

The VIEW from BLUE

Published by Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association

The largest ratepayers' association in the Town of The Blue Mountains

Box 405, Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z7

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Blue Mountains Ratepayers' Association is only \$25 a year from: Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association, Box 405, Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z7. After you have read this newsletter, please pass it on to a neighbour and suggest that they join too.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Michael P. Seguin



Worried? Not our Town

Many experts in the business world say that we are seeing a financial crisis unlike any we have witnessed in the past, contributing to a recession that appears to be more severe than anything we have experienced since the early 1980s. Stock-markets are down over 40% from their peaks in 2008, investments are plummeting, the housing market is in a tail-spin,

money is too tight to mention, businesses are walking a tightrope and jobs are being lost at an alarming rate.

Are you worried? I am! But what would the Council of the Town of the Blue Mountains (or should I simply say The Blue Mountains?) have to say about this recession? While they recognize that everyone is hurting, they still want more growth and prosperity (AKA building the bureaucracy) and they believe they can squeeze more money out of your "deflationary" income.

Council wants us to believe that they "sacrificed" numerous "future needs" in trimming the budget to a 4.9% tax increase. However, at a Feb. 9 meeting of Council it became apparent that a number of budget items were either considered non-essential, a mistake, or were being "increased" to allow flexibility in the Town's spending habits (e.g., new hires and conferences/training

See President's Report page 2



**MARK
YOUR
CALENDAR**

Reserve this date:

Saturday, May 30, 2009 beginning at 8:45 a.m.

Annual General Meeting of the Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association

Members of Town Council and Town Officials will join us

This will be your opportunity to discuss key issues of concern

President's Report

Continued from page 1

expenses were substantially increased over last year's budget, as was the actual expenditure amount).

In any event, thanks to many of your letters and emails and verbal presentations, Town staff started trimming more and came up with a revised budget proposing a tax increase of 2.3% for this year.

This is still too high!

Staff advised Council that this revised and reduced proposed tax increase comes with a "need" for a tax hike of 3.3% in 2010 (can you imagine? . . . during an election year!) and a further increase of 3.6% in 2011. It's always nice that staff continues to look after the "bureaucratic needs of the future" – probably more jobs, promotions, benefits and "larger closet office space" in that new Town Hall!

As for the future, I can guarantee two things that will happen:

- 1) 2010 will see a very low rate of increase, and
- 2) 2011 will see a very high rate of increase.

Can you guess why? In my opinion, Council has delayed the adoption of their 2009 Budget until March 9 in order to reconsider a more "fiscally responsible" tax increase that will possibly better position them for an election in 2010. However, there is an old saying: "If you're headed for a cliff, you've got to change direction." That's what the residents of this community will call for come election time, and that's what the candidates had better be prepared to deliver.

I might add that Council also has delayed the adoption of proposed new water and sewer rates (which you were told about in your last utility bill) until March 23 – hopefully to consider "much-needed" cutbacks in spending on new hiring, new trucks, new computers every 3-4 years, unnecessary training, work space in the new Town Hall, etc., etc.

As I mentioned in a blast via our web site,

www.bluemountainratepayersassociation.com

Have you visited our Website? It reports on lots of good stuff, including informative articles about your community and other info and ideas you should be aware of, such as: art and cultural associations, maps, news media, attractions in and around the town, service clubs, ski areas and lots more. Check it out!

Council and staff have been very quiet regarding the proposed Town Hall development. Judging by the numerous emails I have received, many people are outraged that any consideration would be given to such new construction during these hard, recessionary times. I have continually stated in my messages that "construction of this building today would send the wrong signal to the community – the signal being that this Town lacks compassion and shows no respect for the people of this community who are being hurt by declining assets and uncertainty in the job market."

With regards to Short Term Accommodations (STAs), it is frustrating to announce, once again, that the Ontario Municipal Board hearing on the Town's Interim Control By-Law was cancelled in order to receive appeals to the recently enacted Short Term Accommodation Official Plan and Zoning By-Law Amendments. Please be assured that your Association will continue the momentum in supporting the Town on this important issue, to correct unintentional or illegal commercial/business accommodation schemes in our residential neighborhoods and to control and regulate them.

