

# 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

February 2010

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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

### Election Day in our Town — pay attention

By Michael P. Seguin

**J**ust in case you have forgotten, there will be a municipal election this year: **October 25**. This is the first time you have had to wait four years instead of three for the privilege of voting. Way too long for me! Unless there are changes we will have another four years of the “status quo” — the same old attitudes and the business-as-usual approach.

Is this what you want? Isn't it time for change?

Many people have expressed to me over the past year their unhappiness with the current attitude of Council regarding their concerns and needs. These people are now prepared to express their disappointment at the polls on Oct. 25.

Your expression of unhappiness is one thing — but actually doing something about it is another. Unless you vote and express your democratic right, your complaints mean nothing to this Council and surely will not have much effect on next one elected.

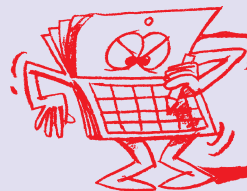
We had less than a 40% turnout in the last election. There is no excuse for such apathy when all you have to do is mail your ballot in. Your association plans to do its best to improve on the last election's poor performance. Should nothing change and we again achieve a low voter turnout, then I will be forced to concede not only my disappointment but also the fact your association was not effective in communicating the importance of this election and its impact on your future tax dollars.

Over the next nine months, your association will

do its best to keep you informed on the major issues and bring you up-to-date on the candidates as they file their nomination papers and reveal their election platform. This information will also be posted on our Website at [www.bluemountainratepayersassociation.com](http://www.bluemountainratepayersassociation.com). We will post survey questions to gauge your interests and concerns.

The BMRA is planning an “All-Candidates” meeting on **Oct. 2** to help our members and the public decide on the best candidates to lead us over the next four years. The preliminary details of the time and location can be found

*See President's Report page 2*



**MARK YOUR  
CALENDAR  
FOR OUR AGM**

- Saturday June 5, 2010, beginning at 8.45 a.m.
- Ravenna Room at the Blue Mountain Inn (conference centre lower level)
- Annual General Meeting of the Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association
- Members of Town Council and their Senior Management Team will join us to report on Town projects and issues and are prepared to answer your questions of concern.

***Reserve this date!***

## The Town's 2010 budget finally adopted by Council

By Michael P. Seguin

At a meeting on Jan. 25, 2010, Council for The Blue Mountains finally adopted the 2010 budget, reflecting a 2.0% tax levy in 2010 that will result in \$9,775,884 being collected from your pocket books (soon to be over \$10 million). This also implies a 3.0% levy in 2011 and 3.5% in 2012. However, let me remind you that 2011 and 2012 come after the election and there are no guarantees – at least not for the existing members of Council.

From Nov. 30, 2009 to Jan. 25, 2010, all kinds of issues and numbers have been “juggled” to keep the increase at 2.0% and help get these members of Council re-elected. The propaganda posted on the Town's Website and in the newspapers would lead you to believe that there has been lots of “restraint, cost reductions and deferrals.” But as I mentioned to you before, the CAO let it slip at a budget meeting that some “smoke and mirrors” were involved and the Director of Finance, Robert Cummings, has indicated that there is some “padding” in the budget.

In order to achieve a 2.0% tax levy, Council was faced with a large reduction in Ontario Municipal Partnership Funding (over \$100,000), a revised assessment growth estimate (now 0.6% instead of 1.0%) and the need for additional salary and benefits in the CAO/ Clerks department – a shortfall of \$134,900. Staff recommended and Council approved:

- Cutting funds from training and travel in all departments (a measly \$5,000 from an over-inflated \$250,000+ budget)

- A reduction in budgeted legal costs for the planning department (\$10,000, probably from the STA legal issues)

- Cutting the OPP budget, since there was lots of extra money in the reserves in case the police budget fell short in 2010 (\$25,900)

- Taking some money from the Harbour fees which are used to fund the Police Services budget since local

OPP also provide security services to the Harbour (\$5,000)

- Cutting \$75,000 in salaries and benefits from the Fire Department by delaying the hiring of a new Fire Fighter

- Cutting \$14,000 in salaries and benefits relating to a Communications and Economic Development Coordinator.

The other part of the budget that was approved involves approximately 125 projects amounting to \$14.50 million to be funded from grants, reserves, development charges, taxation, user fee rates and debt.

It is important to point out that the reserves are dwindling at an alarming rate (a further 12% decline is expected in 2010), the amount of development charges to be collected is optimistic at best (less than 5.0% new growth is expected over the next three years) and the debt load is increasing at a rapid pace (by 20% in 2010).

Are the health of our finances and the current spending level sustainable at this rate without large tax increases in the near future? My guess is “no” and we will certainly be asked pay for the large debt load, most likely starting after the election. Are you concerned? I am!

