

St. John's landscaping company probed for using banned pesticides without a licence

Green Lawn under investigation for allegedly violating Environmental Protection Act

By Amy Stoodley, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 24, 2017 7:11 AM NT Last Updated: Feb 24, 2017 7:11 AM NT



Green Lawn is under investigation for allegedly using banned pesticides on lawns in St. John's. (Gary Locke/CBC)

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Amy Stoodley is a reporter with CBC News in St. John's.

A St. John's landscaping company is under investigation for allegedly using banned pesticides on lawns in and around the city.

According to court documents obtained by CBC News, provincial government officials believe Green Lawn violated the Environmental Protection Act by offering pest control services without a licence between Oct. 30, 2013, and Sept. 7, 2016.

Provincial investigators obtained a search warrant last September as part of their investigation.

No charges have been laid, and the allegations have not been proven in court.

To get the search warrant, an inspector for the Department of Environment provided a judge with information from former employees, customers and the public, as well as first-hand observations that suggested the company was illegally spraying pesticides.

Court documents show that in July 2014, a provincial inspector observed a Green Lawn employee spraying a lawn on Waterford Bridge Road with a pesticide used to treat chinch bugs — an invasive pest known for damaging lawns.

The items seized via the search warrant include banned pesticides, as well as invoices and emails to customers that suggest the company was using chemicals to eradicate pest problems.

Residential ban enacted in 2012

In 2012, the provincial government banned the sale and use of a specific list of chemicals that were used as cosmetic pesticides for residential lawns.

In a statement to CBC News, Environment Minister Perry Trimper confirmed that his department is investigating the application and storage of pesticides, as well as the company's use of pesticides without a licence.

Health Canada has also received complaints about the company's use of pesticides, according to court documents. Three separate complaints to Health Canada between June 2014 and June 2015 alleged the company was using non-registered pest control products during that time frame.

Green Lawn owner Donald Barry has not returned messages seeking comment.



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