative effect to the business. I would also add or reiterate what we heard earlier. Pesticides are very expensive to our golf courses. We do not make more money by spraying more pesticides. In fact, we're encouraged to apply less to try and save as much money as possible.

Again, here's a unique example. A golf course in the Okanagan was going to be under construction. We have a lot of problems throughout the winter, and this is what we see often in the spring if it's a bad winter. This area wasn't treated, so it's a unique example or a rare example of a situation where we can see what would happen without these products.

These next two slides are the same thing. This is a golf course tee box. It's basically unplayable. It's unfit to play.

Some of the feel-good stuff. Again, we're not standing around. I guess we are here, but we're not sitting on our hands.

These are some Kwantlen students. We're out researching and learning about improving our operations as much as we can to reduce pesticide use as much as possible.

This is our research committee chair. He's got a master of science from the University of British Columbia. He's also a golf course superintendent in Riverway. This is just an example that I wanted to show everyone of the qualified individuals in our industry that we're talking about.

This is a research centre in Washington. Part of what I do is liaise with allied groups across Canada and in the U.S.

A lot of money is spent on turfgrass research to try and improve the species of grass themselves — less susceptible cultivars of grass, less fertilizer or water needed, grasses that can stand up better to the traffic and so forth.

Another example of some environmentally friendly activities on a golf course. This is the Penticton Golf and Country Club. The crew here are holding up some painted turtles that they found in one of the sand traps. That sand trap is now protected. Again, just another example of IPM and the environmental stewardship that goes on, on golf courses in B.C.

Bear Mountain. Here's another example. Again, public perception, I think, is quite a bit different than what we actually see on a golf course. For example, it's 160 acres. A hundred acres, approximately, would be managed — or less. There's quite a large area of most golf courses that aren't managed at all.

[1120]

Just another example of some cool stuff coming down the pipe — some really neat robotic mowers, electrically powered, again, to get closer to our goal of sustainability in the golf business. That's what it's all about in the end.

At the end of the day, this is what we want to do — see happy people. We even see happy pets on a lot of our golf courses these days. This was Big Sky, actually, just this past summer.

[Page 55]

That concludes our presentation, and we're ready for questions.

B. Bennett (Chair): Okay, thanks very much, fellows. We do have some questions.

J. Slater: Thanks, guys. I think you guys do a great job. I'm a lucky MLA. I have nine golf courses in my riding. I've played them all, and I see what the course managers do on those places. I know pink snow mould is a huge issue in the Okanagan and the Kootenays. I see in your presentation that 85 percent of the chemicals you use are actually fungicides.

Turfgrass management, as you alluded to, is different than a backyard. A backyard doesn't get the pink snow mould. They don't get the crane flies. But you need to be able to do that at golf courses.

How much of the urban interface on golf courses actually influences your pest management on the actual course? In other words, if you get a bad neighbour and he's got a green in his backyard and he doesn't maintain it properly — he doesn't use the Quintozenes of the world to make sure he takes care of the snow mould — how much influence does that have on the actual course?

J. Rousseau: Not a lot, John. I think I know who you're talking about with the example you're providing, but our problems are fairly unique to the golf business. Like you say, the fungus that we deal with, you won't find too much in other areas. Of course, golf courses are in urban areas, they're in rural areas, they're in interface areas, and yes, we'll have infestations that could arguably come from a residential-commercial area — absolutely.

But mostly, I would comment, those are the weeds. Frankly, we don't care too much about the dandelions. They don't bother too many people.

S. Fraser: Thanks for the presentation. I don't know that I have nine golf courses in Alberni–Pacific Rim, but we have a lot of golf courses in the region, and I'm a very, very bad golfer. But I do enjoy it, so thank you to your members for providing that wonderful recreation.

I'm a little confused, though. We're adjudicating the cosmetic use of pesticides and looking at legislation that for various reasons — health, environmental.... We're looking at other models, other provinces. We're in a minority. As far as the jurisdiction goes, it does not have provincial legislation on this sort of thing.