For more information about the 2010 budget, including tax levy, capital projects, operating budget and expenses you are asked by the Town to visit their Website at [www.thebluemountains.ca](http://www.thebluemountains.ca). For a more impartial assessment or opinion you can ask me at [mpseguin@rogers.com](mailto:mpseguin@rogers.com).

## HST to increase cost of home ownership

Andres Paara, the President of the Georgian Triangle Real Estate Board, spoke recently about the impact of the proposed harmonized sales tax (HST) on the price of local home ownership.

Paara says that Bill 218 (which includes the HST) will increase legal fees, appraisals, real estate commissions, home inspection fees and moving costs by about 8%, adding about \$1,500 in new taxes to the average residential real estate transaction in Ontario (based on an average resale price around \$300,000).

For current owners, the HST will add hundreds of dollars in taxes (around \$500 per annum) on utility bills such as gas, electricity and home heating fuel, on home renovation labour, the cost of lawn upkeep or landscaping and the cost of snow removal.

• Source: *Courier-Herald* 12/04/2009

## President's Report

*Continued from page 1*

in our “Election Corner” on page 3.

If you have any topics, issues or questions that you want the BMRA Board to consider in the lead-up to the municipal election, please do not hesitate to contact me through our Website, via email at [info@bluemountainratepayersassociation.com](mailto:info@bluemountainratepayersassociation.com), or at our association's mailing address. Don't be afraid to express your opinion(s) so we can share them (anonymously if you wish) with all our members. Remember, you are the heart and soul of the Association and we value your opinion.

If you think it's time for a change, remember: Only *YOU* can do it, and – *YES* you can!

### INFOLINE: 211

Need help? Got a question?  
Simply dial the INFOLINE at 211  
anytime – day or night.

## Hydro bills set to skyrocket

By Jim Wilson, MPP, Simcoe-Grey

The advent of a new year is typically a time when people start to rein in spending and adhere to a strict budget after an often expensive Christmas season. This year that budget will grow to be even tighter due to Dalton McGuinty's hydro scheme that will set us on a course for skyrocketing energy prices.

The imminent double whammy this year comes in the form of time-of-use pricing and the new Harmonized Sales Tax. Put together, these two McGuinty government policies are just the beginning of a fiscal avalanche that will see us all paying more to get less from government in 2010 and beyond.

Time-of-use pricing is just as it sounds. It allows hydro companies to charge you based on the time of day you use electricity, which is calculated using those new Smart Meters that have probably already been installed at your home. Many communities already have this system in place.

To get a better picture of how this will affect us, all we need to do is take a look back at last year's power prices. Between Nov. 1 and April 1 from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m., weekdays and weekends, it cost 4.4 cents per kWh to use electricity; from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays it cost 8 cents; and from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. weekdays it was 9.3 cents. Averaged out over the full 168 hours in a week and you are paying 6.224 cents per kWh – that is a full 7.3% above the current rate of 5.8 cents per hour for the first 1,000 kWh used by the average household.

Time-of-use pricing is hailed in some corners as a terrific energy efficiency tool, and in some ways that's true. The problem is, if you're like me, I don't cook my meals, watch the TV, use my computer or light my house during the middle of the night. Nor do I keep my refrigerator on purely during the wee hours of the morning. Like my freezer, it runs all the time. These electronics and appliances are among those responsible for about 20% of a typical monthly hydro bill.

The way this new pricing system is being implemented is really just a hydro money grab cloaked in energy efficiency. Most of us may be able to adjust, but seniors living on fixed incomes who are at home during the day will get hit the hardest. In fact it was complaints from local seniors that promoted me to write this column.

Now if a 7.3% increase isn't enough to

grit your teeth until the bill arrives, Mr. McGuinty is also throwing an additional 8% at you when the Harmonized Sales Tax comes into effect on July 1. This amounts to more than a 15% increase in our hydro bills.

Regrettably, there's more bad news. Mr. McGuinty's Green Energy Act allows producers of renewable energy to be paid rates as high as 80 cents per kWh. Compare that to current market prices of 3.3 cents per kWh, or even the 4.5 cents the government-owned Ontario Power Generation gets for most of its electricity. Expensive, isn't it?

Don't get me wrong, I'm all for renewable energy, but let's face it, its production should come with some connection to the current economic situation. Even worse, Mr. McGuinty is binding successive governments to these rotten policies by guaranteeing these horrible prices with 20-year contracts.

So who gets hurt by these energy policies? Well you and me of course. And all this from the guy who swore in 2003 he'd freeze electricity rates.

• *This article was abstracted from the Courier-Herald, Jan. 26, 2010. Jim Wilson is the Member of Provincial Parliament for Simcoe-Grey. Visit [www.jimwilsonmpp.com](http://www.jimwilsonmpp.com) for more news from Queen's Park.*

Let us remind you that **October 25** is a very important date to remember.

