

Committee is cool to cutting pesticide use

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

Pesticides may pose a threat to more than just weeds when they are sprayed on public parks and playing fields, Milton's community services committee heard recently.

Children may be endangered by the chemicals found in the weed killing sprays, said Milton resident and mother of four Carol Gustafson.

Ms Gustafson appeared before committee armed with both a 26-signature petition and a photograph of her four sons.

"I wasn't sure if I was going to bring this out or not but they are the reason I'm here," she told the committee.

Ms Gustafson made the trip to beg Town staff to stop spraying local soccer fields, at least until the sports season has wound down.

But Town staff reported that they have already reduced pesticide use substantially.

Last year, less than 15 acres of Town land were sprayed.

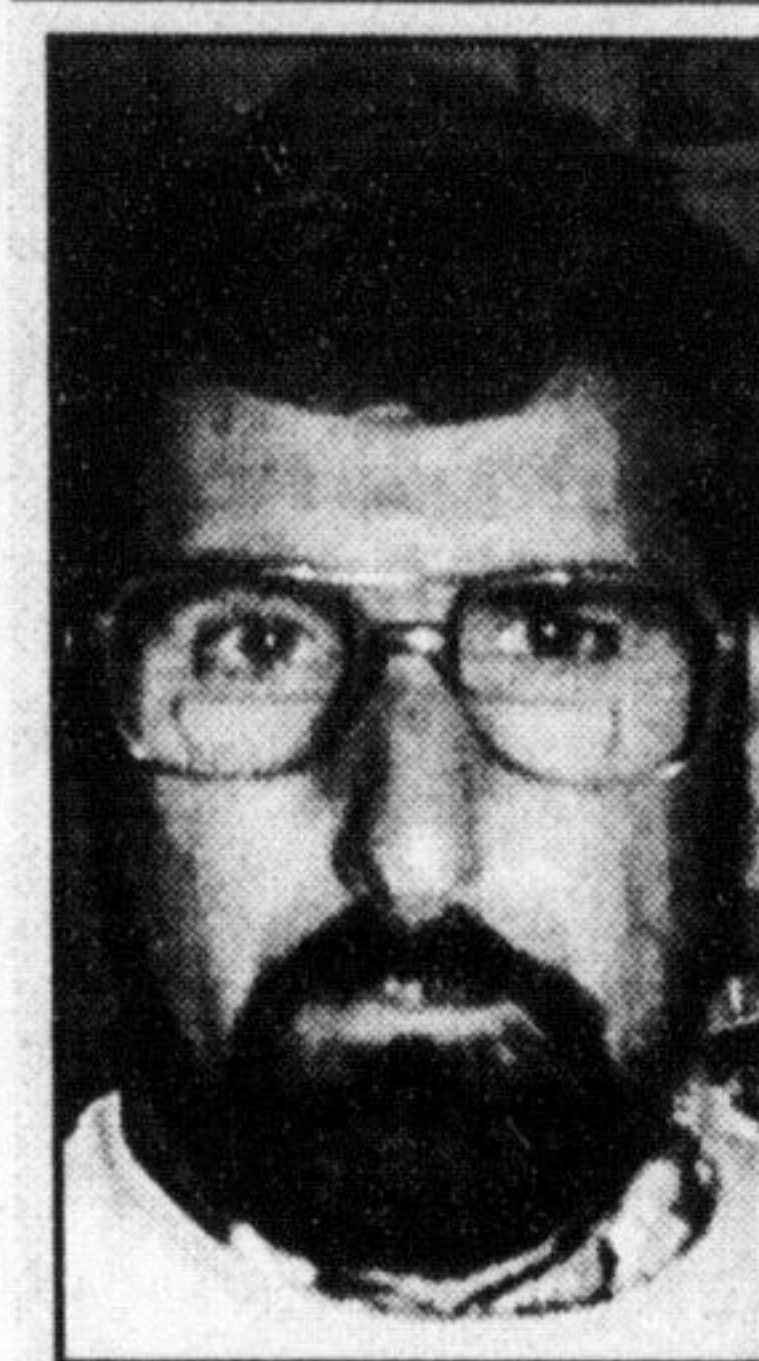
That's down from 193 acres in 1990.

So far this year, the pesticide Killlex was sprayed by a licensed contractor on about 160 square feet of land at the Leisure Centre and the perimeter of the Lions Sports Park soccer fields.

Committee received both Ms Gustafson's presentation and a staff report on the issue for information only.

Children are put at risk by pesticides, said Ms Gustafson.

And the danger lasts longer than the two or three days when signs are up warning people of the spray, she added.



"They're using much less in the way of chemicals than they did 15 or 20 years ago."
BARRY LEE

According to the American Cancer Society, pesticides have been linked with eye, skin, respiratory and throat irritation, as well as muscle spasms.

In the long term, pesticides may be linked to the development of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and childhood leukemia, the Society suspects.

There has been some controversy about pesticide use in Canada as well, said Ms Gustafson.

"Environment Canada calls pesticides a poison," she said. "Environment Canada says they can last for a number of weeks on the ground and children are at a greater risk to chemical exposure than the rest of us."

Pesticides are used to eliminate weeds and provide a cushioned turf for sports players.

But bad turf is better for kids than the dangers of pesticides, said Ms Gustafson.

"In soccer there is lots of falling. I'd much rather have one of my kids break a bone than get cancer," she said.

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Park music

Savouring the sound of music will be easy Sunday afternoon at Victoria Park by Town Hall.

About 70 students from the Ontario Academy of Music on Main Street will arrive at the park gazebo to strut their musical stuff.

Students from age five to 17 will perform at the academy's third annual outdoor show, starting at 1:30 p.m.

Everything from live rock bands to piano, drum and guitar solos will be on the musical menu at the event.

Residents are invited to bring lawn chairs and a picnic lunch to the show, which will likely run between 60-90 minutes.

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