

# The VIEW from BLUE

Published by Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association

The largest ratepayers' association in The Blue Mountains

[www.bluemountainratepayersassociation.com](http://www.bluemountainratepayersassociation.com)

Box 405, Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z7

December 2009

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### MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Blue Mountains Ratepayers' Association is only \$25 a year from: Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association, Box 405, Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z7

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

# Prelude to a municipal election

By Michael P. Seguin

This is the first time we've had to wait four years instead of three years for the privilege to vote. Based on the number of Council and public meetings I have attended, no seats at Council should be considered safe. Many people are saying that they are not happy with the current attitude of Council regarding their concerns and needs and that they are prepared to express their disappointment with incumbents at the polls in November 2010.

Residents are tired of being bullied and portrayed as NIMBYs,

with issues not being recognized or taken into consideration at public meetings. They expect solutions and demand best practices be followed in their municipality, just as their employer expects in the workplace. Residents also expect to be consulted more on major issues, regardless of whether there's a legal requirement to do so.

In my opinion, the "sleeping municipal giant" has been awakened and it won't be satisfied till next November.

Historically, municipal voter turnout has been shamefully low, partly because of the (also shameful) high number of acclamations. We need to consider and encourage potential candidates, if only to provide some choices or alternatives. If you have any aspirations or desire to enact "change" in attitude and direction in the leadership of this community, please consider yourself as a candidate for the next election.

*See President's Report page 2*

## Medical emergencies in Grey County - See the Mailbag insert in this issue

In June of 2008, we ran an article by Steve Brass (an EMS educator and full time resident of The Blue Mountains) concerning medical emergency response services in Grey County. Frustrated by many failed attempts to persuade the Town and the County of Grey to improve medical emergency response services, Mr. Brass has brought this important issue to the attention of Jim Wilson, MPP for Simcoe Grey, who recently wrote to the Honourable Rick Bartolucci, MPP, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, asking for a review of possible deficiencies in this service.

Erika Engel, staff reporter for the *Courier Herald*, provided an excellent "special report" on the issue in their Nov. 18 edition. This can be viewed in the news section at [bluemountaincourierherald.com](http://bluemountaincourierherald.com).

Mr. Mike Muir, Manager, Grey County EMS, has responded to Mr. Brass about his concerns and we want to share this letter with you. **See the Mailbag insert accompanying this newsletter.** We welcome your suggestions. Send them to [info@bluemountainratepayersassociation.com](mailto:info@bluemountainratepayersassociation.com) so we can show Mr. Muir this is an issue that concerns us all and must be dealt with, sooner rather than later.

Mr. Brass's article can be viewed on our Website under Archived Articles.

## Election 2010 — The countdown begins

There could be a slightly shorter wait to vote for municipal candidates if a new Good Government Act is passed. This bill proposes a series of changes, including moving the next election from the second Monday in November to the fourth Monday of October.

Aspiring municipal councilors and mayors will have a couple of weeks less to run their campaigns which, by the way, can start as soon as they are registered to run, as early as January 4, 2010, the first business day of the year. If the bill passes, the next election will take place Oct. 25 rather than Nov. 8, 2010.

Interesting notes about the proposed change:

1. The new date precedes Halloween, often considered a problem because of large volumes of vandalism to election signs;
2. The new date precedes the clock change and provides more daylight hours in the evening;
3. The new date also saves on two weeks of spending by candidates. (It is important to note that candidates will no longer be able to keep surplus campaign funds in an account for their next election.

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## President's Report

*Continued from page 1*

The BMRA Board is planning an all-candidates meeting in early October 2010 to help our members decide on the best candidates to lead us over the next four years.

It is important to mention that our membership base is stronger than ever, with approximately 250 family memberships representing about 400 potential voters. In addition, we have now added 11 Condo memberships and 48 Board Directors who represent some 1,000 residential units in the Blue Mountain Resort area as well as another 1,500 potential voters.

Surely we can make a difference!

Starting with the municipal budget in December, we will be following and keeping you apprised of all the developments in the continuing saga of rising taxes and irrational spending in the new year.

If you have any topics or issues you want our Board to consider during the lead-up up to the municipal election, please do not hesitate to contact me through our Website ([info@bluemountainratepayersassociation.com](mailto:info@bluemountainratepayersassociation.com)) or send me a message via the Association's mailing address. You are the heart and soul of the Association and we value your opinion.

■ See story this page.

Such surpluses instead will go to the municipalities.)

We will keep everyone posted on the date changes. However, unless otherwise notified you are advised to remember the following information as we enter the year 2010:

You have the right to vote in municipal elections if:

- you are a Canadian citizen; and
- you are 18 years of age or older; and
- you reside in or own or are a tenant of land in The Blue Mountains or you are the spouse of such a person.

**By voting in the municipal election, you are selecting representatives who will determine the priorities and direction of our Town.**

The Blue Mountains utilizes the Vote by Mail process for municipal elections. A Vote by Mail ballot kit will be mailed in early October, 2010 to all eligible voters shown on the Voter's List. Voters then have the option of mailing the Ballot Return Envelope containing the sealed Ballot Secrecy Envelope and Voter's Qualification Form to the Town Office by Canada Post or directly to the Town Office until 8 p.m. on the final Voting Day, November 8, 2010 (October 25 if the Good Government Act is passed). There are no voting sites when you choose to Vote by Mail.

