

Mayoral candidate makes hospital funding pledge

By Christina Comisso
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

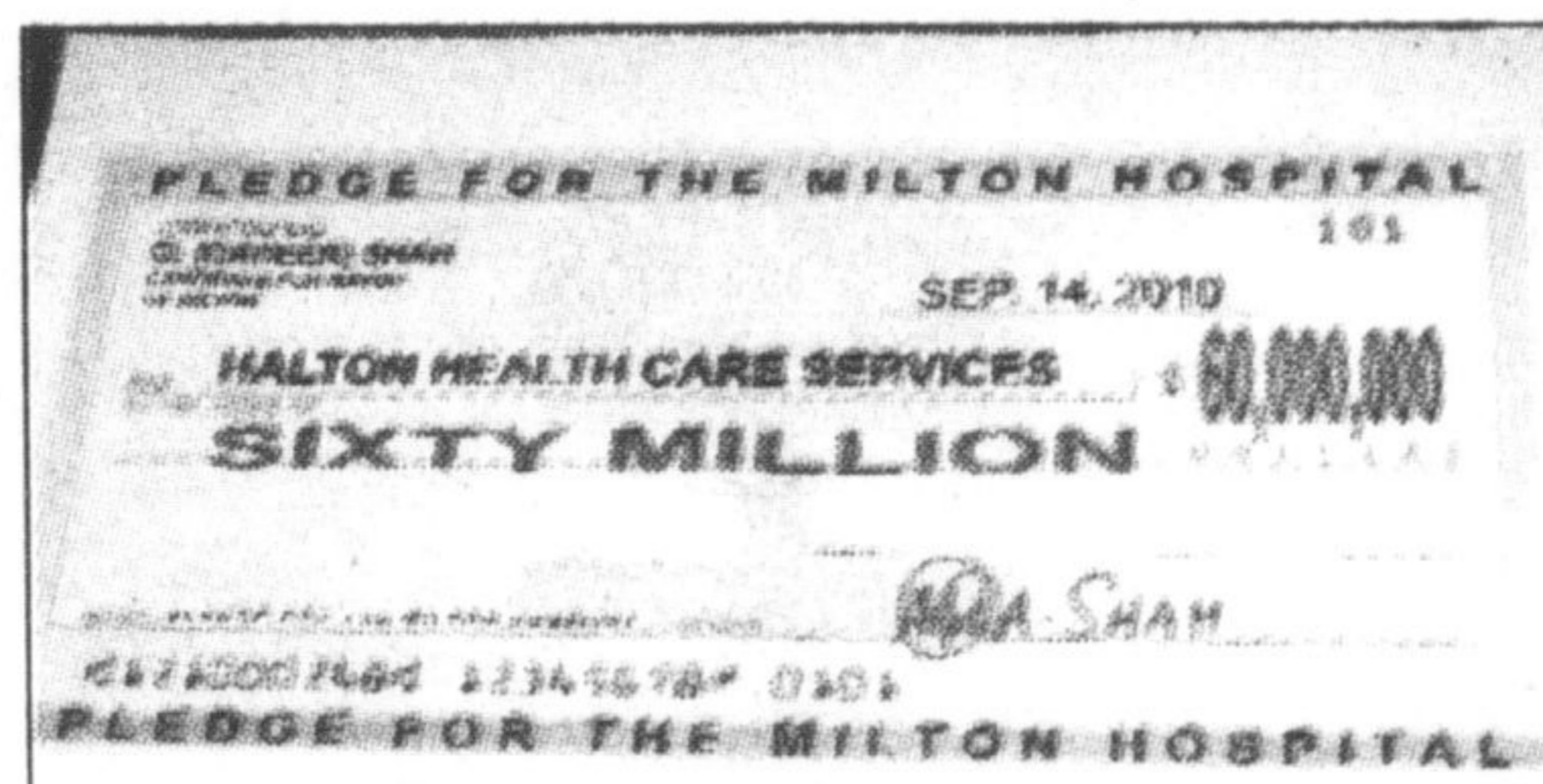
Milton's hospital expansion has made its way onto almost every candidate's platform, but one mayoral hopeful is literally putting money where his mouth is.

Qadeer Shah, if elected, has pledged \$60 million to help fund the expansion — an amount he says could be raised by the Town without any additional tax burden felt by Milton residents.

When asked how the funds would be raised, Shah said: "Broaden the tax base; bring more new businesses; go and talk big corporations into bringing their offices here by giving them some incentives; bring new people into town instead of putting the burden on existing Miltonians."

Shah proposes the Town would provide Halton Healthcare Services with \$60 million over a 30-year period in increments of \$2 million per year.

In June, town council voted unanimously to provide a municipal contribution for the expansion and directed staff to research potential funding sources to assist the hospital in coming up with the required local share of the expansion — typically 10 per cent of construction costs plus the entire cost of equipment. A dollar amount wasn't decided on since the estimated cost for the expansion remains unknown.



Mayoral candidate Qadeer Shah, if elected, has pledged \$60 million from the Town of Milton for the hospital expansion.

However Mayor Gord Krantz, who's running for re-election, said committing to a dollar amount at this point in time may be too presumptuous.

"I'm not going to presume that \$60 million is going to be the figure that the property tax base can absorb in Milton," he said.

Shah asked Krantz to sign a symbolic cheque of \$60 million made out to Halton Healthcare Services, to which Krantz declined.

"I know if you put \$60 million on the property tax base, (taxes) would just skyrocket," he said.

Late last year the City of Burlington committed \$60 million as the municipality's share for Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital's (JBMH) \$312-million redevelopment project.

In August, JBMH received approval from Ontario's Ministry of Health and Long Term

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