

Presentation to the Canadian Wood Preservation Association October 24, 2001

Kimberley A.G. Bates
Executive Director



**Politics, Myths, NGOs,
Aging Boomers,
Science And The
Pesticide Industry**

Overview

- Who we are
- What's happening in this industry
- Lessons to be taken from the war on pesticides

Urban Pest Management Council of Canada

- formed in 1997/8 by Crop Life Canada
- originally a lawn and garden committee, now separate board and by-laws
- represent applicators, manufacturers, formulators and distributors of lawn and garden care products in Canada, allied trade associations, golf courses, academia and related industries
- serve as the voice and information source on urban pest management issues and promote IPM

Why UPMC was created

- Growing realization that issues were similar to agricultural industry, but the audiences and stakeholders were broader and not quite the same
- Tremendous increase in ENGO activity in this area required focused and strategic thrust
- Some companies served both markets, many did not. Needed to include others to address issues effectively

**It's not business as
usual**

Difficult and challenging times

- Money: NGOs using more sophisticated and emotional approaches to get funding
- Internet: around the world in less than one hour
- The villains: businesses seen as defensive and unwilling to put responsibility to the environment and public safety
- Media: view of industry as the villain is entrenched

Trends that are drastically changing landscape

- Aging boomers are becoming risk averse, preoccupied with health and mortality
- Untruths now accepted as truths
- Influx of hefty American foundation contributions, manpower/resources to Canadian activists
- From 300 to 8000 ENGOs in US and Canada in a few short years

Supreme Court – a small earthquake that will affect many industries

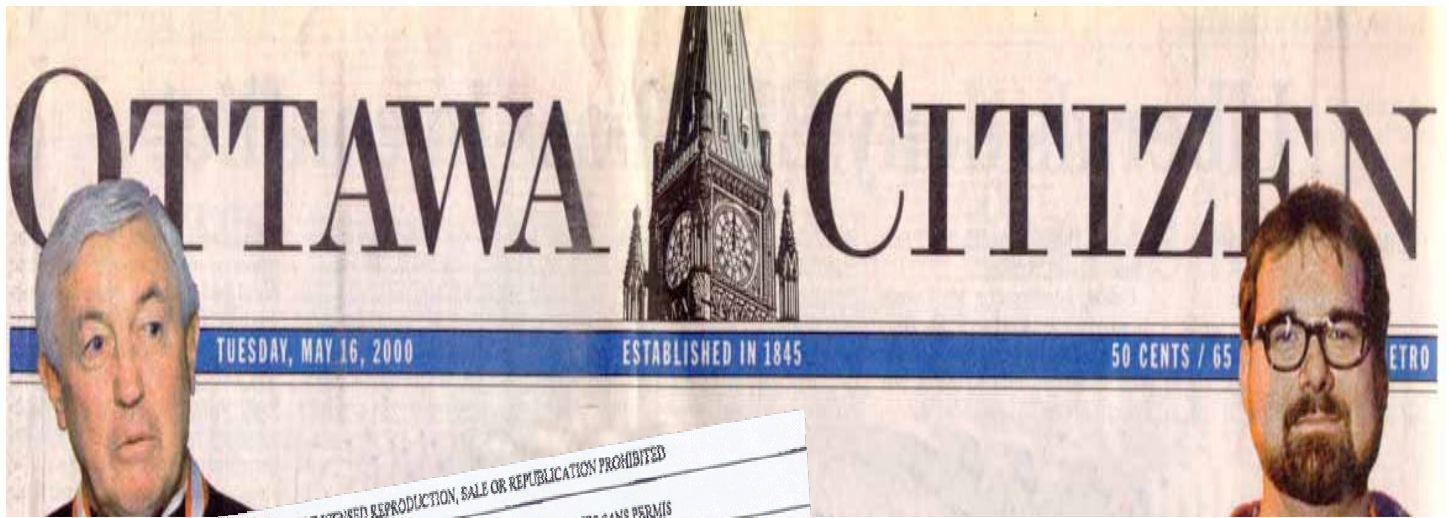
- Heard by the Supreme Court on Dec 7, 2000
- Quebec lawn care companies vs. Town of Hudson
- Judgment June 2001 concerned jurisdictional issue – the real issue was lost in coverage and interpreted as allowing bans in Canada
- Major paradigm shift in industry. Entrenched precautionary principle as a means for curtailing activities even in the absence of proof – reverberations will continue for a long time in many industries

Municipal Reverberations

- Judgment increased pressure on councils to enact restrictions on public **and** private property
- Proliferation of misinformation sensationalizing dangers now used to build the case for “bans” for many things
- Stunts and props impact more than the facts
- Silent majority not expressing support or attending council/community meetings
- No uniform definition of “cosmetic/non-essential”

Faith In Science Is Non-Existent

- Inability to understand scientific community's approach hampers ability to capture audiences and media
- Faith in science is very low
- NGO's have successfully raised issue of credibility of research due to industry funding of science community
- Industry has historically used science to defend itself – not helpful



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Cultivating bad science

Liberal MP Charles Caccia and most of the other members of the House of Commons Environment Committee really want you to stop using pesticides in your garden. Their cause is noble. But in proposing a total ban on pesticides used for cosmetic purposes, they go too far.

The committee's report, *Pesticides — Making the Right Choices for the Protection of Health*, is sensible in its general direction. It favours less pesticide use. It calls for more scientific research into the effects of pesticides. It encourages alternatives to pesticide use.

