

Executive Director's Viewpoint

KEN COUSINEAU, CAE

Ontario Moves Forward on Pesticide Legislation

Recently, Ontario Premier Dalton

McGuinty pledged to pass legislation that would limit the cosmetic use of pesticides in Ontario. The most interesting thing about that to most people in the golf industry is that associations like the CGSA, Royal Canadian Golf Association (RCGA) and the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) applauded McGuinty and the governing Liberals for making this announcement.

Our support is based on two things being included in the legislation. The first is the potential for this legislation to return consistency to the regulation of pesticide use throughout the province rather than the piecemeal approach that exists today through the adoption of municipal bylaws.

This local approach has forced the golf industry to utilize a significant volume of resources lobbying municipalities. All of this effort is in an attempt to ensure golf courses will continue to have access to approved chemical products. Legislation that would be consistent across the province would provide the opportunity for the industry to spend its time and money in the development of new, lower-dose products and cultural practices focused on the control of pests. This in turn could result in further reductions in the use of pest control products.

Another reason for the golf industry's support of this provincial initiative stems from the fact we will be exempted. This exemption was undefined until January of this year when some light was shed on the legislative content.

The provincial government posted "EBR Registry Number: 010-2248-Notice of intent to introduce legislation that would ban the cosmetic use of pesticides in Ontario," and requested submissions by February 18, 2008.

In that document, the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) indicated that golf courses were to be exempt from the prohibition on use. However, respondents were asked to provide suggestions on what measures should be imposed on golf courses in support of

the exemption.

Whatever measures were imposed needed to be achievable within a prescribed period of time to suit the government's commitment as well as providing accountability from the golf sector to the government. The CGSA, RCGA, NCGOA, Guelph Turfgrass Institute (GTI) and the Ontario Turf Research Foundation (OTRF) all commented on the MOE proposals. The responses had two common elements:

- IPM certification be the requirement established by the legislation and the standard to which all golf facilities in Ontario should be held in order to have full access to the use of approved products, and;
- Municipalities not be permitted to adopt bylaws that regulate the use, sale, storage or disposal of pesticides, and any bylaws that are currently in force be deemed null and void.

The CGSA has asked the government to phase in the IPM certification requirement over a five-year period and to give facilities that may be financially challenged by such an initiative access to resources that would allow for implementation within the prescribed timeframe. Why would we ask for such requirements to be imposed? The answer is simple—we knew what was involved and what the value proposition was, both for golf and for the government. If we had left it to chance, anything could have resulted and many of the options would not have been nearly as beneficial or as palatable.

In late February, Minister of the Environment John Gerretsen announced the new legislation would prohibit municipalities from passing pesticide regulatory bylaws. However, the introduction of IPM as a control for golf courses was not mentioned.

It is expected the legislation will be introduced later this spring and the entire industry should hope the government in Ontario will include IPM certification as the control mechanism for pesticide use. More importantly, all players in the industry should make efforts to ensure the government adopts this approach rather than the other options that have been suggested. Q_

CGSA is a supporter of: