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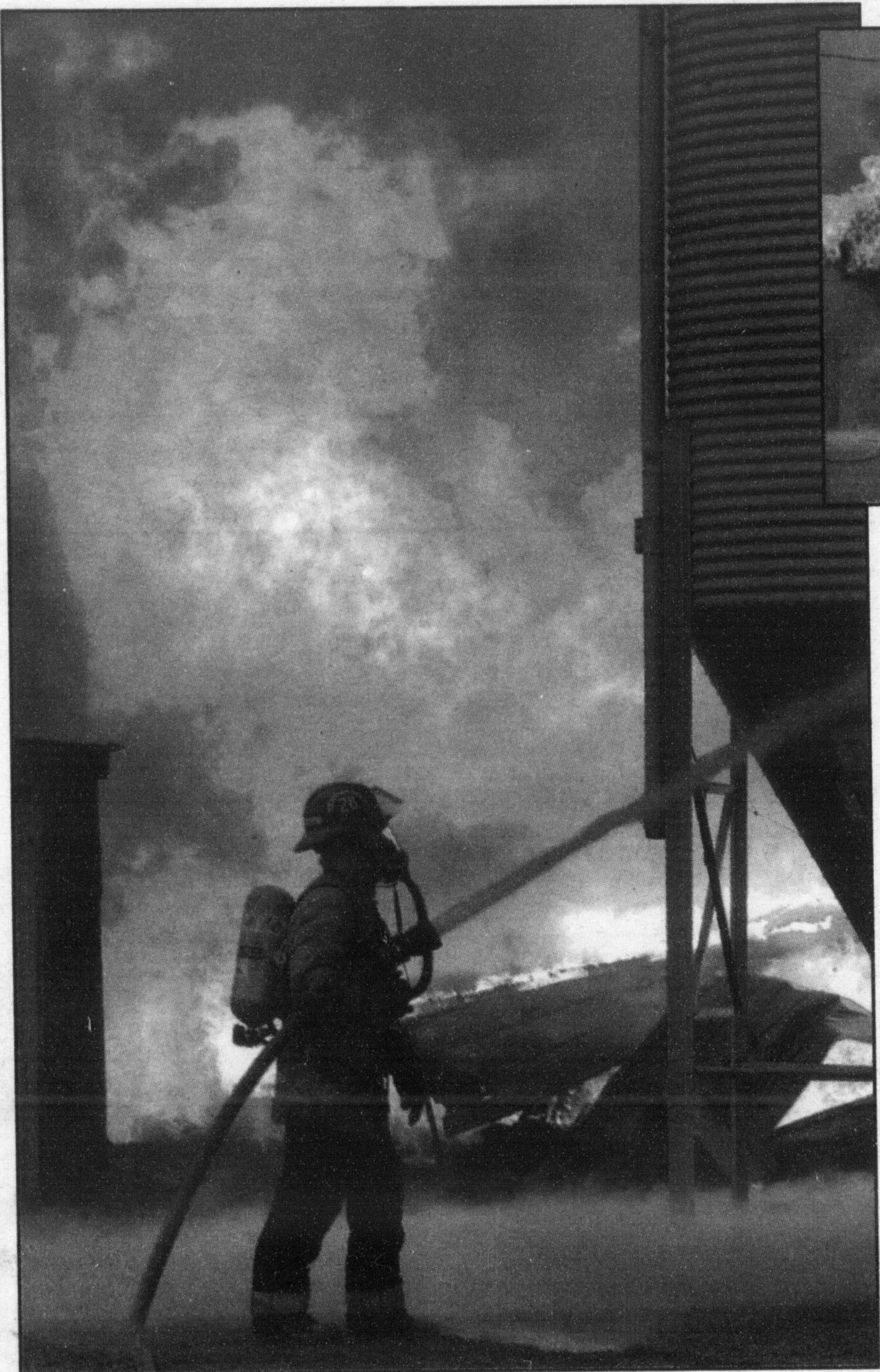
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Firefighters from the Milton Fire Department work to douse a rapidly-burning barn on No. 15 Sideroad Monday afternoon. It took two hours to bring the blaze under control. Luckily, the barn was empty and no one was injured. The cause of the blaze remained under investigation at press time.

Photos by GRAHAM PAINE

Fire that destroyed barn still under investigation

A mid-afternoon fire Monday destroyed a five-storey barn on No. 15 Sideroad.

The Milton Fire Department responded to 5448 No. 15 Sideroad at about 3:30 p.m. and discovered a barn fully engulfed in flames.

Firefighters took two hours to

control the blaze and remained on scene throughout the night to extinguish small grass fires.

The fire department is still investigating the cause of the blaze, although it isn't being treated as suspicious. No injuries were reported.

"We don't have a dollar loss

yet," said Deputy Fire Chief Dave Krantz. "The barn was to be used to store chickens but it was empty at the time. The owner of the barn was home at the time of the fire and someone driving by informed her smoke was coming out of the barn. We're still investigating."

Malboeuf's call for tax break gets no support at council

By RICHARD VIVIAN
The Champion

The Town's \$1.3 million budget surplus from 2001 is going to reserve funds — despite unanswered calls by one councillor to offer a partial refund to taxpayers.

Councillor Rick Malboeuf referred to the surplus as "over taxation" at Monday's council meeting and put forward a motion allocating \$500,000 of it to reduce this year's property taxes. The motion died, failing to find a seconder.

"I believe that at least a portion of it (surplus funds) should be returned to the taxpayers," he told council, suggesting the tax levy be reduced from the interim property tax bills.

The key source of the surplus was building permit revenues, which actually pulled in \$1.7 million more than expected.

But \$120,000 more than estimated was spent on legal fees (mostly Ontario Municipal Board challenges), \$160,000 less than expected was collected from tax penalties, \$283,000 of payment-in-lieu revenue wasn't realized and road work went over budget by \$93,600 — the major contributors that reduced the surplus to \$1.3 million.

"Let's be clear about where that money (surplus) came from. The Milton taxpayers didn't supply the surplus," said Councillor John Challinor.

"We're going to be using that money to fix our (town's) smile, to provide parks and other amenities."

Added Town CAO Mario Belvedere, "The (building permit) revenue also reflects the Magna plant of a half million square feet. I think the building permit fees were around \$800,000, \$900,000."

At the meeting, surplus funds were split between several Town reserves (\$200,000 for the growth related resources, \$100,000 for the legal reserve, \$100,000 for the municipal building components reserve, \$118,000 to the non-residential development charges reserve and \$278,000 to the capital works reserve), with \$204,000 in allowance for bad debts — leaving

"I believe that at least a portion of it (surplus funds) should be returned to the taxpayers."

RICK MALBOEUF

\$300,000 to carry forward to this year.

With the money set in reserves, Councillor Barry Lee immediately asked for \$160,000 from the capital works reserve to repair a large hole in the road on Guelph Line, near No. 20 Sideroad.

"This is a good way of giving the money back to the taxpayers," Mr. Lee said, adding the section of road is particularly dangerous.

Council approved the project, sending it to Town staff for more detailed analysis of the work required. Staff have already been looking into the issue, suggesting the \$160,000 price tag as an appropriate figure.

INSIDE

Comment 6-7
HS Report 8
A&E 18
Dateline 19
Sports 21-26
Classified ... 27-29

INSERTS

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