

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Ridiculous increases

It really is not only ridiculous, but we'd classify it as deplorable that residents anywhere should face municipal tax increases of 30% or as high as 40%.

Yet it's happening in the town (township) of Guelph/Eramosa where reassessment and a tax increase which Guelph/Eramosa Council says only amounts to just under nine per cent, has hit many ratepayers. There has to be something dreadfully wrong when increases of that magnitude are tacked on to some residents' tax bills.

It doesn't matter whether it is downloading from the Province, reassessment, or the local tax rate, that kind of increase could indeed cause much anguish for those who have to shoulder the burden.

According to Councillor Gord Tosh, Eramosa's ward representative on Wellington County council, reassessment only changed if provincial assessors felt the property values changed. He said as many properties fell in value as rose.

Translated into real figures, Mayor Dave Adsett said there are 3,600 residential properties in the amalgamated townships of Guelph and Eramosa and 1,465 experienced a drop in their assessment. Another 1,852 properties had a hike of between zero and 10 per cent. The reassessment also saw 272 homes absorbing an increase of between 10 and 20 per cent or more, a staggering figure.

One has to ask how the value of a residence could rise an astounding 20 per cent or more from the previous assessment? Maybe, as Councillor Doug Breen says, people who saw major increases to the assessed value of their property have in most cases not been paying their fair share. However, it is not their fault. They didn't assess their houses. Something is dreadfully wrong when they are assessed the larger increase in one year.

In other jurisdictions when discrepancies arose, the large increases were graduated over three or four years so residents could handle the fiscal increases without having to declare bankruptcy. Guelph/Eramosa council should look seriously into that avenue before imposing such a large burden on affected residents.

Obviously the chickens are coming home to roost in a lot of municipalities where downloading from the province and income tax cuts from the same source are matching up. For some it means the money saved in Ontario income tax must go to pay local tax bills.

Mea maxima culpa

In the rush to publish this family journal each week sometimes the obvious is overlooked or the facts are mutilated. Last week there were two obvious errors which, thankfully, were brought to our attention several times by sharp-eyed critics.

In the first instance right on the front page, in an article on new firefighters, Bob Andrews was described as a "recently retired Halton police officer" who will now fight fires alongside his son. Sounds OK but it was news to Bob that he was retired.

"I've still got three years to go" (before he's eligible to retire), Bob told The New Tanner. Mea culpa.

For those who know the Spielvogel brothers, Frank and Bill, both prominent in community affairs, the name of Bill Spielvogel in the cut line under a photo of Acton Legion members feting Sunnybrook veterans, caused some confusion. It should have been because it was Frank "Spee" in the photo, not brother Bill. Mea maxima culpa.

We apologize for our errors. We regret them and wish all our human errors were not right there in black and white for others to see. But it's the "nature of the beast" (the newspaper business) and we just have to live with our mistakes.

Briefly...

Newest wrinkle in the five day old war on terrorism - toilet paper with Osama bin Laden's image on it. It's one way of taking a swipe at a terrorist.

★★★★★

Those white flakes which fell on Sunday weren't dandruff or residue from the Afghanistan bombing - they were snowflakes. In some areas they carpeted the ground. Early for snow, isn't it?

★★★★★

Vivid autumn colours should still be colourful this weekend when the weatherman promises warmer, more salubrious climatory conditions. The show lasts only a few weeks and peaks around mid-October.



RECYCLING TODAY: Charles Simon is completing renovations to the ruin of the Barden Mill in Eden Mills creating a home, office, studio and guest quarters for himself and his wife. A greenhouse based on solar principles is at the heart of his strategy to use natural systems for the heating, cooling and even some of his electricity. - Maggie Petrushevsky photo

Historic Eden Mills stone mill being recycled for solar power

By **MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY**
The New Tanner

Recycling is a common term these days. We convert newspaper, cardboard, tin cans, bottles and plastics, even old rubber tires. Eden Mills architect Charles Simon takes recycling a step further. He is recycling a building.

During the clearing of the rubble and debris from the west end of the old mill prior to beginning to construct a new apartment and office space, every bit of reusable stone from the original mill was saved and re-used.

"I didn't think we should throw away a good building," Simon says. "We're recycling the mill built for nineteenth century water power to twenty-first century solar power."

The former Barden Mill in Eden Mills burned in 1979. When Simon and his late wife purchased the property, the plan was to build their dream home in the ruin despite contractor's advice to "put a ball to it" because only the shell remained of the original 1842 stone structure. They made a start in 1984 and Simon has been working on the project in bits and pieces as time and finances were available ever since.

This year the exterior will be finished with the installation of the glass for the green house and the roof garden. Those are the visible signs passers-by will have noticed throughout the past months. Inside has been changed too with the clearing away of yards of rubble from what will become a studio and guest quarters in the front of the building between the street and the river.

Simon has done much of his own work and has finally moved his Toronto office into his house. Or it will be there, once the office is completed and he can finish hauling home boxes of materials in storage at Rockwood.

He originally planned to use a room overlooking the river and adjacent to his office as a meeting room for talking to clients. That was before his wife, Anna, decided it would make a beautiful studio for her ceramic sculpting and "stole it" on him. The twinkle in his eye as he talks about her work and the fact he has installed a kiln for her tells all about his reaction to that theft.

Adjacent to that studio and office, is a guest apartment. Both have views of the river and a roof garden above with the original stone walls

providing privacy for anyone enjoying the spot. The greenhouse is obvious with its wall of glass rising out of that garden. It's dual purpose for collecting and heating in cool times and providing a chimney to vent heat in warmer times is less obvious. Yet that is central to Simon's environmentally-based design.

Air conditioning conventionally comes with sealed rooms and noisy refrigeration units. Simon's version is all natural. In cold weather, the stone and concrete of the building act as a heat sink for the warmth collected through the greenhouse while opening vents in the greenhouse, will allow that heat to blow off while creating a draft to suck out the heat from the entire house in hot weather.

Plants and the nearby trees clean the air and add to the shade for good air quality in the building.

Simon says the fact the building faces due south made it ideal for his philosophy of maximizing natural systems for heating, cooling and ventilating. The old ruin gave him the perfect opportunity to "practice what (he) always preached" about environmentally sound building

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Distributed to every home
in Acton and area as well as
adjoining communities.

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