

CASTOR REVIEW

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Rinks need sweeping repairs

By Jane Camm

Russell and Metcalfe curling buffs could be out in the snow next winter.

Faced with extensive structural repairs following a required in-

spection of curling rinks by the Ministry of Labor, Metcalfe and Russell curling clubs are wrestling with the difficult task of raising large amounts of cash.

Consulting engineers, hired by

the clubs, reported various structural inadequacies contravening standards of Ontario's construction safety code.

Metcalfe Curling club president, Adrian Ross, said the club

has been given one year to repair defects or vacate the structure.

An engineering report prepared by Roy Allen and Associates revealed that the rafter-type roof over the ice surface was overstressed by 50 per cent for snow loading. The report also cited defects in the roof over the lounge area.

The consulting firm recommended additional support be put on rafters and plans for repairs are still in the preliminary stages.

No definite cost estimates have been set but Ross expects the bill to be "well in excess" of \$50,000. If repairs are too costly the club will consider erecting a new building, Mr. Ross said.

Russell Curling Club President Don Hay said the club is in a "state of limbo." The engineering firm, J. Stuart and Ross Associates, hired by the club, got its wires crossed.

The wrong report was sent to Russell, citing problems with floor joists, walls and foundation. "It was some other curling rink's report. We know our problem is with the rafters," said Hay.

The 16-year-old structure is suspected of needing expensive repairs but Hay says nothing can be done until consultants "cut through the red tape" and send the correct report.

Russell and Metcalfe are not

alone. The Ministry of Labor ordered three years ago that all recreational buildings be inspected. All 52 curling clubs belonging to the Ottawa Valley Curling Association were investigated.

Mr. Ross said rinks in Pembroke, Smiths Falls and Richmond were undergoing similar repairs.

The problem is raising enough money. Metcalfe curling club is currently negotiating with Wintario for a grant. Wintario has, in the past, donated 50 per cent of all money needed by recreational centres to correct similar problems.

It has recently cut off all funds for curling clubs dismissing them as low priority for hand outs.

Although the Provincial government has another financial aid program Russell and Metcalfe are not eligible.

The requirements of this program state the facility must be owned by the community. The problem, said Ross, is that both Russell and Metcalfe arenas are owned by the Agricultural Society, negating their eligibility.

Metcalfe may get some relief from Osgoode Township. It is currently involved in a recreational plan for the township and Ross hopes they will help foot the bill.

A Ministry of Labor Spokesman, Andy Paul, said a province-wide inspection of all recreational buildings revealed about 150 needing repairs. A few were forced to be permanently vacated.

Most defects aren't life threatening and can take longer to be corrected, he explained. The really bad ones are ordered closed immediately until repairs are effected.

"There have been problems for years," Mr. Paul added.

