

OPSEU calls for end to study on contracting out

By JASON MISNER

The Champion

The union representing the 300-plus employees at Allendale as well as the residents and their families want to halt four staff layoffs and a controversial study of contracting out jobs at long-term-care facilities.

Terry Moore, representative of the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union (OPSEU) for Allendale, said people are upset by two Halton Region decisions they fear will disrupt care for the elderly.

Last month, the Region decided to eliminate a total of four positions in hairdressing and foot care, effective January 2.

Also, regional council approved a motion for staff to do a four to six-month study to see if laundry, maintenance and/or housekeeping positions should be contracted out. Those positions combined represent 35 employees.

Adelina Urbanski, Halton's commissioner of social and community services, said the decision to lay off four employees was made because Halton is one of the few long-term-care facilities in the GTA that has staff positions for hairdressing and foot care.

"We are doing everything we can to work with those specific individuals to offer education and upgrading opportuni-

ties," she said.

Also, because Halton will open two additional long-term-care facilities in Burlington and Oakville over the next year or so, Ms Urbanski said now was the best time to study the most cost-efficient way to run them.

"It's just being investigated and I want to stress that no decision has been made," Ms Urbanski said of the three departments being considered for contracting. "We want to do it very, very carefully. We can appreciate it can provide a real anxiety to people. It has nothing to do with the quality of work staff are performing."

Excellent quality of care is what Allendale resident Lois Walshe, 69, said she receives from the current hairdressers, and she doesn't want to lose that.

Bundled in a winter coat and hat, she braved the cold weather yesterday to speak at a rally and picket outside Allendale, located on Ontario Street South. It was held to support the Allendale workers and to make the two issues public.

"I don't know what to expect (from contractors)," she said, amid passing cars honking their horns.

OPSEU head Leah Casselman attended the rally in support of the employees and to voice her displeasure with the study.

"The fight is far from over," she told about a dozen people.

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Photo by NICK PERRY

Opposed to contracting out services, Allendale resident Lois Walshe speaks her mind to OPSEU head Leah Casselman outside the long-term-care facility yesterday.

Picture yourself here...



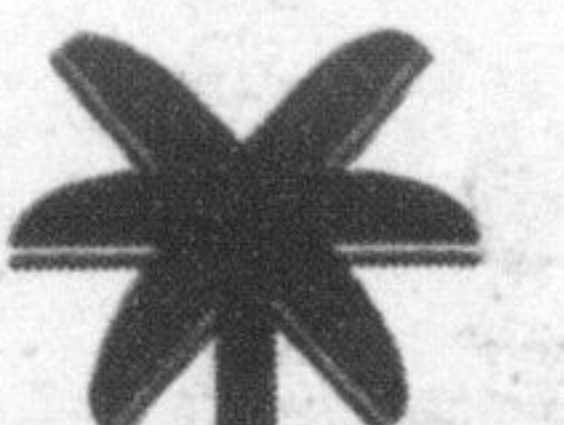
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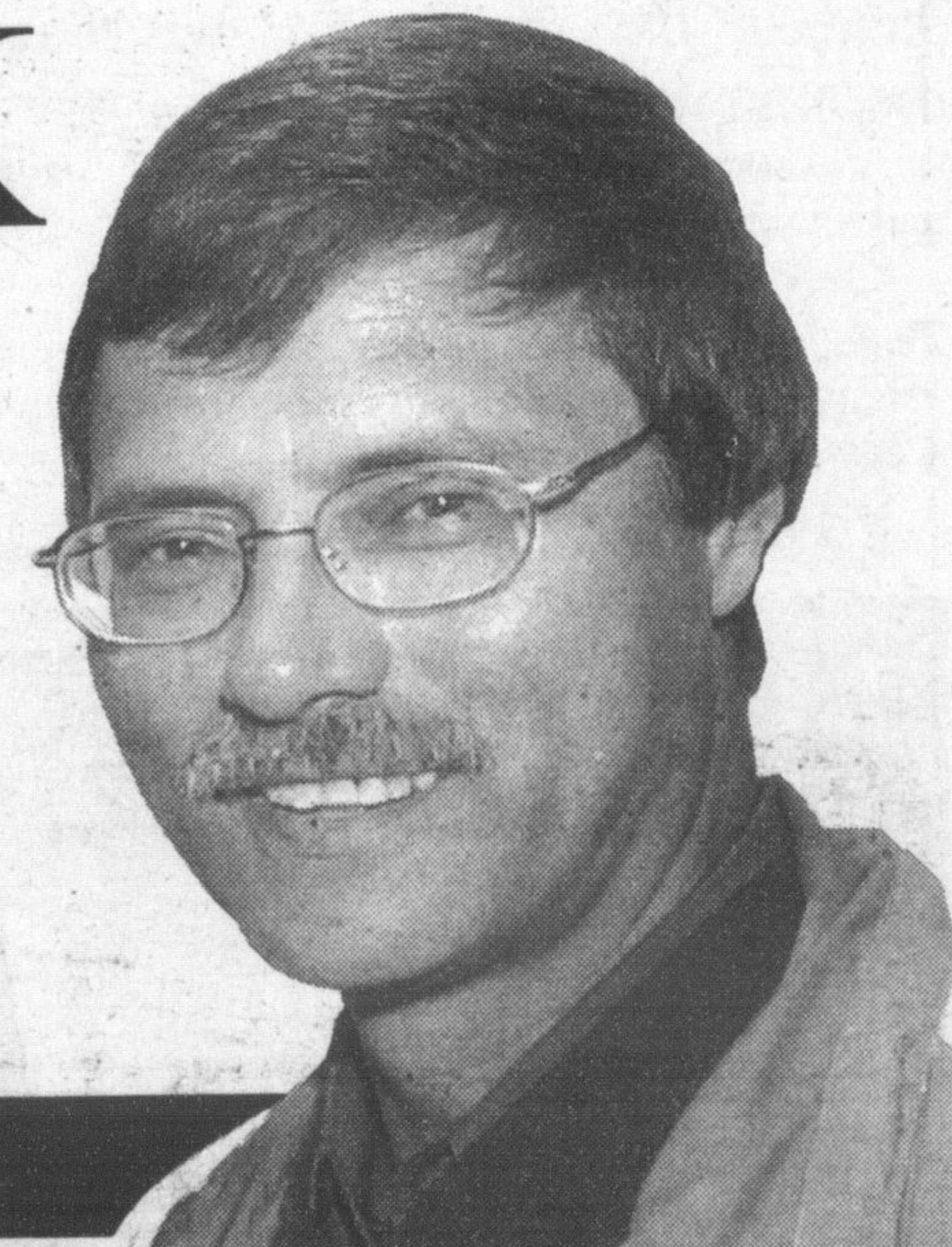
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