

# Krantz's '08 wish: lower tax increase

*Mayor offers thoughts on the year ahead*

By Melanie Cummings  
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Wishes versus expectations. For the year ahead Mayor Gord Krantz has items listed under both categories.

In keeping with a *Champion* tradition, it's only fitting that the man who was born, raised and educated in Milton — and then went on to become its longest serving mayor — give readers his well-honed political insights.

First elected to council in 1965 and promoted to mayor by the electorate in 1980, Krantz has a 27-year perspective to lean on.

Below, he foretells Milton's probable future, and its potential one, too, with unabashed forthrightness.

"There's a difference between what I want to see and what I believe will happen," he said.

As part of the Greater Toronto Area, Milton has been the hub of a lot of industrial and commercial activity.

Krantz doesn't expect "much downturn" to occur in 2008 and for the most part Milton will "hold the line" in these two areas.

With signals of a slump in the auto sector already in play, the strengthened Canadian dollar and increased competition from U.S. manufacturers will contribute to the economic struggles ahead for local auto supply companies.

"I hope the impact isn't too major

but I really don't see any expansion or inclines in industrial growth here," he said.

But sheer location has and will continue to bode well for the town.

"We are already on the drawing board for additional industrial and commercial assessment — maybe not as much as we've had come our way in 2006 and 2007 but still the tax pool from these sources will go higher," said Krantz.

Milton had among the lowest business property tax rates last year at 2.3 per cent for commercial enterprises and a 3.5 per cent tax levy on industrial properties.

But growth brings challenges too, especially over the next decade when the region is expected to abide by the Ontario government's 'Places to Grow' plan. Its legislation that was passed in 2005 and dictates that Halton region will grow to approximately 780,000 people by 2031, an almost 68 per cent increase from the current population of approximately 440,000. Such growth though is estimated to carry an \$8.6 billion price tag to cover necessary infrastructure costs.

In reaction, Halton council created the 'Fairness for Halton' campaign, call-

ing on the provincial government to keep pace with current growth strains on local provincially-funded services such as hospitals, schools, additional police, courts and highways.

"I wear two hats as mayor and as regional councillor and in this respect, I'm equally concerned about the impacts Places to Grow will have on other municipalities," said Krantz.

He's adamant about the biggest item on his wish list for 2008. Krantz doesn't want to repeat the 6.6 per cent tax hike local town councillors recently passed in its final budget figures.

"I didn't support that much of a hike," said Krantz. "I would prefer to keep it at the rate of inflation, at three to four per cent. Doubling the rate of inflation is not okay with me."

While politicians typically have difficulty saying 'no' to constituent demands and pleas for funding, a lesson in separating wants from needs is in order for the next round of budget talks.

Even with a 6.6 per cent hike ahead, it only means the same level of "reasonably good" service for residents. The increase doesn't come with any major improvements, added Krantz.



MICHAEL IVANIN / SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

**OPEN FOR BUSINESS:** Owner Rita Hollis and Mayor Gord Krantz cut the ribbon to mark the recent opening of Milton Shoes and Leather Centre as town councillor Greg Nelson looks on. The store is located in Carriage Square on Main Street.

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