

# Three Community Groups Advocate Fair Taxation for New Sewage Plant

Mississippi Mills, September 2, 2009: An alliance of three Mississippi Mills community groups took their message of fair taxation to attendees of *Mississippi Mills at a Glance* at the Almonte arena, September 1. Building on the success of a public meeting August 19 in Pakenham, the Alliance for Fair Taxation revealed what the Town's proposed new sewage treatment plant will mean to Almonters' tax bills. Alliance members handed out information laying out funding facts the Town has so far kept hidden.

The Alliance consists of the Appleton Community Association (ACA), the Canadian Property Rights Coalition (CPRC), and the Mississippi Mills Residents Association (MMRA). The Alliance opposes plans to heavily tax existing residents for a new sewage treatment plant (STP).

The Town has stated the STP will cost an estimated \$28 million and promises that provincial and federal grants will cover two-thirds of that cost. However, the Town has yet to disclose the details about how the Town's share—about \$9.3 million—will be paid.

The Town expects subdivision developers to add 2000 new homes to Almonte by 2029. The Town needs the STP to accommodate the estimated 5800 new residents. While most existing residents expect development charges on those new homes in Almonte to cover the Town's \$9.3 million share, a new Town bylaw reduces development charges by almost 30% (from \$10,823 to \$7,713). In the end, subdivision developers will contribute just \$3.5 million (\$1745 per new home) towards the new sewage treatment plant.

The Town expects rural residents to contribute \$933,000 through a new septage levy or tax, and new development charges: \$194 for each new house plus 15 cents per square for all new out-buildings (which produce no septage). Existing Almonte residents will pay the rest—almost \$5 million—through increased water and sewer charges.

On June 2, Tim Kocialek, the Town's Director of Public Works, told public meeting attendees that the lagoons had capacity for an additional 200 homes. The lagoons can support growth through infill and densification but not new subdivisions. The Alliance believes the Town should charge developers higher lot levies to cover the STP capital costs, since the developers need the new plant to service their new Almonte subdivisions.

Their appearance at *Almonte at a Glance* is the Alliance's second successful public event of their information campaign. On August 19, 245 rural residents jammed the Pakenham arena to listen to four Alliance speakers and ask questions. Rural residents, who rely on private septic systems, were shocked to discover that the Town expects them to cover 10% of the STP's cost. Using septage treatment as an excuse, the Town plans to break the amalgamation agreement that states rural residents shall not pay for water or sewage facilities. Mississippi Mills formed through the amalgamation of the Town of Almonte, Ramsay Township, and Pakenham Township in 1998.

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