

# Canadian Cancer Society Meets with AGA-BC, Takes a Step Back



On November 29th, three Directors from the Board of the Allied Golf Association of British Columbia (AGA) met with two representatives from the Canadian Cancer Society British Columbia and Yukon Division (CCS) at the offices of the British Columbia Golf Association (BCGA) in Richmond.

Doug Ferne, current President of the AGA along with Kris Jonasson of the BCGA and Jerry Rousseau of the Western Canada Turfgrass Association (WCTA) represented the BC Golf Industry while Kathryn Sealy, Public Issues Director and Britt Swoveland, Public Outreach Spokesperson represented the CCS.

The meeting was arranged at the request of the CCS however the purpose was not revealed. According to the WCTA's Jerry Rousseau, "Ms. Swoveland left me a voice mail asking to meet with her and Ms. Sealy but there was no indication as to why." He went on to say, "In a subsequent series of phone and email tag, there seemed to be some reluctance to share the purpose but it was a fairly obvious possibility it had to do with pesticides."

At the outset of the meeting, CCS representatives outlined their priority election issues to be distributed to the major British Columbia political parties in preparation for the May 13, 2013 election. AGA was told stiffer anti-smoking laws are an important issue for the CCS and not surprisingly, advocating for a provincial pesticide ban was also high on their list of priorities.

Rousseau, who leads AGA-BC's pesticide issue committee commented, "Interestingly, the CCS's position has changed and they are only looking for a lawn and garden pesticide ban." He added, "Basically, they told us they were excluding the golf industry from their campaign and asking us to support their position."

AGA's response to the CCS, as indicated by Rousseau, was the same position AGA has taken since the beginning of the Special Committee on Cosmetic Pesticide's review that began in August of 2011. AGA-BC President Doug Ferne said, "Our position has always been based on facts," adding, "the fact is these products are rigorously tested and Health Canada approved."

"AGA has stated to the BC Government that we have confidence in the regulatory process," added Rousseau, "and we do support education, training and certification when it comes to pesticide use but we can't support a ban based only on the use pattern."

With a negative response to the CCS request for support, AGA was asked if some form of logical compromise could be reached. "At that point," said Rousseau, "I suggested the CCS support a position of certified applicators for lawns and gardens however their immediate response was no."

At the conclusion of the meeting, it appears the BC golf industry may have one less anti-pesticide advocate against it, at least for the time being however the pesticide issue in BC is certainly far from over. "The next step," said Doug Ferne, "is to ensure golf clubs across the province continue lobbying their local MLA's about this issue as the election gets closer."