No snow — More dough

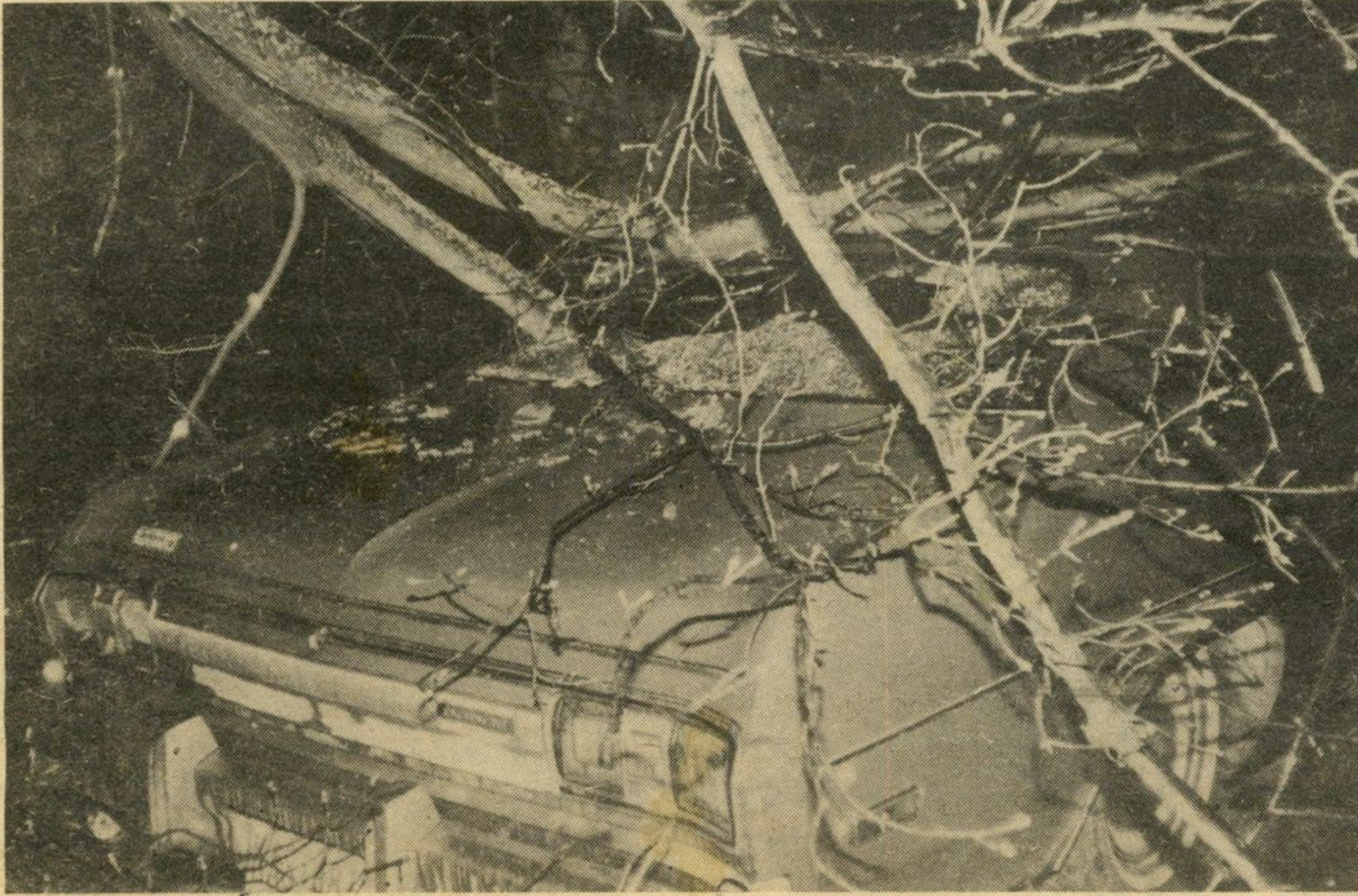
Russell Township ratepayers are saving \$1,000 with each new week of no snow.

They have already saved \$5,000-\$6,000 that had been budgeted for snow removal, Lucien Millaire, township roads superintendent, said. He estimated that, barring severe snowstorms in the next several weeks, the saving could be more than \$10,000 by winter's end.

The saving could be re-applied against summer construction programs such as road paving and sidewalk reconstruction, he said. Meanwhile, work crews normally used on snow removal are being put to use on such things as cleaning up dead wood along the new Russell-Embrun ski trail.

POETS OF THE... CASTOR

Copies of the collector's edition of Poets of the Castor are still available and can be purchased at local outlets for \$2.25 per copy or through the mail for \$2.50; an order form can be found on Page 3. The booklet features the poems of local writers, most with a winter theme.



COULDN'T DODGE IT

High winds have been tearing up the Castor during the past few weeks and one of the unlucky victims was Tom Van Dusen of Russell Village. He awoke one morning to find his Dodge Dart branched in after a huge elm limb snapped and came tumbling down. Mr. Van Dusen's comment: "I knew I shouldn't have parked under that tree." (Mike McDermott photo)



Sidewalk Talk

By Mark Van Dusen

Wild animals are watching

There are wild animals out there.

