



CLIVE BEARDWOOD

## Does Rockwood need water, sewage systems?

A special report for the Free Press on Rockwood's acute problem by Lorraine Root

The question of pollution problems in the Village of Rockwood first became apparent through the eyes of the Wellington-Dufferin Health Unit, when a number of residents were reportedly having trouble with their well water; others, difficulty with septic tank systems.

It was referred to Clive Beardwood, one of the seven public health inspectors affiliated with the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit. Mr. Beardwood looked into the matter and tried to alleviate problems as they arose.

In 1966 the Health Unit reported to the O.W.R.C. that Rockwood had quite a number of bad wells and septic tanks. They required how much the Grand River water table rock formation would stand.

An inspection was conducted in a centrally-located large block area of concentrated housing in the village. Door to door samples were taken of approximately 170 homes.

tank replaced, which would mean blasting rock to get the tanks in, and the lots were too small. So it was, with more and more wells showing problems, and septic tanks repeatedly giving trouble, the health department could find no specific indications where the problem was.

Ground saturated Although an extensive study and search had not been made, a matter of long time observation on an individual basis had proven that there was not enough soil on top of rock in the Rockwood area to provide proper filtration.

More and more tanks were being installed in the village as people bought up two lots with the proper square footage, which officials feared would eventually result in even more concentrated buildings.

Then there was another survey. Indications pointed to the rock pollution level reaching the point of no return. Sewage in some cases was being drawn out of neighbors' wells. Gasoline leaking through the rock strata was finding its way into wells some distance away.

"If," said Mr. Beardwood, "77 per cent was the reading four years ago, I would hate to guess the percentage of polluted wells right today."

There is no place to put the blame for Rockwood's present problem.

According to Clive Beardwood, the majority of sewage pollution is from humans. Previous experience pretty well shows it was from septic tanks. The only neglect involved was that early town fathers did not foresee what could happen with the growth of a village.

Rockwood is not alone in its perplexities. Other areas in the north end of the township have also had considerable difficulties over the past 10 years. In fact, maybe even greater ones, with heavy clay saturation.

The government's decision that all small towns and rural communities must become equipped with water and sewage disposal systems to hold the country's pollution problems at the present level, made it feasible Rockwood should be next on the list.

Already, many small communities have adapted to the new systems including Drayton and Grand Valley, both small Ontario towns with populations not exceeding 600.

Although the O.W.R.C. is quite adamant there is no chance Rockwood's position necessitates the installation of the plant, there does seem to be a measure of urgency. Many do not realize the reason their wells are functioning well (without pollution) is because they are fortunate enough to live in an area of the village where there is ample square footage and more than the required five foot soil depth for filtration.

However, it's quite possible the picture could change very quickly and contamination could leech into the uncontaminated water supply. Also, because there are too many concentrated wells on the upper table of the rocky region, their water could also disappear.

So, unless the new system is installed soon, the village's inaction could, according to Mr. Beardwood, result in epidemics of hepatitis or some other communicable disease. This has been happening in other parts of the Province.

The O.W.R.C. have examined the findings and, because they have the wherewithal to look at a community and say, "Let's fix

it", Rockwood residents may be glad that they have been discovered in time because it is the one governmental body which has the access to the monies required for installation. It has been said many times by the village and township representatives that "The Ontario Water and Resource Commission personnel are appointed to aid, not to hinder or waste anybody's money."

There are many questions the villagers are asking and such questions should be answered by someone who is in a position to answer honestly and with knowledge.

Mr. Beardwood volunteered to answer such questions and here is how he looks at the situation:

Question: Is there any present ruling about septic systems and could they not be investigated and kept under surveillance with penalties if not adhered to, similar to fire department by-laws?

Mr. Beardwood: "Yes, there is a simple by-law pertaining to Rockwood in the Health Act. However, the majority of cases in Rockwood cannot be fixed.

Question: Has there ever been any extensive research done to see if there is any cheaper way of solving the problem, such as supplying water daily to those whose supply is inadequate—or installing joint septic tanks?

