



In Ontario, Canada
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fight for the essential
use of pesticides.

by Andrew Hardy

The Road I(PM) travel (I hope you won't have to)

Over the years in the turf industry, there has been many a political war waged at all levels. Private club superintendents have fought to have a much-needed renovation done, semi-private clubs have battled one another for the almighty golfer's dollar and public golf courses can be forced to fight for survival from season to season. In the province of Ontario, Canada, all levels and calibers of golf facility have bonded together to fight for the essential use of pesticides. The reason for the formation of the Ontario Allied Golf Association (OAGA) was the impending scrutiny that all provinces in Canada are going to face going forward.

I focus on Ontario due to the fact my club, Pheasant Run Golf Club is located there. The conflict being waged is more of an annoyance than a true battle. But the fact is that the Ontario government implemented the Earth Day Act on April 22, 2009. Essentially this law was a ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides. Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty felt "pesticides to control weeds and insects was purely a cosmetic use and that we were putting our families at undue risk."

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So how was golf going to cope with maintaining a high-maintenance turf stand without pesticides? Fortunately, the Ontario Golf Superintendents Association (OGSA), National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA), Golf Association of Ontario (GAO), Ontario Professional Golfers Association (OPGA) and Croplife Canada formed the OAGA. The mission of OAGA was to have the golf industry be exempt from the pesticide ban. The formation of OAGA was a big deal because of the fact that these groups had always worked so hard to gain an independent profile.

With all of the points made thus far, where does Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as it exists in Ontario become so high profile? The IPM program had been a fully voluntary program since 2004. All the stakeholders (golf, landscape, forestry, public works) that were using pesticides were able to come up with their own version of an IPM program. The IPM program for golf was a very user-friendly setup which included the writing and passing (75 percent score) of an IPM exam, the registration of your golf facility with the IPM

council, submitting annual desk audit review, successfully passing of and on-site audit performed by an independent third-party auditor and maintaining eight continuing education credits (eight CEC's) per year.

The program as it existed until the end of 2009 was user-friendly, easy to understand and because it was voluntary not really a panic document to finish. Cue the Earth Day Act of 2009. The pesticide ban was less friendly to the landscape industry than it was to the golf industry. Home owners were completely shut down for pesticide use while golf was granted an exemption based on the IPM program. But the catch was that the IPM program the 53 fully accredited golf clubs had gotten used to was to be revamped and drastically changed. So my thought when electing to enter the voluntary program was that Pheasant Run would have a leg up on the other clubs that hadn't entered the program. Becoming a fully accredited Level-2 golf course in 2008 did not offer any advantage. The fact is the clubs that were "ahead of the curve" were lumped in with everyone else. Though the process to becoming a Level 2 facility remained the same as before, the program as I learned it

was going to change.

Changes to the documentation and the amount of paperwork with the new IPM desk audit were significant. My 2008 desk audit was about 20 pages in length, while my 2009 desk audit was more than 300 pages. Yet the two documents did basically tell the same story. The biggest difference was the Annual Report, which was a part of the new IPM desk audit. The report was a cumulative account of the actual active ingredient in kilograms for each product used within the given golf season. And this report is to be uploaded on the IPM Council of Canada website and placed in a high-traffic area in the clubhouse of your course. To the average golfer or member these numbers really don't mean much. In fact to a fellow superintendent they probably don't mean much other than a possible comparison. Also to be added to the IPM website is the map that is created that shows where on our properties we have



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applied pesticides. This is a little easier for the average person to decipher based on the colors and outlines used. Though easier to read, it may also paint a negative picture of what is being done on a specific property. We at Pheasant Run really don't spray very much at all. But looking at our map you'd get the impression we do. In the court of public opinion I believe the maps do more negative than the annual report.

The last element to meet the conditions of the golf exemption is the holding of a public meeting. The public meeting is to be advertised in a newspaper and all inhabitants living within 100 meters of the golf course are to be personally invited to the public meeting. For a facility like mine this meeting does not really strike fear as we have six neighbors. There are a number of golf courses in Metropolitan Toronto (population about 4 million) that have as many as 350-500 dwellings within the prescribed 100 meter zone not to mention the potential for "environmental activists." With fire codes of clubhouses and potential member participation some of these clubs may have to rent outside of the club to accommodate the numbers. And there are at least two clubs I know of that will do up to two or three separate meetings in one night to meet the guideline. The OGSA in conjunction with Croplife Canada have produced an informational video that highlights the positive benefits of golf to be presented the night of your public meeting. The OGSA has also developed a guideline for running a successful meeting with the hopes that member clubs will follow these for symmetry within our industry. Essentially, the meeting is the reading of the annual report and fielding potential questions.

SO WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS MEAN FOR GOLF IN ONTARIO? For the time being the exemption is in place until 2013. At that point Ontario's Ministry of the Environment (MOE) will review the program and move forward from there. There is somewhere in the neighborhood of 1,300 golf facilities in Ontario. It seems a little farfetched at this point to think



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IPM ANNUAL REPORT - PEST CONTROL PRODUCT USAGE for the year 2011

Golf Course: Pheasant Run Golf Club | IPM Agent: Andrew T. Hardy

Area	Product	Rate	Quantity Applied	Comments
Killex (9111) 2,4-D	History of pest activity in treated area	2.400	1.800	Little less product used this year
	Evidence of pest activity in treated area		324.000	
Merit Sulfquat (40g WSP) (2502) insecticide	Major grub damage in the spring. Turf has damaged in areas through the course.	8.776		

Mapping and public notices are part of Ontario's IPM program.

that all are going to fall in line with the legislation (less than 40 percent participation, so far). And there is one small club that I am aware of that, based on the costs of being in the IPM program (\$905/season plus the \$85 agent fee), have decided to stop using pesticides. They made their membership aware of what was coming and they essentially live with the issues that arise.

The golf industry in Ontario has lived through the first phases of the exemption. For some of my colleagues in other Canadian provinces – such as British Columbia, which has always been a very political province – I fear the government is going to throw the book at golf. The presence of the NAGA in British Columbia will hopefully allow cooler heads to prevail. And as the chips fall for two provinces, it isn't going to be long before others will have an IPM program to work with.

I have always based my maintenance on an IPM program with the environment and strong stewardship at the fore. So falling in line with this new IPM program has been easy

and difficult all in the same breath. The easy part is the spraying aspect, as we don't spray a lot and do use other means of fighting disease as well. The more difficult aspects are the reports and work to complete annual reports and paperwork now take me in excess of 70 hours to complete. The in-season scouting reports can take up to two hours to complete with all the follow-up and cross-referencing with spray applications. The program is taking many superintendents off the golf course and putting them behind a desk. But the Ontario government, no matter who is in power, is never going to eliminate this pesticide ban. So we grin and bear it and trudge through the paperwork and meet the stringent guidelines set upon us because it could have been worse. In fact, it could have been much worse. **GCI**

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