To ensure accuracy of the Voter's List, eligible voters may check the List beginning in September and if qualified, can be added to the Voter's List up to the close of voting, unless otherwise notified.

The Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association plans to sponsor an "All Candidates Meeting" at the beginning of October, 2010 in the Craigleith Resort Area. We also hope to partner with an associated group to hold another meeting in the Thornbury area. The details of these meetings will be passed on to you early in the new year, hopefully by our next newsletter in February.

Give some thought to those "juicy" questions you always wanted to ask our elected officials.

## Town's Website revamped

Have you viewed the Town's Website lately? The redesigned website features quick links to frequently asked questions, downloadable maps and road and weather reports.

Citizens are being asked to join the Website by signing up with a user name and password. From there they can receive town notices directly on any topics they may be interested in, including: meeting notices, notices from the Depot or the library and information from service clubs. If you have a chance, visit [www.thebluemountains.ca](http://www.thebluemountains.ca).

*Source: Courier-Herald 09/29/2009*

## Blue Mountains Family Health Centre beats another obstacle

Sept. 15 was a milestone day for the new family health centre in Thornbury. Mayor Ellen Anderson held a press conference at the building site to announce the signing of the three Memorandums of Understanding necessary to allow the transfer of the donated land to the Community Family Health Centre. These agreements also made way for the demolition of the back end of The Cidery building on Highway 26, which will do much to improve the appearance of the town entrance.

The downturn of the economy and the fact that grant applications from the North East Grey Health Clinics Inc. (NEGHC) to both the Provincial and Federal governments were not successful has made it necessary to delay the start date planned for 2009. The board has since downsized the building plans for the Health Centres by excluding the retail space for a pharmacy and physio-

therapy office in order to reduce building costs and ensure getting a shovel in the ground by next April.

The Blue Mountains has donated \$250,000 in cash, and NEGHC are presently working with them to explore other ways they can help financially toward the goal of an April start. Both sides are anticipating a positive outcome.

Meanwhile the fundraising program continues and has shown a significant change for the better since the Sept. 15 announcement and the continued improvement in the economy.

If you'd like more information, would like to volunteer or would like to make a donation to the Community Family Health Centres please check out the Website at: [www.communityfamilyhealthcentres.org](http://www.communityfamilyhealthcentres.org) or call 519-538-1311, ext. 4262.

We look forward to having you join us next Fall to celebrate the success of the Blue Mountains portion of our project to build Community Family Health Centres in both the Blue Mountains and Meaford to attract and retain physicians who will be credentialed at the Meaford Hospital.

## H1N1? Better we should all be vaccinated against HST!

By Michael P. Seguin

I'm not sure what's bothering me most: the H1N1 or the HST. Does the "H" stand for "help"? At least I can get a shot for the H1N1. What kind of pain killer can I get for this new cash grab called the "HST"?

Jim Wilson, our MPP for Simcoe Grey, says in the November 25, 2009 issue of the *Courier-Herald* that "taxes for an average middle-class family of four could increase by \$2,500 and by more than \$2,800 for a typical senior couple due to this new tax."

Ouch, that hurts!

Both he and Bill Murdoch, MPP for Grey Bruce Owen Sound, have been inundated by petitions, emails and calls and have vowed to do everything possible to stop this tax grab from coming into effect. I hope they yell loud enough.

In order to ram this new tax through the legislature, McGuinty is trying to push it through without any public consultation. This is typical of a Premier who, when elected, promised not to raise taxes. During the campaign he also pledged (in writing) to follow the Taxpayer's Protection Act, which mandated a referendum before any tax increase. Immediately after winning a majority, the Premier made it clear he is not a "man of his word" and introduced the largest single tax grab in Ontario's history with his poorly named "health premium."

Now McGuinty wants more money from us with the HST (I'm starting to get sick). On July 1, 2010, the Harmonized Sales Tax will raise the price of just about everything by 8%. Your household bills could be going up by at least another \$50-\$60 a month.

For you and thousands and thousands of other people in this province, the only way to stop this tax grab (and the pain that we will all suffer) will be to threaten McGuinty and his Liberal followers with defeat at the polls in 2011. For now, everyone should put pressure on the McGuinty government by writing him at [dmcguinty.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org](mailto:dmcguinty.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org) or support Jim Wilson by signing an HST petition at [jimwilsonmpp.com](http://jimwilsonmpp.com).

Enough is enough – we must fight back. We need to stop this dreaded HST or we'll all be working full time for the Government of Ontario.

### Emergency & Information

**Immediate response:** 911 (Do not call unless it's an emergency or you will be assessed a response charge of \$300)

**OPP** (Collingwood & Blue Mountains): 1-888-310-1122; (Administration): 705-445-4321. Blue Mountains Resorts Security: 705-445-0231 x8281/8911 (24 hours)

**Fire Department** (Craigeleith): 444-2244

**Municipal Offices:** Thornbury 599-3131. Paul Graham, Chief Administration Officer, x234; Robert Cummings, Treasurer, x235; Stephen Keast, Town Clerk, x237; David Finbow, Director of Planning and Building x246.