My understanding is that in other jurisdictions that do have restrictions at the provincial level — there might be some exceptions that I'm unaware of — by and large it's not applying to golf courses. Golf courses are exempt. Yet it says in the document here that the NAGA of B.C. believes that further restrictive pesticide use legislation and regulation on a provincial level is unnecessary.

We're looking at issues, mostly urban, some urban interface, arguably, and we're looking at examples of other jurisdictions that have restrictions. You're probably exempt, based on other models of this. I mean, I don't know that. I guess we could do anything.

But you've taken a blanket statement against any further restrictions on pesticide use. You do also say that you're also asking that any further legislation addresses the problems of the trend toward municipal pesticide bylaws and regional inconsistencies that ensue, which is understandable. Isn't that a contradiction, again? Aren't I seeing two contradictions?

We're dealing with an issue that may not affect you directly, because you are exempt in other jurisdictions around cosmetic pesticide legislation, but you're taking a position against any further restriction. Regardless of where that goes, it's pretty.... It's just a statement.

B. Bennett (Chair): Member, you're going to have to get to a question here.

S. Fraser: But then you're saying that you want any legislation to be mindful of the patchwork of municipal legislations that are out there now. Wouldn't some sort of provincial legislation address that last part? I just see some contradictions here.

J. Rousseau: I think it's quite logical, actually, to take a position like we have, to say that no, we don't think there's any further legislation required, in general. If there were to be, I think that's what we're talking about. I didn't really mention the uneven playing field argument. We did talk about that at our awareness day. If, for example, golf courses in Alberta, Washington State and Idaho don't have restrictions placed on them, it puts our product in British Columbia at a disadvantage.

You're right. As far as I know, golf has been exempted, at least in Canada, from any sort of ban or restrictive legislation. However, again, I think legislation is dynamic, and that could change. We just want to ensure that golf courses do remain exempt.

K. Jonasson: I think the other thing that should be pointed out is that the original legislation that was introduced in the spring did contemplate golf being exempted, but it was only exempted for putting surfaces, which would not have solved the issue of fungicide use on fairways, and it was only for a period of five years. The statement that we're making is that we currently do not have any products that we could introduce within a five-year period.

There were some restrictions, and I think that's what alerted us to the fact that we needed to be making a presentation as well.

[Page 56]

D. Ferne: If I just may add to that — Doug Ferne, with the owners association and part of this group. The document that you're referring to.... The owners association, as Jerry was saying earlier, represents golf course owners and operators throughout the province, all different shapes and sizes, implementing programs and addressing issues that affect the efficiency of their operations. That's why we put that document together.

What we were trying to be pointing out there is that the golf industry already conforms through the regulations and such that are in place, even more so than that. Should there be any additional changes down the road, that would create the unlevel playing field.

Any decisions that were to be made should be based on facts and scientific information. And if it's to be imposed in different regions, it would impose further restrictions on one area more so than another and would create the unlevel playing field. I hope that clarifies the issue.

B. Bennett (Chair): I'm going to try and get one more quick question in here, and it'll have to be a fairly succinct answer.

J. Yap: In your first slide, titled "What is integrated pest management?" in the second paragraph you've got: "IPM includes effective planting, etc., using combination of biological, physical, cultural...." What's cultural?

J. Rousseau: Cultural are mechanical means, generally — for example, in the turf golf business that I gave earlier, aeration, where we actually take a machine in and loosen the soil, remove some of the soil. We'll replace that soil with sand. We can dethatch the grass, so a machine comes in and sort of gives it a bit of a back comb. There are many, many different ways of doing that.

J. Yap: Just a technical term.

J. Rousseau: It's semi-technical. You'll find that across all horticulture, ornamental industries. They've got their own set of practices that they can do. Hand-weeding could be classed as a cultural practice. The list goes on.

