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# CASTOR REVIEW

## Sidewalk Talk

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### Russell bridges falling down

Four Russell Township bridges are in hazardous condition and in immediate need of replacement or at least major overhauling, a firm of consulting engineers has advised council in a preliminary report.

Asked if it was possible any one of the bridges could collapse without warning, township clerk-treasurer Jean-Guy Bourdeau replied with utmost seriousness: "Anything is possible."

The bridges include the St. Joseph, Menard, and Clement structures south of Embrun and the St. Andre span near the Russell Slaughter House.

All the structures in question are at least 50 years old, Mr. Bourdeau said; two are of steel construction and two of concrete.

The clerk said tests conducted on the bridges by Ottawa engineers Lecompte, Moller and Associates shows their support-

ive ability to be questionable. The firm examined a total of 30 bridges in the township.

When the engineers have completed their report, the township will petition the Ministry of Transportation and Communication for grants to rectify the situation, Mr. Bourdeau explained.

He said council requested from the ministry some time ago the go-ahead to replace the St. Joseph Bridge and is optimistic the application will be granted.

Councillor Baird McNeill said replacing or restoring hazardous bridges will be council's spending priority this year.

"It's hard to pick the worst one among them," Mr. McNeill said.

While it's unusual, rural bridges have been known to collapse; one caved in near St. Andrews north of Cornwall last summer just after being crossed by a loaded truck.

Mr. Bourdeau said the township is covered by insurance in the event a bridge collapsed resulting in injury or damage to private property.

A weight restriction of 11 tons is maintained on the bridges which allows their use by school buses, the clerk said.

### Buses held up

Procedural details have slightly delayed the start of the new Castor area bus line.

Martin Bielz, line owner, said his fare and schedule application was taking longer than anticipated to be processed by the province.

"It's unfortunate but there's nothing I can do about it," Mr. Bielz said, labelling the holdup a formality.

Based on the latest word from the province, he hopes to have the service from Morewood to Ottawa and points between in operation by mid-February. The start had been announced for January 20.

Notice of the starting date will be displayed in all area post offices.

A custom bus, one of two to be used for daily double return runs, has already been delivered to Mr. Bielz.

### Old Folks proposal —

### Roomier than rumored

The proposed Russell old folks home will be as much as double the size originally envisaged, the provincial Ministry of Housing has announced.

Adrian Gorrizon, a ministry community housing project coordinator, said that a township-wide survey has indicated that demand for residency in the home is much greater than earlier indicated.

As a result, he said the home to be built at the east end of Church Street will contain as many as 24 units rather than the 12 originally planned, if the demand projections hold true. The smaller

number of units was based on a first, more local survey.

Mr. Gorrizon said the ministry hopes to commence construction of the home simultaneously with the installation of sewers in Russell Village.

If the home is built sooner, he said a double expense will be incurred because a holding tank will have to be installed to accommodate the home until the sewer project is completed. This would cost \$10,000 - \$20,000 in addition to later sewer hookup.

Meanwhile, he said technical problems are delaying clear title to the land for the home; however he was optimistic a deal

for acquisition of the property would be made soon.

Once the site is purchased, a preliminary design for the home will be drawn in preparation for a cost estimate. The province and the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation will bear the full capital cost of the project. The township will be responsible for any operating deficit.

Marcel Dugas, of J. L. Richards and Associates, consultants for the sewer project, re-affirmed completion by the end of this year. A \$1.1 million contract for installation of pipes has been awarded to Collavino Inc., of Windsor. Digging is to begin by the middle of this month.



Photo courtesy of St. Lawrence Parks Commission

"Winter fun at Upper Canada"

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### Stump splittin' pretzels muscles

By Mark Van Dusen

If you think our rural forefathers weren't tough, try splittin' stumps their way.

Then break out the rubbing alcohol - it'll take gallons of the stuff to even begin to sooth pretzeled muscles. Take a swig if it'll help.

Stump splittin' the old way is not for the delicate, not for the easy-bruising who welt up when their heads hit the pillow too hard. Stick to trapping dandelion puffs. Please, this is serious.

Stump splittin' the old way was for those who thought nothing of digging post holes all morning, wrestlin' with a horse and plow all afternoon then walking 10 miles to a neighbor's for some friendly chewin' all evening (to some, spooning sugar is akin to digging post holes).

Yessir, stump splittin' the old way was as familiar to grampa as Whisper and pocket computers are today. The old way was the only way - by hand.

Not to suggest that our forefathers were great grizzly-bulls who went around pulverizing trees with one swipe of their claw-hooves. But they didn't have chainsaws or hydraulic stump splitters either. No, they had a few basic tools.

They used the axe and sledge, of tempered steel and hardwood pounded and carved together by hand for hands as hard as the shaft they gripped and muscles as flinty as the heads they swung.

Most important was the wedge, a V-shaped chunk of alloy that could take a cataclysmic slugging to drive its razor edge into the knottiest heart.

After one day of splittin' the old way recently, I felt as if I had been the victim, not the attacker: that I had received the beating.

Ottawa pal Ron Tysick dumped me a load of firewood, including a dozen intimidating-looking elm stumps. They were.

We had decided to tackle them sledge-'n-wedge style since they were infected with the Dutch disease and saturated with water which would have made sawing a binding business.

I borrowed a couple of seasoned wedges from Russell's Orti Harrison who seems to have a tool for everything. The battle-scarred vets has obviously seen the inside of many a stump.

Armed with these, we approached our squat prey with the air of heroes about to drive stakes into the hearts of a horde of dormant vampires. We had caught them napping, the rest would be easy. So we thought.

The method was relatively simple. One fairly flat stump was used as a cutting block with the stump to be cut riding it piggy-back. An axe was planted along the diameter of the top stump.

A wedge was tapped with a sledge into the crevice started by the axe which was easily removed later as the crack widened. The full length of the wedge - eight inches in this case - was driven into the heart of the stump.

The stumps were large, some of them 20 inches in length and diameter, and, because they were pulpy with disease, did not separate cleanly with the first wedge which can be almost impossible to remove.

A second wedge was driven home closer to the circumference of the stump to widen the split further and, burst it apart or at least free the first wedge which can again be driven in at a new spot.

By repeating this procedure, most of the stumps finally gave to the strain and burst. The halves were cleanly severed with an axe.

However, there was more than one diehard which gulped both wedges and held them like a vice. There being no other wedges, an axe hammered into the crack proved as adequate. But it was also costly - one axe handle cracked like a matchstick when it hung up at the edge of the crack and was given one blow of the sledge too many.

Sinking the wedge below the surface of the stump also required caution. One sledge was decapitated when the head sank into the crack and the shank struck the edge of the stump.

Above-freezing temperatures made splitting more difficult. Froze-freezing and sap create internal pressure which helps blow the stump apart.

At the end of the day, it was easy to pity a battering ram. Even the enthusiastic help of locals Paul Rodier and Bill Pollock who had been enticed Sawyer-like to "take a crack at it" could do little to dissipate the ring of cold steel against cold steel and the jolt of many indirect hits which jostled the nerves for hours afterwards.

But, sitting in front of the woodstove as the flames took a last lick at the ashes of a stalwart foe was warming.

Muscles would ache tomorrow but grampa would be proud.

