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Statement by The BUZZ regarding the announcement of the relaxation of the ban on the importation of products containing glyphosates:

The BUZZ is a group of Bermuda residents, who have been working since late 2013 under the auspices of the Bermuda Environmental Sustainability Task Force (BEST) to consider the causes of the decline in bee populations. It seems indisputable that one of the causes of the decline is the impact of toxic chemicals. As a consequence, The BUZZ had been working on an approach to Government to ban the use in Bermuda of the family of systemic pesticides known as neonicotinoids, which are implicated in the threat to bees.

In May 2015, in response to the worldwide concern expressed about the health threat posed by the chemical 'glyphosate', the Minister for Health announced a 6-month ban on the importation of products containing that chemical. Glyphosate is the active ingredient in the weed killers RoundUp and Rodeo, among others, which are widely used in Bermuda to kill weeds. The importation ban was supported by local farmers who expressed their own concern about the use of these products and stated that there are organic alternatives that 'could easily be used'.

During the 6 month importation ban, there was to have been testing done to determine any long-term threat posed by the residue left as these products break down in the environment. We would have hoped that the design of the ban would have been extended to include any 'use' of the products, thinking that ongoing use during the testing period would likely interfere with the results.

On February 5, 2016, prior to any testing having been conducted, a press release was issued stating that the ban was being relaxed and that the importation of ready-to-use products containing glyphosates would again be permitted (while the concentrated product would continue to be banned for importation). We were disappointed by this change especially given the Minister's recent public expressions of concern and commitment to the health of Bermuda.

It is important to point out that glyphosate is only one chemical of concern that is freely available in Bermuda. For instance, as we mentioned earlier, neonicotinoids continue to feature in articles about adverse impacts on health and in the decline of bee populations. Our concern is heightened because Bermuda still does not have regulations in place for the sale, application, transportation, handling, storage and disposal of pesticides. It is likely that Bermuda has neither the appetite, nor the budget, to replicate such an approach (a ban and period of testing) for each of the many chemicals currently being used on the island, let alone those chemicals that will be

developed and introduced as nature 'adapts' and builds further resistance to current formulations.

We respectfully urge the Minister to further demonstrate her commitment to the health and well being of the Bermuda people and to take bold action in protecting our environment by developing a vision for a Bermuda where the use of chemical pesticides/herbicides/fungicides is dramatically reduced or even eliminated. We believe that such a bold intention could add real value to the Minister's health promotion strategy and the savings from the purchase of toxic chemicals could be redirected to developing other means of dealing with the roadside weeds and invasive species.

As examples, Bermuda could:

- use organic treatments,
- develop a work program for non-violent offenders from the prison system to control roadside weeds and invasives, which would allow them an opportunity to make a contribution,
- invest in a program of soil restoration (Dr. Elaine Ingham of Soil Foodweb Inc. advises that with the proper soil health there would be no need for chemical treatments at all),
- establish a national composting centre, using organic methodologies, and
- invite everyone in Bermuda to contribute their ideas and expertise to the development and promotion of the vision.

If you are interested in this issue and would like to be a part of The BUZZ group, please contact Kim Smith at the BEST office, telephone 292-3782 or email office@best.org.bm.