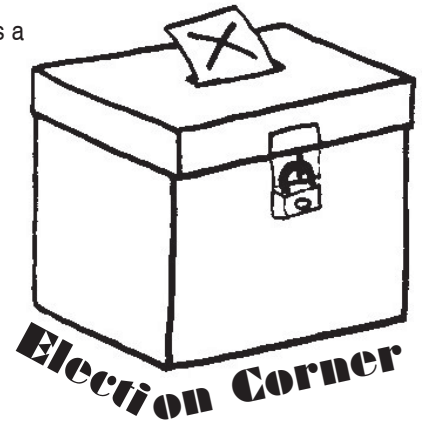
That's the day you will be asked to vote for a leadership that has energy and vision, and one that puts property taxpayers' rights first rather than the occupants of Town Hall. Let us remind you that if you don't vote and we have a dismal turnout, then *nothing* will really change. It's this type of apathy that is responsible for the re-election of long-time incumbents on name recognition alone; such incumbents generally interpret a low voter turnout as approval of the status quo and a "business-as-usual" approach.

Is this what you want?

Over the coming nine months leading up to the election, we promise to keep you informed on the major Town issues. But at the end of the day, we can't change the makeup of this Council — only **YOU** can do that by casting your ballot either in person or by mail (a voting kit will be sent to you) on Oct. 25, 2010.

For more information on how you can vote in the Town of the Blue Mountains, please visit our Website at [www.bluemountainratepayersassociation.com](http://www.bluemountainratepayersassociation.com) or the Town of Blue Mountains Website at [www.thebluemountains.ca](http://www.thebluemountains.ca).

Candidates have until Sept. 10 (Nomination Day) to file their nomination papers. As of the date of the writing of this article, five candidates had filed: Ellen Anderson, Marshall H. Heatherington, Sheldon A. Rosen, Duncan McKinlay and John McGee (see election story on page 10).



## The short term accommodation challenge – the Great Awakening

By Lester Posen

**Y**ou either own, acquired through family or finally decided to buy a piece of property that you can use as a “getaway” in The Blue Mountains. But this is just the financial component of your investment. In smaller communities, there is also the need to invest personal capital. Personal capital, by my internal dictionary, equates to the giving of your own time to ensure that your interests are properly represented in the local environment.

Considering that property is the single largest investment most of us make, it is imperative that we ensure our peaceful enjoyment of it. It is amazing, however, how little we invest in ensuring that we are able to do so. This may sound confusing so let me explain:

The Blue Mountains is a prime target for many people because of its abundance of activities and the idyllic setting in which to establish a primary home, a retirement home or a second home. The flipside is that this area is also prey to developers, individuals or companies who seek the opportunity to leverage assets of the community to drive a bottom line.

For the most part, the town plan and zoning have been established to ensure peaceful enjoyment of our investments. However, more and more often we see that business people with ties outside of the area or in far reaches of the area, are establishing business ventures that skirt the plan and zoning established by the town.

The greatest issue facing the town and its future as a community is that of Short Term Accommodations or STAs. These are, for the most part, owner-absent rental properties providing very short rentals: e.g., one day, a weekend, or one week. These are unsupervised accommodations that are rented by people who are looking for a low cost get-away without supervision.

This has become a hot issue for all areas of The Blue Mountains. Developers are snapping up prime properties and purpose building accommodations to drive an STA market. Most of these STAs are situated in residential areas, near beaches, maybe even next door to you. The challenge here is that we, as the adjacent land-owners, are left to deal with the noise, garbage, parking and general interruption of peaceful enjoyment of our own properties.

The developer’s discussion here is that they are being responsible because they: bring business to the area; have a deposit from the renter to discourage damage to their property; have a “property manager” who supervises the property, etc. In reality, the business that they are taking is business that should come

to a properly zoned motel or hotel or legally conforming rental company.

The renters have already decided to come to our area and support our legally conforming businesses and attractions. But the STAs are operating a business that does not pay a business tax to our town. The STA owner levies a deposit on their property to protect themselves against damage. There is no provision for compensation to adjacent land owners for damage or loss of peaceful

enjoyment of their properties. As for STA property managers, they are hired to go in after the rental period to clean up the building, clean up the property and assess if there is a charge against the deposit for the owner of the STA.

So, where am I going with this discussion? The Blue Mountains has passed a By-law to regulate these STAs. This By-law sets out operation, licensing, zoning, location – all of the components that we would

expect from our elected officials. But this By-law has been challenged by the owners of some of the larger STAs before the Ontario Municipal Board.

The bottom line here is that these developers believe that they have rights that take priority over you and me to operate these businesses in our town, next door to you and me, without regulation.

Here is your call to action:

Support this new By-law! Make it known to your elected officials that you support this By-law. Write or call them and let your voice be heard!

