

PC leadership hopeful Prentice says future of party looks bright

Candidate visits Milton last week

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**
The Champion

Jim Prentice says he thinks Milton residents are no different from other Canadians in that they want the Liberals out of power, but are having their voting influence drastically minimized as some support the Canadian Alliance and others opt for the Progressive Conservative (PC) Party.

The PC leadership candidate was at the Ramada Inn Wednesday to introduce himself to Miltonians and share his ideas, hoping to convince them he has what it takes to lead a party and possibly a country.

Mr. Prentice is one of seven PC candidates hoping to replace Joe Clark as the party's leader at the June convention.

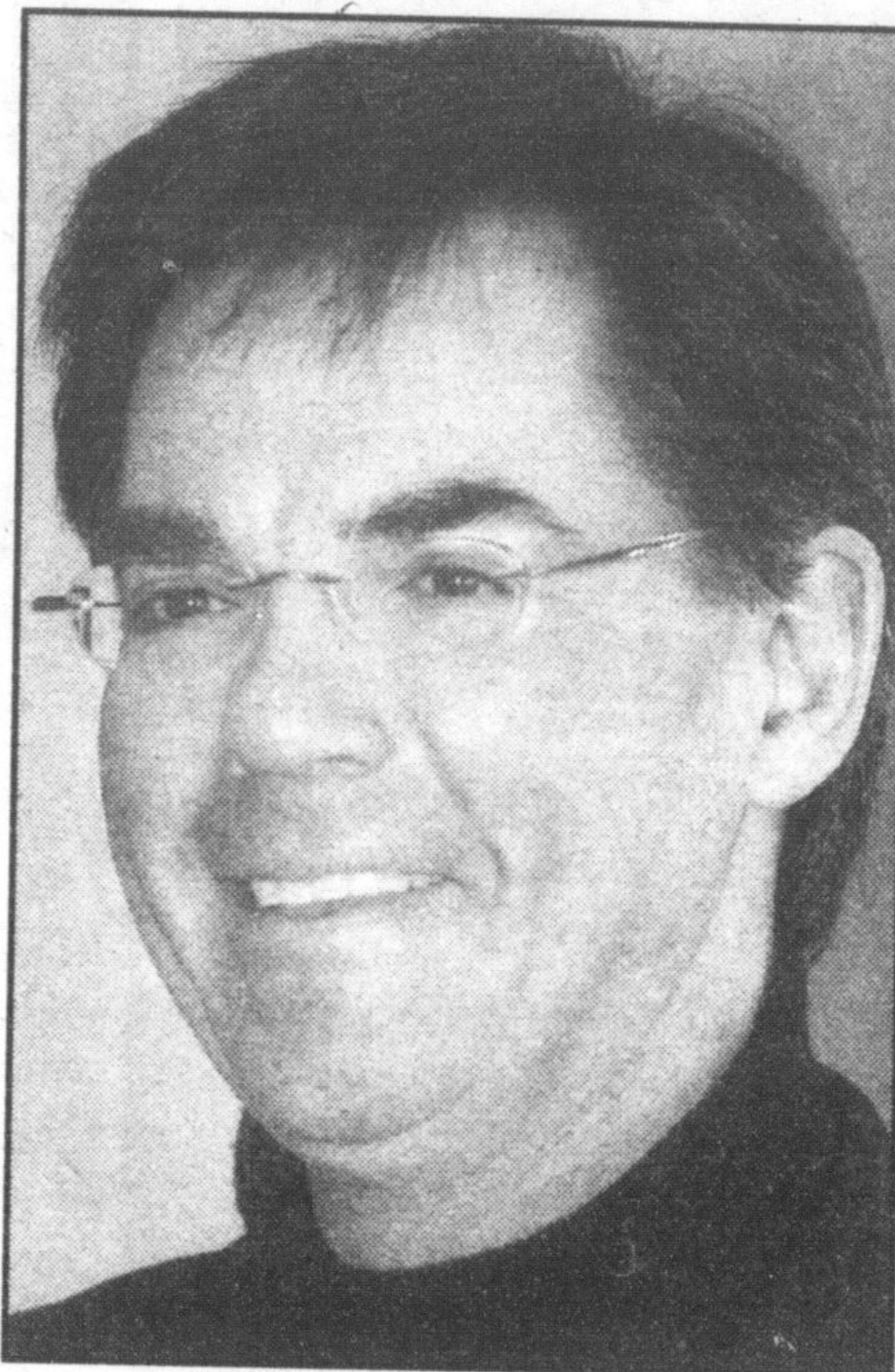
His key message? The future for the PC party looks bright — that is, if the party can be reunited and partner in some way with the Canadian Alliance.