## ABOUT THE TOWN

with Michael P. Seguin

### Roundabout officially open

A roundabout has replaced the intersections at Grey Road 19, Grey Road 119 (Scenic Cave Road) and Mountain Drive. If you haven't experienced it, I suggest you give it a try. I'm impressed! Local residents will now benefit from better traffic control, reduced congestion and safer roads at the base of the Blue Mountain Resort. The resort, which invested \$600,000 in the project, will also profit from the potential to expand into the Orchard project at the

mountain and provide greater capacity on the ski slopes. Blue Mountain Resort President Gord Canning described the roundabout as "a major achievement . . . and we will now have a great entrance to the resort, the Town and our County."

Source: *Courier-Herald* 09/06/09

### Auditor finds deficits in reserve funds

In July, auditors conducted their annual audit of the Town of the Blue Mountain's 2008 financial statements. To their astonishment, they found that some of the reserve funds were in a negative position and recommended that council fix them. A negative reserve fund means that the Town has spent more than has been collected and is borrowing from reserve funds to finance capital projects.

The negative funds are: general government \$562,180; fire and rescue \$283,092; roads and related area \$1.9 million; Craighleith sewer capacity \$772,596; Thornbury East water \$79,508; Thornbury West sewer \$691,259; Thornbury East sewer \$80,705; Lora Bay sewers \$1,304,560; and Clarksburg sewer

## Neighbourhood Watch Alert!

Things your burglar won't tell you:

- Of course I look familiar. I was here just last week cleaning your carpets, painting your shutters, or delivering your new refrigerator.
- Hey, thanks for letting me use the bathroom when I was working in your yard last week! While I was I there, I unlatched the back window to make my return a little easier.
- Yes, I really do look for newspapers piled up on the driveway. And I might leave a pizza flyer in your front door to see how long it takes you to remove it.
- If it snows while you're out of town, get a neighbor to create car and foot tracks into the house. Virgin drifts in the driveway area a dead giveaway.
- If decorative glass is part of your front entrance, don't let your alarm company install the control pad where I can see if it's set. That makes it too easy.
- A good security company alarms the window over the sink. And the windows on the second floor, which often access the master bedroom and your jewelry. It's not a bad idea to put motion detectors up there too.
- It's raining, and you're fumbling with your umbrella, and you forget to lock your door - understandable. But understand this: I don't take a day off because of bad weather.
- I always knock first. If you answer, I'll ask for directions somewhere or offer to clean your gutters. (Don't take me up on it.)
- Do you really think I won't look in your sock drawer? I



always check dresser drawers, the bedside table, and the medicine cabinet. *Here's a helpful hint:* I almost never go into kid's rooms.

- You're right: I won't have enough time to break into that safe where you keep your valuables. But if it's not bolted down, I'll take it with me.
  - A loud TV or radio can be a better deterrent than the best alarm system. If you're reluctant to leave your TV on while you're out of town, you can buy a \$35 device that works on a timer and simulates the flickering glow of a real television. (Find it at [faketv.com](http://faketv.com))
  - Sometimes, I carry a clipboard. Sometimes, I dress like a lawn guy and carry a rake. I do my best to never, ever look like a crook.
  - The two things I hate most: loud dogs and nosy neighbors (Neighbourhood Watch members).
  - I'll break a window to get in, even if it makes a little noise. If your neighbor hears one loud sound, he'll stop what he's doing and wait to hear it again. If he doesn't hear it again, he'll just go back to what he was doing. It's human nature.
  - I'm not complaining, but why would you pay all that money for a fancy alarm system and leave your house *without setting it?*
  - Avoid announcing your vacation on your Facebook page. It's easier than you think to look up your address.
- Source: *Selected statements by convicted burglars, documented in the Reader's Digest, September 2009*
- (The inmates have spoken – time to join and become a Neighbourhood Watch member!)

\$364,696. This equates to a total negative reserve fund or deficit of \$6,038,596. The Town is relying on growth and development charges to offset these deficits.

Are you worried? I am! Does the expression “benefiting owners” come to mind as a way of paying for future capital projects? Just ask our neighbours in Lora Bay and Camperdown who are now being asked to help pay for certain capital water and wastewater improvements usually paid for by developers.

*Source: Courier-Herald 09/17/2009*

### **Craigleith Heritage Depot is one year old**

In September the Craigleith Heritage Depot celebrated its first year of restoration. The Depot represents part of the preservation of the 370 year history of the Craigleith area. Famed archaeologist Charles Gerrard says that the original pioneers in the area (the Flemings) dug a quarry near the water and were responsible for naming Craigleith, after a Scottish quarry they used to pass on their way to Edinburgh before they emigrated. Congratulations to the Depot and those involved in its preservation. A must see!

*Source: Courier-Herald 09/29/2009*

### **Village Association (BMVA) seeks tax relief for Plunge Aquatic Centre**

The Town staff continues, through its legal council, to deny the Blue Mountain Village Association's request to reclassify the Plunge Aquatic Centre into a lower tax bracket. The BMVA argues that it's a not-for-profit service organization and that the Aquatic Centre is a recreational facility benefiting the whole community and its members, who are a part of the community.

