

More computers with Internet now at library thanks to grant

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

Milton Public Library is revving up to speed into the information age thanks to a new partnership grant from Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC).

Through the Local Labour Market Initiative, the grant will allow the library to install 11 new computers with full and limited Internet access.

The new computers are scheduled to be up and running by October of this year.

"We're delighted to have been considered a part of this," said chief librarian Leslie Fitch. "It's a grand thing."

Presently, the library has two computers with Internet access and two terminals that are linked to library catalogues only.

The whole deal is worth about \$52,000 for Milton, with the library kicking in 35 per cent of that figure through trade such as staff time.

The idea is to increase access to the information technologies necessary in today's job market.

"The HRDC are trying to partner with someone obvious in the community to help people prosper in the information age," said Ms Fitch.



Leslie Fitch

HRDC have forged similar partnerships with libraries in the other Halton municipalities.

More computers will relieve the bottleneck that can form around the work stations already in place at the library, which frequently boast line-ups.

It will also help the computer shy plunge into cyberspace, said Ms Fitch.

"I hope people who currently are a bit hesitant will try these out," she said. "Every facet of our everyday life is becoming structured around computers."

That's where the library comes in.

"Not everyone can afford to have this kind of equipment at home," said Ms Fitch. "But people expect

that we'll have it."

Even if access to computers isn't a problem, for some people, access to information can be.

Once again, that's where the library comes in.

"It can be really difficult to search. One of the advantages of coming to the library is that searching and retrieving information is our specialty," she said.

"There's an opportunity for us to help."

Even in the terminals that have only partial Internet access, the library's experience with people is an advantage.

Partial access means the computer would be linked only to information sites the library subscribes to.

By understanding what people want to know, the library can choose which web sites to hook up to.

"We know what kind of questions people want to know answers to," said Ms Fitch. "That's our business."

Additional computer work stations can only boost the community's labour skills, said Ms Fitch.

"I can't think of many jobs out there where you don't need at least the basics of computer knowledge," she said.

"Even cash registers are automated now."

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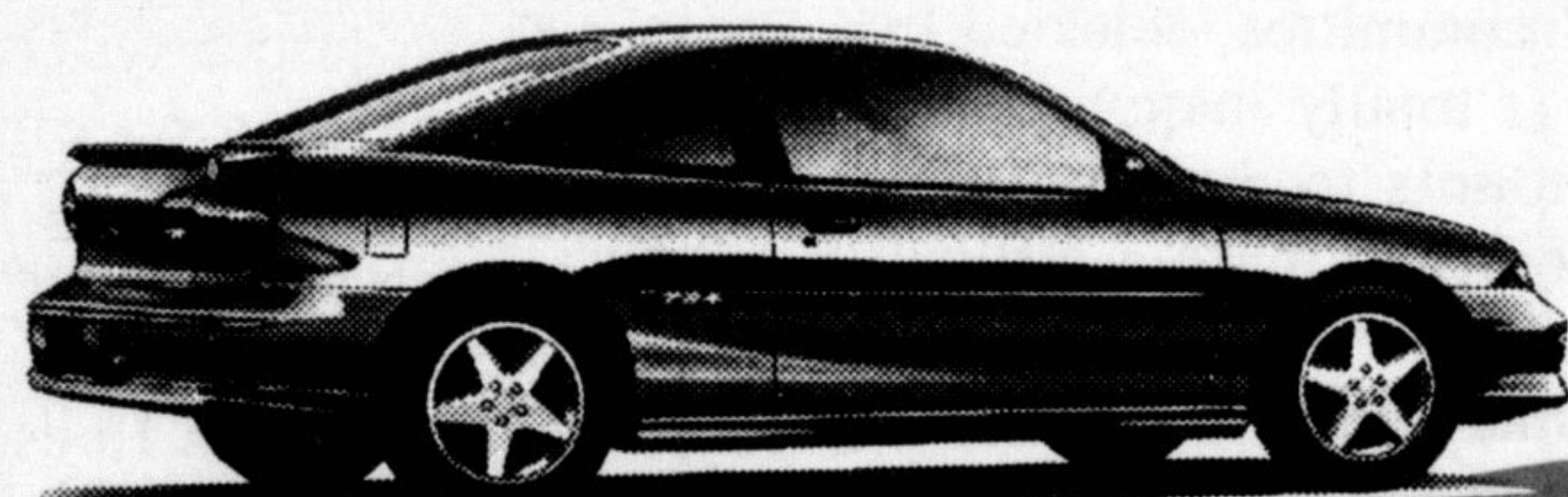


