

No particular issue dominates candidates meeting

By **JASON MISNER**

The Champion

When Joan Campbell found out early last week that she would be one of four employees at the Allendale long-term care facility to lose their jobs to contractors January 2, she felt the best time to get answers was at Friday night's election meeting at the Milton Leisure Centre.

Unfortunately, she left with lingering questions following the two-hour plus meeting. It included five of six candidates for Milton's mayor, four for Halton chair and three of four school board trustees running for the public and Catholic boards.

The meeting involved an opening statement from each candidate followed by questions from the crowd of approximately 200 people.

Ms Campbell, who has worked in hairdressing at Allendale for 24 years, asked mayoral candidates Gord Krantz and Rick

Malboeuf as well as regional chairman candidate Joyce Savoline whether they would try to save the four jobs if elected.

She directed the question to the three because they were on regional council when the decision was made about contracting out some services.

Ms Savoline explained regional staff were directed this year to conduct a restructuring study of services provided in long-term-care facilities operated by Halton. She said the four employees to lose their designated jobs were to be hired elsewhere in long-term care services.

Mr. Malboeuf said he couldn't promise to stop the job losses, but said he received an e-mail last Tuesday concerning the issue and is looking into it.

Mr. Krantz said he had "not been part of a debate on this whatsoever" about contracting out services at Allendale, and said if elected he "would oppose the laying off of those people."

After the meeting, Ms Campbell said she still doesn't know what will happen. She's confused at how the job losses can be a cost savings when the four employees — with a combined working experience of 85 years at Allendale — are to be hired elsewhere.

More importantly, Ms Campbell said she's worried about what impact changing employees will have on the seniors who are used to routine.

"I couldn't believe it that after the years we've had there (at Allendale), we're kicked out the door," she said after the meeting, noting she's not sure what their new jobs will be.

Before the meeting started, members of Local 261 of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union distributed flyers outside the Milton Leisure Centre, alerting residents to the contracting-out issue.

Overall, there was no dominant issue that gripped the cordial candidates meeting.

In addition to the inquiry about contracting out services, questions included a complaint about the smell coming from the sewage treatment plant on Fulton Street as well as transit, the youth and lack of staffing at libraries.

The no-smoking bylaw — smoking has dominated town council since January of this year — was brought up but didn't flare things up. The question to the mayoral candidates was about the decision to allow designated smoking rooms (DSRs) starting January 1.

None of the candidates said they would help in repealing the DSR bylaw.

Said Al Volpe: "I don't believe any kind of (bylaw) to encourage people to smoke is really doing anybody any good."

Some residents attended the meeting to help make up their minds before voting and to hear responses to issues they're concerned with.

Long-time resident Henk Verkerk of Lyndsay Court said transit must be offered to the new subdivision areas in town.

"There needs to be something available for the new homes," he said.

The meeting was put on by the Milton and junior chambers of commerce.

Mayoral candidate Vito Agozzino and public school board trustee John McTavish couldn't attend the meeting.

Jason Misner can be reached at jmisner@miltoncanadian-champion.com.

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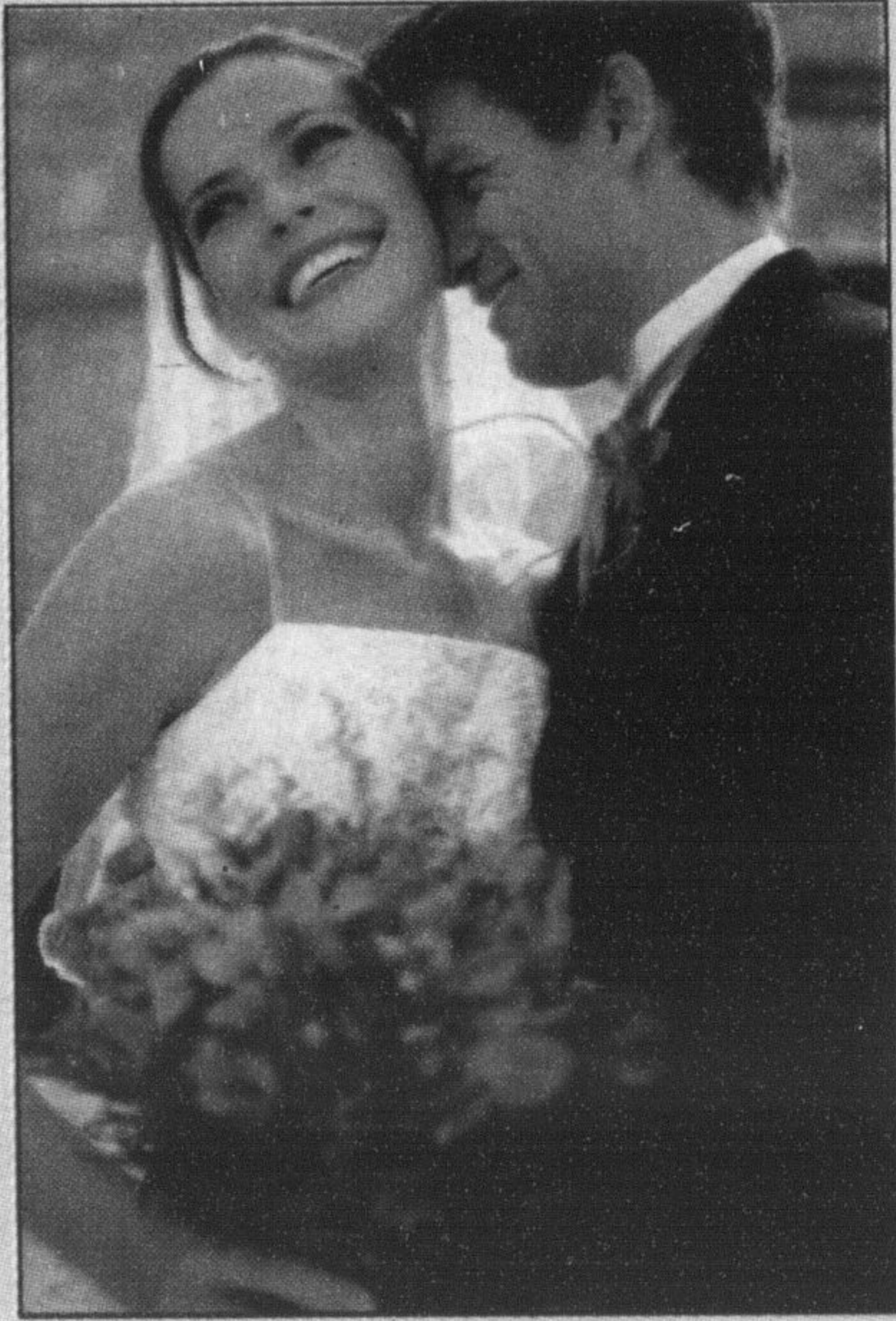
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