

THE *View* FROM *Blue*

HIGHLIGHT EDITION

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Peter Bordignon, President of BMRA

Hello Everyone,

People often ask me about the meaning of the term 'ratepayer'. The best definition is:

"any person required to pay local property taxes to the town".

Clearly everyone in the Town of the Blue Mountains is a ratepayer.

That's important to know, because the volunteer Board of Directors at the Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association - BMRA works diligently on your behalf everyday. We work with the Mayor, Council and Town Staff on many areas with regular consultation on planning policies and bylaws to improve everyone's enjoyment of our beautiful town. Most recently, there have been vast improvements made in many areas by The Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association!

Grey County: John Leckie and the County Committee will have the most work in front of them for 2017. It is very important to realize just how much of your property tax dollars flow to the County and how vastly inadequate the money coming back is. At the time of amalgamation of the TBM, our contribution of Grey County's total revenue was 20%. Since that time, our contribution has **shot up to 26%** of their revenue pool. During this time, all 8 of the other municipalities in Grey County have decreased their percentage contribution. The important fact to note is that contributing the most money does not give you the biggest voice at the County. Most people do not realize that the amount of votes each municipality gets is based on eligible voters **NOT** money contributed.

Most notably, at the January 23rd Town Council Meeting, by our request, Councillor Michael Martin introduced a notice of Motion for a Provincial Facilitator and County Option Workshop. This **BIG WIN** means that we have taken the first major steps to getting a fair and equitable deal with the County of Grey.

New Official Plan: Brian Nelson and Committee directly influenced two areas of the OP with both inclusion of the Town's Community Design Guidelines and elimination of some very open-ended density bonusing policies.

Short Term Accommodation: Terry Keller and the STA Committee constantly meet and work with Town Staff to monitor STA bylaws and OMB hearings in regards to Short Term Accommodation. It's important to mention also that BMRA stood up for a lot more clarity in the STA policies within the new Official Plan.

Annual Town Budget: Terry Thompson and the BMRA Budget Review Committee are constantly working with Ruth Prince, TBM Director of Finance and her capable team to ensure that all budget numbers are thoroughly vetted.

Environment: Our Environmental Committee Chair, Blanka Guyatt sits both on our Board and the Watershed Board working to protect our beautiful land and water areas.

Communications: Paula Hope, BMRA Communications Chair and Committee are improving the flow of all this information to our members in both print and website mediums.

Community: We were involved in the new Sign By-law, which will set some precedents for an approach to design that's more in line with our community character.

I would like to mention that this effort was led by Vivien Alper & Rosemary Gosselin, both BMRA members. This is a great example of how the BMRA and our members work together to get things done.

Membership: This is our only source of operating revenue. Jane Moysey, the Membership Chair is constantly informing and recruiting new and current tax payers to our association. That naturally leads me to kindly remind everyone to renew your membership if you haven't already with the Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association (BMRA). If you haven't joined in the past, we invite all permanent and seasonal residents to become new members. This year our membership fees will remain at \$25.00

These are just a few of the highlights that your Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association is currently working on and involved with. Our Annual AGM is scheduled for Saturday, May 6th, 2017 at the Marsh Street Centre.



"It's called SLUSH... SORT OF LIKE MUSH, ONLY COLDER."

By BRC Chair Terry Thompson and members Richie Baird, Al Fraser, Brian Harkness and John Leckie

The amalgamation “founders” put the 20 % in place for 1998 when TBM became part of Grey County for budget purposes. We maintain our support should be “capped” at a 20% share and moved back to that level from 26%. The \$3 million in annual savings could be put to good use here in TBM for major project funding, improving infrastructure, the community centre, the library or simply reducing property taxes for residents.

This 20% cap idea was first raised by Al Fraser, a member of the BRC and most recently given weight when we found out from Town finance staff that a 20% share was in fact the original number put in place when TBM was formed in the late 1990's. (see table below).

This represents a significant change in TBM's relationship with the County. Your Board has approved “back to 20%” as a goal of the BMRA as we move forward. The upcoming AGM will give us an opportunity to work to further educate ratepayers and gather grass roots support.