"Everywhere I go, Canadians say we have a fine nation, a proud nation, but it's badly governed. We have to draw the Conservative party back together and form a government," said Mr. Prentice, 46.

In the November 2000 federal election, Liberal MP for the Halton riding, Julian Reed, was elected with 47 per cent of votes, his office told *The Champion*.

According to Mr. Prentice, this doesn't show strong Liberal support in Milton. "Haven't we all had enough of the Liberals in this country?" Mr. Prentice asked. "We have an obligation to our country to stand up and do something about this."

It's important for the Conservative and



Jim Prentice

Alliance parties to sit down, talk, and find solutions to the current split in right wing votes, he said, adding that almost all of the beliefs the two parties have are the same.

In the 2002 by-election, Mr. Prentice said he decided not to run against Canadian Alliance leader Stephen Harper after becoming the party's nominated candidate in Calgary Southwest for the 2002 by-election. He decided to allow Mr. Harper to take a seat in Parliament, instead.

"After some soul-searching, I decided the principled thing to do was to not contest the by-election," Mr. Prentice said in a profile distributed at the meeting.

He explained that's one of the ways he has shown — through actions, not simply words — that the PC and Alliance parties should be working together rather than competing.

Mr. Prentice grew up in northern Ontario and currently lives in Calgary, Alta., where

he works as a lawyer and small businessman with interests in retail and real estate. He served as the PC Party's national treasurer from 1991 to 1995.

Mr. Prentice said he's optimistic about the future of the PC party.

"I see bright days ahead. Mark my words, as fragmented as the party now seems, this is the beginning of laying the foundation of a new Conservative party." Meetings like this are an ideal way for constituents to become informed, said Don McGill, president of the local PC riding association.

"It's a good idea for constituents to meet (Mr. Prentice) and hear some of his ideas," Mr. McGill said.

Unity within the PC party is something Mr. Prentice said he believes strongly in — and Mr. McGill said Mr. Prentice could very well be the one to bring that about.

"This man can generate a cohesiveness within the party. This guy can put a group of people together to form a majority vote."

James Snow — who was a Conservative MPP representing Milton from 1967 to 1985 and the Minister of Transportation from 1975 to 1985 — attended the meeting, and said he was "quite impressed" with Mr. Prentice. He echoed Mr. McGill's sentiments, viewing Mr. Prentice as a unifier.

"I think he has the ability to pull people together. Unless a leader is able to pull things together with the Alliance Party, the Liberals will be in power forever.."

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Meeting discusses plans for Oakville shelter, but none in place for Milton

By **JASON MISNER**
The Champion

The fact that there are no plans to build a homeless shelter in Milton coupled with a brewing snow storm likely explains why no one attended a public meeting last Tuesday night.

The public meeting was the first of four being held in each regional municipality to update residents on the shelter proposal in Oakville.

Regional Chair Joyce Savoline said "unless something directly affects them" a majority of people don't typically get involved in an issue.

She also said a winter storm that night might have caused some not to make the drive from elsewhere around the region to hear the update.

Regional councillors endorsed the final report of the Emergency Housing Advisory Group in January.

The group was formed last year to provide the Region of Halton, the Salvation Army and the Town of Oakville with criteria for locating and operating a shelter.

According to the Emergency Housing Advisory Group's report, a single, 20 to

25-bed facility is being recommended at first. The facility could then later be expanded to a maximum of 40 beds.

Construction of the shelter could begin by the end of the year.

The group's report addressed specific emergency housing issues like community need, location criteria, housing operations, safety and security, the planning process and public consultation.