I do need to mention, because the WCTA.... I said this earlier. We do represent about 46 percent golf. Part of our membership are sports field personnel as well. They're also interested in the cosmetic pesticide issue, and some already do have those restrictions, due to the municipal bans that we see. If there were to be a ban, they're asking for exemptions for establishment of sports field turf, renovation infestation or some special events. For example, if a World Cup were to come to B.C., they don't want to be left without any tools in their toolbox.

B. Bennett (Chair): Unfortunately, I'm not going to be able to get the last question in. We're going to have to move on. Thank you very much for coming in. We appreciate your presentation.

[1130]

Our next witness, committee, is the Invasive Plant Council of B.C.

Gail, while you folks are wrestling with the technology, I think, because you just arrived, I'm going to ask committee members to introduce themselves and say which riding they're from, starting with the Deputy Chair.

R. Fleming (Deputy Chair): Good morning, Gail. Rob Fleming. I'm the MLA for Victoria–Swan Lake.

M. Sather: Good morning. Michael Sather, MLA, Maple Ridge–Pitt Meadows.

S. Fraser: Hi, Gail. Scott Fraser, MLA for Alberni–Pacific Rim.

J. Yap: Hello. I'm John Yap, the MLA for Richmond–Steveston.

J. Slater: Good morning. John Slater, MLA for Boundary–Similkameen.

B. Penner: Good morning, and thank you for joining us. My name is Barry Penner,

MLA for Chilliwack-Hope.

B. Bennett (Chair): And Gail, I'm Bill Bennett, MLA for Kootenay East. Can I safely assume that you've read the terms of reference for our committee?

G. Wallin: Yes.

B. Bennett (Chair): And you know what we're about and what we're doing, so I don't have to go over that. Do you have a PowerPoint presentation that you'd like to give us, I guess, this morning?

Let me just say before you get started, Gail, that you have 30 minutes. You can divide that up however you want to. You can do 15 for formal presentation, 15 for questions, or any proportion you want to apply, but you have 30 minutes. You can carry on any time you're ready.

G. Wallin: We may just want to do this non-virtual.

B. Bennett (Chair): That would be real.

G. Wallin: I'm from Williams Lake, actually, so I'm from the Interior. The Invasive Plant Council, which I'll talk to you a little bit about today, is actually a provincewide organization, and we have our staff located wherever the best staff are. I'll just start with that.

The first page is just an overview of the Invasive Plant Council. We're a charity. We were established in 2005

[Page 57]

after a provincewide development of an invasive plant strategy for British Columbia. It was one of the first ones developed. What they called for was the establishment of a non-government, broader-than-government, inclusive-of-government society. That's what led to the Invasive Plant Council.

One of the things that the Invasive Plant Council — page 2 — is really unique about is that we work by collaboration and we work by consensus. Our board is inclusive of different interests — provincial government, federal government, local government, aboriginals, forestry, industry, horticulture, mining, etc. — and they're forced to work by consensus.

The other part that we actually work with in really close partnership is the independent regional weed committees that are located across B.C.

Some of them are weed committees; some of them are now species committees. What we've found is that nationally and internationally there's been more of a focus on species, dealing with the pathways, than just plants. So what we're moving to in B.C. is also species, which reflects the role of the provincial government, because you guys have actually got species management, not just plant management.

We work in collaboration with the regional weed committees, which are independent societies. Most of them are societies. A couple of them are charities, but most of them are societies.

I just threw in a couple of highlights of some of the work that we've done as the Invasive Plant Council. You'll see a list there at the bottom of page 2: "Grow me instead." We've been working with the horticulture industry. Rather than selling invasive plants, what are some safer alternatives that they can sell instead of invasive plants? We've worked with them.

We've been working with local and aboriginal governments on what some tools are that they can use in their systems, in their current bylaws, that would make them more effective as invasive plant species-orientated.

