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THE HALTON COMPASS

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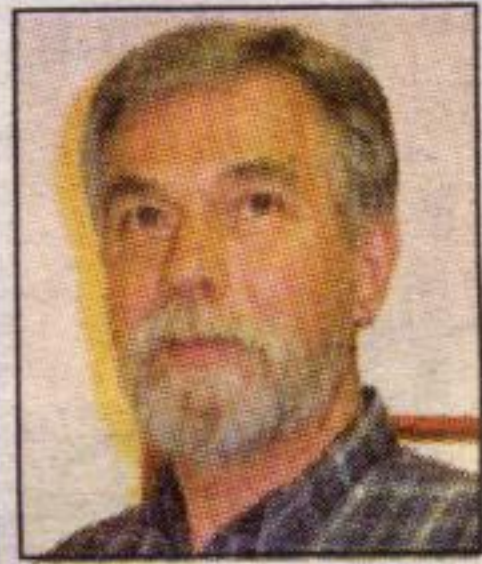
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REGIONAL NEWS, NOTES AND NEIGHBOURS

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Minister defends Milton growth plans

Caplan meets with hundreds in Hamilton

By DONNA DANIELLI

When the new provincial government was sworn in last October, one of the premier's first tasks was the creation of a new Ministry. Headed by Minister David Caplan, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal looks at how investments in infrastructure, such as transit systems, hospitals and education facilities can meet demands and improve the quality of life for Ontario residents.

"WE NEED TO CONSIDER THESE THINGS BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE, BEFORE WE HAVE TO MAKE RUSHED DECISIONS."

With the unveiling of the Ministry's first major report "Places to Grow: Better Choices. Brighter Future" Minister Caplan also began a dialogue that recently saw him visit Hamilton for public consultation on this new report. "This is the first step in a process that will make our community safer, stronger, more prosperous and more livable," he told the crowd of well over two hundred people who came out to have their say. "It's a plan that spans years. It spans government mandates and it spans generations.

"To make this work, I need your help, your guidance and your wisdom. We all have a stake in insuring a brighter future." The Growth Plan identifies urban Milton as an emerging urban centre where new economic and population growth will be encouraged. New growth would be accommodated through compact development for the creation of a community with a balance of jobs and housing choices. "We've identified Milton as a growth area," stressed Caplan in an interview after the public meeting. "It would be an area that would be a priority for infrastructure investment."

Campbellville's Bob Beyette voiced his skepticism at the long term effects of this initiative, asking Caplan "does this initiative cause growth, create growth or manage growth?" to which Caplan responded that it would "direct growth to areas we feel can handle it."

It was the identification in the report of the areas around Milton and Halton Hills as future growth areas that some of the audience took exception to. "That is completely contradictory to the Halton Urban Structure Plan (HUSP)" accused Burlington Councilor John Taylor. This accusation was echoed by Milton's Colin Best, who stated that "this plan is a direct contradiction of the Official Plans of Halton and Milton. It basically wipes out all the Class 1 and 2 farmland in Halton."

Minister Caplan responded that it was necessary to remember that the potential growth areas illustrated on the maps were conceptual, an indication where development might, but not necessarily, occur. "We have a 20 to 25 year supply of land, but we need to start this conversation now," he argued. "We can't wait until it is urgent, we need to consider these things before it is too late, before we have to make rushed decisions." He also stated that verification has been done with the Greenbelt Protection Act Task Force to ensure that the growth plan is in line with the Greenbelt Protection Act.

"We can't have urban versus rural, provincial versus municipality, developer versus environmentalist," Caplan stressed. "We have to establish a new way of working together where we all benefit." He also emphasized the importance of public input on the new growth management plan. "We want to hear from you on any mistakes we have made," he told the crowd. "We won't be offended. Talk to us. If we can't publicly justify it, then we shouldn't be making that decision."