The BMVA has taken the position that in order to sustain this valuable community recreational resource the town should declare the Plunge a municipal asset under the Municipal Act. This would relieve this facility of its property tax burden, releasing funds the VA could use to increase destination marketing and assist in aquatic programming within the community. The Town should also pursue supplemental aquatic programming through grants.

The alternative – the Town will want to built their own aquatic pool at the taxpayers expense and it must be in the Thornbury area!

*Source: Courier-Herald 09/29/2009*

### **Wildlife centre proposed for Meaford**

The Toronto Wildlife Centre (TWC) made a presentation to the Meaford Council on Sept. 21 proposing a new facility to help rehabilitate sick and injured wildlife animals on an 82 acre property located just outside the town on Highway 26. The proposed facility would eventually include a wildlife hotline, wildlife rescue facilities and a veterinary hospital. It would also feature programs focusing on wildlife, youth volunteer opportunities, a kid's camp and a nature centre adjacent to the Georgian Trail. Educa-

tion is the main focus of the proposed facility. The TWC Executive Director said the facility will not become a zoo or the home of non-native wildlife, especially domestic animals such as cats and dogs. For information about TWC, visit their website at [www.torontowildlifecentre.com](http://www.torontowildlifecentre.com).

*Source: Courier-Herald 09/29/2009*

### **Georgian Trail e-bike ban may be reconsidered**

New legislation passed by the province on Oct. 3 permits the use of e-bikes up to a maximum weight of 120 kilograms on roads with cars and pedestrians. An e-bike is defined as a motor or power-assisted vehicle that can reach a maximum speed of 32 kilometres per hour. Municipalities were given the authority to determine where e-bikes may be ridden on their streets, bike lanes and/or trails.

The Georgian Trail Association (GTA) must now consider whether or not to allow electric bikes on the crushed-stone treadway of the Georgian Trail. The GTA initially rejected an application to allow the machines on the trail, stating that it wanted to preserve the trail for non-motorized traffic exclusively. Harriet Cummings, President of the Association, expects that there will be no change regarding their use on the Georgian Trail. Lets hope so!

*Source: Enterprise-Bulletin 10/07/2009*

### **Controversy continues over short term accommodation**

Despite Town efforts to bring in an interim control by-law and subsequently an official plan and zoning by-law amendment to control short term accommodations, Craigleith residents are growing impatient with lack of progress by the Town and the OPP. Complaints are still being made on a regular basis.

The Director of Planning and Building Services reported at a Council meeting that 502 incidents were registered in 2008, including noise, mischief, liquor licence act, disturbance of the peace, theft, breaking and entering and assault. Seventy-three charges were laid; in three cases the complainant declined to lay a charge. As of November, 402 incidents were reported, with 53 charges laid and five occasions in which the complainant declined to lay a charge.

Several Craigleith resort area residents dispute these numbers, saying that more calls to the OPP have been made but are not being registered. Residents are being asked to continue calling the OPP at 1-800-310-1122 and make sure their call is registered by asking for an incident number.

*Source: Courier-Herald 11/18/2009*

### **Real estate news**

The economy is definitely recovering – market sales activity through September 2009 (based on MLS statistics) has already reached about 94% of the 2008

volume. A strong third quarter was achieved mostly through over-\$500,000 home sales. Condo sales were 136, with 95 of them in Collingwood and 41 in the Blue Mountains.

According to Karen Poshtar of Royal LePage Collingwood, her company still has a substantial inventory of homes on the market, with only 31% of them seeing an offer. This probably is the trend with most other real estate companies.

Karen also reports in her quarterly newsletter that the Legacy Condos (Chateau Ridge, Cachet Crossing, Mountain Walk and Sierra Lane) are units that sell in the \$250,000-\$300,000 range. She indicates that the prospect of selling these units has been impacted by condo fees in the \$450+ per month range. There is an inability on the part of the \$250,000 purchaser to cover the maintenance costs.

Karen's quarterly newsletter deals with new developments and real estate trends in the Town's of Collingwood and the Blue Mountains. Visit her Website at [collingwoodhomes.ca](http://collingwoodhomes.ca).

### Quick Hits!

1. Collingwood is trying to work out a deal to purchase the Cinema 4 property at the corner of Huron and Minnesota Streets in Collingwood for \$1.4 million. The Town is considering the building as an opportunity for an arts and cultural centre and also a partnership with Georgian College.
2. Your journey along First Street through Collingwood should soon be less hectic. Construction is ahead of schedule and a middle turning lane should result in better traffic flow and fewer traffic accidents. Construction is expected to be completed before the end of the year – just in time for ski season.
3. The Blue Mountains recently updated fees and charges for Fire department services, emergency response services, municipally owned recreation facility rental rates, harbour services, Craigeith Heritage Deport services and ice rentals. You can view these new fees and charges at [www.theblue mountains.ca](http://www.theblue mountains.ca) (go to local government: by-laws-2009-By-law No. 2009-72).
4. The Town is planning to buy more land for the landfill disposal site at a cost of around \$52,700; this acquisition is to provide a greater attenuation (alleviation) zone, widening the safety zone for potential contamination.
5. The Ontario government has finally announced that it is upgrading 9.4 kilometers of Highway 26 between Meaford and Thornbury to enhance driving conditions and highway safety, i.e., pavement repairs, new passing lanes for traffic in both directions, and intersection and drainage improvements. Construction has begun and is expected to be completed next November. If you are driving to Meaford and beyond, you can expect some traffic delays due to lane closures.



