

Cancer-related deaths in Tiny study released

supervisor says report flawed by lack of statistics

by MARK BOURRIE

LAFONTAINE--The federal government has released a controversial report on cancer-related deaths in Tiny Township that shows the area with a lower cancer rate than the rest of the provinces but a high rate of ovarian cancer in women and lymphatic cancer in men.

In a telephone interview last Friday, Don Wigle, supervisor of the cancer study, said the report is flawed because the Ontario government does not keep adequate statistics on the number of people who have cancer and who are still alive. The report deals only with cancer deaths.

"Most cancer deaths take about 20 years, and the aerial spraying in Tiny Township has been going on for about 12 years. Our figures don't include any deaths after 1981, and it was in 1982 that Hostess Farms used a chemical that was no longer registered," said Wigle. The study was commissioned by Monique Begin, federal minister of health, after she

received complaints from the Tiny Township Ratepayers Association and from Professor Joseph Cummins, a geneticist on the faculty of the University of Western Ontario in London.

In a letter attached to the report, Begin said her ministry will continue to examine the numbers of cancer cases in Tiny Township. Wigle said his job, as supervisor of the study, would be easier if statistics on individual cases were available.

He said the report finds some cancer below the provincial average, but ovarian cancer is three times above the average and lymphatic cancer in men is about 2.5 times the average. He said the cancers could not be traced to jobs of the people who had died.

Professor Cummins, who had pushed for the study, said lymphatic cancers have been found to be common in people who have been exposed to pesticides.

"And Tiny Township should have a lower cancer rate than the average. It's a rural

community, supposedly with fresh air and good water and the people in the township don't work in industries where they would be exposed to cancer-causing agents. The study, plus the number of young people who live in the spraying area and have cancer, plus the number of mutations among livestock show conclusively that there is something wrong in Tiny," said Dr. Cummins.

Dr. Cummins said the report's claim that the high number of ovarian cancers may be caused by cosmetics such as talcum powder did not impress him.

"I don't believe the ladies in Tiny Township use more talcum powder than any other women," said the professor.

The Tiny Township Ratepayers Association is now asking the federal government to provide money for a more in-depth study of cancer cases, using door-to-door surveys to find the number of victims.

The association is also trying to get the provincial government to release data on the

death of Robert Miller, a 25-year-old Waverley man who was a former employee of the Hostess Farms Division.

The Health and Welfare ministry is now finishing a study of genetic problems in the Tiny Township area. The report will be released later this year.

Fred Brox, manager of Hostess Farms, said in a telephone interview Saturday that officials of his company had read the report and found nothing to give them cause for alarm.

He said the report showed the cancer rate in the area was not above normal but added the report was conducted only about 10 years after the company began spraying, while cancer often is not detected for many years after exposure to hazardous chemicals.

"But we feel the spraying program is no danger to the people in Tiny Township, and the report shows that we have been right," said Brox.