**Don't just sit back and hope that someone else will do this for you!**

It is infinitely easier to contact the town than ever before. They have a toll-free telephone number and all members of council and employees have email addresses (see page 1). Use these resources. This is a critical moment for all of us who own, live and enjoy the recreational peace of our properties.



*The big challenge: Short Term Accommodations rented by people who are looking for a low-cost getaway without supervision*

### 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.

**Breakdown of the most recent cost estimates and pertinent details for the new Blue Mountains Town Hall:**

Land Acquisition Costs (Former Gas Station & Retail Store & MNR/ORC acquisition)	\$850,000
Demolition of Retail Store, Gas Station, Underground Tank Removal, Old Town Hall	\$145,000
Removal of Impacted Soils	\$200,000
Environmental Consultant	\$60,000
Placement of Engineered Fill	\$200,000
Design Services (Architects & Engineers)	\$540,000
Proposed Building:	
Basement	7,226 sq. ft.
First and Second Floor	19,225 sq. ft.
Estimated Cost Per square Foot (LEED Silver Quality):	
Basement	\$130/sq. ft.
First and Second Floor	\$240/sq. ft.
Total Estimated Construction Costs	\$5.6 million
External Parking Lot Development	\$85,000
Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment	\$250,000
Site Works, Landscaping	\$300,000
Moving	\$50,000
Contingency@3.5%	\$168,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$8,448,000</b>
Cost Over-Runs	Unknown

Source: Town Staff Report dated Oct. 1, 2009 and attachment to Report SRB.10.04 dated Jan. 25, 2010

## Blue Mountains Council prepares for construction of new Town Hall

The projected budget for the new Town Hall is now set at \$8.448 million. It was initially set at \$7,950,000 last year but unexpected contamination and remedial costs of around of \$505,000 have upped the budget by 6.26%.

It is important to note that the Town received a huge commitment from the Infrastructure Stimulus Funding (ISF) Program: \$4.6 million. The critical date associated with this funding is that the new Town Hall must be substantially completed by **March 31, 2011**.

On Jan. 25, Council was advised by the Director of Planning & Building Services, Mr. David Finbow, that a building of this size usually takes around 10-12 months to build, and a lead time of about 8-10 weeks is required for steel delivery (piles). He also advised that the tender bid process would need to start by March 1, with a 4-6 week review period followed by an evaluation and award. Assuming that the tender process is completed within this time frame, the construction start date (piles) will be June 1 at the earliest.

With regard to financing and funding, approximately \$73,500 per annum for the next five years will come from taxation, while \$17,640 per annum for five years will come from our water rates, with another \$17,640 per



Artist's concept of the new Blue Mountains Town Hall

annum for five years from sewer rates. The monies from taxation and your user rates are basically needed to pay down the borrowing costs (debt load) of approximately \$1,333,800 in 2010 and 2011.

There it is folks – a quick summary of the details. Are you confident that the costs will not rise, especially with a tight construction period. Will our taxes and user rates go up to offset over-runs? Are you satisfied that the Town has done everything to reduced costs and show restraint? Does spending \$250,000 on new furniture, fixtures and equipment show restraint and good judgment? Is spending \$50,000 on moving costs for a distance of less than 50 metres seem reasonable? Are any

volunteers available to help save on moving costs?

When the new Town Hall has been built, will taxpayers be faced with a revised strategic plan to ensure “long-term financial sustainability,” i.e., higher taxes, higher water rates and higher sewer rates?

There are so many questions to ask – I’m sure you must have lots more. We welcome your comments concerning this development – please email us at [info@bluemountainratepayersassociation.com](mailto:info@bluemountainratepayersassociation.com).

Remember to save the important questions for our Town guests at the AGM, which is now scheduled to be held in the Ravenna Room at the Blue Mountain Inn on Saturday, June 5, 2010 (just about the same time construction is scheduled to start).

## Town gives more cash and a loan to the health centre

By Michael P. Seguin

In our December, 2009 newsletter, we reported that the Town had donated \$250,000 in cash toward the development of a new family health centre in Thornbury and that the building committee for the North East Grey Health Clinics Inc. (NEGHC) was working with the Town to explore other ways to help financially with the start of construction in April, 2010.

Well, the discussions heated up and at a Dec. 14 Council meeting, the Town’s elected officials, in a split vote, approved the maintenance of the previous \$250,000 pledge for construction costs and to provide an additional \$100,000 in grants for start-up fees and charges. These monies will come from the Working Capital Reserve, which will require replenishment by \$250,000 over the next several years, probably from taxation starting in 2013.

The building committee also received approval for an interest-free loan of \$420,000 for a maximum of five years to assist with costs. Starting in 2011, this loan is to be repaid over five years from fund-raising efforts.