Mr. Beardwood: It's a matter of transportation economics. During a three year drought in this area it was attempted to truck water but it did not prove feasible on a permanent basis, both from the standpoint of excessive handling and also the fact something could contaminate the liquid. It was impractical. Four or five people on one system will not solve problems. There is a

required 75 gallons per person per day in every 150 sq. ft. of ground per person for disposal in normal ground. If we would install a three or four man septic system it would amount to the same thing. Small lagoons are not feasible because the thermal layer in the water can be quite foul for at least 10 days twice a year. Also, it would require a location of at least 1,500 ft. from residence. A tank is still the most successful and economical method but it requires an area of five feet grade of earth over rock.

Question: Why is it necessary for Rockwood to have such an expensive and updated system when a much larger area, such as Milton, has only a simple one which is adequate and probably not as costly. Did trustees consult with Milton?

Answer: Naturally every new item is better than the one before and it is logical to assume that the newer system proposed for Rockwood will not cost any more for its better capabilities than the one in Milton as it was probably considered the best at the time of installation. Extra costs would only be determined by the general upgrading of all costs.

Question: Has a check been made to see if the cost could not be curtailed by septic tanks being brought up to standard?

Answer: Yes! But most tanks are not repairable. If not adequately handled, residents would have to have a placard marked "condemned" on their homes. In such a case Rockwood could not expect any new residents who will help curtail the cost in the long run.

Question: If the whole project is scrapped, who will pay the shot of the \$150,000 survey?

Answer: The government is responsible and the O.W.R.C. will absorb same.

Question: Why should Rockwood residents have to pay for the pipe past the conservation park?

Answer: The piping cost past the conservation park would possibly be absorbed by the government as recreation areas of the province are benefiting by pollution abatement.

Question: Is it true that if one question is raised the proposal will be automatically scrapped?

Answer: Not at all. But all letters of disapproval should be forwarded to the Municipal Board or presented at a meeting of the O.M.B.

Question: Would it seem practical for Rockwood to install water only? If not, why not?

Answer: Practical, yes, but it would only solve the immediate hazard, not the final pollution one later. Within a year or maybe two, the pollution could flow out. If there are rock fissures, the pollution disappears into it but with no such fissures it follows the rock table right down to the river, the centre of the watershed into which everything flows.

Question: How long will this system remain adequate?

Answer: Rockwood is presently geared for 1,700 people. It could be a 15 year plan, depending on the planning council. Rockwood should insist on an official planning and zoning board prepared to set up proper protective by-laws. A planned sewage expansion program is necessary. If it happens gradually, it can be controlled and new industry and growth absorbed the same way.

Question: If the village cannot pay the cost and if a vote is taken and it registers a "No" what will happen from the standpoint of the Board of Health and the O.W.R.C.?

Answer: A vote will not affect the necessity of the proposed system. While the O.W.R.C. respects the rights of the citizens it also has not gone to the expense of such a survey unless it was considered absolutely necessary. If a number of homes were condemned then the village would be considered "shut down" and new residents would not be moving in. Such an increase in population would help to curtail expenses.

Question: Regarding the residents of Eden Mills. How will this affect the water running down to that village?

Answer: Not at all. The O.W.R.C. have a policy to locate

half a mile from the nearest dwelling and this will provide enough aeration and oxidation in the waters so that by the time it reaches Eden Mills the water has been purified again.

Question: Would it not be cheaper to put the plant right at the nearest water point, close to the main road near the mill, thus alleviating the necessity of extra pumping stations to send the sewage up the hill and around the conservation system?

Answer: I go along with the idea of putting it near the first dam on the main road. The O.W.R.C. requires the effluence be released on a watercourse with enough water flow to dilute it six to one in fast flowing water. If effluence gets into calm water, there is a definite growth of algae—not necessarily pollution, but it is plant life feeding nutrients and, as a result, the algae bloom thought normal with all that water could bloom beyond the capabilities of the water to supply oxygen. It would be used up by the algae. This could kill fish. If however, it hits on running water there is a natural aeration taking place. If introduced above the dam, instead of below, it could result in a clogged up mess. Consequently it would be preferable to run the effluent below the mill dam.

Question: If the conservation park should prove to have a sewage problem how will it be handled and who will pay for it?

