Minutes and Impressions from the Meeting with Mike Morris April 23 2019

The meeting this morning with MLA Morris went fairly well.  It was a quiet and listening discussion that ranged around our topics on our list as well as others.  In the end our objectives, as mandated to our Glyphosate Group by the BOD, were achieved.  It was a reconnaissance meeting. We talked for almost an hour and a half.

We wanted to know the status of the bill, what motivation was behind it and his overall position on Glyphosate.  We also wanted to let him know that the IVMA were here to help, understand his concerns, promote responsible herbicide application and help increase public and stakeholder awareness of the robust processes already in place around herbicide applications. In broad strokes and bullet summary this is what we covered;

* The minister explained his feelings, motivations and where they come from.  In short he is a trapper and has seen habitat and biodiversity degrade over 40 years and wants to do something about it. At one point he described when asked that he felt that 50% of his trap line area had been sprayed over the past decades (??time frame??). This sense clearly impacts his overall thoughts on Forestry Spraying and in particular Aerial (he mentioned)
* The bill is still in draft form and it seems that at the moment he has retreated a bit and is re-writing it.  We got the sense that it was something that he was reconsidering quite a bit (maybe due to feedback from caucus??).
* He also said he expects the bill will not make it to second reading in the legislature.
* We discussed silviculture, logging, timber supply and overall changes on the land base.  His evidence about the changes/impacts he is concerned with is largely anecdotal and after discussion on this we spoke at length about the robust systems and regulations that are already in place to manage and govern herbicide applications on crown land. We discussed the importance of letting other stakeholders know about the process and how they might get involved. We described the PMP and NIT structure and process which I think he was largely unaware of. We also discussed the discrepancies in his thoughts and the FLNRO data with respect to the actual increases of deciduous inventory on the landscape.
* He has data that he thinks came from MoE that shows that 80-90% of herbicide applications are done in the central interior and Peace country. He wonders why it would be that way and what they are doing in other jurisdictions.
* We told him respectfully that it was unlikely that his numbers on this were right. I mentioned that I would like to look at the data. I also mentioned that IVMA has asked MoE to provide us with their herbicide usage data provincially and we have trouble getting it. I suspect his data is from Forestry and it may be only aerial data or ??
* Interesting note. He has had his trap line for at least 40 years and has never had a PMP consultation letter sent to him (he said!). I said I would look into this. It was part of our discussion on alternatives and I suggested that perhaps there were some systemic flaws that needed tweaking
* We also discussed at length the alternatives to a ban such as using GARR and other legislation options were already in place to improve habitat and biodiversity protections.
* We spoke about the benefits of herbicides and increasing public awareness in this area.
* He stated that he is not against the use of glyphosate and has no concerns with its toxicity and usage in other areas.
* We made the point that the IVMA is concerned that a ban in Forestry will lead to a push for a wider ban and will be used by opponents to herbicides in that way. He seemed to absorb this concern and at two points in the meeting stated that he ‘did not want to do anything that would give any NGOs or environmental groups any flags to wave’.
* He also stated several times that he was not going to do anything rash and that he was into several different iterations of his bill at this point
* In the end it seemed that we had made him think more about the impacts of his proposed ban and that although it may seem like the most expedient way to address his concerns over biodiversity at this time, the unintended consequences of a glyphosate ban were some things he had not considered. He was seeing that there are possibly alternate ways to achieve his goals rather than the sledgehammer approach of a ban.
* At that point he mentioned “opening the hood” up on the IMP Act and Reg along with other legislation to achieve the objectives he was looking for. A combined approach maybe???
* We discussed at several points in the meeting that Forestry herbicide applications had greatly reduced over the years and were now very focused on critical sites and that most (but not all) PMP holders were very professional and responsible about choosing to apply and where to do it. We also discussed how IVMA was promoting IVM principals and that most in industry embraced them.
* He asked about additional tweaks in the legislation to improve compliance. We said that was not the problem. We discussed chronic MoE understaffing and underfunding and that there is where the solution might be. We discussed, and he agreed with us, that using the COs would not work to regulate and inspect herbicide applications in the province. He suggested COs should do Fish and Wildlife and we offered that ‘Qualified Professionals’ (MoE staff or ??) should be looking after implementing IPMA and IPMR (as per what is already in the Act). He was in general agreement.

I’ll be sending along a nice thank you email to him with Crawford’s, Rick’s and my own contact information attached. I’ll re-iterate our offer to help with information clarity and request his spraying data.

I’ll also thank him for the offer to call him and contact him at any time. The door is now open…