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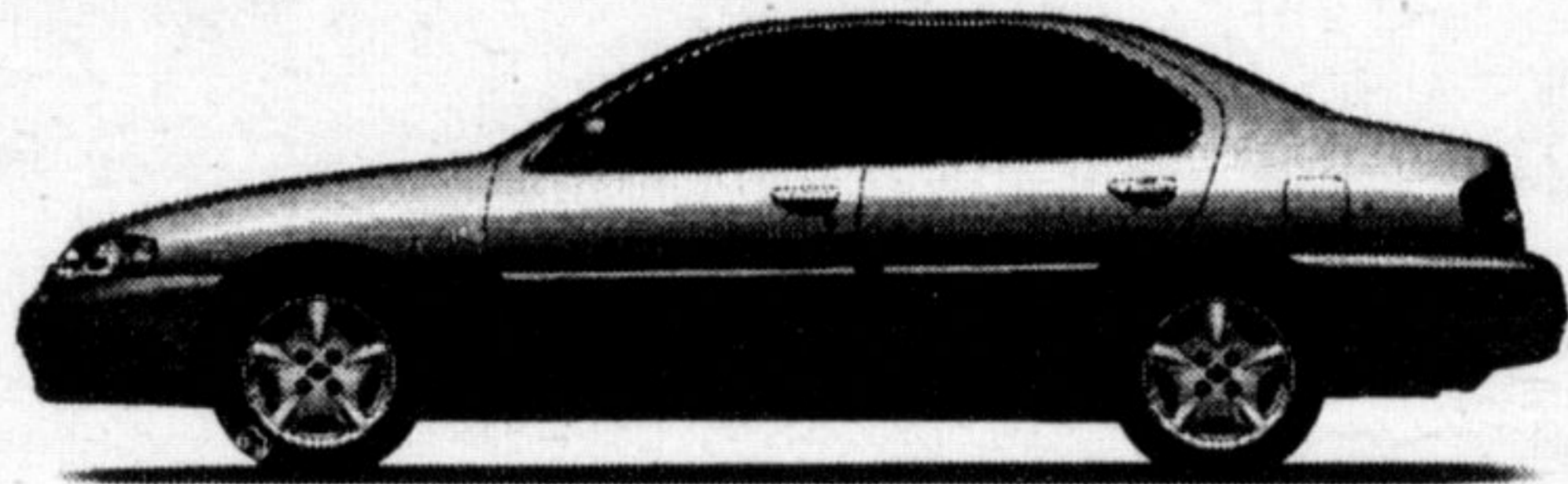
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Milton to be fastest growing community

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

As members of Milton's Chamber of Commerce filed into the elegant Halton Hills Place yesterday, the economic picture appeared as bright as brilliant May sunshine.

After years of stagnation, Milton is poised to bound into a 12-per cent growth rate next year, Town CAO Mario Belvedere said at the Chamber of Commerce-hosted Mayor's Breakfast.



Mario Belvedere

"Milton will be number one as the fastest growing community in Canada," he said. "You'll be reading about us in the Globe and Mail and The National Post."

According to Town projections, the population should surge by 150 per cent over the next 16 years, from 33,000 to 85,000.

In that time frame, available employment lands are expected to increase by 100 per cent, commercial industrial space by 215 per cent, and employment by 150 per cent.

That will bring a surge in tax assessment, allowing better service provision while keeping taxes down, said Mr. Belvedere.

But travelling the bumpy road to growth has meant fine-tuning some development

plans, including that of the 401 Business Park, planned by Hwy. 401 and Hwy. 25.

Though the plans had originally called for high-end office space in the park, they've been modified to allow quality distribution centres as well, said Mr. Belvedere.

"Well, sometimes we're wrong," he said. "The consultant has advised us we need to be flexible and we've responded to that."

But though distribution centres will now be welcome in the business park, their buildings will have to be up to snuff, said Mr. Belvedere.

"We're going to demand a high design standard," he said.

"If you want a crummy looking building, go next door."

Other plans include extending the downtown core to run from Bronte Street to Thompson Road.

There's also room in Milton's Official Plan (OP) for a big box shopping centre by Hwy. 401 and James Snow Parkway, as well as the Hwy. 401 and Hwy. 25.

But as no actual application has been made, planning director Mel Iovio preferred to stay mum on the subject.

"I don't typically talk about it until there's been an application. It's nowhere. There's no application yet," he said.

"In the OP it allows big box in that area but it's subject to going through a market review to ensure there's no impact on the downtown area."




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