



This is an election publication of the Mississippi Mills Resident's Association, Fall 2006

## **Almonte's plan for growth**

At the end of the Community Official Plan (COP) public process, Council quietly decided to extend the boundaries of Almonte in several areas without public input. Some of the new land extends the industrial park. Most of the new "urban" land on the southeast and northeast side of Almonte will be used for future residential subdivisions.

### ***Unanswered questions***

These boundary changes raise a number of questions.

- Why were the changes made after the COP public process was finished?
- Why was this extra area needed when the ward already has plenty of undeveloped land?
- Were these parcels the "correct" choices?
- Who will pay for the water and sewage infrastructure to the new subdivisions?

Some of these questions cannot be answered easily. Others can.

Why the boundaries were changed without public debate is a matter of speculation. Such issues are usually contentious and some incumbents on the Mississippi Mills Council dislike public criticism. Ask your candidates about this one.

### ***Is more land needed?***

There is some doubt that new residential land is needed in the Almonte ward. According to town data, it is clear the ward has enough

land, even given known physical constraints, for at least 325 dwellings or units.

Almonte is not growing as fast as predicted in the COP. Based on a consultant's report, the COP says the town would grow by 3430 between 2001 and 2026, an average 137 people or about 55 households per year. Only 47 new houses were added to the ward between November 2003 and August 2005. A few have been added since.

Mayor Lunney is on record as welcoming a "growth explosion." In an EMC report on Lanark county progress this year, he predicted Almonte would boom once the COP was in place and a new sewage plant was built. He never asked residents if they wanted explosive growth, and it wasn't part of his election platform

The much delayed Whitetail Ridge (WTR) subdivision, if completed, will add 174 homes.

If Council intends to advocate subdivisions, then we must insist they make the best business and environmental decisions.

The current Council agreed to extend the municipal sewer system to WTR using a sewer technology that will prevent anyone along the route from hooking into it. Instead, the town will extend services to subdivisions in the new areas.

It is a questionable business decision. If Council wanted to maximize return on investment, it would have extended the ward boundary along Martin Street toward WTR and insisted on a sewer line configuration that allows hook-ups. That would service WTR and encourage growth where the infrastruc-

ture already existed (though more development on this corridor would present some traffic problems).

### ***Correct choice?***

The expansion to the northeast makes some sense in that it is poor quality farmland and is not next to waterways or prime wetlands, although the drainage situation for this area is shaping up to be a monumental challenge that has yet to be adequately planned.

However, the boundary change added 100 acres to the southeast next to the Gale subdivision. Before the ink was dry on the new COP, the owner presented the town with draft plans for a subdivision with over 500 units. And Council is seriously considering it.

Does it make sense to add more housing lots when there are already nearly 200 lots available between WTR and the Metcalfe subdivision? Maybe this new subdivision is premature?

This property contains top quality agricultural soils, environment hazard zones, an area of natural and scientific interest (ANSI), significant wetlands and setbacks from the river.

This particularly irks rural residents because it represents a double standard. Rural landowners cannot build on good agriculture soils, on an ANSI, in a wetland, in environment hazard zones, or within setbacks from the water; so, how come someone in the town can?

If Council cared about farmland and the environment, they would not have bowed to the developer's wishes and added this land to Almonte. Four councillors cared enough to say no: John Edwards, Alex Gillis, Marilyn Anderson, and Val Wilkinson.

### ***Costs***

New subdivisions will require a costly new sewage treatment plant. This will mean higher water and sewer bills for Almonte residents. (See Bulletin #3 "Sewage treatment options" for details.)

### ***What can you do?***

During the current municipal election, tell your candidate (in any ward) what you think about a new subdivision on the southeast of Almonte.

And if you support it, tell them what it should look like. For example, should the riverfront be a public park or divided up for private residences?

If you don't support it, tell them why.

### ***Other bulletins in this series***

- #1 Downtown Almonte
- #2 De-amalgamation
- #3 Sewage treatment options
- #5 Sunday hunting
- #6 Regulating pesticides

The MMRA Board has reviewed the election 2006 bulletin articles for factual accuracy. The bulletins, and the opinions represented within them, are meant to stimulate community discussion and awareness in the time period leading up to the 2006 municipal elections in Mississippi Mills. Your vote counts!

The MMRA is a non-profit residents' association. For more information on the MMRA or to join, visit our web site at [www.mmra.ca](http://www.mmra.ca).