

OUR VIEW

Million-dollar governance

Governance in Almaguin Highlands does not come cheap.

It took our reporter months to gather the data and tally the numbers, and the end result was staggering. Seventeen municipalities across the region paid 89 councillors a total of \$956,241 in 2016.

The mayors, Reeves and councillors - who each averaged \$10,744 in salaries and reimbursed expenses - over-see a combined population of 23,359. The Town of Huntsville to the south paid its nine-member council \$211,622 to govern a municipality with a population of 19,816 in 2016, while the City of North Bay to the north dished out \$51,289 to its 11-member council to govern a municipality with a population of 51,553.

Something seems off.

There are people in our area that defend the separation of municipalities in Almaguin Highlands as necessary. They cite expansive geography, disparate resident interests, history, identity and concerns over ballooning expenses as reasons to continue with the status quo.

We understand those concerns, but respectfully disagree.

Residents handed over nearly \$1 million to council members alone last year. That does not take into account the vastly greater amounts of money spent on each of the regional municipal offices, executives, equipment, training, contracts, insurance and more. Nine Almaguin municipal employees sit on the province's Sunshine List, a public sector disclosure document that names public servants earning more than \$100,000 annually.

This is not an argument that area municipal politicians and staff do not care about their communities. Nor is it a crass mockery of their work and their efforts to do their best for their residents.

But nearly \$1 million could be better spent on social services, economic development, job growth, cultural preservation, tourism enhancement, environmental protection, infrastructure rehabilitation and expansion or even personal debt reduction, to name a few. All it would take is a more efficient governance structure.

Each municipality in Almaguin has its unique history, plans and people. That is not up for debate. It is also not at risk should municipal co-operation and government reductions take hold. Shoving aside the arguments that support financially efficient and collaborative regional governance is not the right path.

Consider it. Think about it. Almaguin Highlands dodged amalgamation in the 1990s, but it has been a topic debated near continually since. Push down the fear and consider some alternatives because these expenses are not a one-shot deal and they are not immune to inflation.

Are you prepared to pay \$1 million-plus a year for governance forever?

- SAYING IT ON SOCIAL MEDIA -



A round up of reaction online

The story: Nine North Bay drivers in one month ignore school bus flashing lights

"Why are their names not made public??? After all, they are endangering the lives of our precious children and should be identified and immediately lose their licence, !! a fine is NOT enough."

Denise Gratton-Rice

"As a former school bus driver, I can say that when these issues are not used by both the driver of bus and other motor vehicles...the bus driver is usually backed by the other driver by gestures or verbally...the question is how do they get a license or keep one...phones are quite often the problem...another charge of course that is not being enforced enough."

Lana Mery

"Perhaps these idiot drivers should have to do additional training courses to maintain their driver's license validity. Especially, how to obey school bus laws."

Lynne Rochon

The story: Powassan butter tart champ shares tricks, not recipe after maple festival win

"Although your tarts are amazing....I have to ask Lynn Woemke Ralston,are they as delicious as your lemon squares? #feedme"

Dyane Brunton

"Emma told me you were the best cook in the world. Now I'm your son. Congrats Lynn, good job."

Linda Murray Van Kooij

"Annmmnd now I want butter tarts! Lol"

Lindy Anastasia Beaverhausen

The story: Storm water causing ground to shift at Burk's Falls West solar farm site

"1 inch rain over 1 acre is 27,154 gallons or 113 tons, 1 inch rain over 100 acres is then 11,300 tons SO 2.5" or 3 inches of rain... a steep hillside next to the Magnetawan River what a stupid fool thing to do build a very inefficient stupid Solar trinket farm to begin with.... all brains plus yeah sure....."