We actually spent a lot of time trying to guide all the government regulations, legislation, from international down to B.C. into one guidebook. The information was basically that we don't understand what's guiding our governments or agencies. That's called the *Legislative Guidebook*.

I gave those to you as an example — bottom of page 2 there — because that's the range of the products that we will develop in addition to outreach, education, training. All of those have involved bringing people together to work in a consensus approach.

That's just a little brief background on the council.

The next page, page 3. Of course, I didn't page-number these for you guys, so that's going to be a challenge, but I'll work with you. The next part was taking a look at: what are invasive plants? I thought many of you — I've met some of you before — will have an understanding of invasive plants, but this is just a really quick reminder.

They're not native. They can't be native plants to your area. They have to be the problem ones — the ones that are causing social, economic or environment.... We don't care about the dandelions. Those are not.... We don't care about daffodils. Those may not be native, but they're not invasive.

They cause social, economic or environmental impacts. There are actually right now three legislations in B.C. that govern invasive plant management. You'll see them listed there: the Forest and Range Practices Act, Weed Control Act and Community Charter.

You will also be pleased to know, or displeased, that they all have different lists of what's an invasive plant. So there's work underway to try to consolidate those so we actually have a true, common listing across provincial regulations.

The next page. I just wanted to talk really briefly to the impacts of invasive plants and why we care. They have major economic impacts. I've got a few more slides that I'm going to show you later on. But when you take a look at knapweed — and I'm from the Cariboo, and we have it across much of B.C. — it actually closes down rangeland. You lose range ability for your cattle — period. You lose the ability to grow grasses for natural species.

Environmental damage. Actually, this is a big one in the aquatic field right now. You're seeing there a yellow flag iris, a plant that overtakes waterways, lakes. Purple loosestrife is another one. It takes away habitat for breeding colonies. It certainly impacts swimming, etc. Those are just some high-level comments.

Next page. Social impacts. You'll hear more about these plants later, but giant hogweed.... If you're from the Lower Mainland here, you've heard about the plant that hurts kids. It's one that actually causes — and we'll find out more about it afterwards — implications where people are in the hospital.

Puncturevine is the one to the right. It's in the Interior. You can't bike in areas that have

puncturevine unless you're going to do it with tire-less tires.

As a council, we're always working by consensus. We are trying to be inclusive of all interests. When we had your information on pesticide use, we totally acknowledge and support the idea of ensuring that there's responsible, scientific-based approaches to use of pesticides. We really like that, like you are today, you're using that consultation process for a range of input. We think that's going to give you some really strong feedback.

From the council's side, we have some suggestions on the next page, our responses. Invasive plants — and I'll talk a little bit more about it — have distinct economic impacts for British Columbia. They cause us to lose jobs. They cause us increased management costs for governments and industry to treat them. They need to be managed.

[Page 58]

The three kinds of tools that people tend to use in managing invasive plants are biocontrol, where there are agents that are internationally registered and secured; manual, where you cut it or dig it out; and chemical or pesticides.

There are different tools for different plants in different areas. On the manual or mechanical side, which you see at the bottom there, there are some plants that are best burned out.

In the Victoria area — who is from Victoria area? — you had carpet burweed through your park there. In the middle picture there, the best way for treating carpet burweed, because it's a really tiny plant, was to burn it with either the highway heaters or with propane torches. So that was a treatment method they used there.

[1140]

Next page. I want to talk about the integrated pest management and the chemical tools. There are places where manual treatment will not work. When you have large areas of ox-eye daisy, large areas of knapweed, large areas of hawkweed, they can't effectively be treated by manual treatment. There may not be a biocontrol agent.

So the treatment approach for effectiveness is herbicides, and they're herbicides that are registered by Health Canada, which means that they've been proven to be safe and responsible here in Canada, based on a whole range of research. So that's one of the areas that we particularly look at.