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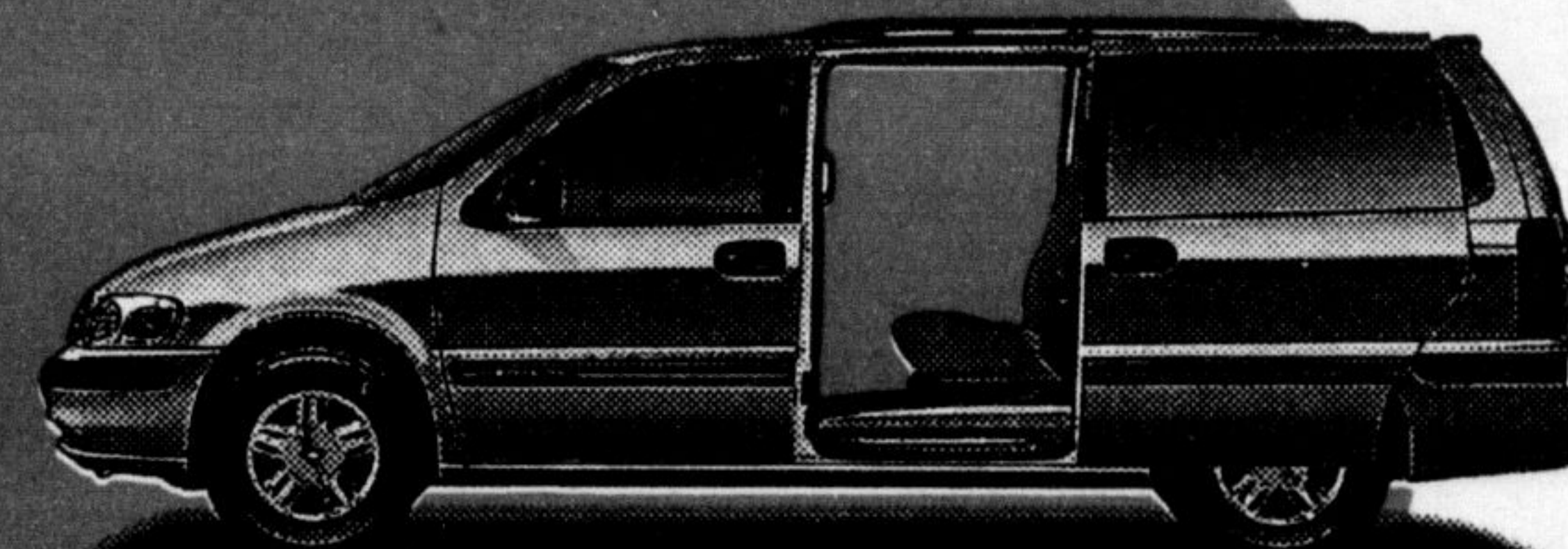
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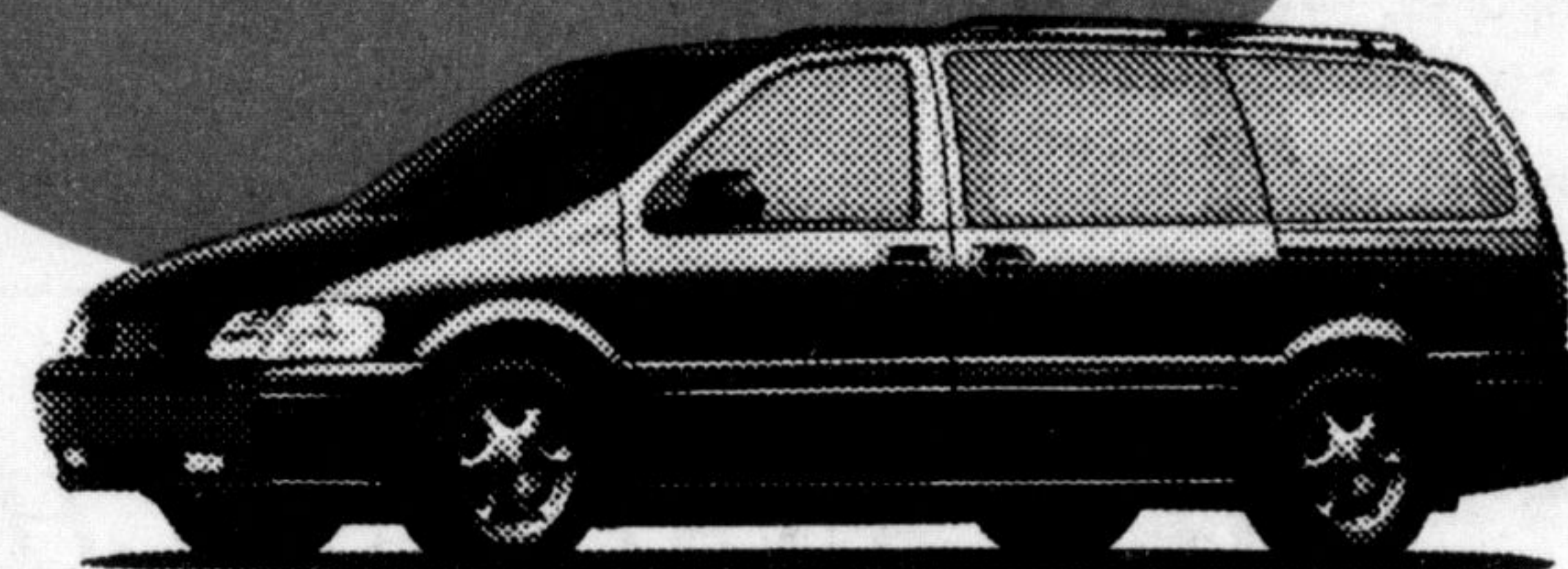