In addition to the goal there are several ways we are already keeping the pressure on trying to get a better deal from the County, from reducing the number of County council reps from 18 to 9 and taking more on re the roads and raising the tier one idea. These all help us “get back to the 20%”

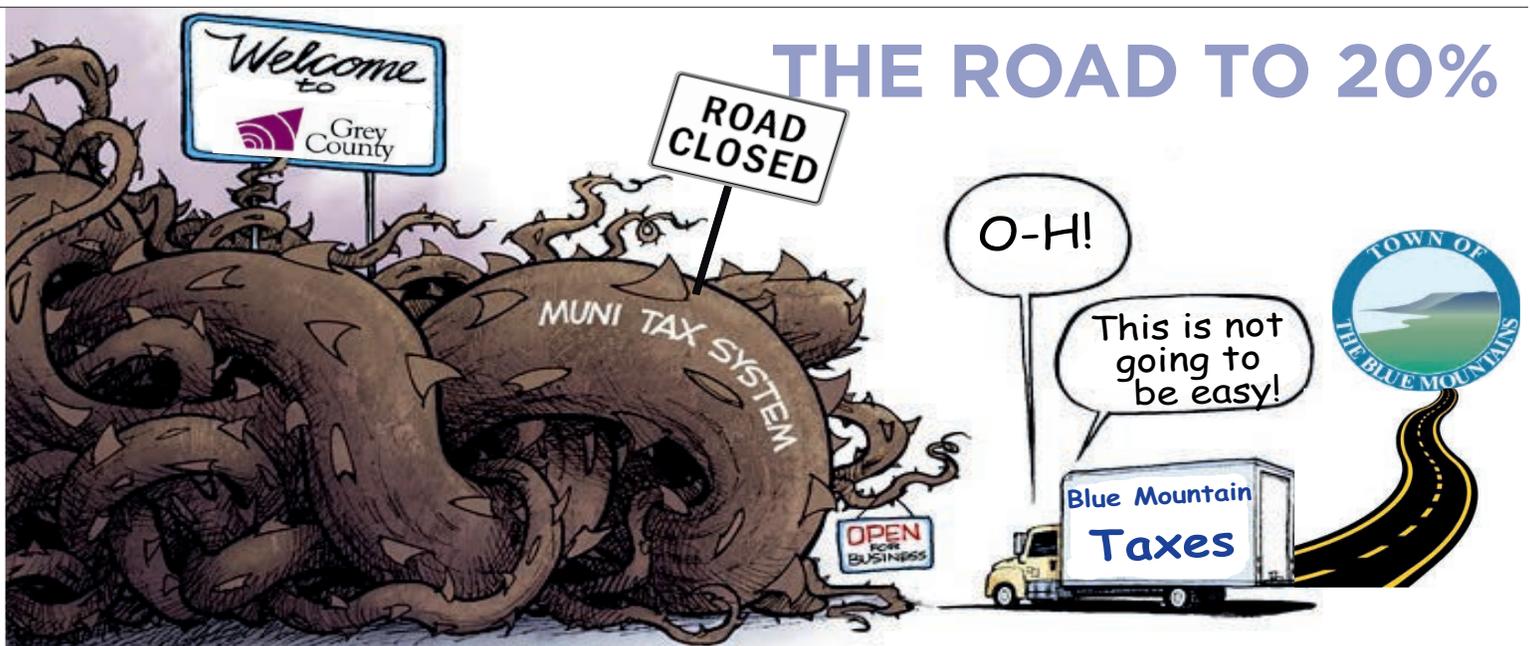
Note that at the 20% level our share of the present \$14 million sent to Grey annually would be reduced by 3 million dollars. This would no longer be available to the County for distribution to the other 8 municipalities and would likely encounter resistance although it was deemed a “fair share” in 1998.

The following table illustrates how TBM's share has risen to 26% from 20% while the other 8 municipalities of Grey County have declined. We are the “cash cow” in the eyes of the County.