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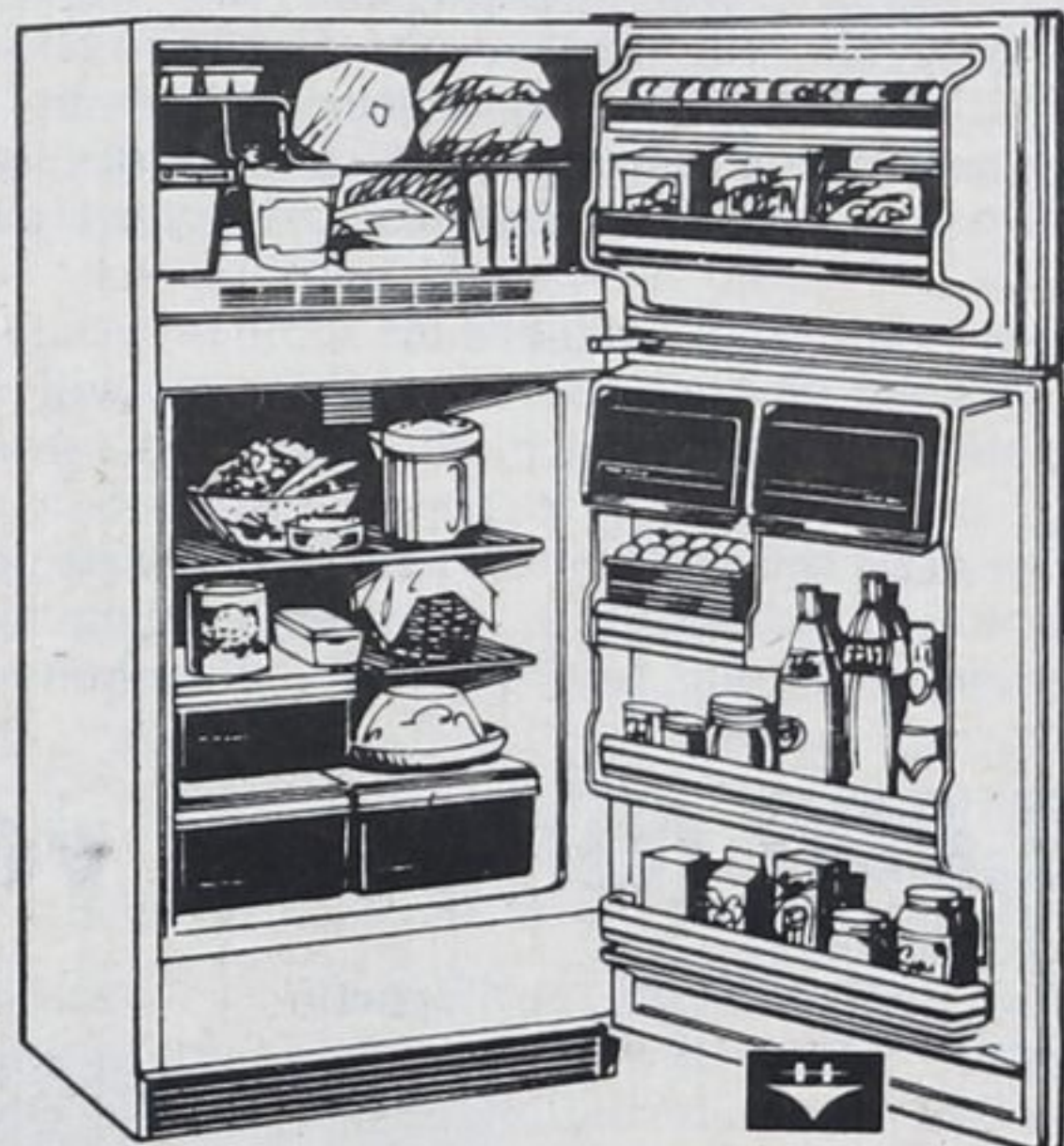


