



*Mull'n
it Over*
with

Bonnie Mullen

With fall municipal elections just around the corner, now is the time for voters interested in heritage conservation issues to start finding out where their candidates stand on related issues. Building heritage plays a vital role in our lives, not only reminding us of our past but connects us with the spirit of our communities. With recent provincial restructuring affecting numerous communities across the province it is imperative that heritage priorities not get lost in the shuffle. Our inheritance of architecture, manmade landscapes and material culture are irreplaceable assets and resources. They are unique to each community whether an example of a particular style or building material, the significance of the person or family who lived there, or the streetscape as a whole.

The Ontario Heritage Act has been in place since 1974 and sets out the role and responsibility of municipalities concerning policy and decision-making locally on heritage matters. Most councils in this area have appointed Local Architectural Advisory Committees to advise and give input on heritage mat-

Articulating the need for Heritage Conservation

ters providing a recognized forum enabling the communities to express their interests in heritage conservation. The services provided by such committees vary by municipality but include things like heritage designation of private and public properties, establishing heritage districts within a village or town, advising property owners on appropriate conservation and maintenance practices, education, raising community awareness, research and inventories of heritage resources.

Heritage designation has often been misunderstood but owners of properties of historical or architectural value often seek out designation wanting to preserve their contribution for the future. Designation recognizes and reinforces the cultural value and community appreciation of heritage properties and provides protection against inappropriate changes or possible demolition in the future. It does not impose expenses beyond those expected of any property owner.

University of Waterloo Professor Robert Shipley conducted a study and published a report concerning the trends in property values of designated heritage properties in 1996. He studied 2707 properties in 24 Ontario communities and concluded that the sale prices of designated properties were at or above average in all but one of the communities studied.

"Far from showing any consistent negative effect there is in fact a positive correlation between designation and an enhancement in the rate of increase in property values when measured against the average trend in property values within a given community," the report stated. It goes on to say that designation alone does not cause the increase in investment but that condition, maintenance and upgrades in the property are key factors.

Coinciding with Wayne Gretzky's retirement from hockey in 1999 Brantford designated his boyhood home built in 1956. In recognition of Ontario's Heritage Week theme "Our Farming Heritage," Waterloo LACAC is designating an historic Mennonite Farm. In addition to numerous buildings the City of Guelph has designated bridges, fountains, trees and landscapes. There are so many pieces of every community's past that warrant preservation.

Although funds to individual owners of designated properties for restoration work are no longer available, municipalities are finding other creative means to encourage and assist owners. While property taxation policies sometimes penalize owners who do improvements and restoration of the heritage properties, some municipalities such as Cobourg, Kitchener, London and Perth

have used the powers provided under the Ontario Heritage Act to provide Conditional Heritage grants or tax back grants to qualified owners. Heritage easements are also being used and in some cases the donation of an easement benefits the owner with tax advantages. The Heritage Challenge Fund Community Program, a joint effort between the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation and the Ontario Heritage Foundation, provides matching funds to municipalities, not-for-profit organizations, local service boards, conservation

authorities and First Nation Councils for capital projects related to conservation and restoration of heritage properties, feasibility studies and plans, as well as endowments to provide income for similar ongoing capital costs.

The importance of the role the public plays in each community articulating the need for heritage conservation and helping to find viable solutions for their preservation cannot be overstated. Public debate should be encouraged and initiated early particularly in a municipal election year. Find out if heritage is a priority for your candidates!



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Carpenter Ants

Carpenter ants are wood infesting ants and can occur in almost any part of a home including interior & exterior walls, attics, ceilings, subfloors, under shingles, beams, logs, below doors, insulation, and a variety of odd places including the linings of fridges. Carpenter ants vary in size from small workers at 5mm up to the large queens at 17mm. They are either all black or black with a reddish mid-section. A mature nest will contain about 3000 ants and can occupy an area stretching from the floor to the ceiling and be several feet wide.

Unlike termites, carpenter ants do not eat wood. They chew galleries in the wood to build their nests. Damp or partially rotted wood is preferred as it is softer and easier for the ants to chew ns well as providing a moisture source. They can be found in insulation and styrofoam such as is found in cathedral ceilings or basement walls. Food in the home is not as attractive to carpenters, their primary food source being other insects and plant saps. Once the weather is warm enough, they will forage outside bringing the food back into their nest in the house. I have often found carpenter ants tending aphids on trees and shrubs. Watch out for peonies in your garden! Many of the homes I have inspected for carpenter ant problems had peonies planted up against the foundations. In these cases, I recommend that they be moved to beds further out in the yard. Carpenter ants travel long distances, often up to 300 feet from the nest.

Carpenter ants can enter structures in a number of ways. A single

queen can enter the home and begin laying eggs. An entire colony can move in using telephone or hydro lines, fences, tree limbs touching the house or simply march across the lawn and up the side of the house. Another way is through firewood. Carpenter ants become dormant in the winter. If infested wood is brought in, the dormant ants can revive when the wood warms up, and possibly move into the structure of the house. Stumps, dead limbs, rotting decks, fences, railway ties and firewood are some common sources in the yard.

Eliminating carpenter ants involves finding the nest. Watching for areas of heavy activity, observing where the ants go in and out of the woodwork, listening for noises made by the colony, looking for sawdust piles and watching for activity on the exterior are all ways of trying to determine the nest location. Check for areas that may have a moisture problem such as leaks around tubs or showers, leaking plumbing, roof leaks, leaks around windows, etc.

Carpenter ants are mainly nocturnal and activity peaks during the night. They are most active in warm, humid weather and less active when it is cool. All ants produce a winged stage at a certain time of the year. These are the reproductives or kings and queens. Carpenter ant reproductives emerge in late spring or early summer. This stage is only produced in well established colonies. It is possible to have more than one nest especially if the ants have been there for a long time. I have inspected homes with multiple nests scattered

throughout the house.

Prevention of carpenter ants involves eliminating moisture problems, pruning back tree limbs touching the house, removing rotting wood from decks, fences, tree stumps or other sources such as railway ties and firewood close to the house. Treatment of these ants often involves drilling small holes into the nest area and injecting insecticide into the nest. In some cases it may be necessary to pull off trim or paneling to get at the colony. Treating around the outside perimeter will also help.

Although carpenter ants can severely damage a section of wood such as a window sill, beam or stud, especially if it has been water damaged, they will not cause the house to come crashing down around you. Their damage is usually confined to relatively small areas. Well-established colonies however can be a major annoyance with large numbers of ants roaming through the house each spring and early summer.



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