

## LOCAL NEWS

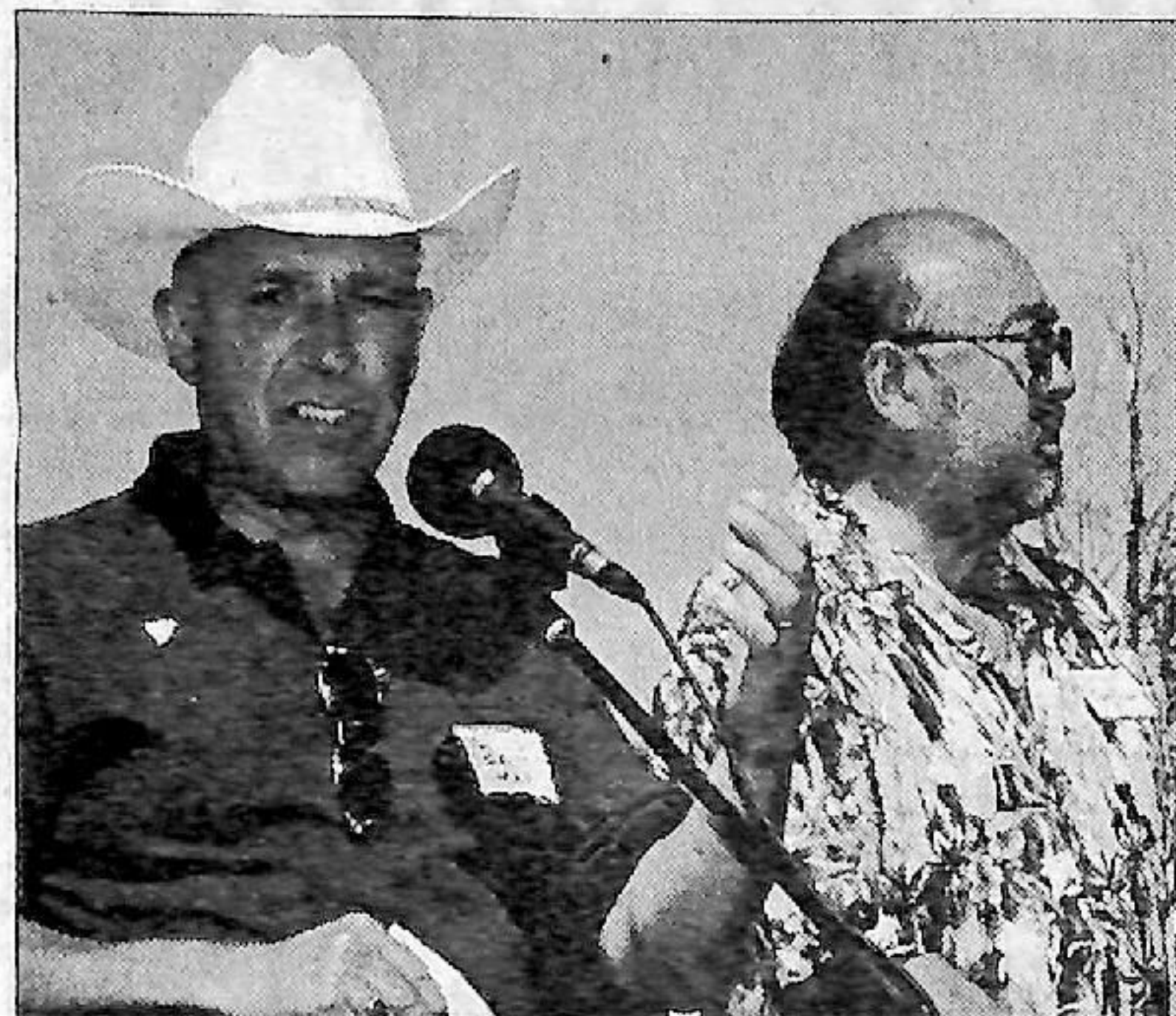


PHOTO BY PETE FISHER

Incumbent Northumberland MPP Doug Galt, left, with Ontario Minister of Culture David Tsubouchi at Sunday's annual Galt picnic in Colborne.