The picture at the bottom there is dealing with knotweed. Knotweed is a concern to the Ministry of Transportation. It grows up through their highways. It grows through cement. I just received an article from Britain today. Mortgages are being refused in Britain on properties that are contaminated with Japanese knotweed because it is so impossible to get rid of. It needs to be.... The only treatment for that is chemical.

It happens to grow not just on Crown lands but on private lands too. We know that weeds or species don't care about our boundaries, and they just will cross them.

The next page. It's called "Chemical Control," with the lady reaching up to touch a tall plant. That's your giant hogweed, and that's a plant that's a horticulture plant that's been brought in because it's exotic looking. It grows to 15 feet tall. It's governed by WorkSafe regulations because it's toxic to the workers. It's an example of a plant....

There are two treatments for this. You can have your workers go in and cut off the seed

heads on a regular basis. They have to be in pesticide suits — or they have to be covered; they don't have to be in pesticide suits — so they don't get the sap of the plant on their skin because it causes some people to be photosensitive, which means you can get second-degree burns, hospital treatment, etc.

I can guarantee you that the number of mothers calling our office in the last two years has just escalated, by people who have been hurt in parks in Nanoose Bay, in Victoria, etc., and how come there aren't more restrictions? You've probably heard this from different folks.

That's one plant that needs to be treated, as one of the tools is with pesticides. And the way you treat this or Japanese knotweed, which I just gave you.... They have big, hollow stems, so what you do is basically take a needle — I'm simplifying it — and inject it into the stem. It's called stem injection, because then it transfers down to the roots. In giant hogweed you do have the option of cutting the seed heads off. In Japanese knotweed you do not have that option.

For treatment purposes, for the right plant in the wrong place, where you want to treat it, pesticide is a tool to be used.

We've got some specific comments. I'm at the bottom here, on cosmetics. This is a range of pictures. Sorry. I didn't print it larger, not knowing that you wouldn't have the big screen here.

"Cosmetic" — we find it's a very difficult word. It's very judgmental. I heard a discussion earlier about urban versus rural. That same debate came up across our board and members, because being from Williams Lake, what I call urban is quite different than what you might call urban down here. I'm from Burnaby originally, so I can relate to both hats. But the concept of should cosmetics be restricted to rural lands means that that residential, five-acre property with hawkweed on it or whatever also wants the same ability to treat it on his or her lands even though they're called residential lands.

The middle picture there is a plant that most people in B.C. are familiar with. It's called the English ivy. It's one that we get in most of our planters. It's a very common houseplant. Left uncontrolled, it will overtake many trees and kill them. There's work now to remove the English ivy from the trees in Stanley Park and Jericho Hill. It's fine up in my area because it doesn't overwinter — yet. With warmer winters, it might.

It's just a vine, but it gets very, very thick. What starts off as a vine ends up being something that you need to take a saw or something to, to cut. It basically just strangles the tree as it grows up. That's just to give you a picture there.

The next page. I've got a few summary points here that we wanted to speak to, as we totally agree that there's a full suite of tools needed for invasive plant management, and they have to be based on scientific principles for all of the various uses — manual, etc. — and everybody needs to be involved.

We're strongly recommending that whatever restrictions come from your committee not be restricted by land tenure, because invasive plants don't tend to respect administrative boundaries. Just as a comment there.

We've got six points on summary here.

[1145]

"Cosmetic" is a subjective term, and I've spoken to that already. Often we think of it.... It's been traditionally used across Canada and elsewhere as referring to maintaining artificial environments, such as green lawns. We're suggesting that the term "cosmetic," in the way it's been applied in many bylaws and across the country, is much different than just maintaining the artificial lawns scenario. Avoid that term, because that is a subjective term. We know that invasive plants need to have a tool for pesticides, and that's one of the tools in the tool box.

Flipping over to recommendation 3. Avoid restricting the residential property use, because as I explained earlier, residential properties across the province will vary in size and shape, but the species will cross their boundaries.

