

# THE VIEW FROM BLUE

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BOX 198, THORNBURY, ON N0H 2P0

## JANUARY 2015

Dear BMRA Member:

Please support the BMRA with your membership renewal today. Our mission is to have a better informed voter. Your membership is critical, as it supports the cost of producing our newsletters and maintaining our website.

You can pay your membership online by [clicking here](#).

For information concerning the status of your membership please contact: Cathy Sholtz-Seguín  
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The New Year brings reflection on achievements of the past twelve months and an opportunity to set new goals and look ahead to the coming year.

The Town of the Blue Mountains will certainly be faced with challenges but our supporters know that the BMRA has never backed down from a challenge. Standing up for TBM's ratepayers is what we do best. Our voice is being heard, as evidenced by the outcome of the Fall municipal election.

**What TBM needs now is: Leadership!**  
The Fall election brought a message to the Town Hall...voters were looking for a change. What change?

The issues outlined in this Newsletter all require leadership and some of those items, such as a better deal with the County, may take considerable time and effort to achieve. However we have immediately before us the 2015 budget process and this is an opportunity for Council to lead... now!

### New Council for The Blue Mountains



l-r: Councillor John McGee, Councillor Robert Gamble, Councillor Michael Martin, Deputy Mayor Gail Ardiel, Mayor John McKean, Councillor Joe Halos, Councillor Michael Seguin

### School Board Trustee



Linda Hamill,  
Trustee  
Bluewater District  
School Board  
representing  
Meaford and  
The Blue Mountains

### 2015 Budget

Specifically, the time has come for Council to lead the budget process with clear, new guidelines. In our opinion the guidelines should include direction to begin with a budget of zero growth in taxes and fees.

### Grey County

The new Mayor John McKean ran on a core plank to his platform of getting a better deal for Blue from Grey. His year-end interview with the Connection stated: "...After 11 years as a Councillor, McKean was elected mayor in October. He campaigned with a goal of getting The Blue Mountains taxpayers their fair share from Grey

County. "I really am looking forward to the experience at Grey County and getting the residents a better deal up there," he said. "Grey County is better off if The Blue Mountains is better off."

Some good news from Mayor McKean's recent meeting at County is that they will now provide 24/7 EMS support at Craileith.

BMRA has asked that the TBM arrange a meeting with the County to discuss Grey County expenditures, and has followed up with the Town's CAO, Troy Speck, to ensure he is aware of the importance of this discussion. His response: "I anticipate this particular subject will require further discussion with the new Council to identify and achieve consensus regarding, specifically, what Council's goals are vis a vis the relationship with the County, and some strategizing as to how best to attempt achieving those goals. Stay tuned." - Troy Speck, Chief Administrative Officer

In addition to the Budget and the County, there are several other looming issues:

### Fire Services

Our Fire Department will need careful direction and leadership from Council and staff in 2015. There are concerns about staffing with suitable volunteer firefighters. Demographic challenges (i.e. lack of full-time residents and a densely populated resort area) are making it difficult to recruit and maintain the appropriate number of volunteers that would meet the prescribed response criteria. There are several other challenges and barriers impacting fire services that the BMRA will be following and informing Ratepayers over 2015.

### Foodland Store/Sobeys

New Councillor Michael Seguin questioned on his blog if the "Town can get the tender out in time to ensure that the Foodlands/Sobeys project can move forward in a timely and cost effective manner?" Based on recent discussions with the Town and Foodlands there would appear to be room for optimism. Stay tuned.

### Water and Wastewater Charges

At year-end, your BMRA Budget Review Committee wrote to the Town's CAO requesting clarification of the water/wastewater user fees and reserve accounts. Are the user fees being utilized to fund other non-related expenditures of the Town, thereby effectively subsidizing ratepayers whose properties are not fully serviced?

This debate centers around whether surplus water/wastewater fees are being properly allocated to Reserves for future replacement costs or whether they being used elsewhere to cover general Town operating expenses.

The estimated amounts involved with this query are \$1.2mm for 2012 and \$1.3mm for 2013, approximately 20% of total annual water/wastewater user fees collected, or the equivalent of approximately 10% of the Town's annual operating budget. We believe that Mr. Speck, CAO, shares our interest in ensuring that the distribution of Town operating expenditures is equitable to all ratepayers, and we look forward to working with him to clarify this issue.

### FOUR THEMES

The good news is that CAO Troy Speck has stated to BMRA Committee members that he is looking forward to the changes and challenges brought forward by the election. He seems to be planning to walk the talk, having identified Four Themes which are remarkably similar to the BMRA's Focus Five election issues.

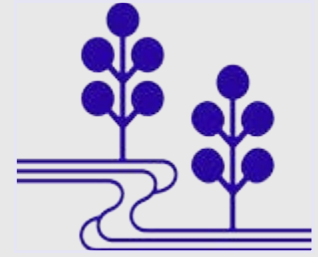
Based on his discussions with the Councillors, here are the Four Themes which CAO Speck stated would help staff work with Council to prioritize goals and create action plans for the next 4 years:

1. Economic Development, Customer Service & Whether the Town is Perceived as being "Open for Business";
2. Planning and Development;
3. Changing the County/Town Financial Arrangement; and
4. Communication & Council Process

The BMRA is very pleased to see the above Four Themes from the CAO.

In 2015 we look forward to attending Town Council and Committee meetings, monitoring business and debate, informing and listening to TBM ratepayers, and providing a voice for your concerns.

Happy New Year!



## BMRA Board of Directors

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*Call for membership info, or visit the website and click on JOIN NOW today!*

You are important to us and we value our relationship with you as members of the BMRA. We share information, opinions and provide news on various issues of concern in The Blue Mountains.

**Please pass this on to your neighbours and encourage them to join the BMRA**  
**[www.bmratepayers.com](http://www.bmratepayers.com)**