Answer: The conservation park would have to hook up to the present sewage and water system and charged on the same basis as industry. (With water meters by the 1,000 gallons)

Question: If a householder could not afford to have a hook-up to the system, could they apply to the National Health and Welfare for a loan, paying it back at low interest rates?

Answer: Never heard of it. They could take a Home Improvement Loan from any bank.

Question: Can people with well pollution be protected if there is no availability for hook-up? Answer: Yes! Refer to The Public Health Act No. 103 which clearly states that a debt can be incurred to cover cost of an extensive hook-up.

Question: If a number of people renege from hooking up to the sewage line it will make the cost for those who do more exorbitant. Is there any stipulation on this?

Answer: In many municipalities dead-line dates for hook-ups are set and must be adhered to, accordingly.

There are many more questions people will be asking. Some want to know if the Township could get a loan with the stipulation that "We'll drill the well and you pay us back. We now know that many of the wells are top-level polluted, meaning those on the upper rock strata and it's just a matter of time before the pollution seeps into the lower ones.

"Basically," said Mr. Beardwood, "it could have originally resulted from the mechanical sealing failure of some of the old wells, allowing pollution or septic contamination to get in."

Whatever it is, the fact remains that the plans for the installation are in their last stages.

According to a direct report from the Ontario Water Resource Commission, the final proposal is with the Council if they decide to go ahead. At the moment this is the cause of delay.

Meantime council says that it depends on the O.M.B. hearing. Mr. Beardwood feels that if council does turn hands down on the proposal, O.W.R.C. would let a reasonable time elapse and then probably come up with an alternative. Meantime according to officials, time is running out and the decision must be made.

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## Opinions from residents on sewer-water proposal

Ever since the April 30 Rockwood Village public meeting when O.W.R.C. officials and the Trustee Board attempted to explain to residents what the rates would be for the 1970 sewer-water proposal, there has been an attitude of general alarm in the village among many who would like to get some straight answers as to why it is necessary to put a village with only a small number of tax-paying residents into such exorbitant debt.

There is no question as to whether such citizens are concerned about fellow-villagers and problems regarding wells and drinking water (they are in fact, very much worried) but there is a feeling that the whole proposal is being forced on them with too little explanation as to why it is necessary. They wonder whether exorbitant costs as laid out in a letter from one of the village's leading citizens to a local newspaper recently, couldn't be curtailed and cut according to the cloth which 985 people can afford.

subsidy of our provincial tax dollar. "It would appear that the frontage charge will have to be increased if insufficient homes

"If it's not good enough for Rockwood then it's not good enough for Eden Mills," he said. "And why would it not be cheaper to put the plant right at the nearest water point, by the main road near the mill and this would cut out the necessity of extra pumping stations to send sewage up the hill and around the conservation system?"

Mr. Allerelle also felt that this would reduce the cost of the project.

join the system as it would not be paying for itself. The only other alternative would be to encourage new industries and homes into the village.

"Surely problems of this kind should receive more interest from the village residents, and be shown by their attendance, just once a month at the village trustee meetings."

Gunnar Allerelle took up residence in Rockwood with his wife Ebba and four children and are already contributing towards its progress by introducing a new business enterprise into the village.

Mr. Allerelle's main concern is the reason that it is necessary to take the pipe line up past the conservation park. He and his family have lived within a 150 yds. of a similar type plant in Milton for six years and he feels that instead of investigating an expensive ultra modern system the trustees should investigate the less costly one in Milton.

Although Mr. Allerelle found swimming beside the sewage plant in Milton was not unclean but in actuality very sparkling clean and he allowed his dogs to drink the water, he could still

understand the beef of the Eden Mills residents who, psychologically did not want Rockwood's residue in their swimming water.

"The part that bothers me is the fact that communications are inadequate between the elected representatives and the electorate. Communications from the elected body to the electorate is the responsibility of its elected officials. They have been given a trust. It is up to them to continually convince the electorate that the representatives were worthy of that trust. They show this by their actions in the council chambers and by the kinds of responsible decisions they make in their capacity as guardians of the public interest."

