

# ✓Citizens lobbying Town for pesticide-free Milton

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

At least two residents say they're bugged by the Town's use of pesticides to keep sports fields looking green and healthy.

Residents Carol Gustafson and Bill Clifford made separate presentations to the Town's community services committee Monday to lobby for a pesticide-free town.

If that isn't possible, they asked that spraying be put off until the fall, when most kiddie sports leagues are through.

But the Town has already drastically reduced its use of pesticides, which includes insecticides, herbicides and fungicides, said coordinator of operations Doug Thompson. Last year, less than 15 acres were sprayed to keep damaging insects or weeds at bay, down from a high of 193.5 acres in 1990.

And rural roadsides haven't seen spray for a decade, while spot spraying in flower beds bed-occurs only when necessary. To control pests without chemicals, Town staff have been using a series of techniques including aeration, irrigation, fertilization and mowing.

But as a father of three, Mr. Clifford is hoping to see pesticide use completely eliminated.

"This issue in my view is about

**"Spraying is an easy out. What good will it do people to have nice-looking lawns if their health is affected?"**

**BILL CLIFFORD**

showing leadership," he said.

He likened an outright ban of pesticides to that of smoking, noting that at one time taking cigarettes out of public buildings also seemed impossible.

He said his appeal is based on a gut feeling that pesticides are bad for human health, bolstered by a growing body of medical and scientific evidence leaning in the same direction.

"Spraying is an easy out. What good will it do people to have nice-looking lawns if their health is affected?" asked Mr. Clifford. "These chemicals are often broad-based killers — plants, bugs and people."

Ms Gustafson came armed with a 300-name petition opposing pesticides. "Doctors and scientists whose primary concern is health are concerned. Children are especially vulnerable because of their

growing systems."

Currently, the Town posts signs warning of a spray 24 hours in advance. Notices that it has occurred are kept up for a further 48 hours. But that's not enough, said Ms Gustafson.

"These chemicals can be toxic for over a month," she said. "I feel if you can smell it, you've been exposed to it. You track it in on your shoes."

There's no point in spraying sports fields if the groups who use them are against it, said Councillor Ron Furik.

"If users don't have a problem with us not using sprays on the field, why would the Town," he asked. "Are we getting pressure from user groups?"

User groups are in favour of toning down the use of pesticides, but they still want quality turf, responded Mr. Thompson.

But the Town doesn't take pesticide use lightly, promised Councillor Barry Lee.

"I'd like to assure you we take this seriously," he said. "We're using far, far less than we've ever used, and in some areas we've eliminated it."

Last year, the Town spent \$3,000 on pest spraying. The same amount has been allocated for 2000. But according to a Town staff report, rehabilitating an infested field could cost upwards of \$10,000.

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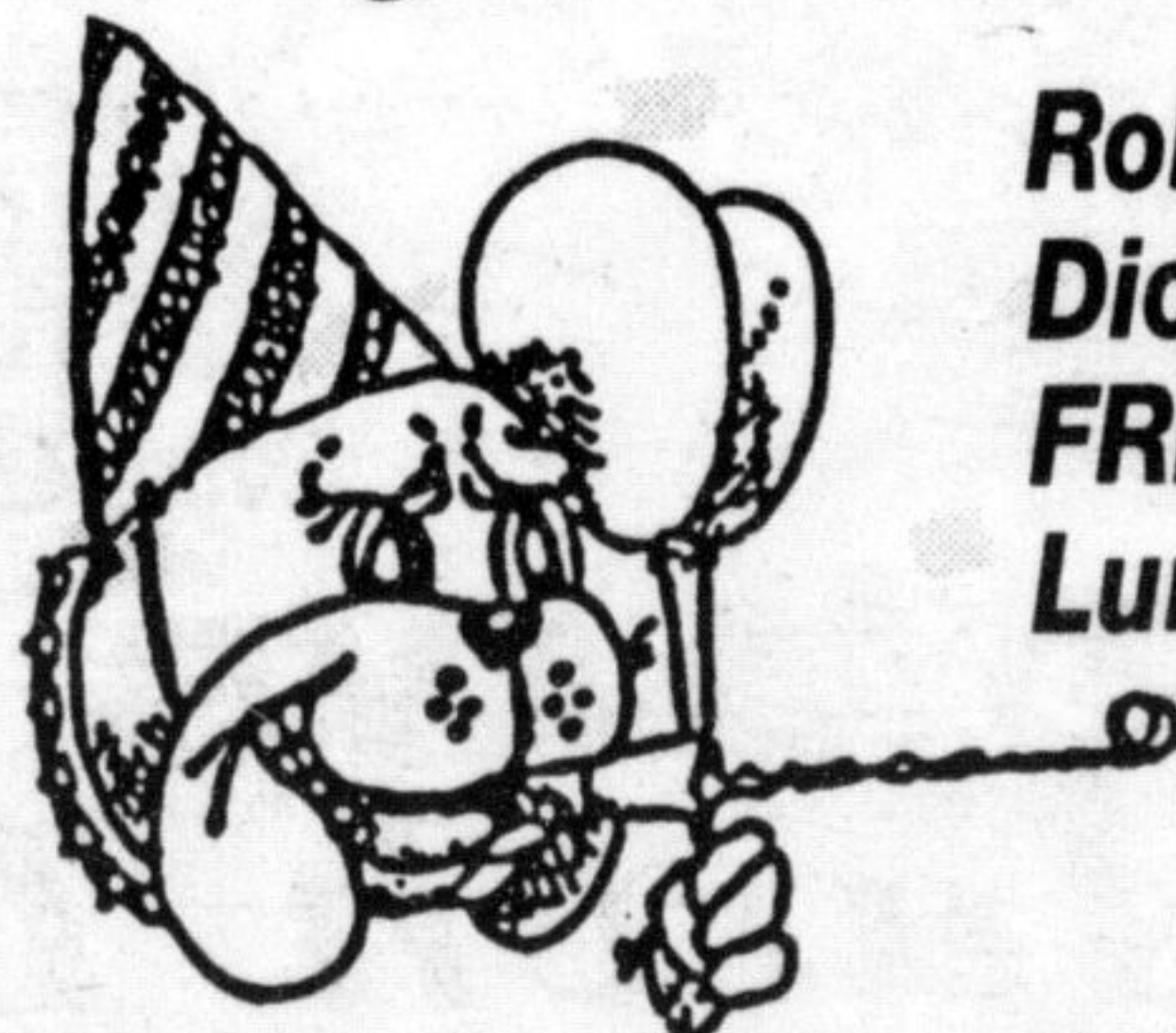
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Diana, Nancy and all our staff  
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