In your terms of reference and in your background you talked about how pesticides could be effectively used. There is a whole suite of professionals and technicians who are already trained out there on the use of pesticides, so that can certainly be strengthened.

There are lots of people who use pesticides now, either smartly or unsmartly, on their artificial lawns, etc. Certainly, more information back to train people to use whatever we're going to be allowing in a more effective way is needed, and we've got a suite of people out there already.

The landowners in many regional districts are unable to get pesticides to use on their properties. One of the things that those local governments, regional districts, do is provide them support or training.

We could certainly look at the global "we" of strengthening the amount of information that they need and get in order to make them skilled, safe and responsible in the use of pesticides. The other point just to make there is that pesticides, by law, are registered by label through Health Canada as to where and what they can be used for. So obviously, we support that whatever the label is, is where the pesticide should be used.

Finally, in conclusion, the outright ban, for cosmetic reasons or non-cosmetic reasons, we think is really missing the point when it comes to treating invasive plants and, in the future, invasive species. It's a critical tool. It's well used across the province. It's probably misused in some areas. Obviously, we need to improve upon that.

The last slide I have there, the last paper, is just to let you know again, as I said at the beginning, that our council is moving — we have moved — from plants to species. We haven't changed our name. We'll be doing that this fall. But we moved from plants to species two years ago, which is reflecting both federal and provincial government's direction to us.

That's the summary, and I'll welcome any questions. I do apologize for not having it for you on screen.

B. Bennett (Chair): Thank you very much, Gail. I've got a quick question for you, and then MLA Sather is next. I want to try to characterize what you said very quickly.

G. Wallin: Sure.

B. Bennett (Chair): I think you said that the use of these pesticides is essential from an economics point of view, from an environmental point of view, in terms of controlling, managing, invasive species. You've said, "Don't impose a ban on Crown land or residential land," and I understand your reasoning for that.

Can you give us some advice on the issue of application of the chemical pesticide? Do you have a position or an opinion on whether everybody who applies these materials ought to be accredited, or is it your experience that the consumer can buy the diluted form of the pesticide at the local Canadian Tire store and follow the directions and apply it adequately, appropriately? What's your sense of that?

G. Wallin: I don't have a position from the council on that, except to the point that it needs to be allowed for use by the private landowner on private land. I mean, there's a whole range of pesticides, and some are more complex and more focused than other pesticides. What we're saying is: "Let's increase the support so that those same landowners could apply it in a safe way."

So if you're buying a rat poison, there are restrictions on how you can buy and store rat poison. As a homeowner, I should know that. Make the same kind of information available to me as I go to buy some pesticides for use for treating not.... I think where we support the use is.... For beautification purposes only, we don't need the broad use of pesticides, but we need the broad use of pesticides for dealing with problems. Did I answer your question?

B. Bennett (Chair): That's a good answer. Thank you very much.

[1150]

M. Sather: Thank you very much. I appreciate the work that's being done on invasive species. It's huge, and I'm disappointed or dismayed often to see how little progress we've made. In some cases it seems to be that it's overwhelming.

I really like that you're extending it to animals. The grey squirrel, for example, is replacing our native red, or Douglas, squirrel in my area in Maple Ridge, very definitively.

What I'm not too clear on — and it's kind of.... I think I got a little bit more clarity on it around the response to the last question. Maybe it's a matter of communicating the message.

When you say not to use the term "cosmetic," this, as you know, is a cornerstone of the idea here. To me, if you don't

[Page 60]

use that word, then the impression, at least, is that you're opposed entirely to this idea. I guess I have just a comment as much as a question. I don't think you're outright opposed. Just in your last statement you're not outright opposed to the ban, as you said, regarding the use of cosmetic pesticides on plants that are not invasive. I just wanted to clarify it, because it is pretty strong language you used.