"On the item of cost for sewage and water service why cannot each householder be told how much it will cost - (a) in taxes; (b) for water; (c) for sewage; (d) for sewage and water; (e) in total per year if all services are subscribed to and (f) if only half the houses subscribe to the service?"

"I imagine that if only half the householders subscribe, the sewage and water rates will double. Am I correct?"

"It seems that the only ones who will benefit from sewage and water in cold hard cash are the developers and the people who hold undersized lots. The rest of

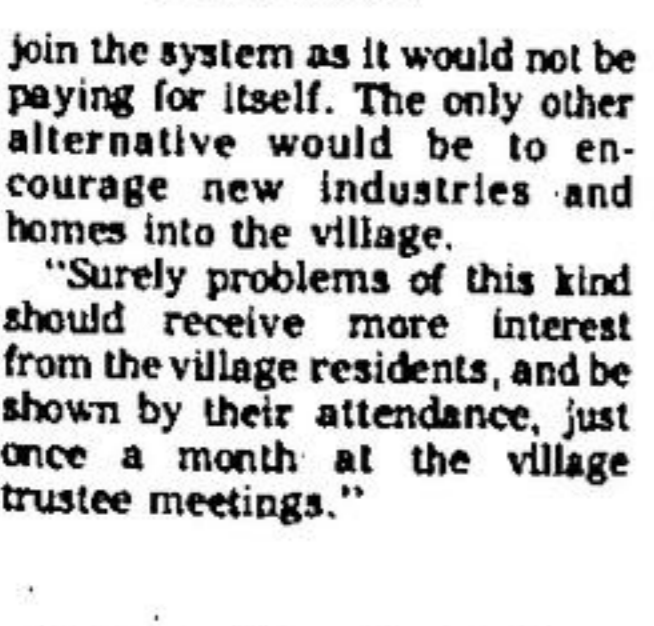
great capacity for generating idle criticisms and when things go wrong we are certainly blessed with a most adequate hindsight."

the ratepayers will be faced with an increase in cost of operating their homes from about \$120. per year up to \$400. plus, per year depending on whether or not the service is subscribed to. By the way, how much will it cost each old age or other pensioner? I also hear that some homes won't even

be offered the service, but this piece of information is heresy. "If water goes ahead with sewage, development will take place. Because speculators and developers will benefit let them pay a good share. If the sewage goes ahead, how long will it remain adequate?"

"Is there a registered town plan and development schedule to regulate any builders and speculators? They will take over a town this size if allowed to do so by indecision, lack of proper forethought, and development regulations."

"Why is there a plan for a pipe about 3,000 feet long to take effluent below the conservation area? Better still, why do the people have to pay for this pipe? It will be laid through rock and that's expensive."



Dave Rowe



Gunnar Allerelle



Gary Bateman

## 90 children take park swim lessons

"Everybody in, the water's fine," and all the children from four to 16 take lessons at the Rockwood Conservation Park.

Mike Hoffman is back at the old lifeguard stand and after three years on the same grounds he makes the chore of setting up the 90 student swimming program seem like a breeze with university potentials like Murray Blackman, Jim Brown, and Mary Kitchen showing their charges how to make like swimming sea dogs, it turns the three week sessions of daily lessons into a great treat.

With approximately 15 children in each class, Jim Hoffman says the Beginners' IS STILL the most popular and, as mothers lounge on the beach watching young offspring splurting about, they manage to slyly absorb some of that vitamin "D" uncorked while junior takes his daily dip.

Students who arrive in for their regular courses are mostly from Eden Mills and the Rockwood area, with a number coming in from Acton and Guelph. Although there have been no records made this year during the regular sessions the teachers are proud of their charges and communicate with personality and good nature.

"Hopefully," said one young instructor, "all of these little kids will be able to make it by the end of this year." With a series of beginners, juniors, intermediates and seniors, taking as many lessons as they can handle,

there's nowhere to go but on, until you're a senior. Then you have passed all your Red Cross

Examinations and will be eligible for lifesaving tests at Guelph Centennial high school.



JANICE GRAY, Brenda Honan, Karen Honan and Marilyn Kelly of Rockwood do a flutter kick as they cool off after their swimming session.