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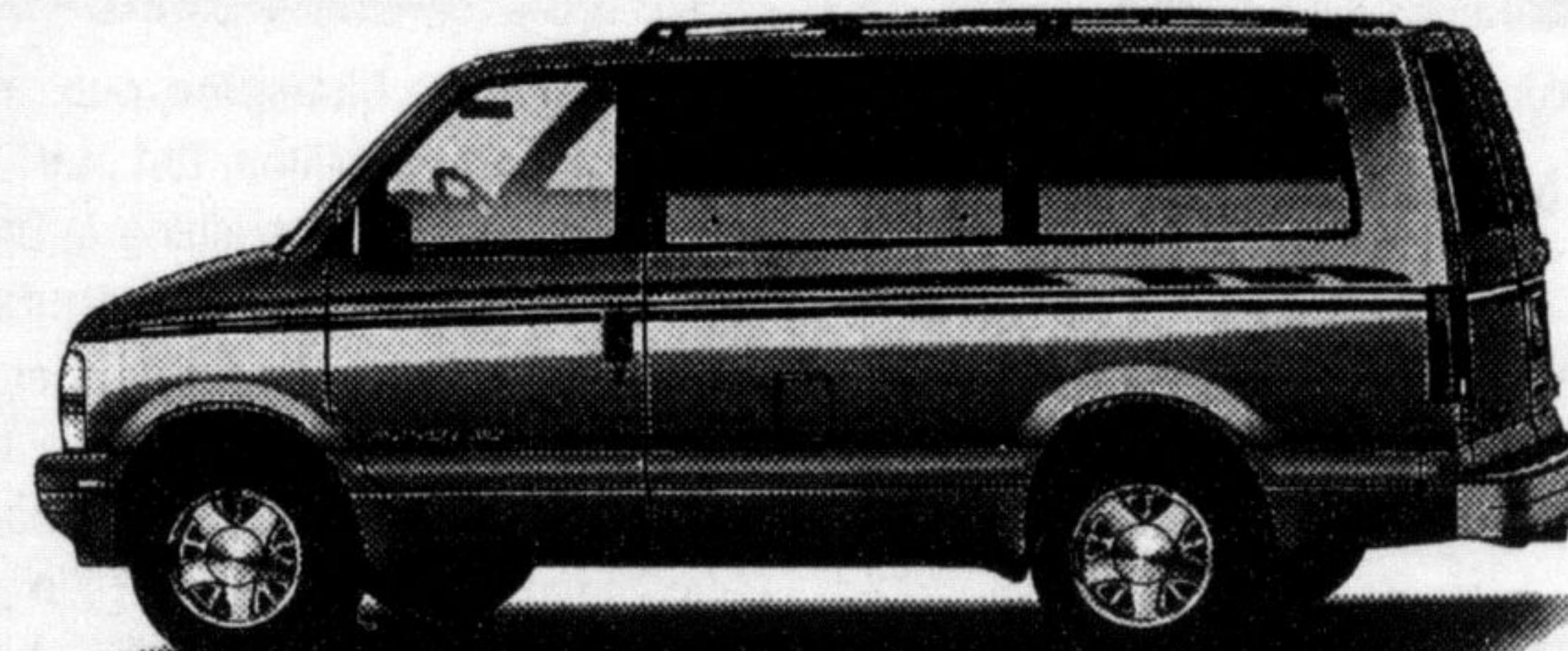
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