G. Wallin: Right. The term "cosmetic," from Victoria to Williams Lake to Prince George, is totally different in how we apply it, so our concern was that that term is misleading.

The way it's applied in many local governments today, when they say "cosmetic pesticide ban" in local government bylaws, they often mean total.... Their wording traditionally has been to totally ban the use of that on their city properties. We have a history of using the word in two different ways. "Cosmetic" means in the eye of the beholder for

many different people, but it has been applied in many local governments in British Columbia to be a total, outright ban.

If we carry on with the language, it creates a really complex minefield to move forward on, so we're recommending that you use a different word — "non-essential," whatever word you want to come up with — so that it can provide a different message as we move forward. Today it is being interpreted in different ways currently in bylaws.

B. Bennett (Chair): In my role as Chair, I appreciate your response to that. I actually find it a very interesting topic of discussion — the use of the word "cosmetic." However, we're given our terms of reference as a legislative committee by the Legislature, so that is the term in use for this committee. But we appreciate your comments nonetheless.

J. Yap: Thanks for your presentation. In your summary, No. 6, "Avoid outright bans on residential or Crown land." I guess this goes to the heart of the issue, to the anxiety that is out in segments of the population in British Columbia that the unnecessary use — or cosmetic use, just to use that term for discussion — of pesticides could affect human health. You know, we all know about the concern, especially for young children playing in a field or in a lawn that maybe has had some pesticide applied to it.

How would you address this from your perspective, given your knowledge of this whole issue and your knowledge of the science and the practice?

G. Wallin: First of all, any pesticide registered in Canada has been done so under Health Canada, so I think you have to go back to the science. People have lots of perceptions that may not be scientifically sound, and we should not be managing based on perceptions but on the science.

I have a daughter. Sometimes she gets antibiotics; sometimes she doesn't. I certainly don't ban antibiotics in my daughter's life. I use them based on a scientific method. Again here, the health of people is absolutely important, and pesticides registered under Health Canada are to be safe for people. That's one of their requirements. I would go back to Health Canada's findings.

[1155]

R. Fleming (Deputy Chair): A couple of the infestations you spoke about this morning — hogweed and others, the interventions you describe — were ones that I wanted to get some clarification on. For example, with hogweed, is it the case that people are controlling those in their own yards with things they can buy off the counter? Or do these require, I think you suggested, needles full of...

G. Wallin: Pesticides.

R. Fleming (Deputy Chair): ...the more controlled pesticide substances that are done by a professional applicator?

G. Wallin: Okay. I didn't say done by a professional applicator, but it could be by a trained applicator. Giant hogweed in some places is being controlled and in other places is

not being controlled. For many municipalities, it costs them too much for the manual cost to remove the seed heads annually from giant hogweed, so they tend not to do it because they have a cosmetic bylaw that is interpreted to mean no use of pesticides in our community. That absolutely exists.

Those communities then move to a manual approach. When their landowners are looking for a treatment, they ask them to manually remove them in a cautious, responsible way.

R. Fleming (Deputy Chair): Well, let me follow up on that, because there are provinces that have cosmetic pesticide bans, and they have exemptions — ministerial permits, ways for the ministry, particularly when there are human health aspects involved — to deal with and address it. I'm just wondering in that scenario if perhaps it's working better in provinces that have bans rather than a patchwork of municipal bylaws for certain types of invasive species that have negative health implications.

G. Wallin: I'm not going to judge whether it's working better or worse, but if we set up a public that expects that there's no use of pesticides, that that's not the tool.... They need to be able to understand why and when these pesticides could and should be used.

From a giant hogweed side, in some of the municipalities in the lower area, some of them have gone for an

[Page 61]

outright ban, and others have gone for cosmetic restrictions, but using it for pesticides. I think we just need to get a better understanding across municipalities.

Where I come from, cosmetic use of pesticides does not have the same issue as it does here on the coast. Yet the same health issues should exist for Williams Lake as it does for people in Victoria. I think we've got to be careful to reflect that across the province there are different perspectives on what the tools are that are needed.