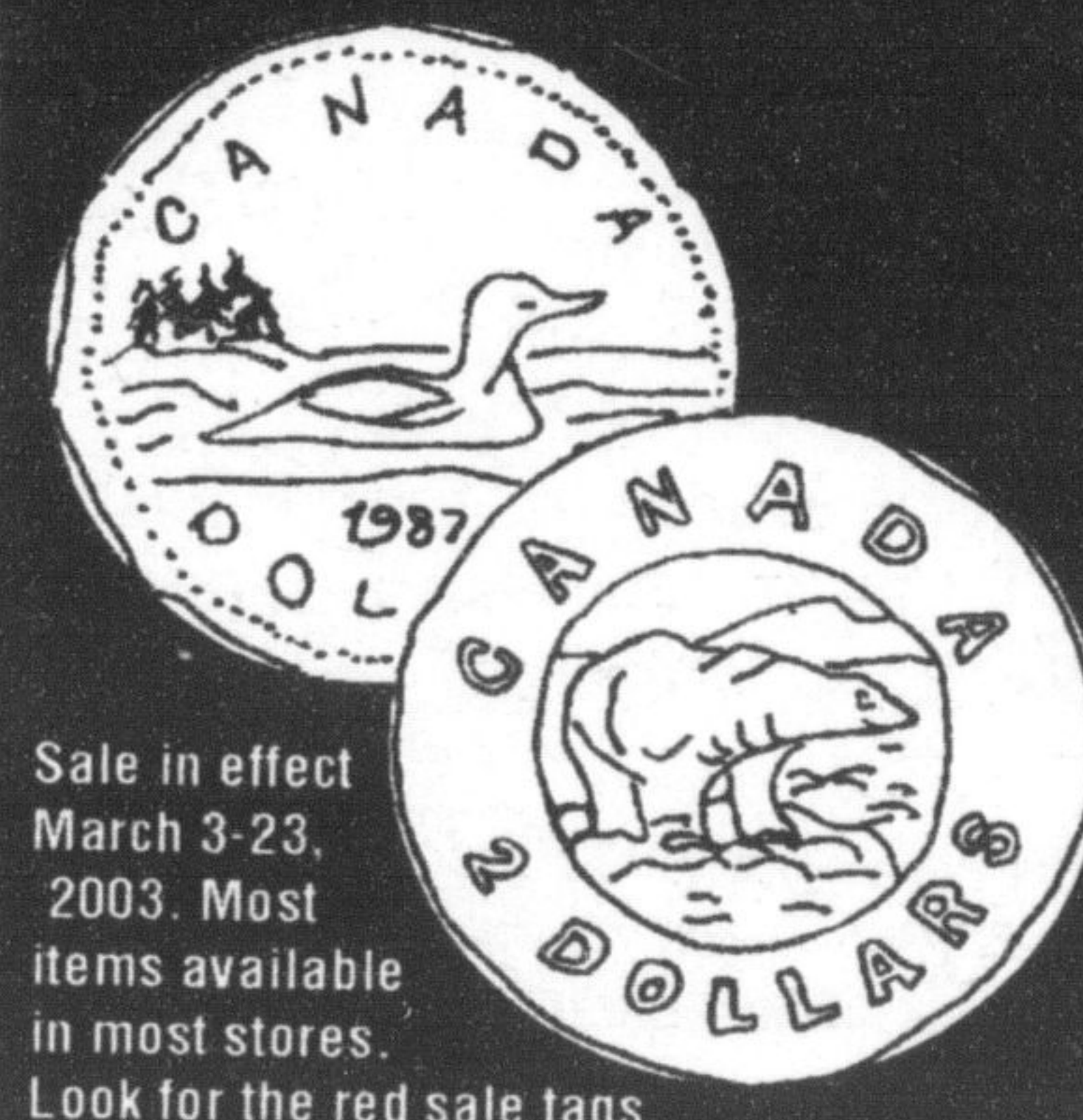
Its final report focuses on Oakville, which has no permanent emergency shelter, and recommends as mandatory the specific criteria for locating, operating and communicating with the public about emergency housing.

Residents ideally will be allowed to stay a maximum of 30 days, but may be able to stay longer based on extenuating circumstances.

The costs of the shelter aren't known because the site has yet to be chosen, said Adelina Urbanski, the Region's commissioner of social and community services.

The Region is in the middle of deciding whether it should buy land to build a shelter or refurbish an existing facility, she said.

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