After that, however, it makes a very large leap, suggesting that some currently used pesticides be banned and that any pesticide use for cosmetic purposes be banned altogether. The committee favours doing this immediately, but adds, "It is questionable... whether the Canadian public would accept a country-wide ban at this time." So it proposes a five-year phase-in.

The committee says it's best to assume all pesticide products are harmful. "The lack of scientific certainty should not be allowed to impede effective action to protect human health," the report says.

This is the "precautionary principle" run amok. It is the reasoning that says unless you can prove a thing is incontrovertibly safe, now and for all time, it must be banned altogether regardless of its possible (or even proven) benefits. It says there's no reason to wait for the facts to come in.

We know that pesticides in concentrated form are toxic. We know they must be applied with care and there is science that suggests links between at least some pesticides and cancer.

But we also know pesticides are beneficial, to crops and golf courses, to backyards and parkland. A wise balance of their benefits and risks is what we need. That is precisely what the "precautionary principle" refuses to do.

The use of pesticides in some neighbourhoods is frowned upon in the most severe way. In others, it is not. Before making the sale and use of legal products into an illegal act, government must have significant and defensible evidence of harm — in other words, it must have good science. The committee admits that it doesn't have that, even as it urges Health Minister Allan Rock to ban these products.

The branch of government regulating pesticides in Canada, the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, has more than 200 scientists evaluating pesticides, most of them based in Ottawa. These experts say pesticide products are safe under certain conditions. The government shouldn't ignore its own specialists. Such a major public-policy decision must be based on something more solid than the fears of committee members.

Mr. Caccia yesterday noted that 37 municipalities in Canada have passed bylaws outlawing pesticide use for cosmetic reasons. Spraying chemicals on your lawn may be socially unacceptable in a couple of years. People are increasingly using "organic" methods to keep a lawn, or digging up grass to plant flowers. That's peer pressure, and Canadians are free to accept it or ignore it.

But to take the extraordinary step of outlawing products without a scientific case would be unsound. There are many things we use in everyday life that someone, somewhere, considers harmful. That does not mean government should make them all illegal.

Bad policy shouldn't be encouraged to take root.

**Result -
Fear and
confusion**

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

INSTAPRESSE

Date 10.03.2000

Ban urged on lawn chemicals

*Commons committee to propose act
for reducing health threat of pesticides*

ANNE MCILROY
Parliamentary Bureau Chief, Ottawa

Lawn chemicals and other pesticides intended for "cosmetic" purposes would be banned under a proposal to be unveiled by the House of Commons environment committee today.

The committee, dominated by Liberals, is calling for urgent action to reduce or phase out pesticides because of their potential threat to human health. It recommends creating a new pest-control act that would prohibit the registration and reregistration of pesticides in-

mean, they are spraying these chemicals around playgrounds and schools," one source said.

Pesticides automatically must be reregistered with the federal government every five years, said Julia Langer, an expert on pesticides with the World Wildlife Fund. If Ottawa follows the recommendation of the committee, it could mean that the pesticides Canadians now use to make lawns green would not be available in the future, and that new ones would not be approved

will hopefully provide some balance to the committee report, which in my view is unbalanced and based more on hysteria than on sound science," said Rahim Jaffer, the party's environment critic.

The Alliance's dissenting report is expected to argue that pesticides provide important benefits for farmers and home owners. The party will argue that pest-control products increase the esthetic value of lands, whether on private prop-

- Pop music, pop medicine, pop science
- Who to believe - realms of conflicting information
- Science will never offer an air tight guarantee – so people are afraid
- Extreme viewpoints and no middle ground in sight

Lessons to be learned

Issues Management 101

- Recognize that no-one, no industry is immune – Halifax started five years ago with one person who wanted to stop use of scent in public
- Look at other industries and try to forecast how developments could affect you
- Ongoing relationships in your community are a necessity, build them for tomorrow

Preparing for the challenge

- Develop a strategy far in advance of when the issue reaches city councils or public debate.
- Work to catalyze people at the local level and get engaged in the process at the earliest stage possible
- If an advisory committee is set-up, industry people should be actively involved to balance interests
- Be proactive and show leadership in your actions

- All materials should be simplified in a language and tone that is understandable and credible to the public
- Presenters are crucial - style rules over substance in these situations
- Presenters should have professional training
- Use government research only if the information is airtight, methodology sound, conducted with modern technologies and ideally, evaluated by third parties

- Accept that people have concerns. Explain how those concerns are being addressed rather than dismissing them
- Try to get the process to allow for some type of cross-examination, so that misleading claims made by activists can be refuted
- There should be a review of bylaws before they are passed by council so contradictions and confusing elements can be ironed out before implementation

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UPMC 2001-2002 Goals

- Build a unified voice for the industry by positioning UPMC as a focal point for consensus building and action, and as the source for reliable lawn and garden information,
- encourage homeowners and governments to adopt IPM
- support strong working relationships and alliances with others with an interest in urban green spaces
- demonstrate industry leadership through self-regulatory stewardship
- participate in and actively encourage governments to support My Home Our Environment

UPMC 2002 Actions “In the Works”

- Green Care Summit – facilitate a summit of related groups and charge them with responding to the future (December 2002)
- National IPM Symposium for municipal staff – added to the Communities in Bloom Conference Kelowna, BC. October 2002
- Public education safe stewardship campaign – pilot in large urban city, implementation across Canada (dates TBA, currently looking for industry partners)