Finally, the building committee received approval to enter into agreement to waive the municipal, county and educational taxes on the property by declaring the health centre a Municipal Capital Facility. Under agreement, the Town would retain ownership of the land and the NEGHC would own and operate the health centre. However, if the business plan were to break down, then the Town would assume ownership of the building.

Although there was a heated debate regarding urgency and the need for a more public process, the members of the NEGHC building and fundraising committees were quite appreciative of the grants and loans totaling \$770,000 and were anxious for construction to start in April, with a possible opening this coming December.

Meanwhile, the fundraising program continues. If you would like more information or would like to volunteer or make a donation to the Community Family Health Centres, you are asked to visit their Website at [www.communityfamilyhealthcentres.org](http://www.communityfamilyhealthcentres.org).

## New Camperdown water/sewer rates ready for billing

After five months of discussion, numerous reports by staff and a requested debate with the Public, Council finally adopted a bylaw on Jan. 25 for sewer and water capital charge rates in the Camperdown Service Area.

This bylaw states that a capital water charge in the amount of \$2,171 will be assessed to benefiting property owners and will be payable over six years at four payments per year. The charge for a partial benefiting property owner is \$1,479 payable over the same term. The bylaw also states that a capital sewer charge in the amount of \$12,544 will be assessed to benefiting owners and will be payable over 20 years at four payments per year.

In debating the capital charges, Council gave consideration to the following factors recommended by staff:

- A unit is a unit, and staff were directed to include the traditional equal charge for each property (a unit is a unit) formula to calculate the capital charges for each resident.

- The four year plan for the water charge was extended to six years and the wastewater charge repayment plan was left at 20 years

- Repayment plan to start on Aug. 25, 2010 (third quarter tax bill).

The residents wanted longer repayment plans for both water and sewers and wanted their first payment delayed until the new year (2011).

CAO Paul Graham said the town was calculating the repayment plan based on its own affordability criteria, which is used in the town’s calculations for every capital project. He said that if the town strayed from that affordability criteria (\$1,500 per year), then it wouldn’t be fair to people who have had to pay for other, similar projects, such as the one in the Lora Bay servicing area in 2009.

*Source: Partial abstract from the Courier-Herald, Jan. 26, 2010*

### 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:** Thornbury Fire Station # 1, (519) 599-5411; Craighleith Fire Station #2, (705) 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.



### ARE THE NEW TOWN HALL COSTS OUT OF CONTROL?

At a meeting held on Jan. 25th, 2010, the Blue Mountains Council gave approval to staff to proceed with the new \$8.5 million Town Hall. Because of the time factor, Council waived the rules of tender. Council then authorized the retention of Chamberlain Construction Services Limited to manage the project at a cost of \$262,250.

I guess we can now say that the new Town Hall is a reality, whether we like it or not.

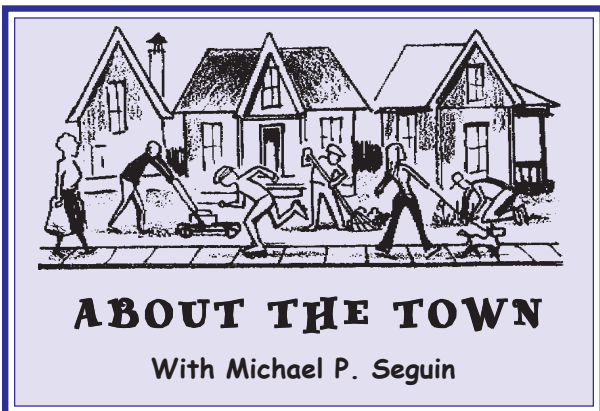
Will \$8.5 million be the final cost? I remember back in the election of 2003 when I asked the Mayor if she intended to spend \$3.0 million on a new Town Hall. And her reply was "I hope not!" I could not have imagined then that she is now prepared to spend \$8.5 million — more than double the cost of 2003.

It was also revealed at the same meeting that the cost of the service station cleanup has now reached \$505,000. We purchased the service station, without an appraisal, for \$425,000 in 2007. When you add the cleanup cost, the service station has now cost taxpayers \$930,000. No wonder the costs for the new Town Hall have doubled since 2003.

I would not want to have to defend the waste of taxpayers' money in an election.

At least that's the way I see it.

**Paul Mitchell**, Thornbury



### Intrawest assets seized by lenders

Fortress Investment Group LLC, the purchasers of the Intrawest ULC, are in default of a \$1.7 million loan which came due in late 2008, around the same time the financial meltdown hit. Intrawest continued to sell assets in order to meet the payments, but the end came this past December. The assets are to be auctioned off February 19, 2010.

It is important to note that the Blue Mountain Resort is jointly owned by Intrawest and the Weider family, who founded the resort.