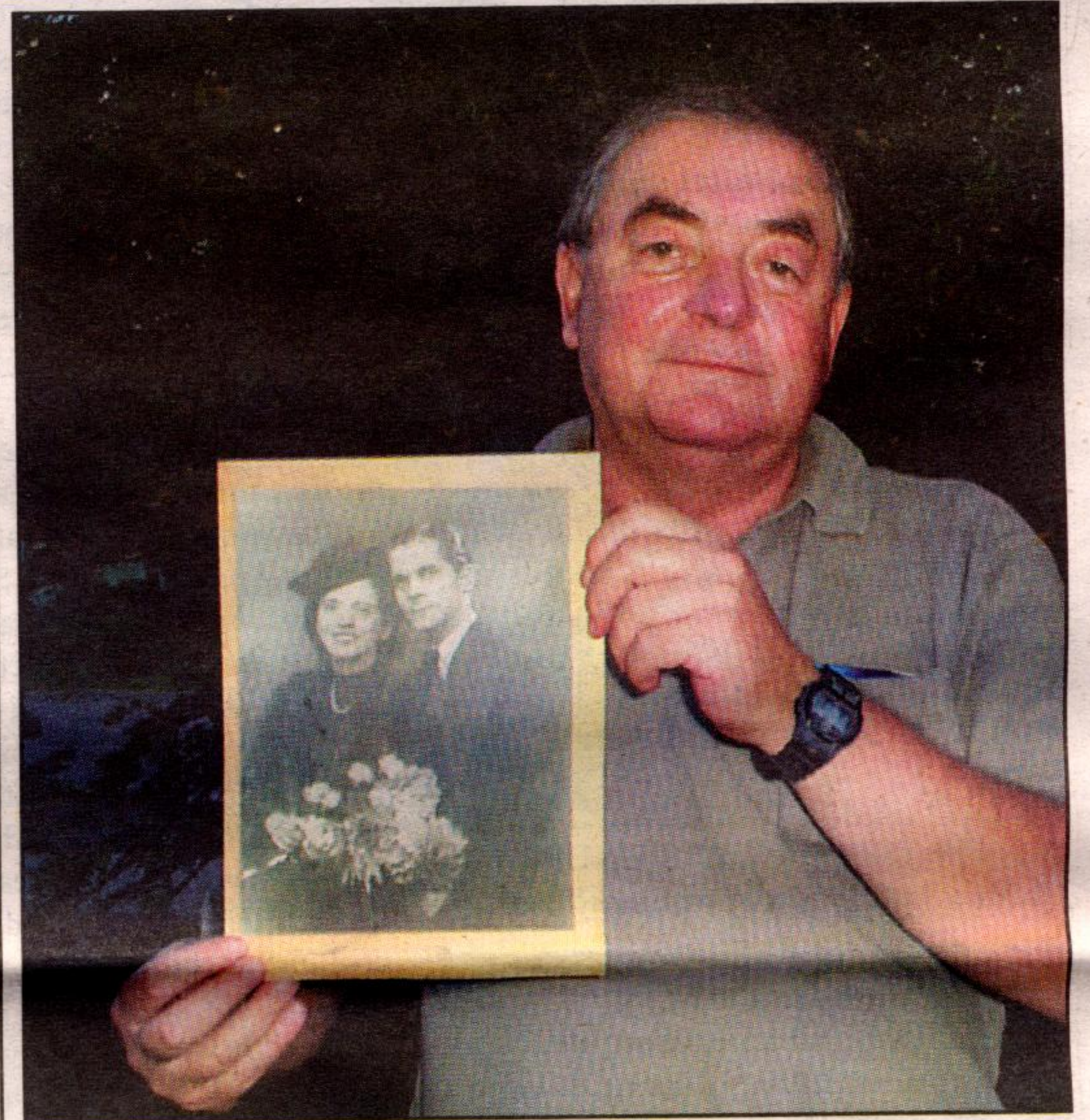


PHOTO BY JENNIFER ENRIGHT

Las Polcz, a resident of Milton, displays the photograph taken of his parents on their wedding day in 1940. His mother is credited with saving the lives of hundreds of Hungarian Jews from the Nazi purges during the Second World War.

Story on page 14.

A day in the life...

Lunch break with Mike Chong

By JENNIFER ENRIGHT

Off Erin's Main Street, Mike Chong is idly chatting with several men as they sit resting on a bench outside Steen's Dairy, a local landmark. Mr. Chong, the newly elected MP for Wellington-Halton Hills, is at Steen's to take a lunch break. It's been a busy day. After a morning spent taping an interview at Cogeco Cable, he and his constituency assistant, Jim Smith, are ready to sit down in front of the lunch counter at Steen's to order cheeseburgers and milkshakes.

Continued on page 3

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