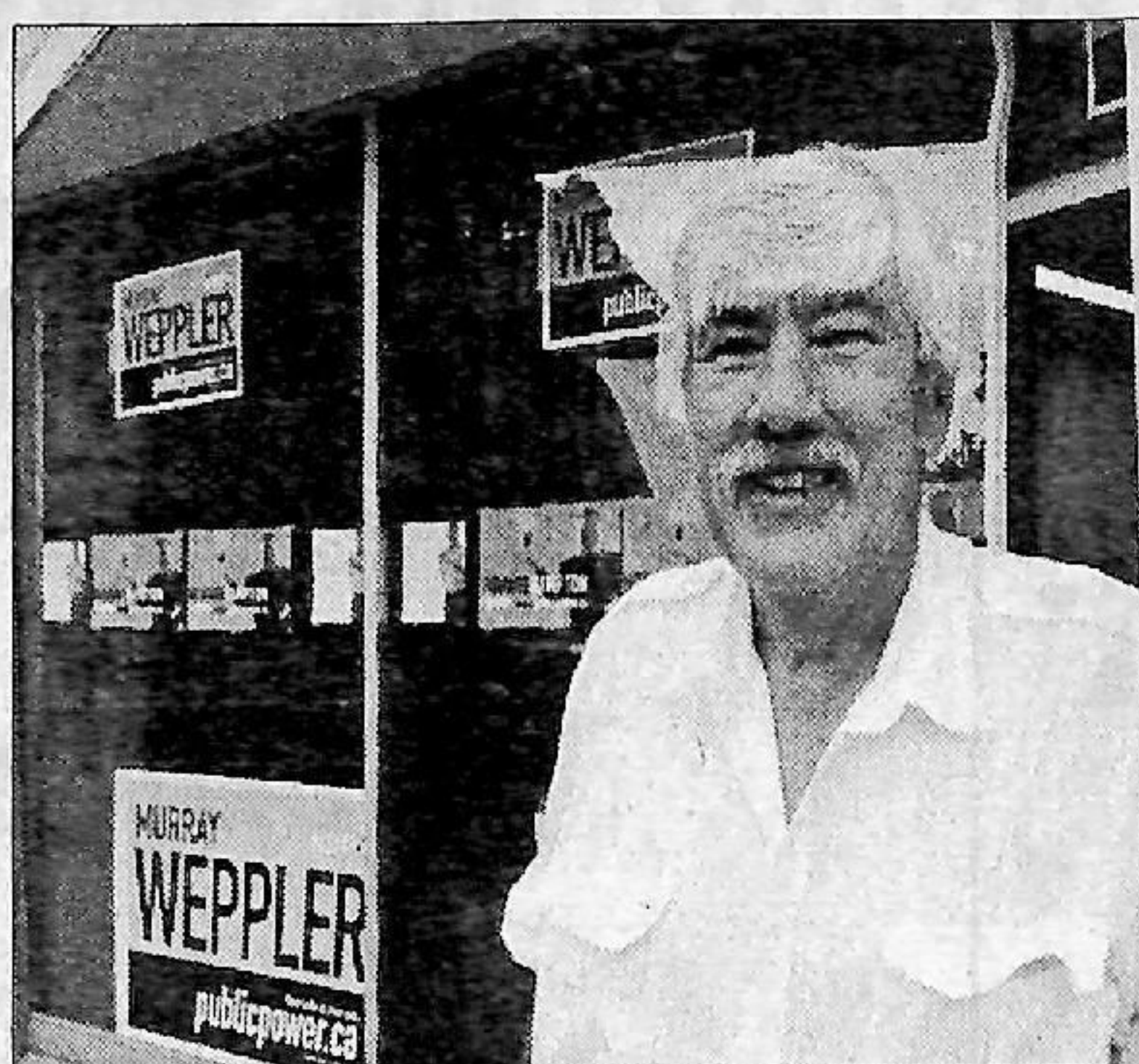


PHOTO BY PETE FISHER

Northumberland NDP candidate Murray Wepler at his campaign headquarters on King Street West in Cobourg.



PHOTO BY PETE FISHER

Northumberland Liberal candidate, and Brighton Mayor, Lou Rinaldi at his Port Hope candidacy office.

## Local candidates ready for election call

By Valerie MacDonald

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The signs of a fall provincial election keep coming and local riding candidates are getting ready for the battle.

The signs: An Ipsos-Reid poll has found 73 per cent of people surveyed think Premier Ernie Eves handled Ontario's blackout well, giving him a positive springboard compared to previous polls; his electioneering buses have been readied; and provincial ministers have been travelling the ridings, including Northumberland.

While incumbent Tory MPP Doug Galt has had his King Street West, Cobourg, campaign headquarters established since last spring, his Liberal and NDP counterparts have just rented theirs.

Signs for the NDP and its Northumberland candidate, Murray Wepler, are up at the party's King Street West location.

"We're prepared," Mr. Wepler

said in an interview yesterday. "We opened the day after the blackout thinking they'd call (the provincial election) for late-September.

"We haven't staffed it yet."

Mr. Wepler is predicting the writ will be dropped late this week with an Oct. 2 election call.

"That's my guess.... They want some extra days to attack the opposition."

Mr. Wepler says some people feel Ontario's electricity crisis actually made the premier look good compared to his earlier showings.

"The improvement has made him look more a premier," he suggested.

Another reason for a fall election is that the Conservative party is going into debt with its election campaign and "it can't afford to wait," Mr. Wepler said.

"They are sort of boxed in."

Mr. Wepler also attacked the balanced-budget message left by Ontario Finance Minister Janet Ecker when she addressed a Cobourg audience recently.

"I don't ever like to call people liars and I won't," Mr. Wepler said, but big banks, bond-rating companies and even Tory party supporters have clearly said there is a budget deficit.

"I give more credibility to Janet Ecker, our minister of finance, than Murray Wepler and his comments," Dr. Galt countered.

His government has paid off \$5-billion in provincial debt and plans to do the same in the next term, he said.

Describing his team as "ready, willing and anxious to go", the incumbent MPP said he has a vision for the Northumberland riding for the next five years which he will unveil when the election is called.

"I don't want to scoop myself," he said about revealing any of its contents beforehand.

His vision is separate from the party platform, he added.

Time is getting down to the wire for Northumberland's Liberal party candidate, Brighton Mayor Lou Rinaldi.

"If there is no (provincial election) call by this Wednesday, my plans are very clear. I won't be running in the municipal election," Mr. Rinaldi said.

His party organization has already rented facilities at 73 Mill St. S., Port Hope, and 11 King St. E., Cobourg, as well as in Trenton, Campbellford and Brighton. They will not open until the writ is dropped, he said.

"I'm totally against wasting money," he said, chastising Dr. Galt's Progressive Conservatives for doing that with their Cobourg headquarters.

Dr. Galt has called this an election about quality of life. Mr. Wepler agrees but expects the government's record on electrical power operation and funding for hospitals and education will be exposed.

"We don't have enough money to run our (new) hospital," he asserts, saying people are paying attention to these things.

No Green Party candidate has been nominated yet.