Stray cats' unfinished new "home" on the 10th Line.

## The shelter of 'hope' survives — for now

By Michael P. Seguin

After much debate, Council and staff at the Town of Blue Mountains have finally relented and approved a temporary use by-law that will allow an animal (cat) shelter at 104 Hope Street until Oct. 31, 2010. Hopefully, this will allow sufficient time for the Georgian Bay Animal Rescue (GBAR) to raise enough funds to provide fixtures and equipment at the new animal shelter that was recently built at 545 10<sup>th</sup> Line, Collingwood, and approved for occupancy.

As I said in my speech to Council, "The many volunteers of the Georgian Bay Animal Rescue play a very important role in building our community. Their commitment to our community is a wonderful and cherished gift. Their volunteer service certainly improves the lives of others and will always create a lasting benefit to our community."

On behalf of the Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association I want to thank Council and staff for recognizing the importance of this valuable service. Their generosity in waiving all Town application fees will also not go unrecognized.

To the many volunteers of the Georgian Bay Animal Rescue and the residents of this community, much more work still needs to be done. For more information on donating, on upcoming fundraising events, and on the many, many animals needing loving forever homes, you are asked to visit the GBAR website at [cdhs.petfinder.com](http://cdhs.petfinder.com). You can also call (705) 455-5204 (leave a message).

Please help those who cannot help themselves. The animals count on your generous heart.

[www.bluemountainratepayersassociation.com](http://www.bluemountainratepayersassociation.com)

Have you visited our Website? It reports on lots of good stuff, with informative articles about your community and other info and ideas you should be aware of, including: art and cultural associations, maps, news media, attractions in and around the town, service clubs, ski areas and lots more. Check it out!

## Customer service for people with disabilities

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) became law in 2005. AODA is intended to change attitudes, values and behaviours towards accessibility to provide equal opportunities for all persons by Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025.

The Act sets accessibility standards in five categories: Customer Service; Transportation; Information and Communication; Built Environment, and Employment.

The Customer Service Standard (Ontario Regulation 429/07) became law on Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008 and must be completed by Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 for Ontario government agencies and boards, district schools, post-secondary education centers, hospitals, and transportation organizations. Private businesses, non-profit organizations, or other service providers with at least one employee in Ontario, must comply by Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012.

The regulation outlines some things concerned businesses and agencies must do to ensure they are providing accessible customer service to people with various kinds of disabilities:

1. Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities.
2. Set a policy on allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access goods and use services and concerning any other measures the organization offers.
3. Use reasonable efforts to ensure that policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
4. Communication with a person with a

disability in a manner that takes into account the disability.

5. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on the organization's behalf, on a number of topics as well as with those individuals who are involved in developing policies, practices and procedures.

6. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of the premises that are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by another law. If a service animal is excluded by law, other measures must be used to provide services.

7. Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing goods or services in premises open to the public or third parties.

8. Where admission fees are charged, provide notice ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability.

9. Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use goods or services are temporarily disrupted.

10. Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how goods or services are provided to people with disabilities and how the involved organization will respond to any feedback and take action on any complaints.

A designated public sector organization or other provider with 20 or more employees must:

1. Document in writing all policies, practices and procedures for providing accessible customer service, and meet other document requirements as set out in the standard.
2. Notify customers that documents required under the customer service standard are available upon request.
3. When giving documents required, provide the information in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

For information, visit: [www.AccessON.ca](http://www.AccessON.ca) or [www.mcsc.on.ca/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario](http://www.mcsc.on.ca/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario)

### **Membership in the Blue Mountains Ratepayers' Association offers you . . .**

1. Information about current local issues
2. A voice to improve the performance of local government
3. Monitoring of costs and benefits of our public services
5. Information for effective participation in local elections
6. An opportunity to assist local government in getting a better deal for our tax dollars
7. Regular mailings of *The View from Blue*  
... and lots more

### **Please pass it on . . .**

When you have finished reading this newsletter, please pass it on to your neighbours and encourage them to join our association!

### **Craigeith Community Centre**

Restored 1860s one-room schoolhouse.  
Designated as a heritage building.  
Includes kitchen facilities

**Ideal for:** Business meetings, Weddings, Social events, Anniversaries.

For rental information, contact Bruce Loveless at 705-446-4673.

## YOUR BMRA MEMBERSHIP – ITS TIME TO RENEW

Dear Member:

The winter season is upon us once again and we are now asking you to renew your family membership for 2010. Your membership fee is important to YOU so that your Association can continue to provide YOU with ongoing information on events and issues in YOUR community and can strongly represent YOU.