Finally, I would like to remind everyone that our AGM is tentatively scheduled for May 30, 2009. I expect there will be number of controversial issues to talk about.

Also – another reminder – we are still seeking new members to serve on our Board. If you want to help the organization and have some flexible time to spare, we want to hear from you, or you can attend the AGM and let your name stand for election. Our organization is getting stronger, especially as we become more informative and start receiving feedback through the internet process. Keep providing us with your new email addresses and visit our new web site at www.bluemountainratepayersassociation.com.

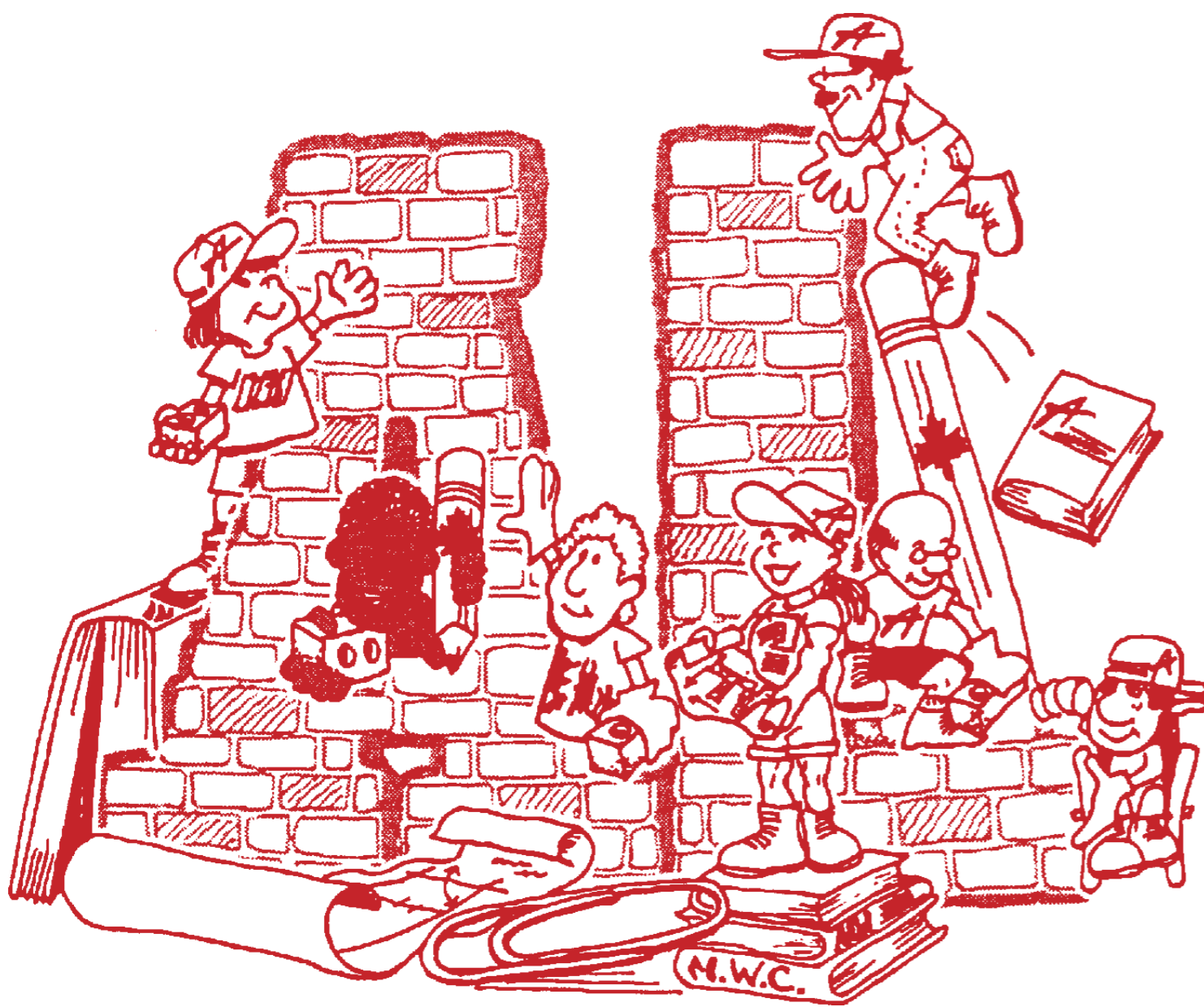
If you have any suggestions on how we can improve the web site, please let me know.

