

Council will wait to hear from Queen's Park

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Wednesday, Mar. 11. Councillors will try to arrive at a base budget for 1998.

That budget will not take into consideration \$330,000 which the province requires in budget reductions in order for Milton to maintain current tax rates. There are fears that the municipality will be faced with an even larger financial challenge than was first anticipated.

They will then decide how to pay for the \$330,000 budget reduction requested by the province. Service cuts and tax increases loom as potential choices.

Won't tip hand

"If we deal with the \$330,000 there will have to be some cards played tonight, which is a little early," said Councillor Brian Penman.

Rookie Councillor Lieven Gevaert said discussing the budget without having all the facts would be an "exercise in futility."

Mayor Gord Krantz was careful to point out that any impression that councillors do not want to tackle the budget is unfounded.

"New numbers from the province may alter the perception of what we have to do," he said. "I want to make it perfectly clear the delay hasn't been manufactured."

Town staff has already indicated a recommendation for a property tax increase. Milton has had its portion of property taxes frozen for the past four years, save a slight decrease in 1996.

New Councillor Rick Malboeuf said the committee should move forward with budget considerations, if only to get some of the nuts and bolts work completed while waiting for further information.

Committee chair Wally Hunter had some sympathy for the approach, saying he did not want to wait indefinitely for information.

"We should work on the \$330,000. We know it will be at least that much," said Mr. Malboeuf.

Mr. Malboeuf took the opportunity to slam colleagues for a committee recommendation which set the Town's capital expenditures for 1998. The recommendation must pass council to come into effect.

He said the committee declined to fund several projects, saying they were not immediately necessary. However, instead of pass-

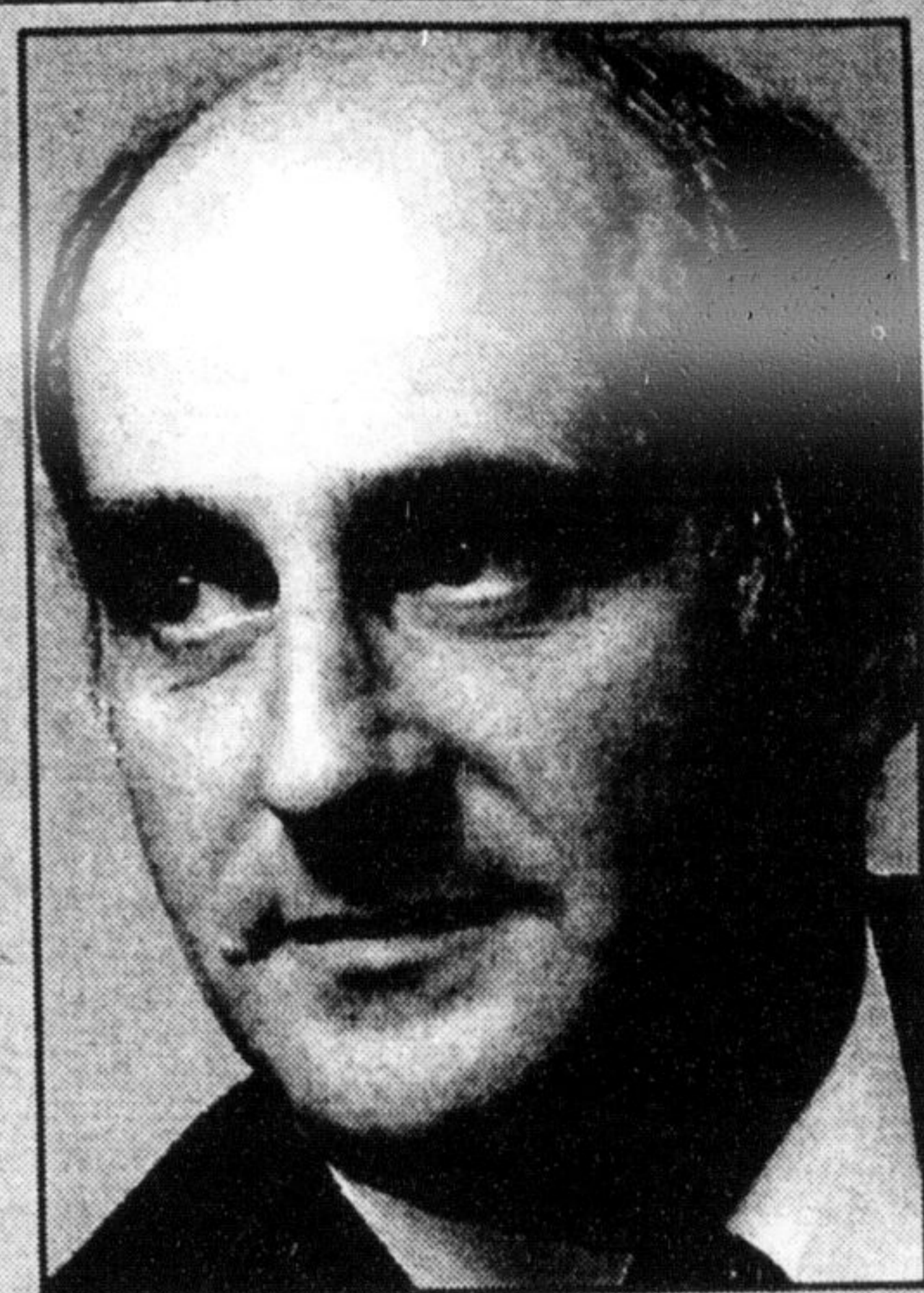
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— GORD KRANTZ



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— RICK MALBOEUF



ing the savings on to taxpayers, committee members elected to maintain total spending by moving several projects ahead; projects Town staff said do not need to be completed this year.

"We had the opportunity to save taxes and we didn't save taxpayers a dime," he said. "I have no vote at this committee but I do

at council," Mr. Malboeuf warned.

Looking at the proposed operating budget, Mr. Gevaert questioned why on many items budgeted amounts for 1998 remained the same as 1997, even when far less money was actually required in the past year. His query was not answered.

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