

MPP Arnott says highway signs will boost tourism

Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has urged the provincial government to stop dragging its feet and implement a new system of tourism highway signs that would enhance tourism in Wellington and across the province.

Ministry sources say that the installation of new signs province-wide likely will not start until 1996. "Minister, it has now been nine

months since the pilot project that your government initiated, and 14 months since the Tourism Report recommended investment in tourism highway signs.

"I urge you to take immediate action on this issue and encourage the installation of new tourism highway signs province-wide," Arnott, the P.C. Critic for Tourism, wrote in a letter to the Tourism

Minister, April 4.

A Tourism Advisory Committee appointed by the Minister, presented her with a report on Feb. 3, 1994. The report recommended investment in tourism highway signs as a tool in promoting businesses and generating economic development in tourism.

On June 30, 1994 the Minister indicated the province was invest-

ing \$1.18 million in a pilot involving the testing of new highway signs in three Ontario locations.

In his letter, Arnott chastised the Minister for the delay in proceeding with the installation of the highway signs, citing the progress of other provinces in this area.

"Prince Edward Island is light years ahead of Ontario in providing a network of directional tour-

ism signs. P.E.I. has found that its tourism signs have been helpful in directing tourists to points of interest, thereby boosting travel.

"I know that tourist destinations in Wellington County and across the province would be much easier to find if we had a decent system of tourism directional signs," Arnott stated in his letter. "The time for action is now."

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Rockwood to become a retirement village?

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK

The Rockwood Miller

Eramosa developer Ron Oelbaum thinks senior citizens will be Rockwood's salvation.

Oelbaum and five other Rockwood developers have joined forces to propose a design philosophy for the Country Villages of Rockwood — an adult lifestyle retirement community.

The proposal, which Eramosa councillors were briefed on in a closed-door session, calls for 20 years of controlled, phased growth, which Oelbaum said will meet the "hopes, needs, economic and lifestyle goals of the community".

"I have visited retirement communities in the States where they view older people as an industry, bringing revenue and jobs. Not only will this draw people from the Greater Toronto Area but I have been surprised by the number of local farmers and older people who say they want to retire where they grew up and lived all their lives," Oelbaum said.

In an interview last Wednesday, Oelbaum, president of the Rockwood Eramosa Developers Group, described Rockwood as a community in trouble.

"Although there is work underway to develop the village's tourism base, apart from the conservation area, there is nothing to draw tourists. Our plans include a golf course, playhouse, cinema, amphitheatre and much more."

Oelbaum said Township planners, who are currently working on a long-range land use and servicing study, do not have a strategy to make the community healthier.

"This proposal will form an economic base for the future and allow Rockwood to have amenities that it otherwise could not afford."

The proposal calls for four distinct villages, all interconnected with greenbelts, hiking paths and bikeways. A total of 2,373 units would be built in phased construction over the next 20 years.

The plan also includes an interpretive centre, a lawn bowling facility and a commercial development once the downtown core is revitalized. Another key component of the proposal is 152 acres of open space and nature areas.

"These amenities could only be realized if there is a grand design and a strategy approved by Council. If Council agrees with the strategy of retirement villages, but then goes the way of every landowner having to make a deal piecemeal, they won't get all of the amenities because no one landowner could pay for them," Oelbaum said.

Oelbaum wants Council to authorize staff to do a financial impact study on the concept and pay 25 per cent, or \$1,250, of the cost.

He also wants Council to endorse plans for a design "charette" — a type of steering group study to design the draft concept.

"We want Township planners and consultants to join planners, municipal officials and the public in June so we can draw out the concept for the planners to use in designing a 20-year land use study," Oelbaum explained.

Oelbaum also wants Eramosa Council to adopt an ambitious time line for the concept: finalization of the draft Official Plan and serv-

icing plans by August, public meetings in September, final Council approval by October and approval of the subdivision agreements in November. Marketing could then begin in early 1996.

The owners and developers of Heritage Village, a retirement community in Vineland, have visited Rockwood and believe it is the type of village where a retire-

ment community would "fit." They want to work with Oelbaum and local developers.

Eramosa Reeve Rick Hughes said Council was "caught by surprise" by Oelbaum's presentation.

"The plan has advantages and disadvantages," Hughes said.

"This plan would need a whole new Official Plan and I don't know if we are ready for that."



Rockwood Centennial's Primary students participated in the school's oral communication assembly at the school on Thursday. Fourth row, from left: Jonathan Ridgeway, Shawn Hitchcock, Beth Shultis, Janine Ruiter, Alison House, Paul Drexler, Kelly Millson and Paul Pursell. Third row: Tori Shore-Grenier, Hailey Lacroix, Ana Swanton, Bob Sedgewick, James Burgie, Brenna Smith and Mac Born. Second row: Aaron Bell, Gavin Anderson, Tim Robb, Brooke McArthur, Fraser Anderson and Laurie Martin. Front row: Taylor Anderson and Laura Bennett. (Doug Harrison photo)

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