Craigeith Community Centre

Restored 1860s one-room schoolhouse.
Designated as a heritage building.
Includes kitchen facilities

Ideal for: Business meetings, Weddings, Social events, Anniversaries.

For rental information, contact Bruce Loveless at 705-446-4673.



'Subtraction by subdivision'

Community needs and the infrastructure deficit

By Michael P. Seguin

I was intrigued by an article in the Toronto Star on Oct. 25, 2008 headlined "Subtraction by subdivision." The article focuses on the central theme that growth doesn't pay for itself and is based on a lie. How many times have you heard the Town say that "new growth will continue to pay for itself?" I hear it every time there is a tax increase or taxpayers are hit with enormous infrastructure costs for such things as water and sewers.

While the article makes reference to the community needs of a larger region (Halton), the fundamentals are the same: never enough money to fund the essential needs of the community, and it ends up costing the established taxpayers more.

Builders everywhere complain about the large development fees they pay per house. They will argue that they build houses, not cities or towns, and should only be accountable for infrastructure upgrades such as sewers, water, roads, bridges and cables. Clearly, the development fees they pay are not enough to cover the costs of institutional, educational, recreational and cultural needs of the developing communities.

As the author of the article puts it, much-needed development and easy money – often referred to as "multiplication by subdivision" – has turned out to be "subtraction by subdivision."

There is a call for a whole new approach to planning: "full-cost" planning. Like full-cost accounting, this new planning would determine, in advance, the real needs and/or costs of a proposed

community, not just a part of the whole.

Naturally, developers would rather not pay for roads, schools, playgrounds, parks, etc. But these essential services are what make a place inhabitable and give its property value.

It is interesting, as we now try to dig ourselves out of a recession, that the Federal and Provincial Governments, which withdrew themselves from the infrastructure and downloaded this responsibility to the municipalities, are now offering enormous amounts of monies for "ready-to-go" infrastructure projects to help stimulate the economy. What happened? Has it now been determined that municipalities can't provide for "much-needed" infrastructure without extra revenues (i.e., higher proportion of the gas tax, maybe a share of the income tax and GST, etc.)? Do the higher levels of government now realize that their downloading or "dumping ground" attitude doesn't work?

Every time I attend a budget meeting or listen to our Town staff and Council talk about the need and costs of upgrading infrastructure in The Blue Mountains – especially Clarksburg – I am reminded that our municipality is damned if it does grow and is damned if it doesn't.

What do you think?

