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To: 'mmra@sympatico.ca'

Subject: Communiqué - the MMRA's e-letter. Vol 2.5 (Feb 2008)

Hello to our readers... and a special thanks to all those who gently chided me about the long gap between Communiqués! I'm making up for that!

Pesticides Bylaw: Some may recall that prior to the 2003 municipal election the Town's Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) provided a recommendation to Council that the Town should be at the forefront of moving to regulate the use of pesticides in urban areas. Lots of effort was expended: the MMRA participated in generating a petition and the EAC even did the "Bylaw for Dummies" thing. (By the way, MMRA member Pauline Donaldson has been formally recognized by the Town for her contribution to the EAC. Our sincere congratulations to Pauline!) Meanwhile, no bylaw resulted at Council. Now, 5 years later there are about 30 cities and towns with by-laws already in place (<http://www.pesticide-reform.ca/municipality.htm>), but MM is not one of them. So although MM is not cutting edge, Council is again moving in the right direction by considering a bylaw. Last summer's local Pesticides Survey showed overwhelming support for pesticides regulation. In fact, according to the Carleton University Survey Centre, a stunning 90% of non-pesticides users and a majority (55%) of pesticides users were supportive of a bylaw regulating pesticide use. Since the proposed bylaw is aimed at curbing the cosmetic use of pesticides, the Board has been helping to provide input on clarifying agricultural activity so as to ensure the intent of the bylaw is not misconstrued to include legitimate farming practices. I'd like to encourage you to **attend Council's Planning Committee meeting on March 6 2008** and show your support for Councillors who speak in favour of protecting the health of our children and our environment.

You can find the Survey report at

http://www.mississippimills.ca/Documents/263/mississippi_mills_pesticidesurvey_report_revised.pdf

The MMRA Board: We're sorry to report that the MMRA Board has lost two of its newest directors: both David Steventon (Director, Strategy) and Bill Duncan (Director, Rural) called it quits partway through their terms. We thank them for their contributions. The MMRA Board, like so many other volunteer groups, relies on the hard work of a small, core group to attend to the mission. While promoting civic debate is a key function of the MMRA, endless talk in ever-decreasing circles isn't!! The Board needs new faces from all corners of our municipality to help engender value-based discussions and promote community enrichment here in Mississippi Mills. So if you're a resident of Appleton, Blakeney, Clayton, Pakenham, rural Ramsay or Almonte come join our "little" Board. Contact us ...Operators are standing by to take your call!!

The silence of the lambs: Last fall a reader wrote: "I am curious that the MMRA seems to be very selective in their interests. For example no input or comment ... on approval of Sadler Subdivision, no input on the massive changes to the Mall; e.g. 3700sq ft 2nd floor front wing; 1500 sq ft kiosks in corridors; 2500 sq ft Dairy Queen with drive through in front of Drug Store. All passed with little comment." Sure did... not that long ago the whole community huffed and puffed and Council paid attention. But when no-one's looking... hello-o-o Clarisse...! As I said above, the MMRA Board needs bodies and isn't able to be the only voice in the wilderness when municipal "events" need scrutiny. No one wants these events to "pass by with little comment" so... please get involved

Amalgamation 10 years on: who's the beneficiary? A rural resident and MMRA member writes... "In the three years prior to municipal amalgamation taxes in Ramsay Township had stayed the same and were lower than Almonte. Since "union" taxes have gone up every year, and every year except one, they have gone up faster than inflation. Before amalgamation, the three original towns (Almonte, Pakenham and Ramsay) had a total of 13 administrative staff. The purpose of amalgamation was to make government smaller. Mississippi Mills now has at least 19 admin staff for a town that has grown by less than 1% in the 10 years since union. \$830,000 was spent last year to expand the municipal offices to accommodate that growth. The 10 years of tax increases have added no new services for rural residents (except maybe recycling). The extra money has gone on staff salaries, unionized road crews (amalgamation made the road crew big enough to attract a union) and renovations to the Almonte old town hall." I would add this reminder about development: A new home buyer in Almonte, hooked up to municipal water and sewer services, will pay \$7000, more or less, through development charges the developer passes on for that privilege. A resident (urban or rural) who builds on an unserviced lot is likely to pay about three times that amount (over \$20,000) for well and septic tank installation. Now shouldn't this be the lot charge for services for new homes to make things fairer?

Houchaimi Development (Spring Street): Public Meeting is scheduled for March 18 to consider zoning changes for Phase 1. Please attend. Everyone in the community is grateful for Jeff Robertson's participation as

neighbourhood representative on the Town's negotiating committee with the developer. Despite some nervousness by our former planner and our Mayor about confidentiality issues, I think we can all sleep easy knowing that not knowing is better than not knowing about knowing....hmmm!

Public transportation or \$1.20/ltr gas? Despite the Gazette's fawning headline that the "Town believes transit meeting is way to go" (The Almonte Gazette, Feb 19, 2008), our MM Council has been invited before to get on board the Lanark Community Transit proposal for commuter service and has successfully dodged any advances. "Visionaries" on Council just stall, stall, stall... not even wanting to get the facts. Rather they point to Beckwith opting out of the Lanark Transportation Association (LTA). Frankly it's a bogus comparison! I may be wrong but Beckwith doesn't have nearly the stream of traffic heading to Ottawa every morning that MM does. It's time to get the facts.

An aside: This carpool website designed for Lanark County commuters allows people to post their driving needs (either as a passenger or as a driver) without revealing personal information. <http://www.lanarkcommuters.ca> MM commuters are using it too, so please bookmark it or write it down as a reminder.

Town communications. Town staff are making a real effort to improve communications. With the Weekender insert, the website (www.mississippimills.ca) and now the monthly E-Newsletter it's hard to be out-of-the-loop! Contact Cindy Halcrow chalcrow@mississippimills.ca to be put on the list. Also don't junk the MM Messenger delivered with your February 22 "junk mail".

Council highlights, February 19, 2008: "The Honourable Gordon O'Connor, Minister of National Revenue announced that the Government of Canada will consider giving the Town up to \$7.13 million towards the upgrade of the Town's communal sewage system." (<http://www.mississippimills.ca/news.cfm?newsid=517>) Will consider??? What kind of commitment is that? Sounds like a Stéphane Dion overture...! Well today's Budget Day, so let's see which way the communal sewage system flows!

Daylight Savings time is coming March 9, so the kids get one less hour for March Break! And even with an early Easter, St. Patrick's Day still falls during Lent! So whether you're enjoying winter's last hurrah where the River kisses Appleton, trips through Almonte or skips beside Blakeney and Pakenham, stay safe and warm and take a moment to reflect on the 3-D landscape painting that is Mississippi Mills.

Sincerely,

Arnie Francis
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Mississippi Mills Residents' Association (MMRA)
"Striving to promote a shared vision for Mississippi Mills"
www.mmra.ca

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