

Mega-jail opponent slams candidates over expansion

By STEVE LeBLANC

Special to The Champion

Libby Walters doesn't buy the argument that Milton council has little say in the Ontario government's expansion plan for Maplehurst.

Claiming that an additional 1,000 inmates would hinder public safety and cost the town thousands of dollars in lost property taxes, she asked mayoral candidates Colin Best and Gord Krantz what they would do to fight the mega-jail.

Their responses fell far short of her expectations.

Said Mr. Best, "There's very little control we (town council) have over the mega-jail. There are a number of items surrounding the plan that need to be resolved and I would hope the government comes clean with the numbers very soon."

Mr. Krantz recalled that similar concerns over public safety were raised when Maplehurst was first built, but that very few problems have ever occurred.

"They can fight it, they just need to get the guts to do it," charged Ms Walters afterwards. "There have been communities in Ontario that have stopped mega-dumps because they banded together and spoke out."

"We'll lose property taxes with a mega-jail and our kids' safety is at risk with more inmates and less supervision."

Her comments came Wednesday at the Milton Leisure Centre, during the Milton Jaycees' Meet the Candidates Night.

The meeting — which included mayoral, Ward 2 town council and public school trustee candidates — drew only 78 people.

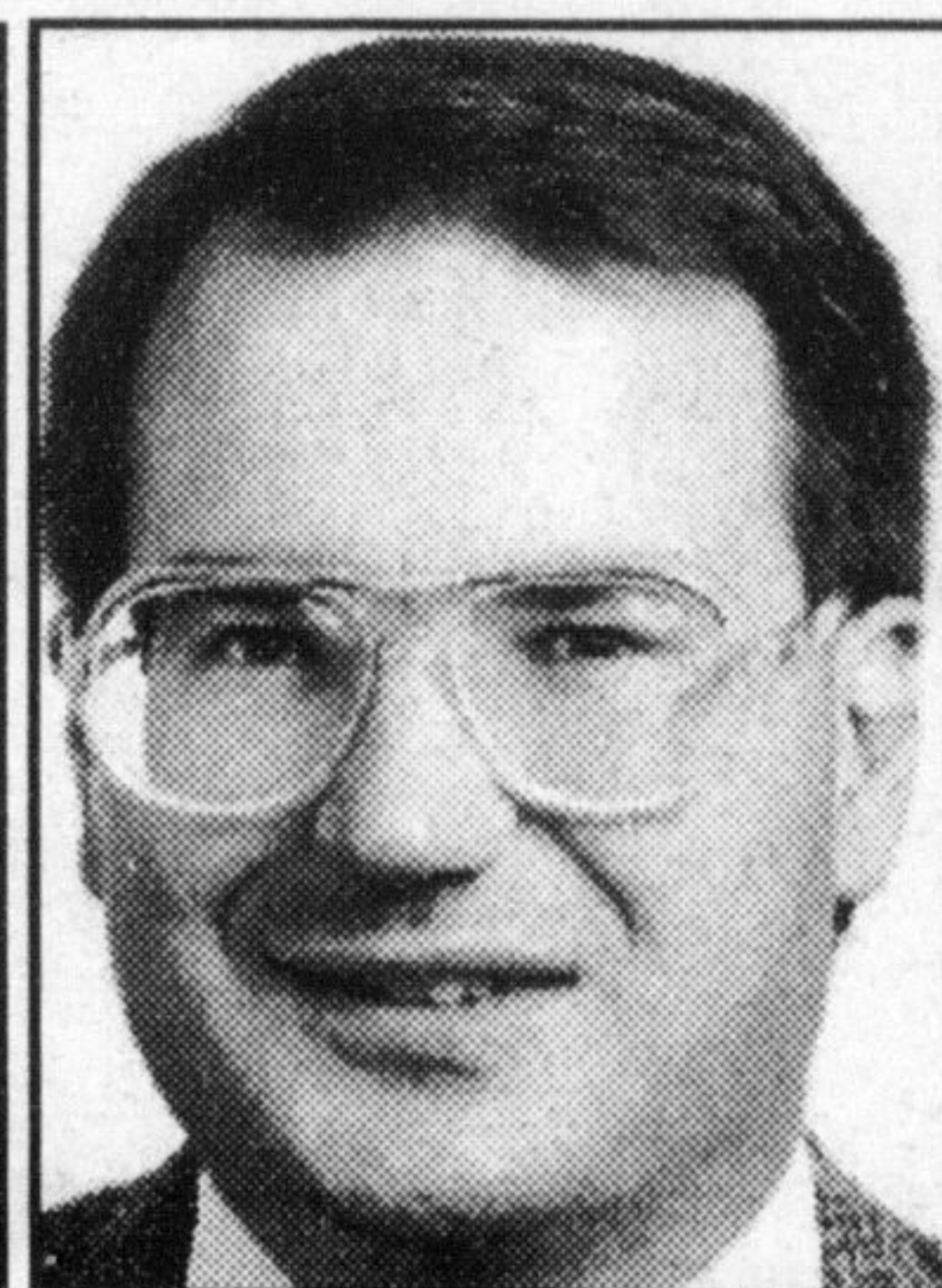
While mayoral candidates offered little hope for a fight against the mega-jail, Mr. Krantz voiced optimism for Halton Region's stand against provincial downloading.

"If we (Halton and other GTA regions) have a unified voice, I think we stand a very good chance of not being downloaded on," he said.

All other candidates echoed the need for a strong opposition, though Ward 2 town council candidate Wally Hunter stressed he did not support council spending money on an advertising campaign against Ontario's plan to pool social service costs.



Gord Krantz



Colin Best

Going against the grain, he said he couldn't endorse council's plan of action when final figures had not yet been provided.

He likened the campaign to "propaganda" and suggested council was sending its constituents information that could very well be inaccurate.

Halton Region is mounting a \$100,000 ad campaign against the province over what is being depicted as threatening tax hikes due to downloading. Milton shares costs proportionately in that exercise — putting in about \$10,000.

Mr. Hunter's comments likely won points with Milton Ratepayers Association member Pat Kelly, who criticized council for not being able to sponsor the annual Santa Claus Parade while at the same time allocating funds to the regional advertising initiative.

The two mayoral candidates and Ward 2 council candidate Art Melanson argued the campaign is necessary to fight a possible \$350 to \$450 property tax increase per household.

"We had the right to spend this money, we're looking at a heavy download and we need to fight it," said Mr. Melanson, whose vision of Milton's future includes another hockey arena, branch library and new arts centre.

Ward 2 council candidate Frank Wilson suggested provincial downloading is inevitable, but did speak out against development projects in rural Milton.

"They're (developers) messing with our water,

• see CANDIDATES on page 8

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