The Fortress Group continues to negotiate with the finance companies in order to re-finance the debt. Intrawest officials released a statement saying it would be "business as usual" at all its properties including the Blue Mountain Resort.

Based on the number of bookings in 2010, the resort is looking forward to a banner year.

*Source: Enterprise-Bulletin 01/22/2010*

### Water and energy saved by the Town

At the urging of Councilor McGee, Town staff at the Craighleith Wastewater Treatment Plant found a way to reduce the amount of potable water usage at the plant by 80%. The use of reclaimed effluent water, instead of potable water, reduced usage costs from \$37,841 in 2007 to \$9,129 in 2008 and also reduced electricity usage, resulting in a savings of around \$9,000 in 2008 over 2007.

Super job by the Town staff! But who will pay for this lost water consumption, which formerly was paid for by the taxpayers? Remember, if taxpayers were to conserve this much water (equivalent to use by 50 households), then they would be asked to pay a higher rate to recapture lost revenue. I suspect that the Town's saving will be allocated to other "wants." I can guarantee you it won't be returned to the taxpayers and we will not see a reduction in our water rates.

*Source: Town Media Release 12/01/2009*

### Town buys more land

The town has acquired two vacant building lots on Mary Street in Clarksburg to provide trailhead parking for the new Beaver River Trail connecting Clarksburg and Thornbury. The CAO says these two lots also will provide additional parking that will facilitate further growth in the commercial area of Clarksburg.

The CAO further advises that the anticipated costs for these two lots would be \$73,000, of which \$68,000 would be for the land. However, an appraisal was never requested and the price paid was based on hearsay information from the community. It is important to note that the market value of these lands might have been much less as the property had been on the market for some years and were presumed to be located on flood

plain lands. No estimates were given as to the costs of transforming these lands into a parking lot. Is this a shady deal or what?

*Source: Staff Report to Council 11/23/09*

## Real estate news – Winter, 2010

After a slow start over the first three quarters of 2009, the residential market in the Georgian Triangle Region appears to have bounced back, with almost double the sales volume in the fourth quarter compared to the same period in 2008. Based on this surge, the total number of transactions for 2009 was 469, compared to 258 in all of 2008 – an 81.78% increase in sales.

According to Karen Poshtar of Royal LePage Collingwood, the Georgian Triangle market, including the The Blue Mountains, is healthy and well-priced homes are selling. She also states that there is a great inventory available and if a seller is motivated to sell they must have the best-priced home on the market.

On a less positive note, expired listings (3,112 homes did not find a buyer) increased by 6%, a good indicator of a buyer's market. There continues to be a steady stream of power of sale listings.

There were 82 Condo sales in the towns of Collingwood and the Blue Mountains, with only 18 selling over the \$300,000 price.

Karen's quarterly newsletter generally deals with new developments and real estate trends in Collingwood and the Blue Mountains and you are welcome to visit her web site at [www.collingwoodhomes.ca](http://www.collingwoodhomes.ca) to see more links or to share with her some of your interests.

## Quick Hits!

1. The Building Department for The Blue Mountains reports that 357 permits were issued in 2009 for a total value of \$50.8 million. Of the 357 permits issued only 67 were for new dwellings, compared with 451 permits (108 dwelling units) in 2008 and 629 permits (183 dwelling units) in 2007 – certainly a decline in development over the past three years. The average over the past 10 years was 426 permits per year (210 dwelling units per year). The Town is presently forecasting only 90 dwelling units in 2010 – quite scary!

2. A curling club group approached the Town recently with the idea of constructing a curling facility at Moreau Park (Town-owned land opposite the Beaver Valley Community Centre) at an estimated cost of \$3.0 million. It was suggested that \$500,000 would come from grants/donations/other funding while the remaining \$2.5 million would come from development charges. The Group advised that they had received 350 signatures in support of this facility. The Town basically told them no funding was available at this time for this type of venture and that they need to look for additional financial support before the Town could consider it further.

3. The underside of the Beaver River Bridge is still under construction and so some short delays and possible detours through Clarksburg can be expected.

This phase of the project is scheduled for completion by mid-February.

4. Landfill capacity consumed in 2008 amounted to 11,200 cubic metres. At the current rate, the landfill space left in The Blue Mountains is expected to be full in 2½ years. The Town is examining the costs associated with closure and expansion of the site and hopes to bring this issue to a Public meeting soon.

## Craigleith Heritage Depot to honor Black History Month

Dr. Karolyn Smardz-Frost will be the guest speaker for this month's installment of the Craigleith Heritage Depot lecture series, 1-2 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 27 at the Beaver Valley Community Centre.

Dr. Smardz-Frost will discuss her historical detective work, *I've Got a Home in Gloryland: The Lost Tale of the Underground Railroad*, for which she has received the Governor General's Literary Award. She brings to life the story of Lucie and Thornton Blackburn, two run-away slaves who escaped to Canada and whose story would have been forgotten if not for a chance discovery during an archaeological dig in a downtown Toronto schoolyard. Her book will be available for purchase and autographing.

