

Tax hikes sure to come *Dateline*

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increase the estimate of building permit revenues to cover the shortfall.

Milton chief administrative officer David Hipgrave made the suggestion when councillors were about to consider staff reductions, which could affect customer service and revenue at the seniors' center and the leisure center.

"We are getting pretty high on the priority list," said Mr. Hipgrave.

"This would really, seriously hamper operations at the leisure and seniors' centers."

Mr. Hipgrave said building permit revenue from the proposed increase in the size of Maplehurst had not been included in the budget.

"I want to balance the budget on the gross expenditure line, not by pumping up the revenue line," said Councillor Wally Hunter. "This opens the door to solve budget problems on the revenue side rather than the expenditure side."

Councillor John Challinor took a different approach when he pointedly told town staff that if they did not feel such customer service items were fair game in potential reductions, then they should not be included in any decision package.

"We almost made a decision that Xcape Youth Center is more important than customer service," said Mr. Challinor. "One is a social service, the other is a customer service."

Earlier, councillors had narrowly rejected a call by Mr. Challinor to refuse the year-old youth center \$4,000 in funding as part of a package of grants to several groups.

"Originally they came for start-up funding and now we're saying its on-going funding," said Mr. Hunter, defending Mr. Challinor's position. "There are significant services for youth in Milton and they are heavily subsidized."

Councillor Ron Furik said the Xcape centre needed the funding and suggested cutting funds from other youth programs before targeting Xcape.

Several other measures suggested by Mr. Challinor were adopted in the operating budget, including reductions to conference attendance, telephone service and legal consultations.

In addition, councillors agreed each municipal department should undertake a services review, which would include long-term priorities, capital investment and reserves. They also agreed staff should look closely at the future use of debenture financing, and conduct a review of Milton's winter maintenance program.

Councillor Marion Howard expressed satisfaction that her colleagues agreed to a core services review, which she had been pushing for. "This year we really got down to the nitty gritty," she said.

However, she sounded a cautionary note as well. "If you think this year was tough, we are falling further behind on our public

works capital forecast. Can we and other municipalities continue unless we change the entire bureaucratic process?"

To keep property taxes frozen councillors agreed to a two per cent increase in user fees on leisure services programs.

Recreational groups had been expecting a 1.5 per cent fee increase.

There was some opposition to the measure.

"I don't think we want to abuse people using the facilities or adversely affect young families," said Councillor Brian Penman. "There is a law of diminishing returns. Increases could preclude some users."

The recommendations from the budget committee need to be ratified by full council at their meeting next Monday (April 7).

Tuesday Apr. 1

The Victorian Order of Nurses holds a **foot care clinic** at the Harmony Court apartments, 111 Ontario St., from 1:30-4 p.m. The cost is \$15. Treatment available by appointment only. To register, call 827-8800.

The **Calling New Parents Group** meets at CHERISH Parent-Child Centre, 540 Childs Dr., from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. For more information, call 825-6060, ext. 7365.

The **Bishop Reding School Council** meets at **Holy Cross School** in Georgetown at 7:30 p.m. All members of the council and any interested parents are invited to attend.

Wednesday Apr. 2

The Milton Seniors' Activity Centre, 500 Childs Dr., holds "**Hot Meal Deal Day**" from 11:45 a.m. to

1:15 p.m. Come along for great food and good fellowship. For more information, call 875-1681.

Recently separated or divorced? A group support meeting takes place every Wednesday evening. For more information, call 854-7823 during the day or in the evenings at 856-8211. Ask for Avril.

Thursday Apr. 3

The Homecraft Division of the Milton Fall Fair hosts a **euchre party** in the Agricultural Hall at the Milton Fair Grounds at 8 p.m. Admission costs \$3, which includes lunch and prizes. Everyone is welcome.