Grey County Municipality	2016 \$	2016 %	1998 \$	1998 %	1998-2016 Δ%
Chatsworth (<i>Chatsworth, Holland, Sullivan</i>)	2,780,558	5%	1,522,011	7%	-2%
Georgian Bluffs (<i>Derby, Keppel, Sarawak, Shallow Lake</i>)	5,907,254	11%	3,492,037	15%	-4%
Grey Highlands (<i>Artemesia, Euphrasia, Flesherton, Markdale, Osprey</i>)	6,189,779	12%	3,265,979	14%	-2%
Hanover	2,654,572	5%	1,762,671	8%	-3%
Meaford (<i>Meaford, St. Vincent, Sydenham</i>)	6,125,478	12%	3,486,662	15%	-3%
Owen Sound	7,709,893	15%	N/A	N/A	-3%
Southgate (<i>Dundalk, Egremont, Proton</i>)	2,715,277	5%	1,555,236	7%	-2%
The Blue Mountains (<i>Thornbury, Twp of Collingwood</i>)	13,812,178	26%	4,465,390	20%	6%
West Grey (<i>Durham, Neustadt, Bentinck, Glenelg, Normanby</i>)	5,004,631	9%	3,094,751	14%	-5%
	52,899,620	100%	22,644,737	100%	

6% of \$53 million is \$3.2 million, funds that could be used to grow our success as a municipality: funding major projects, improving infrastructure, building needed reserves, renovating the community centre, helping the Library or simply reducing taxes.

Even at 20% we would continue to send a “fair share” to the county to support other municipalities.



By BMRA County Committee John Leckie, Chair and members Ritchie Baird, Ron Baran, Doug & Patricia Chalmers, Janet Findlay, Al Fraser, Brian Harkness, Jack Hirsh, Ara Khajerian, Terry Thompson, Laurie Thorne

Thankfully there is no party system in local politics and therefore no ideology gets in the way of what is pragmatic for our residents. We do not get hung up on “my tribe against your tribe” like we do at the Provincial and Federal level. What truly matters is not which party controls our government, but whether the people control our government. That is why the solution to sprawling unaccountable government is decentralization, so that issues are as close to the voter as possible. In our view, sustainable local governments are at the heart of successful federalism.

The question before us is very simple:

Do we want TBM’s economy to go **up** or do we want it to go **down** like what the rest of rural Ontario is experiencing? It’s not a choice of left or right ... it’s up or down. In this new era of a knowledge-based economy that concentrates in mega cities, we have a geography that can leverage our economy in this successful rural area. We are very fortunate to have a magnificent geographic gift that is an attraction to the people of Toronto and its environs. Make no mistake, it’s the geography, and nearby mega population, driving this success. Let’s not blow it by mismanaging our tax revenues. Nor do we want to be trapped by bad Official Planning which is why the BMRA has been so active on that OP file.

Fortunately our Town generates an abundance of tax revenues. It should be more freed up to flourish, not hog-tied to anachronistic aspects of Grey County.

Unfortunately we send an equivalent amount of our own budget, i.e. \$14 million, to the County where we have virtually no say in what happens to that money. That’s because we only have two representatives at Grey Council out of 18. It’s a feudal system. Why on earth do we even have as many as 18 not directly-elected representatives sitting around a County table?

Where is our Robin Hood to save us from this feudalism?

Councillor Michael Martin put forth a Notice of Motion at the Jan 23rd Council meeting. It calls for a Workshop for Council on County issues, and a Facilitator to assist in discussions toward a better deal between the Town and the County. Kudos to both Councillor Martin and to Acting CAO Shawn Everitt who was thankfully quick to offer his support for the Motion, saying he deemed it to already be partially underway. Shawn is expected to report on these matters at the next Committee of the Whole meeting of Feb 22nd or possibly sooner. We would encourage Council to give Staff direction and support to get on with the Report that Acting CAO Shawn Everitt seems keen to deliver.

The Facilitator idea was proposed to our Mayor and Deputy Mayor and Councillor Joe Halos by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Apparently there are Ontario precedents where a facilitator has helped negotiate a better deal between municipalities and a county. We shall keep you apprised of the progress being made with this Facilitator Strategy.

We trust our Councillors are ready to get back to work on this County file, which was a critical issue during last election campaign.

Meanwhile here are some questions some of you have had about the Facilitator:

What is the cost?