If you have already sent your application form and cheque, we thank you for your continued support. If you haven't renewed, then please fill out the application form below and mail it along with your cheque to the address shown on the form.

When you have completed your review of this newsletter, please share it with a neighbour and encourage them to join. If they wish to join, please provide us with their mailing address and we will send them an application form. An application form can also be obtained on the Association website at [bluemountainratepayersassociation.com](http://bluemountainratepayersassociation.com).

If you have any questions regarding your renewal, please do not hesitate to contact: Michael P. Seguin, President, at [mpseguin@rogers.com](mailto:mpseguin@rogers.com) or call 519-599-7179.



### BMRA Membership Application 2010

Please enclose a cheque for \$25 as your annual membership fee and send it with this application to:  
**Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association, Box 405, Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z7**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_ Chalet Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

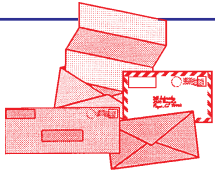
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Neighbour wishing to join \_\_\_\_\_  
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## The Mailbag

The following letter from the Grey County Emergency Medical Services was written in response to criticisms by Blue Mountains resident Steve Brass concerning the delivery of their services in Grey County.



### CORPORATION OF THE COUNTY OF GREY OFFICE OF THE MANAGER OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

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November 10, 2009  
Mr. Steve Brass  
152 Timmons Street  
Collingwood ON, L9Y 3Z2

Dear Steve:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me to respond to your concerns related to the delivery of Emergency Services in The Blue Mountains (TBM).

The County of Grey is responsible for the delivery of emergency medical services (EMS) and is involved with the public access defibrillation programs (PAD) in the Town of The Blue Mountains. Many points you mention are beyond the responsibility of Grey County EMS and we assume those points will be responded to by the appropriate parties. We would be more than willing to sit down with others to discuss points that would potentially benefit residents and visitors and we will make contact with the Town and the Blue Mountains Village Association.

I would like to comment on Grey County response times for EMS in TBM, call volumes and types and the County's role in PAD programs located in TBM.

#### **EMS Response Times**

EMS response times are calculated on the time that the EMS crew receives the call information from dispatch to the time that the crew arrives on the scene. There are four codes that are utilized when calls are dispatched as follows:

- Code 1 – non emergency transfer
- Code 2 – non emergency transfer – time sensitive (i.e., booked appointment)
- Code 3 – emergency call – non life threatening
- Code 4 – emergency call – life threatening

The current requirements for calculating response times are set by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MoH) and are entrenched in the Ambulance Act. The response time measured is the Code 4 – emergency call calculated as the 90th percentile. The requirement set by the MoH is based on the 1996 response time standard measured for all Code 4 calls responded to within the boundaries of Grey County. The 90th percentile is 15:54 meaning that all Code 4 calls responded to within the boundaries of Grey County must have a response time of 15:54 minutes or less in order to meet the standard. In simpler terms, this means that nine times out of ten we need to get to the call in 15:54 minutes or less. In 2008 the Code 4 90th percentile time was 15:36 minutes, which is within the timeline set by the MoHLTC.

You suggested that the average response time for EMS Code 4 response is over 15 minutes. This terminology is somewhat incorrect as the County does not calculate or report response times based on averages. If this were the case, the calculated 2008 average response time in IBM for Code 4 calls is 9:43 minutes. Measuring average response time is a poor indicator of system performance as the average response time is only the best of the worst response times. I would like to point out that contrary to your claim that the response time to Code 4 calls is greater than 15 minutes, when looking at all Code 4 responses the majority fall well under 15 minutes. When reviewing the call response times it must be pointed out that the response times look at all Code 4 responses to all areas of TBM including the village, ski hills, Craighleith, Thornbury and the outlying rural areas. It must also be considered that EMS responds in all weather conditions including the most inclement conditions where even snow removal equipment has been pulled off the roads.

To help provide a more balanced perspective on call response times a review of 2008 data was conducted and shows the following:

**Total Code 4 Calls: 500****Response time Total Calls**

1-3 minutes	30
3-6 minutes	113
6-9 minutes	89
9-12 minutes	127
12-15 minutes	80
15-18 minutes	42
18-21 minutes	10
>21 minutes	13

Included in the above response times are all Code 4 call types which include motor vehicle collisions with injuries, cardiac and respiratory emergencies, diabetics, other trauma and patients with decreased levels of consciousness. Vital signs absent (VSA) calls account for less than 2% of the annual Code 4 call volume comprised of both medical and traumatic causes. Sudden cardiac arrest calls account for one half of one percent of total Code 4 calls.

In December 2009 Grey County EMS began an in-depth analysis of vital signs absent calls and has been tracking the data closely. Between December 2008 and October 2009 there have been 98 Code 4 responses for vital signs absent patients of which 4 calls occurred in TBM. Of the 4 calls, two were traumatic VSA and 2 were un-witnessed cardiac arrest. None of the patients would have benefited from the use of a defibrillator. In terms of locations where the patient was found to be VSA, the patient's residence was the location 85 times, roads and highways 7 times and other public locations (ski hills, stores, beaches/waterfront, parking lots, etc.), 6 times.

