

Scientists put pesticide lobby's arguments to rest

By MARK LESLIE

Sparing no time responding to an environmental coalition's call for quick and hard-hitting pesticide laws in Ontario, a Canadian green industry organization has published a scientific document that critiques and disproves many of the coalition's statements.

Thom Charters, a director of Green Care Horticultural Association, said "A Scientific Response to the Urban Anti-Pesticide Lobby" has been distributed to each of its 20 superintendent, turfgrass and lawn care-related member organizations and Green Care is fielding requests for additional copies.

But despite the document's significant refutations to statements made by the Urban Pesticide Caucus (UPC), the response has been meager, Charters said.

Charters said executive summaries from the Green Care report were sent to 2,500 members of the media, who were offered the entire report.

"Yet, we have only six or seven requests," Charters said. "That tells me the media will take what they're spoon-fed, but if it requires any effort they won't bother."

Charters also said people in the golf industry are not even responding to the available information. "A lot of people in our business say, 'Yes, it's a crime what they (environmental activists) are doing,' but they don't do anything about it... Public perception is beginning to overwhelm people. They would rather not discuss the issues in public," he said.

Written by three scientists with Ecological Services for Planning Ltd. of Guelph, Ontario, the Green Care booklet is a "must addendum" to any letter the association sends out bringing "irresponsible stories to people's attention," Charters said.

The booklet stands as an obstacle to the UPC's war cry to ban "urban cosmetic use of pesticides by the end of 1993 or earlier."

Charters said if the UPC is successful in Ontario, "it's automatic they'll take it (action plan) across the country."

Asked if the Green Care report's disapproval of UPC statements has changed any minds of the environmentalists, he said: "Having participated in many forums on this subject, mostly on the municipal level, I know the audience I would get with them and it would be pointless. This report would not temper their approach whatever. They are the radicals of the no-pesticide issue."

The report, however, might help as a companion document to a new book published by the American Society of Golf Course Architects (see accompanying story).

Ecological Services for Planning Inc. performed a scientific review of the document that serves as the basis for UPC action: "Regulating the Urban Cosmetic Use of Synthetic Pesticides — An Action Plan for the Province of Ontario."

ESP said: "Due to the selective nature of cited scientific sources, readers may be misled to reach conclusions that are not supported by the weight of evidence. The type of information presented in the report will serve to further increase the public's misconceptions of pesticides and could possibly result in regulation of pesticides based on emotional reasons and not on scientific rationale."

The ESP scientists — Drs. Shelley Harris, Gladys Stephenson

and Chris Wren — proceeded to expose misstatements, conjecture and "extremely selective" statements that are "highly misleading."

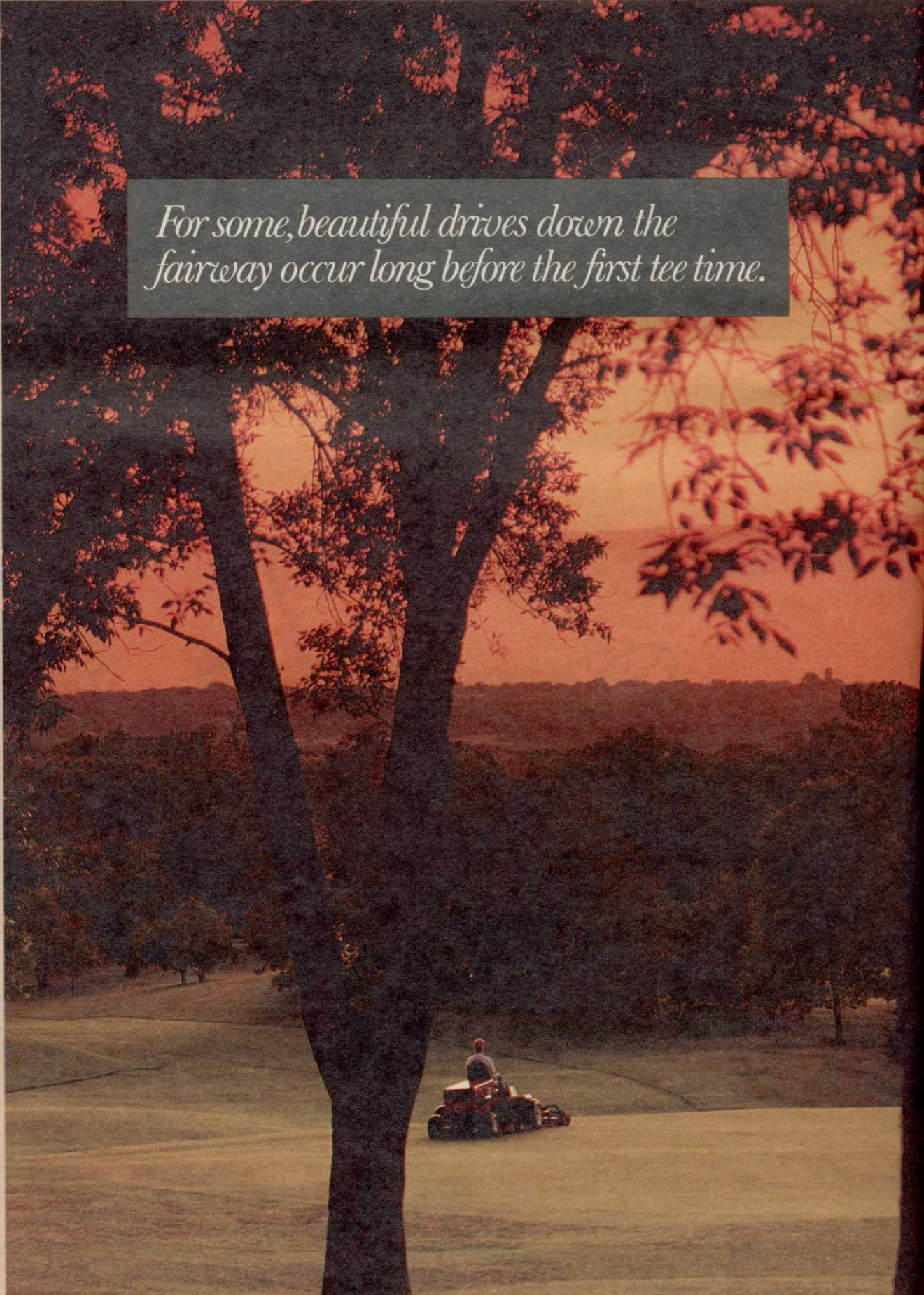
The report added: "There is a major concern that the majority of the information sources are biased towards the anti-pesticide lobby. The UPC has cited 78 sources in its document. Of these sources, there are 26 'journal' articles. Eighteen of these are from the Journal of Pesticide Reform, which is not a

peer-reviewed scientific journal and could not be located by University of Guelph and University of Waterloo library searches.

"Of the remaining eight 'journal' articles, the information from three, which was checked, was taken out of context or interpreted in such a fashion as to support the opinion of the UPC. Many of the remaining sources (i.e. Canadian Environmental Law Association, Friends of the Earth, National Coalition Against the Misuse of

Pesticides, Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, and Pollution Probe) are from groups which support the views of the UPC and do not necessarily present the weight of the scientific evidence. Furthermore, these groups do not conduct scientific research."

"A Scientific Response to the Urban Anti-Pesticide Lobby" is available for \$10 from Green Care Horticultural Association, 34 Lambeth Road, Islington, Ontario M9A 2V7.



For some, beautiful drives down the fairway occur long before the first tee time.