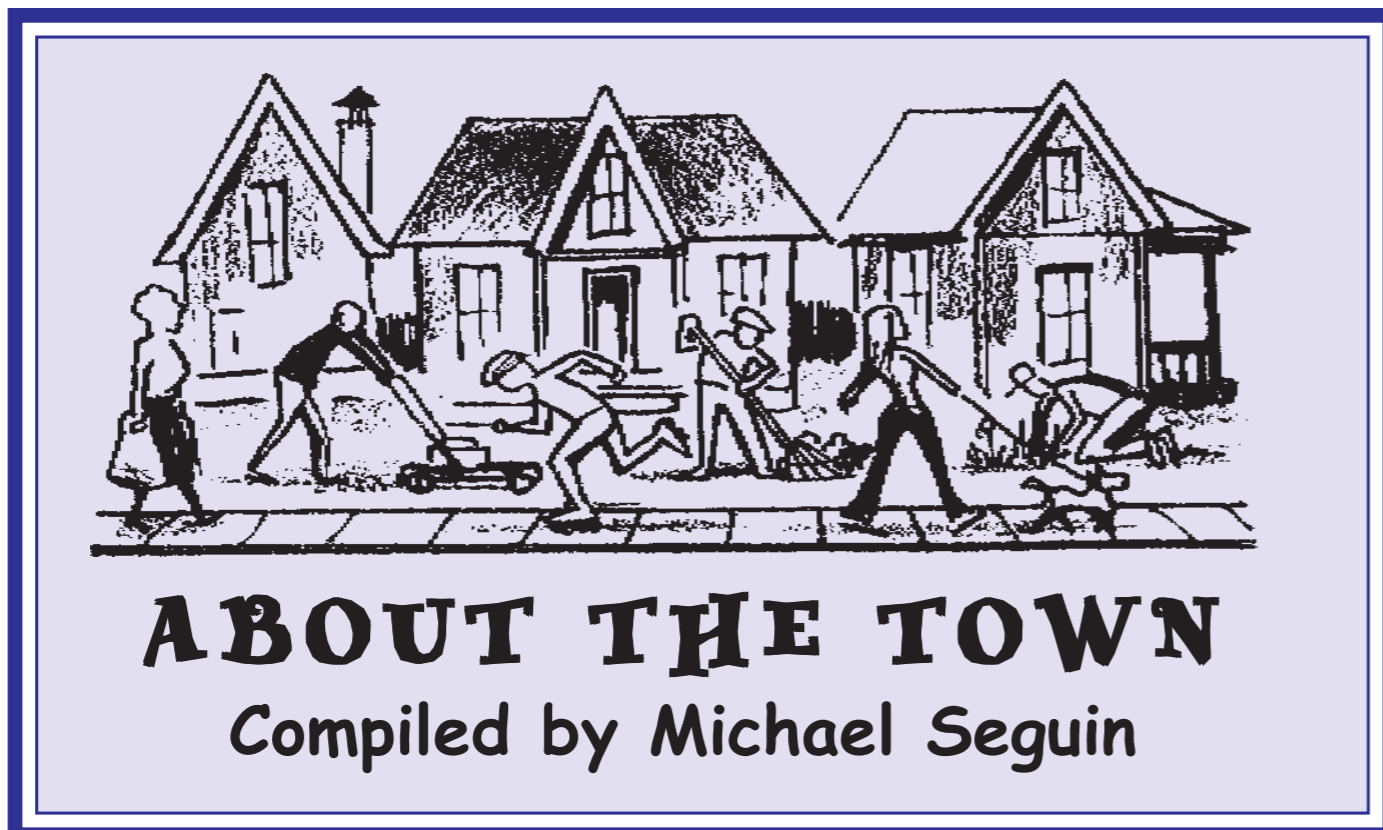
Property assessment

If you are not happy with your new property assessment, then we remind you that the deadline to file a Request for Reconsideration (RfR) with MPAC is March 31, 2009.

You can obtain the necessary RfR form by calling MPAC toll-free at 1-866-296-6722. There is no charge for this service and we highly recommend that you request a reconsideration.

If you want expert advice, we recommend you contact the Canadian National Taxpayers Coalition (CNTC/CAFTA) at 705-696-2356, or www.cntccanada.ac. They will be glad to send you information on their organization and have been working on a manual that will help you appeal your assessment.

If you are not happy with MPAC's response to your Request for Consideration, then you have 90 days after MPAC has notified you of its decision on your RfR to file an appeal with the Assessment Review Board (ARB). The ARB has its own appeal process and can be reached at 1-800-263-3237 or 416-314-6900, or visit their website at www.arb.gov.on.ca.



Your property is now in “The Blue Mountains”

In December of 2008 the Town sent out a communication advising that we will now be called “The Blue Mountains” instead of “The Town of the Blue Mountains.” They say that the change is to simplify language and reduce the opportunity for errors when referring to “The Blue Mountains.”

Does anybody get it, and why wasn't the public asked for input? The public was asked to come up with suggestions for a new name and now they have just changed it.

For what its worth, the word “Town” defines the boundary of this municipality and the residents it represents, whereas the new name does not define any boundary and appears to be more representative of the ski hills.