Studies have shown (Iwami, T. et al, 2006 and Malcolm, G. E. et al, 2004) that the majority of out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur in the patient's residence. The empirical review of Grey County's data suggests the same. Additionally Stiell et al, 2004, identified that survival from out-of-hospital sudden cardiac arrest is 5% in an optimal system with first response defibrillation programs. There is a need to recognize that sudden cardiac arrest does not carry high probability of a successful outcome and that emergency services are not capable of reaching a sudden cardiac arrest patient in the ideal time of 4-6 minutes in all cases. The fact that most sudden cardiac arrests occur in the patient's residence, and that those residences are spread between communities with low urban densities and rural communities with very low urban densities, the availability and cost of those required resources would be highly prohibitive.

Taking the above into consideration, it is imperative that the public understands that the chances of surviving an out of hospital sudden cardiac arrest in rural Ontario are very low in spite of our best attempts to maximize emergency resources.

**Service Levels**

Grey County EMS provides ambulance service to IBM 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year. Staffing at the Craighleith base is from 10:00 to 22:00 hours every day with coverage from 22:01 to 09:59:59 provided by stations in Meaford and Collingwood. As EMS delivery is a County-wide responsibility, it needs to be recognized that the overall model of service delivery is based on a County wide view and not individual communities. Even though we have stations located throughout the County in fixed locations, the resources are utilized for standby coverage on a regular basis and are not permanently based in the station. An example of this is the Meaford 08:00 to 16:00 vehicle being placed in TBM between 08:40 and 10:00 hours to provide coverage. Ambulances are moved where needed on an ongoing basis.

In determining service delivery levels, the County assesses response times, call volumes and geographical influences. As mentioned earlier, the 90th percentile response time to Code 4 calls is meeting the legislated requirements for Grey County. This means that the fundamental standard by which we are measured has been met. Secondly, we review call volumes in determining the need to increase service levels.

<b>The Blue Mountains</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Code 1</b>	<b>Code 2</b>	<b>Code 3</b>	<b>Code 4</b>	<b>Code 5</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	2008	15	29	227	632	521	1424

The above table shows the number of calls completed in The Blue Mountains in 2008. The number of Code 4 calls is different from the preceding data as data run in this format shows all dispatched calls whether or not the crew arrived on-scene. Earlier data reflects calls that had a documented arrived on-scene time.

When broken down by time of day and by seasonal variations, the call types and volumes fluctuate dramatically. The following charts identify the call volumes based on seasonal fluctuations and by time of day.

<b>Period Dec. 2007 to Nov. 2008</b>	<b>Code 4 Call Volume 10:00-21:59:59</b>	<b>Code 4 Call Volume 22:00 to 09:59:59</b>
December through March	327	82
April through August	83	73
September through November	33	47

The call volumes identified in the chart show significant calls occurring when ski season is in operation. The majority of the calls are related to ski hill injuries and higher activity levels in the village. During the periods when the ski hills are not in great use, the call volumes decrease dramatically. Between the hours of 22:00:00 and 09:59:59 there were a total of 202 Code 4 calls, which equates to just over one call every two days between those hours. Utilizing this call data combined with the County meeting its legislated response times makes the argument for the additional resources a difficult one to justify from a financial and resource allocation standpoint.

There are similarities in the broader healthcare sector seen in the hospital sector. The need for increased health care levels such as angiogram and angioplasty services in Grey County has been argued for many years. Currently these services are available only in urban centres such as Kitchener Waterloo, London and Toronto. Not every hospital in Ontario has these specialized services due to the lack of sufficient patient numbers to warrant placing the services in every regional hospital. Grey County EMS does see increased work in transporting these patients to tertiary care centres. However, we recognize that in rural Ontario not all specialized services can be delivered locally. The comparison can be made looking at the lower call volumes which do not justify an increase in service levels.

Thirdly, we look at geographical anomalies that may impact service delivery. Currently, there are no identifiable geographical issues with respect to service delivery with TBM that are not consistent with the rest of Grey County, therefore there is no impact on service delivery levels.

Your suggestion of providing a single paramedic response unit has merit. However, there are difficulties with this type of unit being utilized to provide additional coverage during the night hours. There are significant health and safety concerns having a single paramedic respond to emergencies unless they have allied agency back-up. Most systems that incorporate single medic response units are in urban centres where timely allied agency response is readily available. Having worked as a single medic on a response unit as a paramedic in downtown Toronto, I can assure you that there are inherent risks with programs of this nature.

## **2) Tiered Response – Fire**

The provision of tiered response by the fire service is a responsibility of the local government and we presume this matter will be responded to you by The Blue Mountains.

## **3) Tiered Response – Police**

The provision of tiered response by the Police service is a responsibility of the local government and we presume this matter will be responded to you by The Blue Mountains.