- Cost: \$7 per lecture – \$10 per couple – \$4 youth ticket (18 & under) – \$65 year pass. Museum members receive 10% discount.

Tickets are available at the door or can be pre-purchased at The Depot or the Town Hall.

For further information, contact The Depot at 705-444-2601, or visit [www.thebluemoountains.ca](http://www.thebluemoountains.ca).

■ Here's rest of the 2010 schedule as announced by curator Suzanne Purdy ([spurdy@thebluemoountains.ca](mailto:spurdy@thebluemoountains.ca)):

- **Monday, March 29:** Dorothy Duncan, who will speak about her heritage recipes, some of which are included in her book, *Nothing More Comforting*.

- **Monday, April 26:** Chris Raible. His talk, entitled "From Hands Now Striving to be Free," is about penitentiary-bound men in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century who were anything but penitent.

- **Monday, May 31:** Dr. John Steckley will discuss the St Lawrence Iroquoians in Huronia.

- **Monday, June 28:** Carl Mills, with a presentation honouring the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first flight over Toronto by Count Jacques de Lesseps on July 13, 1910; In a second presentation, Dr. Andrew Miall will examine the Collingwood landscape, with a special focus on the geological processes, rocks and scenery.

- **Monday, Aug. 30:** Dr. Ron Williamson will speak about the archaeology of the Mantle Site and urban planning in Ontario during the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

- **Monday, Sept. 27:** Doris Heffron will discuss her latest novel, *City Wolves*, a captivating tale of a Canadian pioneer women making a road for herself as the first female veterinarian in the nation.

*Source: Press Release, and Courier-Herald 12/15, 2009*





## **BVO: Serving The Blue Mountains community for 28 Years**

Beaver Valley Outreach is an organization that provides social services as well as programs and activities that enrich community life in The Blue Mountains. The wide scope of programs we provide, under the umbrella of BVO, makes us a unique organization. Our success is due entirely to the generosity of community individuals, businesses and organizations such as yours.

We offer 22 programs including a transportation service of volunteer drivers, and a breakfast, lunch and homework club at our local school. We also provide emergency services, including food, clothing, shelter, referral advice and a Christmas Hamper

program. For seniors, we offer a free grocery delivery program. Our recreational funding program helps children participate in local sports and arts activities. At our premises on Bruce Street, we have an Early Years Centre for mothers and their children as well as a Nursery School. We also offer a summer school readiness program for children starting school for the first time.

Our request today is that you help us inform the community of the services we offer by sharing the information provided here. Additionally, you are always welcome to donate to and to shop in our Treasure Shop or, why not drop in and find out what other volunteer opportunities are available. Certainly cash donations are always appreciated and, as a registered charity, we are able to issue you a tax receipt.

We are very proud to be able to say that 100% of all money donated to BVO goes directly to programs, services and community events. We can do this because the revenues from our Treasure Shop help pay all overhead expenses.

Our next community event is an Easter Eggstravaganza. Join us for egg-painting, crafts, entertainment and a chance for the kids to get up close and personal to some special woolly and furry guests. So gather up the kids and grandchildren and join us on Saturday, April 3 for a few hours of fun at the Community Centre in Thornbury.

For information, call 519-599-2577.

*Dear Members:*

*I read the following article in Nov. 15 edition of The Toronto Star and I want to share it with you. It is by staff reporter Carol Goar, who often writes about life-changing issues and experiences. Whether you agree or disagree with Ms. Goar, I welcome your comments at [info@bluemountainratepayersassociation.com](mailto:info@bluemountainratepayersassociation.com). Enjoy! — Michael Seguin, President*

## **All dressed up and nowhere to volunteer**

**By Carol Goar**

In just over a year, Canada will start experiencing the largest wave of retirements in its history. By the time it ends in 2029, a third of the workforce will be gone.

Many soon-to- retire baby boomers expect to volunteer when they leave the labour force. Giving back to the community has always been part of their life plan.

But they're in for a surprise. Many well-known charities don't use volunteers. Their day-to-day work is done by paid staff.

A retiree who wants to teach adult literacy, help people make their homes more energy efficient or give a non-profit agency a hand with its finances or paperwork is likely to find those jobs aren't available.

An individual who has experienced poverty, hunger or homelessness and wants to help a social service agency design and run its programs is likely to be turned away.

There still is a need for volunteers at Meals on Wheels, Out of the Cold, churches, local charities, amateur sports organizations and theatre groups. There is always a demand for individuals with wealth and connections to sit on non-profit boards. And fundraisers are never rebuffed.