I know, I've seen them.

Well I haven't actually seen them but I've seen proof of their existence. I've seen where they live, I've seen their tracks, lots of 'em.

I'm not just talking about your average hole-in-a-tree squirrel either, I'm talking about coyote, fox, mink, beaver, muskrat, jackrabbit...they're out there.

Never seen any of these, you say? Lucky to spot the odd mouse skittering across your yard? Look just a little farther my friend.

Out there, across the field, untamed piercing eyes may even now be watching you. They may belong to a wild animal you thought had long vanished from the local landscape.

The Castor area is a sizeable tabletop of farmland crisscrossed by fences and roads, zigged by the like-named river and its branches and zagged by smaller creeks. It is paw-marked by numerous reserves of bush and it here that the wild animals hide.

Ever set foot in one of these wooded refuges? If you're like most people, probably not. You zoom along, burdened by the pressures of the day, oblivious to the familiar flatness, having long ago

decided that the only living things out there were the cows looking stupidly at you across barbed wire.

In a rare relaxed mood you wondered if there could possibly be any wild animals in that pocket of trees way over on the horizon but "Naw, there's nothing around here but birds and bees," you scoffed.

There's a good chance you were wrong, friend. Ask the farmers. Do you think that they no longer have to charge out in nothing but rubber boots, longjohns and loaded shotgun to break up a foofaraw in the chicken house? Often as not, the only shot they get off is at the night sky before swearing to "someday go over to those woods and blast the cuss that's been stealing my birds" then going back to bed.

They're in there alright, in the woods. Now I'm not saying that every stand of 20 trees is teeming with wildlife but I speak with experience when I refer to the large acreage of bush on Gord Devine's farm down Vars way.

I went there recently with my trapper neighbor Gord Beeton who is trying to bring beaver under control in the bush before they flood-kill more trees (no mean job when dealing with a wylie animal which

has the added advantage of being protected by two inches of ice. Gord's traps were empty this day).

There was only a dusting of snow and the frozen surface of the sweeping beaver ponds was like the smoothest sidewalk — perfect for exploring. For more than an hour we marched between chiselled tree stumps and clumps of dried reeds and cat-tails.

We came upon several beaver lodges (frost crystals around the vent on top were proof of occupancy) and the same number of muskrat dwellings. We saw the intricate interplay of jackrabbit and coyote tracks as prey tried to outsmart predator. We saw fox and mink tracks and minnows squirming in a black pool.

It was reassuring to know these animals were there, so close to home (how many of you would have doubted the existence of a coyote within 100 miles of the Castor?). If this was a suitable habitat for them, it could be safely assumed that it was also home to others such as raccoon, porcupine and skunk (snuggled away somewhere in winter slumber).

Years ago when the settlers cleared the land, they bypassed sections such as Divine's bush because the terrain was too rugged for farming or housing.

The trees, rocks, ravines and marshes were left to the decimated wild animal population. From what I saw on my walk with Gord Beeton, this has proven to be their salvation.

Gord figures that there are more beaver now than there were 100 years ago. This is born out by a paragraph in John J. Rowan's The Emigrant Sportsman in Canada published in 1876:

"The country, too, is of course getting opened up; and as the price of fur rises and population increases, so do the beavers decrease. They are now only to be found on the extreme heads of rivers far away from settlements."

This is certainly no longer the case from what I saw and Gord says there are many areas relatively close by which he regularly visits and which are sanctuaries to the same kinds of animals that live in Divine's bush. He says controlled trapping keeps the animals from over-populating and dying of starvation or disease.

I left the solitude of the beaver ponds with renewed faith in man's ability to live in at least partial harmony with nature. If these wooded areas of the Castor can be preserved, the wild animals will always have a home.

It's nice to know they're out there.