## **4) Public AED Program**

The County of Grey through Grey County EMS has taken on a stewardship role in providing a support network for a public access defibrillation programs in communities throughout Grey County. In late 2007 the County and the Blue Mountains partnered in the PAD program with oversight for the program being provided by the County. Initial site visits were arranged and as well as sessions organized which saw CPR/Defibrillator training for town staff being completed by late 2008. Blue Mountains staff has continued to provide in house training to staff through their fire department first aid trainers and have identified that there are approximately fifty CPR/Defibrillator trained staff at TBM. Grey County EMS has assisted with the placement of over 50 Automated External Defibrillators (AED) throughout Grey County and has provided training sessions in CPR and AED use. We recognize that although there may be limited use of the devices, the fact that they are available will provide the best chance of survival for a victim of sudden cardiac arrest.

## **5) Public Awareness Program**

Although your comments were directed primarily at TBM, we believe that public education is extremely important and warrants further discussion. It is reasonable to state that the majority if not all citizens are aware that activating 911 is the appropriate action to take when an emergency arises. The public awareness surrounding this concept is very strong and has been fostered over the years by public relations campaigns. To say that all of the work is done would be a disservice to our citizens and as TBM continues to attract both new permanent residents and tourists, the need to continue to educate the public becomes even more important. The County is interested in hearing your ideas on how to better educate the public in the areas of emergency response systems and PAD programs.

## **6) Schools**

The County PAD program through Grey County EMS is supportive of placing AEDs in Grey County Schools, however it will be incumbent on the programs to take an ownership role as the present PAD program has reached its administrative support limits.

## **7) Emergency Signage**

While the County supports any improvements in accessing 911 emergency services on the Georgian trail, the jurisdiction over the trail is not under the County's role and responsibilities. The County is aware that signage markers on the Georgian Trail were in place originally. However, it has come to our attention that many of the markers were removed for unknown

reasons by persons utilizing the trail.

Currently, 911 services are accessed by trail users utilizing personal cell phones. In early 2010, there are changes coming to the telecommunications industry with respect to enhanced 911 services which will utilize multiple wireless communication towers to triangulate the location of the call within 10 to 300 meters of the call location. This will help to greatly improve emergency services response along the trail.

#### **8) New Town Requirement**

The points you have raised regarding the requirement for any employer with 50 or more employees to have an AED on site is a responsibility of the local government and we presume this matter will be addressed by The Blue Mountains.

#### **Conclusion:**

I would like to thank you for bringing your concerns regarding emergency response in The Blue Mountains to the attention of the agencies responsible for the provision of those services. By bringing forward your concerns you have opened the door for discussion and dialogue which will greatly help us to improve the services we provide to the public. It is my understanding that you have been invited to attend an upcoming Transportation and Public Safety Committee meeting as a delegation which I believe would be of great benefit to the political representatives.

The County believes it is providing excellent Emergency Medical Services to the citizens of The Blue Mountains and the remaining communities throughout Grey County. We are meeting the response time requirements set out by the Ministry of Health and have embarked on an aggressive Public Access Defibrillation program throughout the County. We strongly believe that we have in place the appropriate resources to respond to victims of sudden cardiac arrest with our current EMS system and PAD program and are continuously looking for ways of improving those systems. Again, thank you for bringing your thoughts and ideas forward.

Sincerely,

Mike Muir, Manager, Grey County EMS

### **The Budget Game**

Budget meetings started on November 17<sup>th</sup> and, to my surprise, after only two meetings Council came up with a budget increase of +2% along with +2% for water and no increase for sewer. But if you thought taxpayers could call it a game, think again – we were only in the first period of the game.

The next period came on Monday night November 23<sup>rd</sup> with the introduction of the “**Budget Enhancement Report Summary**” which said in effect that the CAO had a wish list of items totaling \$250,063 which had been left out of the original budget and should now be considered because the Mayor and one Councillor had not attended the second meeting. With one councillor still absent what followed I can only describe as an embarrassment.

When we start talking about whether to spend money on a golf course, a youth coordinator or the fire department, I am sorry Madame Mayor and Deputy Mayor but the fire department gets my vote hands down for the simple fact that the fire department is an essential service. Why did the fire department’s budget come in at +2%, while the parks and trail budget was at +13% and the CAO and Clerk’s office budget was at +34%. The answer is the fire department played the game and the rest did not.

It makes no sense to me to have a Council direct staff to come in with a +2% and then change the game in the second period with staff asking Council to reconsider an additional increase of \$250,000 or +2.50%, which would bring the total tax increase to +4.50%. The scary thought to all of this: was this the game plan all along?

At least, that’s the way I see it.

Paul Mitchell

### **“Smart” development**

Response to Paul Mitchell’s editorial regarding “Big is Not Always Smart:” (see [bluemountainratepayersassociation.com](http://bluemountainratepayersassociation.com), October, Current Articles)

It has been my concern with all the major development in this area that this town has suddenly been receiving an incredible increase in the amount of tax revenue. We expect them to act responsibly but unfortunately this is not always the case as has been seen throughout the large corporations who felt that this money was inexhaustible and was to be used any way they felt reasonable. With the devaluation of property in Blue Mountains, there is going to be a reduction in this tax manna and any spending by the council should be for necessary improvements in the areas that they are responsible for and not in extra fluff.

Thanks Mr. Mitchell for bringing this to our attention and I hope you will add this voice and others to your concerns.

R. Fielden MD, Condo Member