I don't know if that addresses your point.

R. Fleming (Deputy Chair): Well, I think you mentioned elsewhere in your presentation that you wanted to get away from this idea that primarily we're talking about lawn-care ingredients, but primarily we are talking about lawn-care ingredients. If you look at the volume of cosmetic pesticides that are being consumed in the province of B.C., that's primarily what we're talking about. Isn't that the case?

G. Wallin: I don't have those numbers, but that would surprise me because the amount of pesticides you use through industry is quite high. If there's a different breakdown for the percentages that are used by just homeowners, I'm not aware of that. I didn't pull that number coming into here.

I do know that local governments will buy their pesticides. And whether those are tracked as industry or cosmetic, I'm not sure. But we're working with probably more local governments in the last two years on use of pesticides on their municipal properties or passing out to their residences than we've seen in the last ten years.

R. Fleming (Deputy Chair): Okay, one final question. You said "avoid restricting any use on residential property" in one of your slides. I'm just wondering if your council is opposed to pending federal bans on fertilizer-pesticide, so-called weed-and-feed products, which will be the law of the land nationally. Are you against that, because that would be a restriction that is pending on residential property?

G. Wallin: Right. We haven't come to a position on that. We haven't been asked to. What we're looking for.... My understanding is that that's looking at the binding of weed-and-feed products, and it's the weed products that we're particularly interested in. Those, as a stand-alone, our understanding is, will still be allowed under the federal regulation. It's the binding of them that's not. But I'm not an expert in that area.

B. Bennett (Chair): Gail, a question from me that arises from the Deputy Chair's questions. We have ended up in B.C. with a patchwork of different kinds of restrictions imposed by local government. They're able to do that. At least, my understanding of it — I may be wrong — is that the legal basis for them, the authority for that, is in the Community Charter. There's something called concurrent jurisdiction. The province actually could, if it chose to do so, stop local governments from dealing with what is supposed to be, I think, a provincial issue.

[1200]

Do you have any thoughts on that? I mean, would it be better, in the view of the invasive-plant people, for the province to be in control of the use of pesticides across the province, as opposed to allowing each individual local government to decide?

G. Wallin: What I'm going to go back to is that I think if the province puts a blanket-wide statement about what can happen in Tumbler Ridge on the same level as what would happen in Vancouver, there are challenges there. You've got different climates, different conditions.

If you were to try to ban a pesticide across the province, it may be the right tool in the north but the wrong tool in the south. Whatever is provincewide has to allow lots of flexibility across the different regional and local governments. It would really depend on how you would handle that provincewide.

Certainly, it's not just the Community Charter. The weed act, actually, also empowers local government, and that's a hundred-plus-year-old act, and it hasn't always been enforced by the majority of local governments. Yet the local governments will argue — and you guys will be familiar with this term — downloading if you encourage them to take on more roles.

It's a really tough challenge, I think, to come out and have something that's going to meet both sides.

B. Bennett (Chair): Well, listen, thank you very much — very, very interesting. I think I speak for the whole committee that we really appreciate the work that the Invasive Plant Council does in British Columbia.

We know that you are challenged to deliver the level of management that you do, with

the resources that you have. But I know, from personal experience — and you and I have discussed this — that you've got great weed committees across the province, and you do a good job of coordinating them.

Thank you for that, and thank you for your presentation this morning.

G. Wallin: Thank you, and sorry for the graphics.

B. Bennett (Chair): Motion to adjourn from the Deputy Chair?

Motion approved.

The committee adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

[Return to: [Committee Home Page](#)]

Hansard Services publishes transcripts both in print and on the Internet.
Chamber debates are broadcast on television and webcast on the Internet.
Question Period podcasts are available on the Internet.

Copyright © 2011: British Columbia Hansard Services, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada