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NEWS

# Builders feel impact of building code changes

by GINA GILLESPIE  
*The Independent*

It began as a means to streamline procedures and improve the quality of building construction in Ontario. But Bill 124, which makes changes to the Building Code Act, 1992, is creating more problems than solutions for local builders and designers.

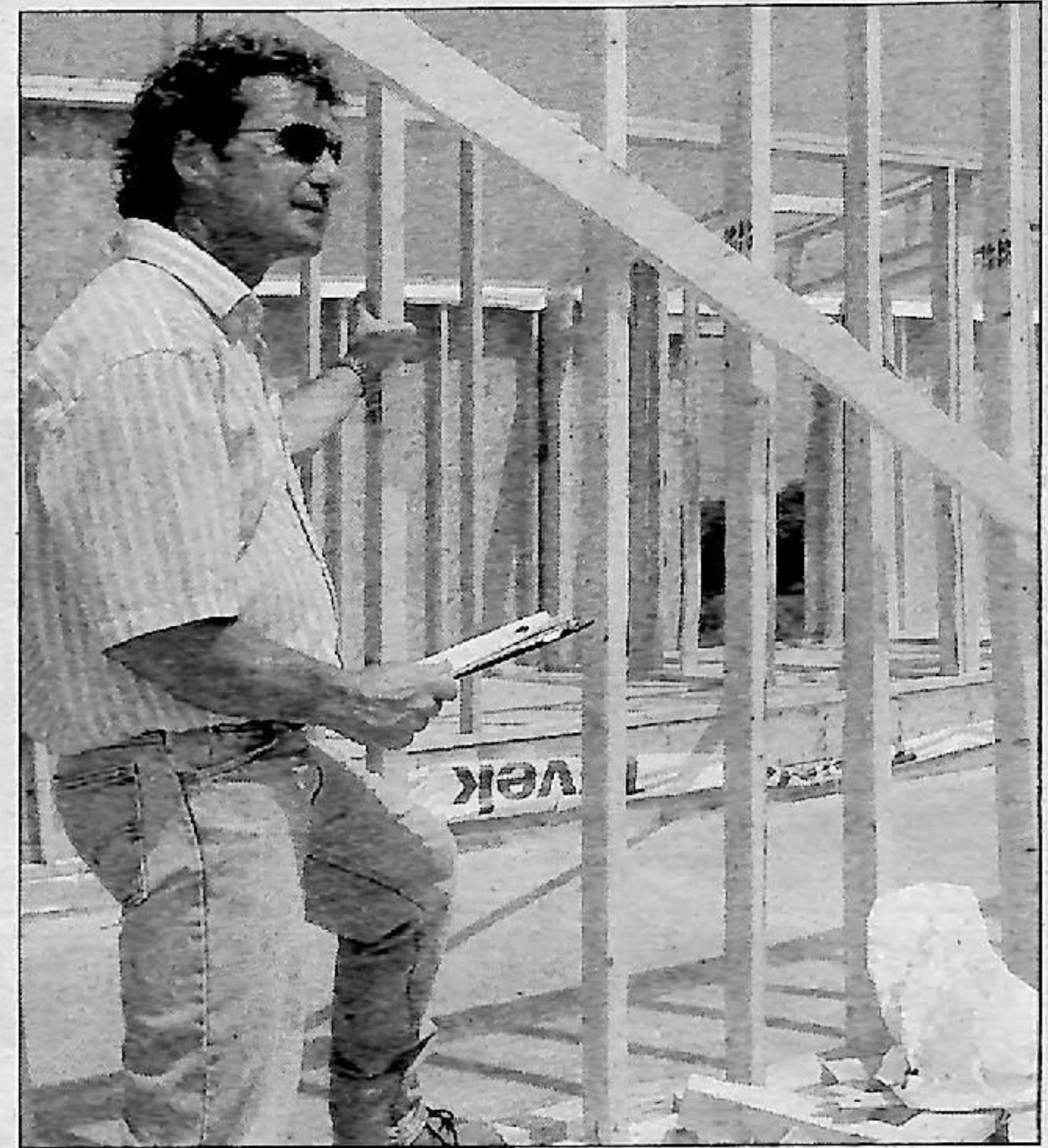
The changes involve mandatory qualifications for building officials, certain classes of designers and Registered Code Agencies (RCAs), including a requirement for professional indemnity insurance.

What this means, in part, is that a builder who used to draw his or her own building plans must now take training through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MAH) to become registered and/or qualified. Plans drawn up by an unregistered person will not be approved for a building permit. Despite years of creating suitable drawings, builders and designers must now find the time and money to get the required training.

"No insurance company wanted to touch these designers, because it's an unknown commodity, so they hike the insurance up big time," says Rick Jones, chief building official for the Municipality of Brighton. "I found about four designers that said 'I'm just going to pack it up. I don't have enough business to pay the insurance.' That means there will be fewer designers out there for people to use."

With Brighton's small-town charm sparking a building boom, losing people from the pool of qualified designers will create hardship for local builders.

"We are leading Northum-



Cindy Woods photo

*Rick Jones, chief building official for the Municipality of Brighton, says changes to the building code will create hardships for local builders.*

berland County in building in the last couple of years," says Mr. Jones. "We're setting records in our building stats, and there's more of the same coming for the future."

For custom home builder Len Kuipers, the new requirements are an inconvenience, and will add to the cost of a home, but he sees the changes as mostly positive.

"Generally for the companies that do good work and do proper design, it's not a bad thing," he says. "It will take away from the people who don't work by paper, and cash workers. Cost wise and time wise, it's a negative, but as far as defining our competition, it's a positive."

As the July 1 deadline for obtaining the necessary qualifications approached, two-thirds of the people remained unqualified, prompting a deadline extension to Jan. 1, 2006. Despite the extension,

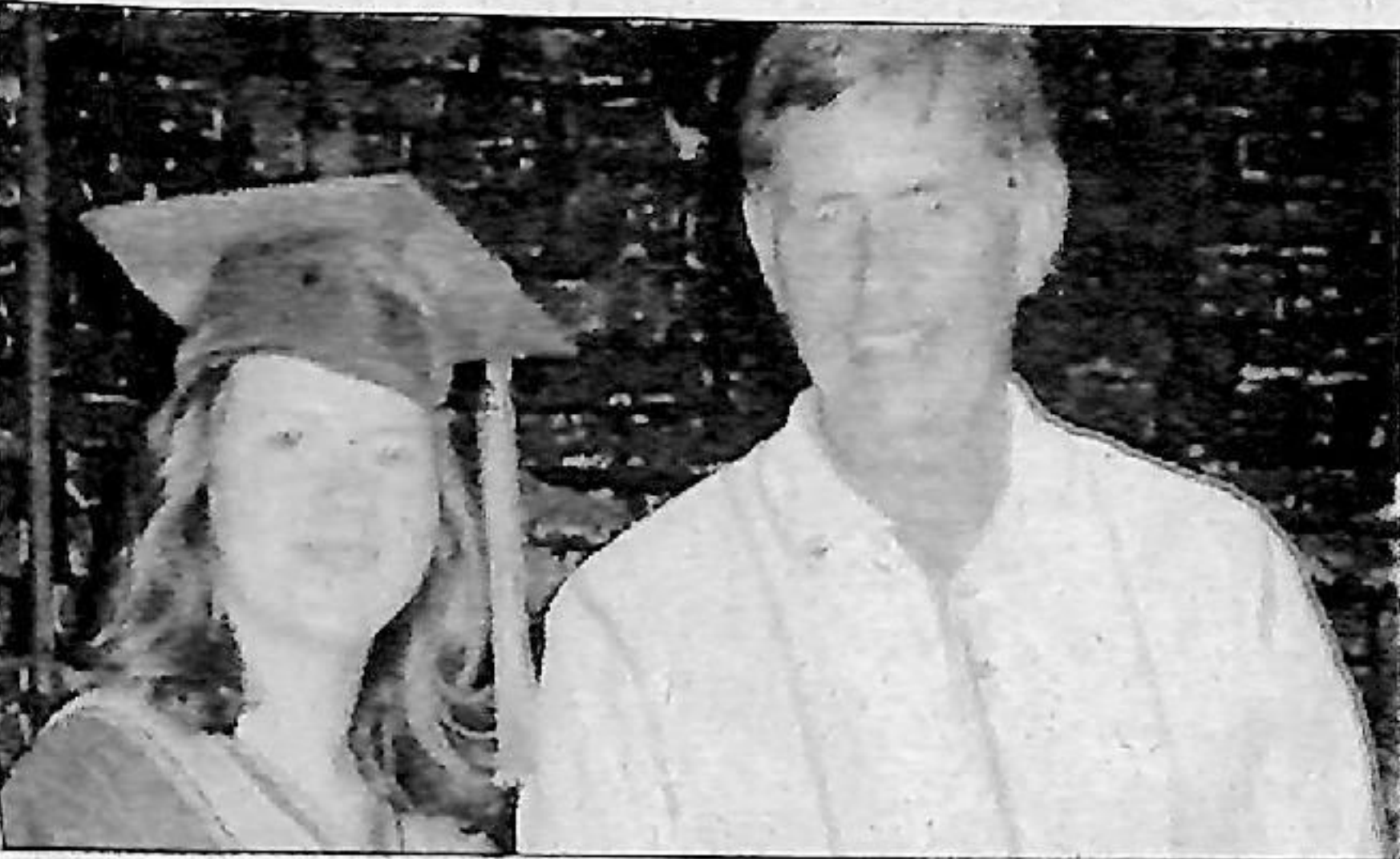
the timeframe remains tight.

"Right now, all the builders are out building homes. It's their gravy season. They don't have time to go for a one-week course," says Mr. Jones. Despite working for 13 years as a home inspector, having taken a multitude of courses over a 15-year period, and having a college education, Mr. Jones still requires three or four courses himself to be awarded advanced status.

Representatives from the MAH will be at the Cobourg Lions Centre on Elgin St. E. in Cobourg on July 14 at 7 p.m. to answer questions and address concerns over the changes.

"We want every person affected to go there," says Mr. Jones. "Have questions pre-formulated. We would like everyone involved in the building process to come on up and figure it out."

Mary Ross collected two awards at the 2005 Convocation. She is pictured above with Paul and Karen Island, donors of the John-Paul Island Memorial Scholarship. Mary also won the Wooler Women's Institute Award.



Cramahe's Valerie Puffer earned two awards for her efforts. Mike Thompson presents her with the Brighton Rotary Service Above Self Award. She also won the W. M. Sprung Award for Math and Physics.



Sarah Kilpatrick brings home the Brighton and District Chamber of Commerce Award.



One last time - It was the last call for graduating members of Razz-ma-jazz.

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