Do you agree with the town that this change will “help to enhance our name recognition locally, nationally and internationally?” – *Source: Town Communication Dec. 8, 2008*

New recreation building nears completion

In our last newsletter, I advised everyone that the Town had approved a budget starting at \$495,000 to build a new operations centre building (a kind way of saying a “storage building”) at the Tomahawk Recreation Complex (417230 10th Line). The plan at the time was to build a 50x60 foot single storey building, with a 12x60 foot mezzanine for storage and locker rooms above the office space. There also is a plan to incorporate a climate-controlled workshop and a 40x50 foot single storey addition with no heat or water servicing for storing equipment.

Well, I haven't seen the final costs but I'll bet they're nowhere near the projected budget. The Town says this will be a sustainable and environ-

mentally-friendly building or recreation complex. I think it will just be an expensive storage building. You can be the judge: visit the building and site this spring and let me know what you think.

– *Source: Courier-Herald 10/30/2008 & 12/10/2008*

Thornbury bridge scheduled for a makeover

As part of the budget process, the Director of Engineering, Reg Russwurm, announced in January a plan to rehabilitate the Beaver River bridge on Highway 26 near the Town Hall. This will see the old deck removed and replaced, construction of a traffic barrier to separate the traffic from pedestrians and the installation of new expansion joints. The cost of the bridge work has been estimated to be \$1.9 million, which Mr. Russwurm states should be mostly funded from the MTO. Approximately \$720,000 has already been secured to do some of the repairs.

The town plans to begin the repair work this summer, so be prepared for some long and frustrating traffic problems and possible detours through Clarksburg. – *Source: Courier-Herald 01/15/09*

Town hopes to delay Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act

The Province of Ontario passed the Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act in 2008 and there is a proposed new regulation to implement it this year. The major components include: 1) new classes of pesticides, 2) banned or restricted pesticides; 3) exemptions to the ban; 4) pesticide storage and fire department notification requirements; and 5) notice signs. Cosmetic pesticides are those used for domestic lawn and garden care. The regulation is under review by the Ministry of Environment to go to Cabinet for approval sometime this spring.

Town staff and your Town Council, under pressure from the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AGAC), decided to lobby the government to delay the regulation in order to enable more “scientific study.”

In my opinion, this action by our Council goes entirely against the Community Vision of the Strategic Plan “. . . offering a healthy and supportive lifestyle to a diverse range of residents, businesses and visitors.” While I support our farmers and the importance of their industry in providing food for our survival, I do have choices in what I eat but I don't have choices in the air I breathe. It's time to move on and promote a healthier environ-

ment. I welcome your comments. – *Source: Town Staff Report & Council Meeting, Feb. 2, 2009*

Black history museum moving to Clarksburg

The old Sheffield Park Black History Museum on Long Point Road has been sold for future rural residential development and there are plans to re-establish it on a 10-acre property on Clark Street in Clarksburg. Carolynn Wilson, manager of the museum, says that the new museum is expected to be up and running by the end of 2009 or early 2010. – *Source: Enterprise-Bulletin 01/09*

Town hires a new youth coordinator

The Town is trying to become a provincially-recognized youth-friendly community by hiring Joanna Gardland as a youth coordinator to help launch their new initiative. Joanna's job will be to help the town obtain a youth-friendly designation through a provincial program called Play Works, helping young people to become more involved in organized community and youth activities as well as local politics. I suspect that there will ultimately be a need for a new youth centre – probably a better use for the Tomahawk Recreation Complex. Good luck Joanna!

Quick hits:

1. Congratulations to Deputy Mayor Duncan McKinlay who once again was acclaimed Chair of the Grey County Planning and Community Development Committee for 2009.
2. Based on Georgian Triangle Real Estate Board MLS statistics, the Royal LePage Collingwood Homes web page reports that the average price of a single family home in the Town of the Blue Moun-

tains for 2008 (12 month period) was \$444,201, compared to \$257,247 for the Town of Collingwood. Unit sales in the Town of Blue Mountains were down 25.40% in 2008 from 2007. The Town of the Blue Mountains' sales-to-listing ratio is close to 30%, making it definitely a "buyers" market, but apparently only one of every 3.5 listings is sold.

