

The following letter to the editor was not published by the Regina Leader Post.
Update : corn gluten had been licensed for use in Canada for at least 2 years.

Re: Heckled, abused and lied about by Simon Taylor, Sat. Feb 7, 2004.

Date:

Fri, 13 Feb 2004 17:43:51 -0600

<letters@leaderpost.canwest.com>

Letter to the editor,
Regina Leader Post,

Re: Heckled, abused and lied about by Simon Taylor, Sat. Feb 7, 2004.

Who is heckled, abused and lied about?

Mr Simon Taylor's letter is beyond credible. It is true however that the term pesticide defines what a product does.

According to Mr Taylor, he could not use corn gluten if there was a pesticide bylaw. Mr Taylor, also doing business in Toronto, should be familiar with the terms of its pesticide bylaw. He must know that Toronto, as well as other Canadian municipalities with existing pesticide bylaws, provides a list of least toxic acceptable pesticide products that can be purchased and used by everyone. Every municipality also reserves permission to use unlisted pesticides under license for special emergency problems. In fact, industry's consistent arguments against such a list strongly imply they are aware of it. There is no reason to keep corn gluten off any acceptable list.

The Weed Man has not been the only company offering a natural organic lawn care package in Regina. I am aware of two others.

As to why no one has decided to try the Weed Man's organic lawn-care package, why would anyone do so when they are being told that the regular lawn care program is only using "safe", "environmentally safe" and/or "biodegradable" products? These statements are illegal under Canadian law, and their use led to recent fines to four companies, including the Weed Man.(2) I notice that Mr Taylor did not use any of these terms in this recent letter. I am also wondering why the organic lawn care program he offers is comparatively so much more expensive in Regina than those offered in other municipalities. How and how much it was advertised?

By Mr Taylor's own informal admission at a meeting, he does not find it necessary to wear the appropriate safety clothing demanded by the label of the pesticide products he applies. His company therefore does not apply products according to label i.e. in a lawful manner. Readers should decide if that constitutes "caring for their employees" or not.

One of industry's cornerstone arguments is that bans do not bring any reduction in the use of pesticides. I don't know anyone outside of industry that has seen pesticide sales statistics, or what pesticide products they include. If dangerous products have effectively been

replaced by least toxic ones, the sales figures may be the same but the sales breakdown would be very different. I would suggest that asking the municipalities concerned instead of industry for those data may give a more objective view. A Halifax poll (1) shows that about 90 per cent of those surveyed use alternative sustainable methods, rather than pesticides. There are similar results in other municipalities. Bylaw enforcement also shows the same trend.

While it is true that, for licensing purposes, many tests are run on pesticides by industry contracts, the list is by no means exhaustive. There are indeed many health problems such as endocrine disruption or effects on the immune system for which there are absolutely no tests required anywhere to license a pesticide. Let's not mix up ignorance with safety.

As to Mr Taylor's "begging activists for meetings on their terms to discuss concerns... and focus the debate" it sounded more like come to see me at my office and I will prove your concerns wrong. (I should know I was one of them!) Why would anyone refuse such a thoughtful invitation? The new City of Regina IPM committee will hopefully provide a venue "to focus the debate on productive issues" which Mr Taylor is craving. I hope to be part of it.

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1. Halifax Poll - Majority of Homeowners Not Using Pesticides

Date: Tue, 26 Nov 2002 17:24:23 -0500

From: Mike Christie <mike_christie@attglobal.net>

News Release

Majority of Homeowners Not Using Pesticides

(Tuesday, November 26/2002)-- A recent public opinion poll conducted by Corporate Research Associates found that about 90 per cent of those surveyed use alternative sustainable methods, rather than pesticides.

Stephen King, HRM Manager and Senior Advisor, Parks and Natural Areas, said today the results clearly show that the municipality's public information/education program during the past two years has been very successful.

Mr. King said " The pesticide-use reduction initiatives are just one piece in the bigger picture of environmental sustainability. HRM is working towards a sustainable community, one that uses its resources wisely, reduces waste, promotes sustainable practices and provides quality services to its residents."

Two years ago, after considerable public and stakeholder input, HRM passed By-law P-800, commonly known as the Pesticide By-law. The legislation was a first of its kind for a major Canadian

municipality. Its intent is to provide protection for those adversely affected by pesticides and to reduce impacts on the environment.

The by-law, which comes into full effect on April 1, 2003, applies to residential properties and municipally-owned property. There has been a two-year phase-in, with strong focus on a comprehensive public information/education program.

A number of brochures and fact sheets can be accessed on line at www.region.halifax.ns.ca and follow the Naturally Green or Pesticide By-law links.

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2 . <http://www.cbc.ca/stories/2004/01/16/Consumers/pesticide040116>

Pest Control Products Act (PCP Act) regulates environmental label claims and advertising of pest control products registered under the Pest Control Products Act. Subsection 4(2)) of the PCP Act states that "No person shall package, label or advertise a control product in a manner that is false, misleading or deceptive or is likely to create an erroneous impression regarding its character, value, quantity, composition, merit or safety."

Terms such as "environmentally friendly" "environmentally safe or "safe for the environment" may be misinterpreted as relating to personal safety and, as such, may cause some confusion.

Original letter: Feb 7, 2004

" I suggest that Brett David Dolter, whose letter 'Cosmetic pesticide use could be dangerous', appeared in the Leader-Post of Jan 27, checks the facts.

First of all, a pesticide is defined by what something does, not by what something is.

This is a crucial distinction.

If a completely harmless product affects a pest by repelling, mitigating or controlling it, then it is, by definition, a pesticide.

Case in point: we at Weed Man have been offering, as far as I know, the only completely natural, organic lawn-care package in the city for four years. Not one person has decided to try it.

Why? Because it is expensive and it doesn't work nearly as well as the traditional products.

But if the city banned pesticides, then I couldn't, by definition, use even *this* product.

The product is corn gluten meal, a food product, and was recently given a PCP number by Health Canada. That makes it a pesticide – and therefore "verboden" under a ban. By the way, it is an edible product and is used in animal feed.

Regina city Council wisely decided that the registration of pesticides and the expertise to decide what should be allowed resides with Health Canada. It is an expensive, complex and technically demanding process. As far as supporting local businesses that will "bear the costs" (as Dolter puts it) I've had a bellyful of that "support".

Over the last two years, I, my employees and colleagues have been personally attacked, ridiculed and abused by activists. They have accused us of not caring for our employees, customers and family!

And if the city councilors had the temerity to disagree with them, then they were, as several activists put it, "bought and paid for". We were heckled at council and lied about in the press. If it hadn't been for a fair and open city council process, we never would have even had a hearing. Finally, where there are so-called bans in place, there has been no reduction in the use of weed and feed, just a shift in users from professionals to the home owner – something nobody wants or supports. That fact is not in dispute.

We have offered – no begged – activists for a meeting on their terms to discuss concerns we all share as citizens and focus the debate on productive issues. We have been rebuffed every single time.

We should be proud that we have a city council that listens and really believes in good government."

Simon Taylor, Regina

(Taylor is owner of the *Regina Weed Man*)