

# Reader asks, how high is too high?

Dear Editor:

Recently, Midland town council had an opportunity to deal with the controversial issue of new building heights. There is now a proposal before council that would allow the construction of an eight-story building on the site of the Athenian Hall, at the corner of Dominion Avenue and Second Street.

Two weeks ago, Bryson Parsons, a Queen Street resident who cares about sound planning, and I, went door to door in several areas of Midland to try to determine whether the majority of citizens support the unanimous decision of council to give this development the green light.

Many people are glad to see a new development at that corner. A development would clear away a problem area, and, if done properly would enhance the neighborhood. However, nearly everyone we talked with felt the eight-story structure is too high.

Downtown Midland already has one high-rise building. Therefore, some would say, the door has been opened for more high-rise development. This line of reasoning should not sway council to give this plan final approval.

Firstly, the Midland Avenue building does nothing to improve the quality of downtown Midland. Like the Athenian Hall property

plan, the first floor of the Midland Avenue complex is commercial space, but it has not attracted private businesses that would strengthen the downtown. The building houses social service offices.

Secondly, the Midland Avenue building is disruptive to its immediate neighbors. It subtracts from the quality of the residential neighborhood nearby and takes away privacy from those who live around it. Also, there is a problem of garbage blowing from its disposal bins and parking lots.

There are sound reasons for limiting high rises in old neighborhoods. It's not enough to say they are eyesores. A council that allows them to be built in an existing neighborhood takes something from the residents living nearby. As well, something is lost from the downtown, when a new building is allowed

to tower over the historic architecture of the community.

Recently, Barrie, which has faced the problem of developers asking for height restriction exemptions, hired a consultant to look into the problem. That city has learned the hard way that burgeoning high rises do not add to the downtown core.

Midland council should undertake a similar study and shelve the Athenian Hall proposal until it knows whether this plan would indeed be an asset.

Would four stories be an infringement? Five perhaps? Does Midland council have the expertise to know for sure? Certainly eight is too much!

Yours truly,  
Mark Bourrie  
Midland

## Democracy inaction

Small town politics in some North Simcoe municipalities does not make for a good model of democracy in action. Closed meetings have become the normal method of conducting business for some local councils and open debate is stringently discouraged.

Midland and Tiny Township both have regularly scheduled "caucus" meetings immediately prior to their public meetings. It's at these meetings that the arguments and debates are in full swing. Matters are solved behind closed doors, out of the view of both the public and the press. When the "real" council session starts, the rubber stamp is brought out for a hard evening's work.

It could be argued that the business of running a municipality moves more smoothly under these circumstances, and in some cases it most likely does.

But that attitude belies the democratic values Canada stands for. When bylaws and resolutions are rushed through a council meeting before anyone has a chance to say "boo" about it, the voters are cheated.

Midland council has become so wrapped up in the idea of resolving things in private that its public meetings have simply become forums for the individual councillors to reach their cable TV constituents and, they hope, present a positive image in an entertaining fashion. This makes for good TV perhaps, but is it any way to run a town?

## Councillor should fill spot on board

Dear Editor:

If Mayor Al Roach and his fellow-councillors Bev Day, Nancy Keefe, Gale Brown and Gale Niblock are red-faced over their 1988 re-appointment of 23-year-old Mark Leader as Midland's representative to the Huronia District Hospital Board, it isn't too surprising.

Leader was absent seven out of twelve HDH regular board meetings in 1987. His attendance record in 1988, up to the present time hasn't significantly improved.

Out of six meetings involving the HDH board of directors held thus far in 1988 — including the annual meeting held June 20 — he has been absent on three occasions.

The bid by the HDH board to alter municipal councils' appointments of representatives, which was "dead partially, according to one HDH board official, by the lack of attendance and participation on the part of Midland's representative on the board.

The Town of Midland has a substantial interest in Huronia District Hospital.

Besides making an approximately \$95,000 annual payment towards the hospital's debenture (mortgage) debt, Midland provides a lot of other services.

For example, the hospital has first call on

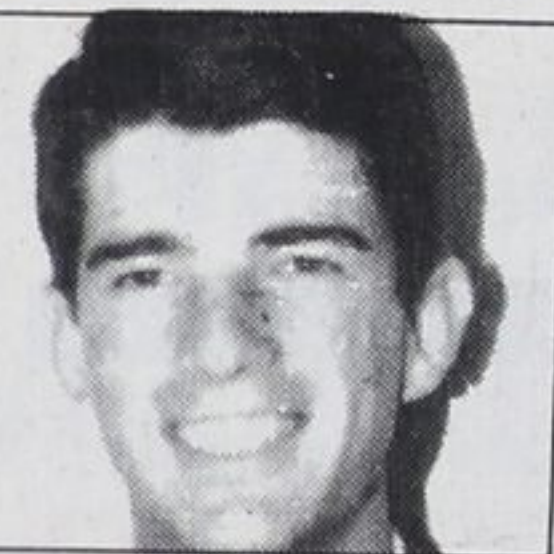
Midland's very expensive fire protection facilities. The municipality supplies water and sewage treatment services, bus service, etc.

Huron District Hospital's 1988 budget amounted to \$12,248,435. Midland needs a representative on the hospital board who is going to stay on the job, look after the store and give the people of this area the representation they are entitled to.

In view of the fact that the regular monthly meetings of Huronia District Hospital board of directors have been changed and no longer are held on the same evening as that Midland council, it is now possible to have direct council representation on the board. It would appear that Leader's busy schedule precludes his ability to participate fully as a HDH board member. Midland council should do him a favour and relieve him of his present appointment.

Midland's current HDH board representative should be replaced by a member of Midland council who will keep council and the citizens of Midland fully and regularly informed.

Sincerely yours,  
Bill Ogilvie  
Midland, Ontario



## As I See It

by David Krayden

### From paradise to rotten fruit

Don't get me wrong. I enjoy plane travel. It's a lot of fun.

But traveling at night can be difficult — especially when you don't sleep.

Right now I feel like going to bed. Instead of acquiring badly needed rest last night I was flying from Vancouver to Toronto.

My 10 days on the West Coast were as close to paradise as I may ever hope to deserve on this earth. I enjoyed my vacation and wish it hadn't ended so soon.

But I had some rather unique problems with planes along the way.

Take the stop-over in Calgary on Sunday night and Monday morning for instance. It was only supposed to be a 30-minute delay.

It turned out to be an hour on the ground with nothing to do. The problem had something to do with "rotten fruit" in the cargo section of the plane.

You know how the pilot usually handles these situations. After a long time of uncertainty, when you hear bumping and banging going on underneath the plane, a voice broadcasts the particular state of affairs.

A wavering voice explained the situation to us all and we all smiled that there wasn't something more serious going on beneath the plane.

"If ... you're wondering ... what you can smell right now," the pilot hesitated, "it's just some ... rotten fruit that we've found ... in the hold." Tell me why pilots pause so much

when they're explaining things like this to you?

He promised us that the difficulties would be rectified within "five or 10 minutes."

That's like the plumber telling you the job on your sink is only going to cost \$5 or \$10.

I was just starting to get tired before we landed in Calgary. But try to sleep when a plane has landed. All the lights go on. People behind you get up and push your chair forward; they reach up into the upper compartments and search for their carry-on luggage.

Masses of new passengers arrive and bump your seat.

So you just sit and wait.

Try as I would, I just couldn't get to sleep all the rest of the way to Toronto. Because of the time difference between Pacific

Daylight Time and Eastern Daylight Time, the night tends to vanish without warning. Before you know it, it's morning.

Soon they're coming around asking you if you want a drink and presently it's time for breakfast.

(They didn't feed us very well on this flight and I couldn't turn down breakfast).

After eating my early morning meal, I really couldn't risk going to sleep. I thought I was going to whoof my cookie, or more exactly, my oleaginous omelette.

Wish me pleasant dreams.

## Penetanguishene Citizen

Published each Wednesday by Telemedia Communications Inc., Ontario, 74 Main Street, Penetanguishene, Ontario 549-2012  
Second Class Mail Registration Number 2327  
Year subscription rate \$39.00

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## Letters

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