Terry Hewitt

ABOUT US



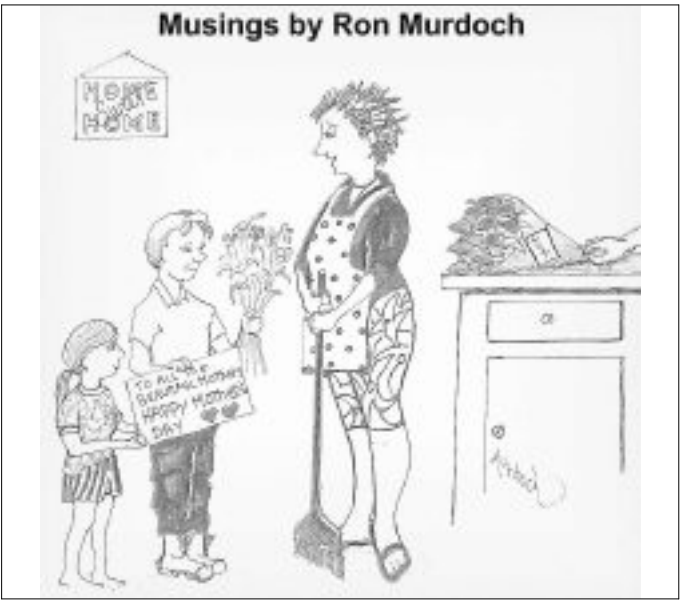
The Almaguin News, published every Thursday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. The Metroland family of newspapers is comprised of more than 100 community publications across Ontario.



newsroom@muskolaregion.com
www.facebook.com/AlmaguinNipissingNews
@northbayNip

CONTACT US

Letters to the editor
All letters must be fewer than 400 words and include your name and telephone number for verification purposes. We reserve the right to edit, condense or reject letters.



Mailbox height restrictive for seniors

Most rural mailboxes are in compliance with Canada Post requirements.

A notice in our mailbox read, "Lower your mailbox to a 114 cm height. Must be done within 10 days' notice." What about the older residents who cannot afford to change this?

Is it Canada Post or the mail carriers who complain they have to reach too high to open the box?

What is next? They open your mailbox, there is music playing or a cup of joe waiting? I am thankful for mail delivery even during harsh conditions. I should the mail carriers to still have a job.

Diana Rutgers
Burk's Falls

'Your support makes the land trust viable'

Note: The Magnetawan Watershed Land Trust included the following message from its president, Barry Graham, in its spring newsletter.

Happy spring to all! Palmer and I will soon be on the road north to our favourite destination - Ahmic Lake, Magnetawan, and the surrounding area. We look forward to seeing our friends on the lake and in the community. I want to express, once again, my heartfelt appreciation for all of your support. Your support makes the land trust viable as we continue with the trust's mission. Your willingness to volunteer, provide financial support, and participate in our events makes our work worthwhile and enjoyable. Please, keep it up.

On behalf of the board of directors, I also thank you all, once again, for your support and for your ongoing interest and commitment to the land trust. We thank both new supporters and our long-standing supporters who have made sustained financial commitments to the trust over the years. You can be assured that your board remains dedicated to the preservation of the natural, historical, scenic, and recreational value of Ahmic Lake and the surrounding area, as stated in our mission statement - just as you are.

We have been active over the fall and winter with our stewardship of the Old Man's Creek Reserve that includes monitoring the creek, the trails and the property. A special thank you "tip of the hat" goes to

the members of the Municipality of Magnetawan roads crew who helped us remove a freezer full of meat along with other trash someone had tossed off the bridge over the creek.

We participated in the Ontario Land Trust Alliance (OLTA) annual gathering where our co-ordinator, Val Fieldwebster, and I proudly accepted for the land trust the 2016 Ontario Land Trust Alliance's Land Trust Achievement Award. The award recognizes the trust for outstanding achievements in fulfilling its mission from a conservation and community outreach perspective. We also held two very productive board meetings by conference call. Additionally, we discussed (and continue to discuss) with landowners on Ahmic and elsewhere in the watershed assistance the land trust can offer to the preservation of their properties and associated possible tax benefits. And we continued participating in outreach activities and the planning for the 2017 summer season activities.

We were asked to attend and present at the International Land Conservation Network in Minneapolis last fall, which Val did. Additionally, we were asked to attend the Municipality of Magnetawan's hosting of a public meeting to discuss the formation of a committee to jointly support the conservation, sustainable development, and marketing of what is being called the Magnetawan River Park. Val did and now we have been asked whether we would like to be on the committee, which we are considering. We recently participated, for the second year in a row, as a judge at the 2017 East Parry Sound Regional Science Fair. Based on the very positive experience last year, this is so encouraging to see so many youngsters looking for ways to make positive changes.