3. In November, 2008, the Thornbury Harbour received a Five Green Leaf Anchor Award for its eco-efficiency performance. The award was based on a stringent eco-rating checklist, which included a review of environmental management and policies, water quality and habitat preservation, hazardous substance handling, conservation, energy efficiency and waste reduction.

4. The Blue Mountains has announced that Peter Tollefsen will spearhead initiatives to update the Town's Official Plan, to assist in the completion of the Community Improvement Plan and to assist with the Town's Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan. Planning activities, including processing development approvals and other land use-related studies, will be provided through the Town's newly formed Planning and Building Services in the Department led by David Finbow.



If you are not yet a member of the Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association . . .

Whether you are a permanent or seasonal resident, we encourage you to join

Membership offers you the following:

1. Information about current local issues
2. A voice to improve the performance of local government
3. Monitoring of costs and benefits of our public services
4. Proactive involvement in bettering the environment
5. Information for effective participation in local elections
6. An opportunity to assist local government in getting a better deal for our tax dollars
7. Regular mailings of *The View from Blue* with information on current issues, politics, development projects, events and more

Simply send your name, mailing address, email address and telephone number to BMRA, Box 405, Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z2, together a cheque for \$25.

Emergency & Information

Immediate response: 911 (Do not call unless it's an emergency or you will be assessed a response charge of \$300)

OPP (Collingwood & Town of The Blue Mountains): 1-888-310-1122; (Administration): 705-445-4321.

Fire Department (Craigeleith): 444-2244

Municipal Offices: Thornbury 599-3131. Paul Graham, Chief Administration Officer, x234; Robert Cummings, Treasurer, x245; Stephen Keast, Town Clerk, x237; Peter Tollefsen, Planning & Development, 599-3070 x247; David Finbow, Director Building/Bylaw & CBO, x246.



THE CRAIGLEITH HERITAGE DEPOT



By Suzanne Purdy, Curator

The Craigleith Heritage Depot is pleased to announce the launch of its 2009 Lecture Series. This monthly Lecture Series aims to bring cultural heritage and environmental awareness to the public at large by hosting presentations at the Beaver Valley Community Centre in Thornbury.

The Craigleith Heritage Depot's mandate is to highlight The Blue Mountains' unique cultural, natural and industrial history. This year-round facility has a multi-generational appeal, serving both locals and visitors to the area. "The Depot" conscientiously collects, curates, researches, protects, exhibits and interprets a wide range of objects and archival materials relating to the history of The Blue Mountains for the continued enjoyment and enrichment of the public. By engaging all sectors of the community in its activities, services and programmes, The Depot is a key partner in community development.

The launch of the 2009 Lecture Series signifies the first of many educational programmes aimed at enriching our community. Revenue generated from the Lecture Series will go toward the ongoing programming and operating costs of our much loved and recently restored iconic landmark – the Craigleith Heritage Depot.

Craigleith Heritage Depot 2009 Lecture Series

Location: Beaver Valley Community Centre, Thornbury

Cost: \$7 per lecture ~ \$10 per couple ~ \$4 youth ticket (18 & under) ~ \$65 year pass

Museum members receive a 10% discount

Tickets on sale at the Depot or at Town Hall. A limited number of tickets will be available at the door.

For further information contact The Depot at 705-444-2601, or visit www.thebluemountains.ca.

March 30, 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Dr. Peter Storck, Royal Ontario Museum curator emeritus, archaeologist and author:

"The Paleolithic Peoples of The Blue Mountains area"

April 27, 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Krista McKee, Community Relations Officer – Grey Sauble Conservation Authority:

"Our Sustainable Future"

May 29, 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Dr. John Carter, historian, author and lecturer:

"Barns: Our Vanishing Heritage"

June 29, 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Scott Cameron, historian, author and lecturer:

"Shipwrecks: Death, Destruction and Disaster on Georgian Bay"

INFOLINE: 211

Need help? Got a question?
Simply dial the INFOLINE at 211
anytime, day or night.

PASS IT ON

After you have read this newsletter, please pass it on to a neighbour and suggest they join our Association – the best way to keep up-to-date on what's happening in our community