

Communiqué - The MMRA's e-letter - Vol 3.3 (October 2008)

Hello to all our many readers across Mississippi Mills,
We hope that you spent a special Thanksgiving weekend and took a moment to enjoy autumn's beautiful colours in and around our Town.

Wednesday, October 29, 7:30 pm: Waste Management: Lessons about what's working and what isn't.

The MMRA is sponsoring this talk in response to residents' requests, to help address some key issues, including:

- Where are we today? Provincial vs. municipal diversion goals
- Success or failure of organic collections and composting?
- Is it possible to enforce the 3 Rs for commercial/industrial operators?

Sue Campbell, General Manager of the Ottawa Valley Waste Recovery Centre (Pembroke) is a knowledgeable advocate and experienced practitioner in the waste management area. There is no cost for this event. Come out and participate, ask questions, get answers. For more information, see the information poster on the MMRA website, www.mmra.ca, and inserts in various local print media.

How is Council managing our money?

We estimate the Town's debt outlook to be approaching \$14 million!

Accumulated debt (2008 year-end)	= \$6.4 million
Deferred debt (delayed projects)	= \$0.4 million
Sewage Treatment Plant (2009/10)	= \$7.0 million
Total expected debt by 2010	= \$13.8 million

MMRA members have been warning that this Council and the previous 2 Councils have been plummeting us into debt (about 100 postings over the last 5½ years on the Discussion Group). It's time to pay attention, folks. By the time a new Council takes over in January 2011 our provincial credit card (limit of \$20 million) could be maxed out!

- In 2007 it was about \$4.5 million (see MMRA Discussion Group message No 3272)
- In 2003 it was about \$½ million (see MMRA Discussion Group message No 1064)

Other financial considerations:

- Debt service: Sure, money is cheap now, and Council is betting your house that it stays cheap! What about the debt service ratio on the Sewage Treatment Plant, Urban to Rural? This is estimated to be 9:1, so rural residents can expect to cough up 10% of the Sewage Treatment Plant's debt service costs (interest). We bet it will be more.
- Cost overruns: In shared cost initiatives such as the Almonte Old Town Hall and the Ottawa Street reconstruction (and in future, the Sewage Treatment Plant) cost overruns are borne exclusively by the taxpayers of Mississippi Mills. Just add it to the above debt! For example,
 - The Ottawa St project is apparently coming in \$700,000 to \$800,000 over budget right now!
 - The Almonte Old Town Hall was awarded a \$1.5 million grant (2008) with the understanding MM would kick in another \$500K. The front façade work, budgeted at \$135,000, came in at \$312,000 or 231% over-budget! The overall total bill for restoration work on the Old Town Hall will cost \$3.2 million (not including the roof which may also need to be done).

- The Sewage Treatment Plant is CURRENTLY estimated at \$21 million (but could equally well end up at \$30 million).
- Revenue offsetting: There is a plan that Mississippi River Power Corporation profits be used exclusively to offset some of the costs of water and sewer projects.
 - Is it appropriate for hydro users to see their usage fees subsidize projects such as the Sewage Treatment Plant that benefit future housing and commercial developments?

Should residents be continuously watching over Council?

The Mayor thinks so.... he states that "... on 'community planning' ... (he)... just assumed that - if no one comes to our meetings and no one ... ever brings forward suggestions - we (Council) were doing a great job...". Mr. Housing Bubble responded "...don't expect me or any other taxpayer to come to your meetings and help you spend my money - the output of my labour - responsibly. Please. If we come, we will for good reasons. Our reasons. Because you work for us. And when we don't come, it will be because we trust you and your colleagues to do your jobs well and spend our money as you make it, not in advance of when you make it."

If you're not on the MMRA Yahoo Discussion Group, you're missing the full thread of the discussion. Consider joining now. See <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MissMillsResidents/>

Board's Letter to Province on Sewage Treatment Plant

The Board of the MMRA has written to the Ontario Minister of Infrastructure asking him to NOT extend shared funding of \$7 million to the Town for the Sewage Treatment Plant. This is carefully thought-out move by the Board, a request for a sober "pause for thought" before this Council buries us – the taxpayers of MM - in financial crisis. We continue to worry about financial forecasts that may not have considered the decommissioning costs of the sewage lagoons, or may have too quickly sidelined the more moderate option of upgrading the lagoon system (\$8 million was the figure we think was suggested). A Council that is drunk on the promise of development has lost all sight of the economics of the potential recession... Read our letter at <http://www.mmra.ca/letter%20to%20Prov%20re%20STP%20funding-20080929.pdf>. As we did in our September Communiqué (http://www.mmra.ca/vol3.2_2008-09.pdf) we again invite all residents to get informed on the issues and discuss the impacts.

Drunken driver

Our fictitious story (in last month's Communiqué) about the 10 year old getting killed on Hwy 29, to illustrate a lack of safe roads, brought on a reader's recollection of a friend having been killed near that stretch some 9 years earlier and an eye-witness report from the week before our last Communiqué. In the latter incident, our reader wrote about a car barely pulled over on Hwy 29, with the driver's head out the window, near Hope Street on 29, close to Gleeson Rd. Our witness turned around only to find the driver was drunk and passed out. They called 911. Had someone been walking, this car would surely have hit them too. The police took 20 minutes to arrive at the scene and then apparently put the driver in an ambulance without a breathalyser, having our reader conclude that there would be no conviction.

Nominations for Sustainable Community Award

The 2009 Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Sustainable Community Awards celebrate excellence in sustainable community development by highlighting the best municipal initiatives that link environmental, social and economic goals. These communities are leaders that are not just thinking

about sustainability but they are making it happen. Is MM on its way to be nominated?

<http://www.sustainablecommunities.fcm.ca/FCM-CH2M-Awards/>

Commuter/ Public Transit

Five MM Councillors voiced their extreme opposition to public transit. They voted down a motion to support Thom Transport's proposal for a commuter service. Furthermore, these Councillors tried to have any further motions forbidden. A resident who was present indicated that there will be no rational discussions with them on this issue, as their minds were made up, suggesting that there will never be public transit in MM under their watch. Who are they? Go to our website www.mmra.ca and see. Then tell us what you think in our online survey.

Business Person of the Year

The MM Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual Chamber Gala on October 15 and we congratulate the following award winners:

- Business of the Year: John & Tom Levi, Levi Home Hardware
- New Business of the Year: Sean Isaacs, Alliance Coin & Banknote
- Outstanding Community Supporter: Reg Gamble, C. R. Gamble Funeral Homes

42% no-show voters in the Federal Election: While the media is busy gorging itself on the results of our "non-election," it seems clear that the blue pill hasn't cured electile dysfunction! We congratulate all the local constituency candidates in each of the parties for running good campaigns and debating well at the Hub's All Candidates meeting. Congratulations to the Hon. Gordon O'Connor for retaining his seat in the House of Commons.

In closing, we wish a safe and happy Hallowe'en to parents and children alike. The MMRA asks drivers to take care always, but especially when our ghouls and goblins are on the streets.

Regards,

The Board of the MMRA

Mississippi Mills Residents' Association (MMRA)

"Striving to promote a shared vision for Mississippi Mills"

www.mmra.ca

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