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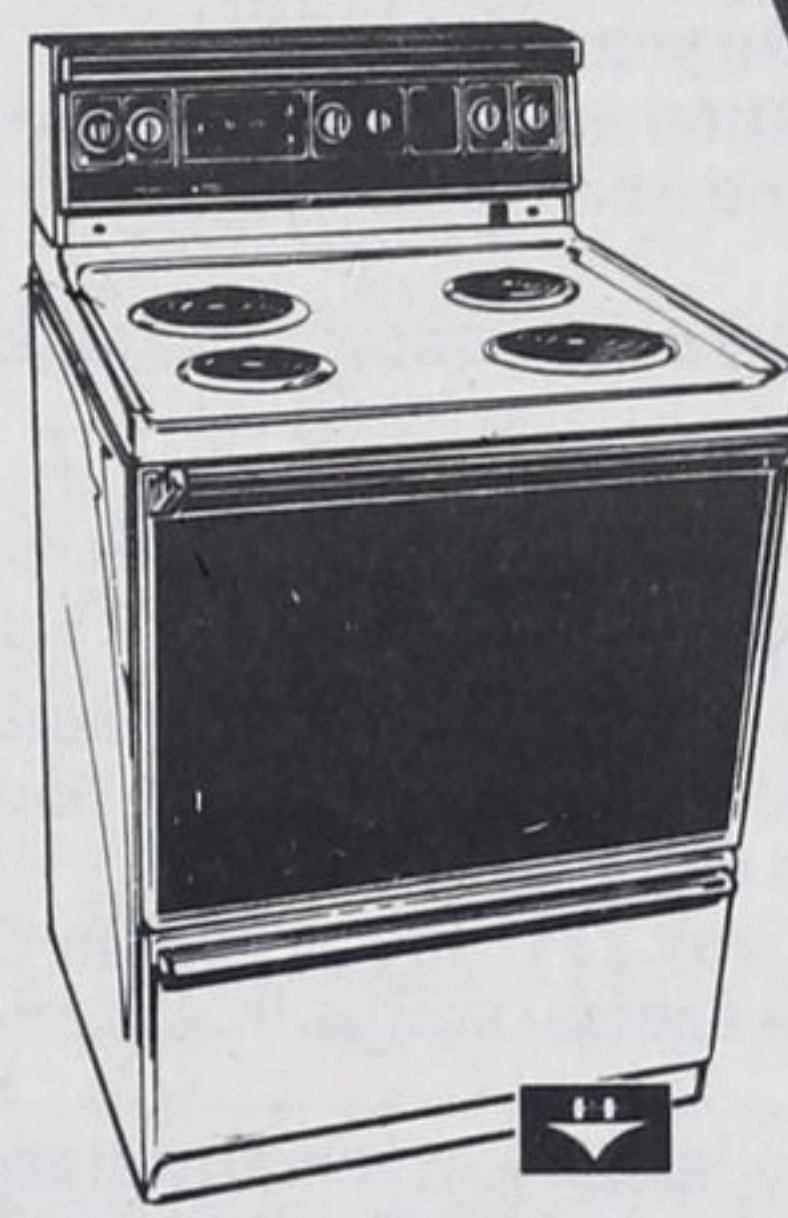
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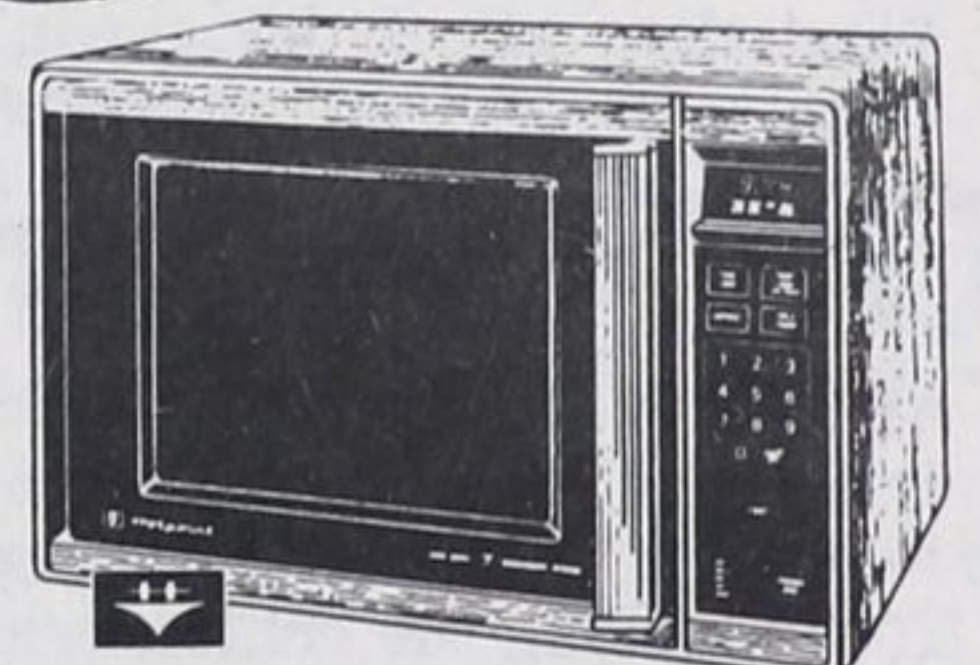
