

## Communiqué - The MMRA's e-letter - Vol 4.2 (September 2009)

Hello fellow residents and friends of Mississippi Mills,

Well, Labour day traditionally marks a time in the year of shifts – “end of summer” gatherings, getting kids school-focused, preparing for harvest, [Fibrefest \(Sept 11-13\)](#), recapping on summer, getting ready for tax hikes .... O! Did I say that out loud?

### **The Almonte Sewage Treatment Plant:**

Why will Almonters and rural residents be paying plenty for the STP? The Town's strategy has been 1) to give developers a financial break by cutting development charges and 2) to limit the competitiveness of tendering. The following is an extract from the Town's successful funding request for 2/3rds of the \$28 million from the November 2008 Building Canada Fund Application Report ([www.mmra.ca/archives/BuildingCanadaFund.pdf](http://www.mmra.ca/archives/BuildingCanadaFund.pdf)):

*6. What are the significant project risks and what is your strategy to mitigate those risks?*

*The largest risk to the project is the cost to the end users. If the implementation of the project results in development costs higher than those in neighbouring communities, then growth within the service area will reduce and the Town will be carrying the costs for the project over a longer period of time. Should funding, in the amount of two-thirds, be received for this project the development charges the Town will assess to new growth will be competitive with neighbouring towns and growth will continue.*

*Experience has proven that the choice of the most appropriate contracting strategy can have a major effect on the ability to meet cost and schedule objectives. The current construction environment presents a major risk to both the cost and schedule objectives for this project that will need to be managed. Recent experience in Eastern Ontario with traditional tendering processes has seen challenges in obtaining a sufficient number of bids on work, and as a result, bids are significantly higher than budgets using current construction price inflationary indices. Prequalification of general contractors will be used to ensure that those selected provide a competitive bid.*

### **The Alliance for Fair Taxation**

The MMRA has joined forces with the Appleton Community Association and the Canadian Property Rights Coalition to advocate for a fairer approach to taxation, starting with the impact of the new sewage treatment plant and septage treatment. The Alliance ([http://www.mmra.ca/alliance\\_aca-cprc-mmra\\_flyer.pdf](http://www.mmra.ca/alliance_aca-cprc-mmra_flyer.pdf)) has started to increase awareness among Almonte residents as a result of its presence at the *MM At a Glance* event at the Almonte Arena on September 1. The groups involved sponsored a hugely successful public meeting at the Pakenham arena (245 people attended) to inform rural residents of Town plans to tax residents for rural septage treatment. As a result of the awareness campaign Council has received numerous letters from residents. Apparently the Mayor wishes to respond via form letter and has warned Councillors to maintain a common front! So common, in fact, that Pakenham councillors Hurrell and Ferguson refused to proceed with a local meeting when invited Alliance members - all Pakenham ward residents - arrived to answer Pakenham residents' questions on septage funding on September 3. The Alliance has requested delegation status to provide information to Council at the Committee of the Whole meeting on September 8 at 5:30 pm. This is an open meeting, so please attend if you'd like. (<http://www.mississippimills.ca/townhall/events.cfm?eventid=835>). **An aside:** In 2006, the MMRA issued a pre-election bulletin on *Sewage treatment options*. Several unanswered questions existed then. Many of them still do. Please see [http://www.mmra.ca/3-bulletin\\_sewage.pdf](http://www.mmra.ca/3-bulletin_sewage.pdf).

### **The Dovercliffe Court subdivision proposal: why the pursuit of development and a trust in municipal planning cannot co-exist**

So why would you try to build 474 homes right next to Almonte's Sewage Lagoons? Brylin Construction /SEH Developments has again, over the last year, been proposing to Council a subdivision of initially 264 units (now 474 units) in the Dovercliffe Court area off CR 29 by the proposed Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) and the sewage lagoons. It would be laughable if it weren't so carefully shepherded through a compliant Council. You see sometime back in the late 80's to mid 90's, development close to the sewage lagoons was proposed and ended up nixed by the Ontario Municipal Board due to MOE and residents concerns. Since then a careful "if you build it, they will come" strategy has evolved with the current Council's blessing. So if you move and /or replace the sewage lagoon due to a new STP - although you really don't absolutely need to - you can make the area more habitable (read "less stinky"). Then you can have the area re-zoned and developed. And by the way, who's going to PAY for all this? Why, YOU of course – the current residents of 1800 homes in Almonte Ward. Because urban development fees (paid by developers) have been drastically cut in July 2009! (<http://www.mmra.ca/today.htm#sep09>)

### **Municipal government is the MOST important level of government for most Canadians**

Smaller rural municipalities like ours deal in a magnitude of millions upon millions of tax dollars. Tax dollars that impact residents directly and daily for infrastructure (water, sewage, roads, etc), urban planning (e.g. residential and commercial design and development), economic and social well-being and environmental sustainability. Since 2006, Ontario municipal elections are on a 4-year, fixed term cycle. No more 2 or 3 year terms. The municipal "public service" comprises well-remunerated professionals in senior staff functions and a unionized work-force. Good people all, dealing with increasingly complex technologies, laws and public expectations and operating in a grey zone between political interference and public demands. The next election is November 8, 2010. Much like more senior levels of government, the new, longer term for elected officials permits a more serious planning cycle. But are there similar checks and balances built in at the municipal level, similar to senior levels of government? Let's see. Ontario municipal governments seemingly have

- no "legislative agendas" for public scrutiny
- no cohesive "party" platforms that can be assessed
- no "question periods" for the loyal opposition
- no "loyal opposition" per se
- no Hansard-rigour for meeting minutes
- no "parliamentary press" (especially in Mississippi Mills which has no newspaper or community-specific news medium)
- no political answerability for elected (and acclaimed) councillors
- no comprehensive "conflict of interest" policy
- no "community strategic or vision statements" (only documents that speak to process, such as the 2006 Community Official Plan)
- no internal audits

Those of us who follow municipal matters closely believe that municipal governance can no longer be "business as usual" and the people of Mississippi Mills deserve better. Political leaders should be leaders and facilitators, not bullies. Political representatives should make decisions formed on ethical principles, not through the influence of a few. An informed citizenry should be a fundamental objective of municipal government, not an afterthought.

We welcome your comments on how we, the taxpayers and residents of MM, can help improve municipal governance. Join in at our Yahoo discussion group, post a comment on our Facebook group or send an email to [info@mmra.ca](mailto:info@mmra.ca). See below for links.

The Board of the MMRA  
Mississippi Mills Residents' Association (MMRA)  
"Striving to promote a shared vision for Mississippi Mills"  
September 7, 2009

Website: [www.mmra.ca](http://www.mmra.ca)

Yahoo Discussion Board: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MissMillsResidents/>

Facebook Group:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=86444027774&ref=mf#/group.php?gid=86444027774&ref=mf>

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