

# Council, Ted Arnott parley over provincial issues

By Rebecca Ring

Guelph/Eramosa Councillors told MPP Ted Arnott that the province needs to upload responsibilities that were downloaded by the past Conservative government, such as social services. "We're paying for things that we shouldn't be, so we don't have the money to pay for what we should. Rather than a grant for a soccer field, I'd rather have the province pay for social services again so we could pay for this from municipal taxes and be able to maintain it," said Councillor Doug Breen.

Arnott initiated the meeting with council recently to discuss these and other issues. He plans to represent the Progressive Conservative Party for Wellington-Halton Hills in the upcoming provincial election. He currently represents Waterloo-Wellington, which includes a small slice of the township. The new

riding will encompass all of Guelph/Eramosa and Halton Hills to match the federal riding.

They discussed education, health care, sports and recreation, "Places to Grow" and the environment. The common theme was the need to put municipal tax money back where it was intended so facilities and programs could more readily be established and maintained.

Arnott asked what the current ratio is for the delegation of property taxes. Mayor Chris White said 20% goes to the municipality, 50% to the county and 30% to education.

#### Education funding

Breen said the education funding formula needs to be changed and only the province has the power to do so, "We have lots of programs but not enough bricks and mortar," referring to the shortage of class space. White said the township needs a central area where kids can go, such as an outdoor arena that could serve

as an ice rink in winter and roller-skating rink in the summer. Arnott asked how much this would cost. "About one or one and a half million, depending on the design. We would like to build it so it could eventually be closed in," answered White.

Councillor Reta Moyer spoke about the "chronic shortage of long-term care facilities," adding, "Often, family caregivers are getting stressed and the strain even results in them losing their jobs." The doctor shortage then came up, with Arnott asking how many residents don't have doctors. White said the issue is not just whether they have a doctor, but whether the doctor is local. Breen said the population of Rockwood has increased substantially with no increase in medical services available.

Council agreed that development has to be managed correctly, because the township is "a

rural oasis", which needs to be protected. "We don't want it to become Brampton or Mississauga, so we need flexibility with the Places to Grow plan so it's not too much too fast," said White. "Don't put us in the Greenbelt, though, because we want planning control," added Breen.

"I am glad you're here," White told Arnott. "In September, we will formulate a design committee for the community and we will develop a master plan. We will present this vision to our partners, like the province, GRCA, and the City of Guelph. If we don't tell you how you can help, that you don't know."

Arnott said, "If a municipality calls me, I call back ASAP because I want to deal with them personally. If I can help a council, then I can help a community. My door is always open and I will work with you if I'm successful in the next election."

## The ROCKWOOD Miller

# Decommissioning of dam to renaturalize Eramosa River

By Rebecca Ring

The upper dam in the Rockwood Conservation Area has been decommissioned which will result in the "renaturalization" of the river, according to Ralph Beaumont, Communications Manager for the Grand River Conservation Authority. Natural flow and cooler temperatures will reduce bacteria levels and improve cold water fish populations, such as trout, he says.

The upper dam was originally built to power the old woollen mill, the ruins of which are an attraction at the park. The dam is an historic feature in the community, however it no longer provides power and has a negative environmental impact so the GRCA decommissioned it this spring. It held back water, creating a pond and causing silt and bacteria build-up. "It's bad for water quality and bad for the fish, deteriorating downstream conditions," says Beaumont.

The dam is made up of concrete pillars with slots. Logs were placed in these slots to achieve the desired water level. They were normally taken out in the winter, so this spring the GRCA put in fewer logs to impound less water upstream. The waterfall is still there with its esthetic value but there is no upstream pond.

"We'll see how this works. We should have a nice clear

stream instead of a pond," says Beaumont.

The next step is to decide on a plan for the newly uncovered shoreline. Currently, grass has been planted, with the possibility of planting meadow plants and trees. "In four or five years, you won't even know a pond was there," says Beaumont.

#### Expect improvement

The GRCA expects a vast improvement in the water quality and will work with the community, angling and fishing clubs, and other organizations to improve fish habitat. Currently, there is a "sterile" pond bottom. The addition of rocks and other rehabilitation measures would provide habitat where fish could hide and breed.

Some past success stories include Taquanyah near Cayuga on the lower Grand River, which is a cold water stream. A dam was built there in the 1960's but was decommissioned a few years ago. It is in the process of "renaturalizing and looks great," according to Beaumont.

Another case is at Chillago near Hespeler. A dam with a road on it failed so rather than repair it, a bridge was built. The cold water fish population downstream has since improved. The GRCA also helped remove a private dam in Fergus, with the Ministry of Natural Resources. The "old Beattie dam" failed so it was removed, allowing water flow and fish passage.

#### Tent pads

Other projects at the RCA include creating tent pads on campsites. "Using a tent pad allows the unique, natural area to regenerate," says Beaumont. Some sites have been closed and others opened to encourage regeneration. With the help of donations from Gilbert McIntyre Funeral Home, trails are also being built so hikers will stick to specific paths. With heavy use, foot traffic can prevent the growth of trees and plants. "There are 60 year old trees but no babies in some areas. Most people will stick to a trail, allowing the other areas to regenerate. A healthy forest is like a healthy town. It needs seniors, adults, teens and babies," says Beaumont.

The 11 parks in the GRCA see over 1.1 million visitors each year and Rockwood is one of the busiest, averaging 75,000 visitors. Beaumont says, "The very things people come to enjoy - trees, water, camping - must be balanced to continue. The GRCA is an environmental agency first, hence the innovative projects." There are currently no plans to change the lower dam in the park, which creates the swimming area.



**LET IT FLOW:** The Grand River Conservation Authority decommissioned the upper dam in Rockwood this spring to "renaturalize" the river. Better flow should lower water temperatures and improve water quality. Shown here, a staff member takes photos of the river and shore to document its progress. *Rebecca Ring Photo*

## Speeder of the week

On Thursday July 19 at about 9:37 p.m. Wellington OPP Constable Jonathan Devine was patrolling on Highway 6 of Arthur Twp monitoring traffic. At this time the officer found a 1998 Chevy Blazer northbound travelling well above the posted speed limit.

A 20-year-old Mount Forest man has been charged with speeding at 140 km/h in the posted 80-km/h zone. He is scheduled to appear in Guelph Court on September 5.

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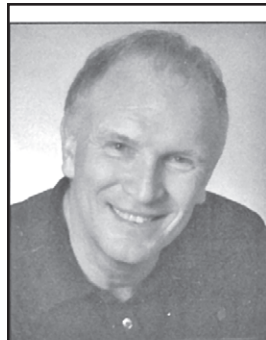
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