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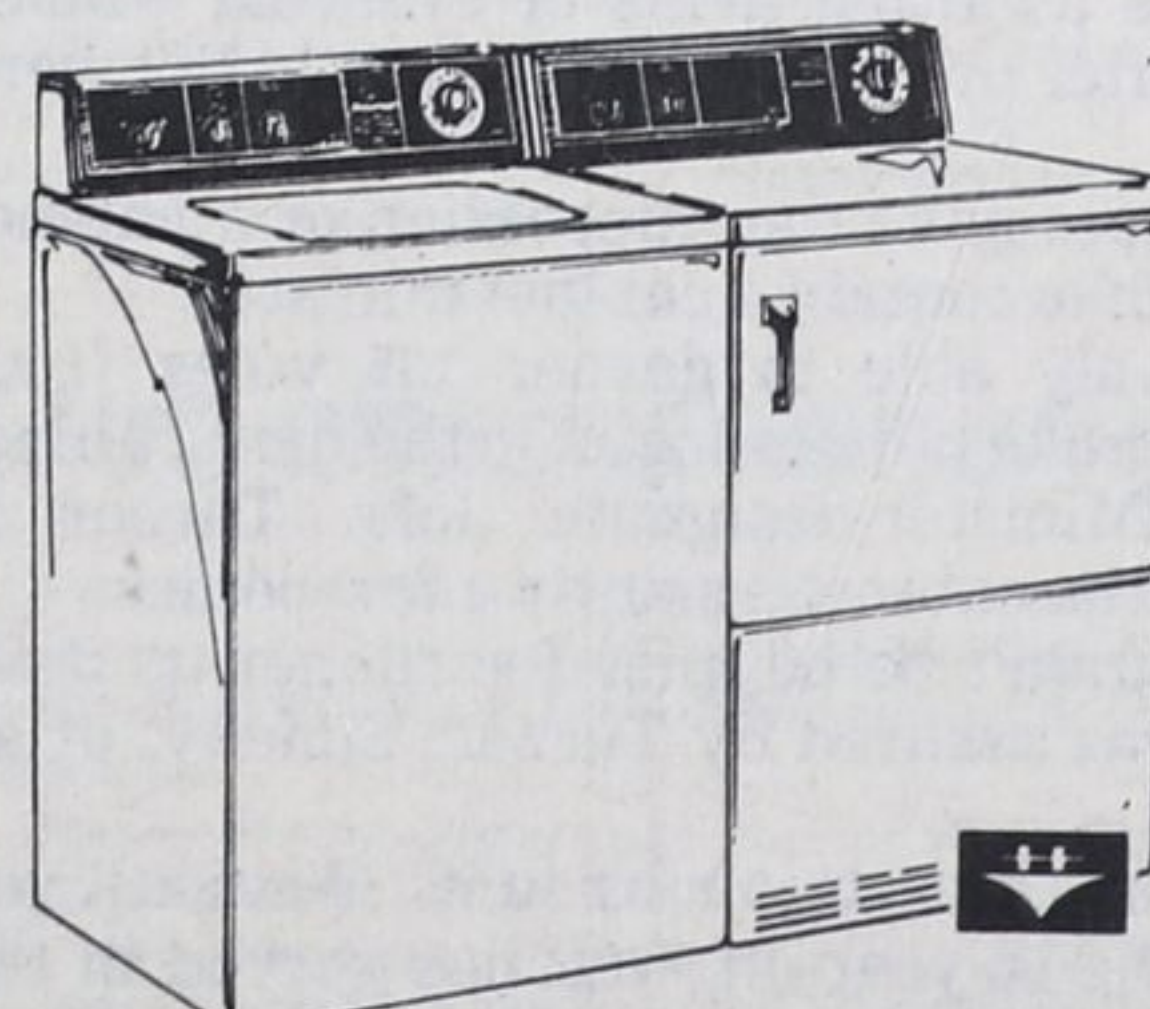
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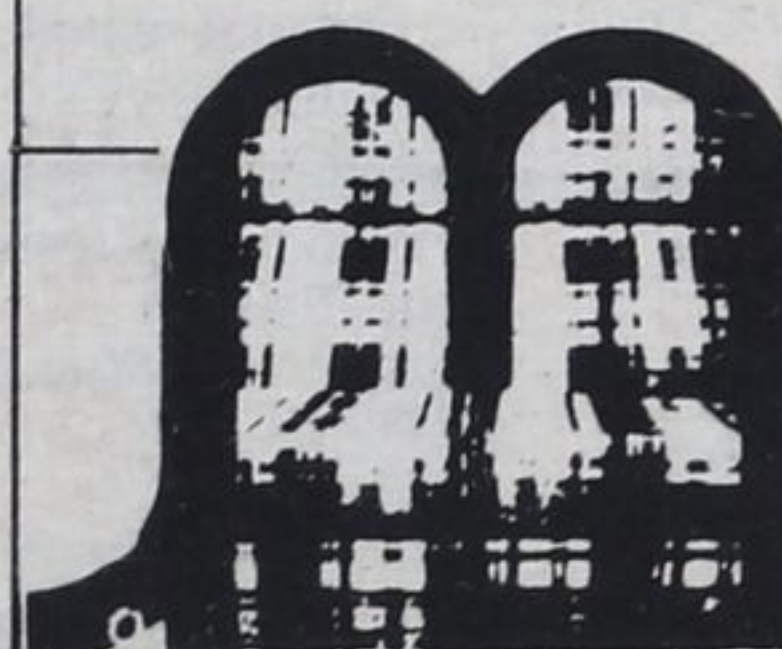
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