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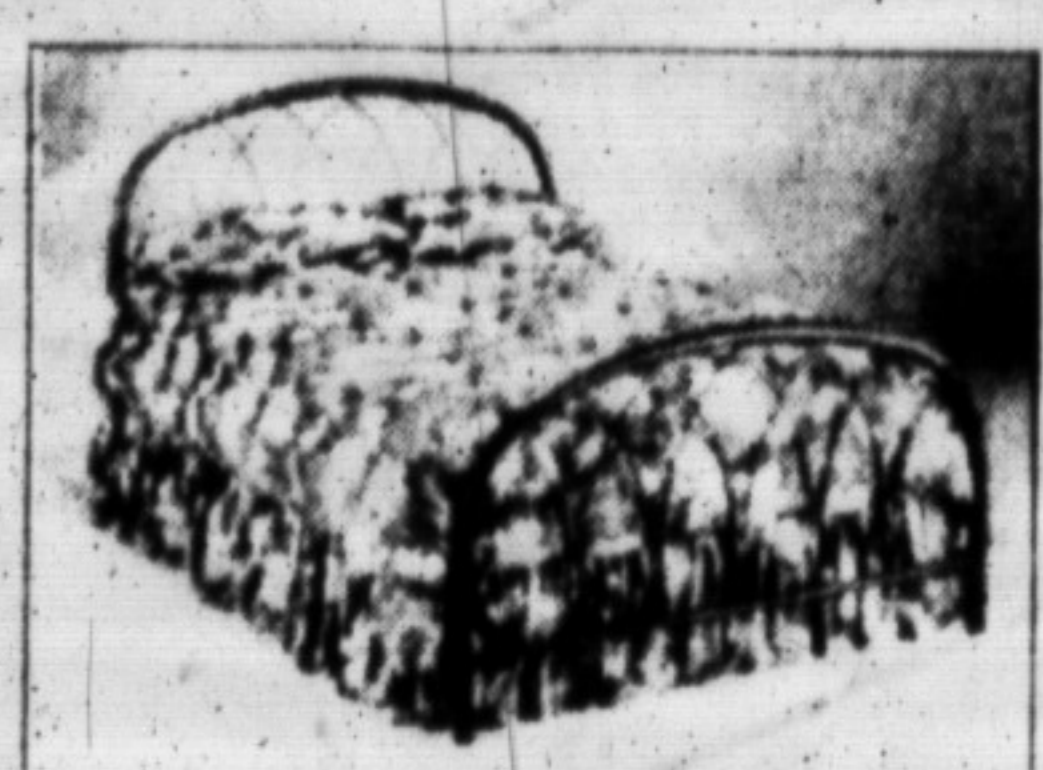
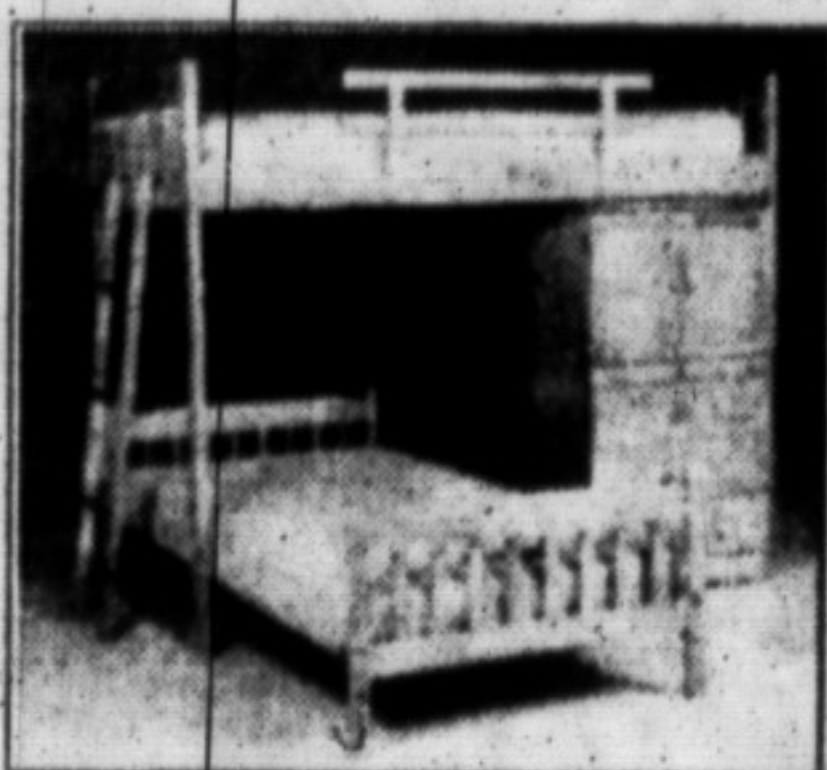
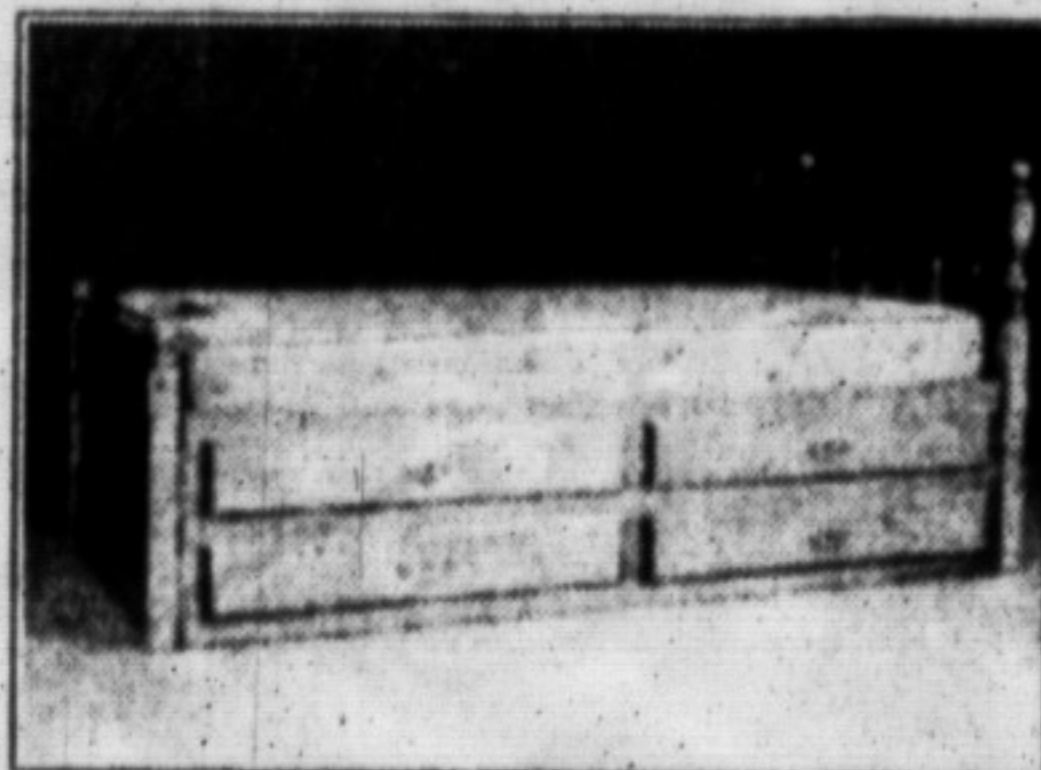
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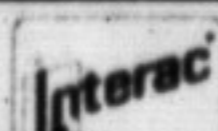
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