We have now firming up timing for our annual general meeting and annual celebration. The trust's AGM will be on Saturday, July 29, starting at 2:30 p.m., not our usual mid-morning start, at the Ahmic Lake Golf Club. We made the move in order to avoid conflicting with the Wooden Boat Parade, which starts at 11 a.m. that day. Our annual celebration will take place not on

our normal date of Sunday of the long weekend but this year on Friday, Aug. 4, starting at 5 p.m., at location to be determined. We happily accommodated a request from the Ahmic Lake Cottagers Association, in light of its centennial events, to hold the celebration on a date other than the Sunday of the long weekend. (Please note that both the AGM and the annual celebration are open to everyone having an interest in, or curiosity about, the land trust and are not limited to members of or donors to the land trust.) More information about these and other land trust events is available in this newsletter and on our website at www.mwt.org or our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/MagnetawanLandTrust. Please do check our events listing.

As I have expressed in previous letters, please do continue to provide your advice and feedback. See you soon.

Barry Graham
President
Magnetawan Watershed
Land Trust

Make sure you buy local honey

At a recent meeting of the Muskoka Parry Sound Beekeepers we took a straw poll on our winter losses.

The rate was in the normal, approximately 25 per cent range that we expected. There were 27 hive losses from about 107 healthy hives that went into the winter, to replace these hives will cost \$200 per unit, not \$5,400. As a hobby this is not a money maker.

The members of this organization are hobby farmers or small time honey producers. You will see some of the latter at local markets.

On a national scale, large honey farmers (1,000 to 4,000 hives) are suffering from depressed market prices that are forcing them to seek a loss or to stockpile their product. Some of this is due to offshore honey being dumped on us.

What we are asking you is to buy local honey or be aware of the product you are purchasing and the very least, buy Canadian.

Look for the required label Product of Canada. This ensures that it is home grown honey produced to the highest standards and is often only found in fine print on the back of the container.

Canada No. 1 or Packaged in Canada (Usually in large print on the front of the label) do not ensure that it is home grown.

The former lets you know it has met a minimum standard for clarity, colour, viscosity and is fit for human consumption. The latter label, Packaged in Canada, means that it is off-shore honey repackaged here. In some of these cases it is produced by processes that are unacceptable to us and dumped by the barrel onto our market and repackaged as is, or used to dilute our own home grown.

McCormick, who is the largest home distributor in Canada, recently announced they will amend their practice of diluting their product with offshore honey from China and Argentina and sell 100 per cent Canadian content. This is laudable.

Should you choose to buy local honey, go to a local beekeeper or the local markets. Their product will be raw, natural food, unadulterated in any way by heat, micro filtering or adding the potency with any additives for flavour or preservative. Some honey from the supermarket is heat treated to prevent the natural process of crystallization. We are all aware of the trade offs that occur with quality and flavour sacrificed to eye appeal and shelf life. Think those dry, red cardboard flavoured items that pass for tomatoes. We are all aware of the trade offs that occur with quality and flavour sacrificed to eye appeal and shelf life. Think those dry, red cardboard flavoured items that pass for tomatoes.

Over time, this granulation process will occur, especially if honey is stored at lower temperature (no fridge) because the glucose fructose combination in the comb ("honey") that is capped by the bees at less than 17 per cent moisture is supersaturated. Enhancing this granulation process are the suspended pollen grains, they form a platform around which the crystals cluster.

In harvesting the honey the keeper simply lifts the full frames from her hive, strips the wax caps from the comb, centrifuges the frames to extract the golden viscous liquid, gravity sieves to separate the wax from the honey and bottles it. Pollen that showers into the open honey cells enhances the nutritional purity. As a bonus, the frames and waxey honey sludge are fed back to the bees who clean it up. They will repair and reuse the comb but not the beeswax. It is collected, melted and sieved to clarify it and it has many uses from cosmetics to candles.

Check your labels carefully, the important information is often in fine print on the back side: Product of Canada.

Wayne McGill
Graftonhurst

WHO WE ARE

Almaguin News
59 Ontario Street, Box 518 Burk's Falls, ON POA 1C0
Phone: 705-382-9996
Fax: 705-382-9997
Web: www.almaguinnews.com

Delivery
For all delivery inquiries, please call 705-789-5541.

Publisher
Dana Robbins
General Manager
Shaun Sasse
Editor-in-Chief Metroland Central
Joanne Burghardt

Publications Manager/
Editor-in-Chief
Jack Tynan
Managing Editor
Pamela Steel

Director Distribution
Mike Barnhill
Distribution Manager
Andrew Allen
Director Creative Services
Katherine Procher