

I am writing in the capacity of having been the medical doctor on the Kelowna Pesticide Bylaw Committee. The so called battle over the pesticide issue is not one involving two equal sides. It is a David and Goliath fight for what is right. On one side there are parents, doctors, health care officials, cancer society representatives and children on the other is industry. By industry I don't just mean local sprayers. They are just the local face behind which stands mega industry - like Croplife. Croplife can afford to fly anybody anywhere and pay experts to permanently be on contract to be called at a moments notice. This is the kind of industry dollar with which university's are now largely funding their research. The hand of this industry stretches far and wide. The motives of industry are clear and the pattern of defense it launches in city after Canadian city who dare to consider a ban on pesticides is now so familiar to those of us who watch - it's like witnessing the telltale signs of a serial killer. Here is how it goes...this is what has happened so far in our home town....

Industry catches wind of municipal discussions about pesticides with blinding speed. As in the case of Kelowna, a private committee document regarding health impacts gets leaked and sent to, guess who, a hired gun (Keith Solomon)- a "scientist" on contract with industry who without the authors' permission sends a critique direct to city council along with his impressive list of credentials. Next - industry hires that same academic to come and give a scientific talk on pesticides for the edification of the community. Notably only certain hired guns exist - I guess not every academic is for hire and so, we see the same man appears repeatedly in Canadian municipalities claiming to have no industry ties. Dr. Keith Solomon is a classic example of such a man. He has never yet answered my question put to him in a series of emails which I sent to our City Council and to him as to how many cities he has been to over the past 5 years to make claims that pesticides are safe. Why does he tour around Canada doing this? Only to defend good science? Who funds his research, pays for his travels and gives him honorariums? He won't answer. When he says he is on "contract" with whom and for what services exactly? When medical doctors, medical associations, parents and cancer societies give their time and energy to this issue, it is given out of a concern for public health. Research into pesticide impacts on public health are publicly funded. Notice how industry is NOT sponsoring the kinds of questions asked by such research. My only motivation in spending hours on the Kelowna pesticide committee is concern for health. Nobody pays me an honorarium and I am not there to defend my livelihood.

There are no big corporate funds behind the people wishing to protect public health. Those engaged in producing medical evidence about the health impacts of pesticides don't generally have access to large corporate backing. Protecting public health isn't a money making venture. However, scientific opinion, with all it's fancy credentials can be bought. It regularly is. So when a "scientific" opinion is presented, all the unsuspecting public can do is think about the motivation of the speaker and why the opinion would matter so much. Councilor Blanleil drew my attention in exactly such a manner, as I watched him at the July 9th city council meeting. His stated opinion was that because his ancestors used much more toxic pesticides than are used today and nobody died that we are likely safe. However, he did think it would be a really good idea to get more information about pesticides... from industry. Yes, that's right, not from our

Medical Officer of Public Health, not from the Canadian Pediatric Society or from the BC Medical Association or from the Canadian Cancer Society - your city councilor thinks we should trust industry first. I've got only one question at this point - WHY? It was also clear that he had not taken the time to study the report produced by the Pesticide Bylaw committee. If he did he would never have espoused the "big Daddy" approach to lowering the public's level of concern about these issues. You see, he feels that the federal government would have looked after safety issues for us unsuspecting folk and if they haven't rung any alarm bells, then it all must be safe. Well, wake up councilor Blangleil, the Auditor General has repeatedly slammed our supposed regulating body (Pest Management Regulatory Agency) for its incompetence. The Canadian Pediatric Society has blown the whistle on the PMRA too, stating it is failing to protect our Canadian children. The decision about pesticides and their safety is being left up to each city of this country and that means that in this David and Goliath fight people like me, local citizens who care, can at least ask the right questions in the hopes that health risk will be prioritized. One could get lost in the quagmire of so-called scientific debate, but when the dust settles remember one thing - who is delivering the information and why.

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