But for the most part, the non-profit sector is not waiting with open arms for retired baby boomers with skills to share and time to spare.

"Logically, it should be a great opportunity," says Michael Hall, vice-president of Imagine Canada, the umbrella organization for charities and non-profit organizations across the country. "But few organizations have the infrastructure to manage volunteers.

"You need to orient them, assist them and integrate them into your team. But where are the resources? Most organizations are stretched thin.

"It's harder to manage volunteers than paid staff," he adds. "They generally want to give you a few hours a week. Paid staff are there, 9 to 5. You can count on them."

Hall acknowledges that it was volunteers who founded and built the non-profit sector, that the move-

ment was rooted in the philosophy of neighbours helping neighbours and that it was able to mobilize people in a way governments could not.

But that was a different era, Hall contends. “A lot of them (the volunteers) were women who weren’t working.”

Today’s non-profit sector is huge. It employs 1.3 million people. It accounts for 6.8% of the country’s gross domestic product. It is run by paid professionals, many with postgraduate degrees. And it is symbiotically linked to government. Its members deliver a vast array of publicly funded services: job training; child care; immigrant settlement; home energy audits; legal aid advice; counseling and support for people with mental illness; assistance for seniors, low-income families, aboriginal peoples and crime victims. Agencies compete for government contracts.

Initially, voluntary leaders embraced this model, thinking it offered them freedom from their chronic financial woes.

Now they realize it didn’t. And it brought a host of

new problems:

Non-profit organizations have become mini-bureaucracies run by administrators and weighed down by paperwork.

They have lost their agility, their capacity to take risks and their connectedness to the communities they serve.

And they have become inhospitable to volunteers, who as Hall puts it, “don’t fit into the way our organizations are structured.”

For the last decade, a quiet malaise has spread through the non-profit sector. There never is enough money to do the job properly. Workers feel overwhelmed and undervalued.

“I call it the compassion trap,” Hall says. “You can squeeze them because they believe in the cause. I think Canadians are exploiting the goodwill of the non-profit sector.”

There is another possibility. Non-profit organizations are alienating Canadians, asking for donations but providing no outlet for their talent and goodwill.

### Election news flash

## As new candidates surface, it’s now a three-way race for mayor

As we went to press, two newcomers to politics and two veterans had just thrown their hats into the ring, two of them joining incumbent Ellen Anderson in the race for Mayor of The Blue Mountains.

■ **Anderson** has served two terms as Mayor of The Blue Mountains, plus one as Mayor of Thornbury prior to amalgamation, and a term on Thornbury council. She sits on the board for the cross-border Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, and was a founding member of the Southern Georgian Bay Coastal Initiative. In addition to sitting on the standing committee for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, she was a board member of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

Mayor Anderson says the big issues she has been committed to over the years are affordable housing, the environment – with a particular focus on water – and youth initiatives.

■ **Sheldon Rosen**, owner of the Lodges at Blue Mountain, says he wants to bring his business experience to The Blue Mountains Council table. While he’s still working on his platform, his main focus is tourism.

“The biggest industry in this town is tourism,” said Rosen in a phone interview. “[Current council] do very little or nothing to promote tourism . . . there are a lot of issues going on that are affecting a business that I’ve been involved in and I don’t see a lot of direction.”

Rosen wants to promote the town as a four season destination, and would like to see a “method to the madness” of local development including some regulation of style and concept. “We should encourage the right kind of development,” he said, including “more development on the waterfront.”

His platform also includes ideas on low cost housing for the service industry, a transit system to solve the disconnect that he says exists between Blue Mountain and Collingwood, reducing taxes and government spending.

“Reduce costs instead of raise taxes,” he said. “Taxes shouldn’t have to go up all the time.”

Rosen skied at Blue Mountain as a child and later played golf in the area. He purchased his first property here in 2002 and Lodges at Blue Mountain now rents several properties. He also has a home in Richmond Hill.

■ **Marshall Heatherington’s** family has lived in The Blue Mountains area for more than a 100 years. He wants to run a campaign that is, literally, made by the people. Living and building in The Blue Mountains right now makes him feel like “a dog chasing his tail,” and he wants to bring a “boots on the ground approach.”

“I don’t think that spending is going the right way,” said Heatherington in a phone interview. “I’d like to see money spent more where the municipality can actually do something, as opposed to gradual projects.”

He believes the Medical Centre facility should have a higher priority than the Town Hall. However, he’d like to hear from the voters themselves what they would like that they cannot seem to get now. (He can be reached at Box 462 in Clarksburg.)

He adds that if he can find someone not connected to the current council and with the dedication and eye for opportunity that match his own, he’ll step down to support their campaign. “I want to see the right person in there,” he said. “That may or may not be me.”

Watch for more election news in our next issue.

■ *Excerpts from the Courier-Herald, Feb. 3, 2010*