

We would like to respond formally to the following article published by the Canadian Broadcast Company News Service.

First is the article published and then our response below

Montreal schools ban green cleaning products

February 26, 2010 | 5:14 PM ET

[CBC News](#)

Montreal's public health department is warning school boards across the city not to use biodegradable cleaning products, Radio-Canada has learned.

Dr. Louis Jacques, who works for the health department, said Friday that he has studied research on such products, and is worried the very thing that makes them green could cause allergic reactions in children.

The department decided to look into the research after a health and safety employee at La Commission scolaire de Montréal, the city's largest French-language school board, brought the issue to its attention, Radio-Canada reported.

Jacques said biodegradable products contain organic enzymes that help break down detergents.

He said it's those enzymes that need further study and perhaps regulation. So far, La Commission and the Lester B. Pearson School Board, the largest English school board in Quebec, have already stopped using the products, according to Radio-Canada.

"Based on the studies that have been done among workers, we know that these products can cause asthma, rhinitis, conjunctivitis and dermatitis," Jacques said.

"But the most frequent health problem that was caused or aggravated by these products is asthma."

The health board plans to make recommendations on green products in late March.

Response to Montreal Article on Cleaning Products

Dear Sir or Madam,

I would like to respond to your recent article reporting the warning issued by Montreal's public health department regarding the use of biodegradable cleaning products.

This article has caused a great deal of concern for those of us in the professional cleaning industry, most specifically for those companies and individuals that market and advocate Green cleaning products and systems.

While I cannot speak to the general accuracy of the article, what is clear is that the author essentially "mixed-up" a number of terms, resulting in considerable confusion.

The article first discusses the fact that the public health department is concerned about the use of biodegradable cleaning products. In the very next paragraph, it refers to these same products as *Green*. And in the next paragraph, it then mentions that biodegradable products contain "organic enzymes."

Please let me clarify for the record:

- Biodegradable products are not necessarily Green, and vice versa.
- Biodegradable products do not necessarily contain “organic enzymes,” or any other type of enzymes for that matter.
- The same is true for Green cleaning products--they do not necessarily contain enzymes of any kind, including “organic enzymes.”

Lumping these different types of cleaning products together and then referring to them all as Green is totally inaccurate.

Further, your article discussed the potential health hazards of these products as if they are all the same.

Please let me clarify that a Certified Green or environmentally preferable product is one that has been tested by an independent, third-party laboratory, ensuring that it meets specific criteria developed by EcoLogo (in Canada), GreenSeal, and other certification organizations.

Meeting these criteria ensures that the product has a *reduced* impact on the environment, the user’s health, and the health of building occupants. This means that the product is proven less dangerous to human health when compared to conventional cleaning products in the same category.

Considering that this article dealt with the health and safety of our children, the author and this publication owe the public more thorough, accurate investigation and greater due

diligence when it comes to ensuring that such an important article is accurate, clear, and correct.

Mike Sawchuk

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