Always a good question but let’s put it in the context of \$14 million a year sent to a County, where we have virtually no say on what happens to that money. Over 10 years that would be \$140 million. Yes, we will have to spend some money on a Facilitator to help us get out of this jam. It will be money well spent.

Can we force the County to come to the table with a Facilitator?

No, but if County turns us down, then we can use that and advise the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who suggested it, by saying “...see, we told you we can’t work with the County, which is why we would like to get out of it and become a Tier 1 Municipality”.

Are there precedents where this is happening?

Yes and no, not exactly. Because most of rural Ontario is struggling, there is not another case where one Town has to support eight others to this disproportionate degree. There simply are not many rural areas that have our good fortune. But yes, there are cases where a Facilitator has helped reconcile differences between a Town and a County which is why the Minister suggested we retain a Facilitator.

Are there any side benefits that could materialize if TBM starts this process?

Yes, by vocalizing this issue we will stop enabling bad management of all 9 Towns plus a County all having their own accounting and HR and Planning and Roads departments. No business could survive without trying to find economies of scale on these functions.

Our economic base is not centered in Grey County; it is centered around the Mountain and South Georgian Bay, from Wasaga to Meaford and even Grey Highlands. But trying to govern locally as if it’s Owen Sound centric is simply not being accountable to the voters in this locale.

Feudalism 2017



“ Put up a big splashy banner that says, ‘Thanks for another great year, Blue Mountains’ “

Short Term Accommodation (STA) Update

Demerit Points ... What are they and do they work?

In February 2015 the first STA received its license from the Town and we now have over 200 licensed residences in residential areas in The Town of Blue Mountains.

When a property has accumulated 15 Demerit points the Owner must appear at a hearing with a Committee of three councilors. After a review, the Committee has the choices of rescinding the points, imposing conditions, suspend the license or revoke the license.

How has assigning Demerit Points for bad behavior affected our residential neighborhoods? We have heard from people living near STA's and, for many, last summer was the best they have experienced in years, with fewer noise and related problems. It would appear that the consequence of receiving demerit points has had a positive impact.

Any questions contact us at: sta.bmra@gmail.com

The licensing Bylaw allows the Town to assign Demerit Points against a STA owner for various infractions that occur at their property as per the table below.

STA Demerit Points Reference Table	
Infraction	Demerit Points
Fire Protection & Prevention Act/Fire Code	15
Operating without a license	7
Building Code Act	7
Sleeping in excess of maximum permitted	5
Non-availability of Responsible Person	5
Noise By-law Infraction	5
Not providing updated information	3
Contrary to Parking Management Plan	3
Contrary to Property Management Plan	3
Not posting license	3
Property Standards	3
Long Grass	2
Waste/Garbage Collection	2

Happy Valentines Day

JOIN TODAY!

The Blue Mountains Ratepayers' Association is growing in numbers thanks to many of you who keep abreast of the issues and support BMRA activities! Please don't forget to send in your \$25 and keep us the force we've become! New members and diversity always welcome!

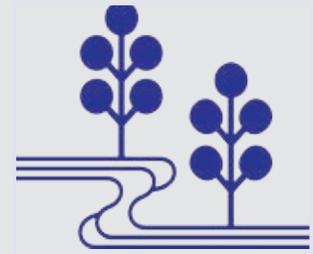
We are actively seeking residential members as well as members from our agricultural community, corporate business, and small business.

PLEASE RENEW OR JOIN TODAY!

WHY BE A BMRA MEMBER?

- Strength in numbers = influence on government and community issues, paid membership is the proof
- Membership means you can bring issues of concern to the attention of the Association and perhaps find like minded support
- Represent the issues facing your neighbourhood or industry and make a difference
- While your Board are all Volunteers...

Website, Newsletters and AGM are costly: for effective and timely communication we need your dues!



BMRA

Board of Directors

Peter Bordignon, President

pbordignon@outlook.com

John Leckie, Vice-President

john.leckie@rogers.com

Peter Sharpe, Treasurer

pesharpe@rogers.com

Bill Pittaway, Secretary

billpittaway13@gmail.com

Denis Fennessy

djf@rogers.com

Paula Hope, Communications Chair

paula@bookedsolid.ca

Blanka Guyatt, Environmental Chair

blankaguyatt777@gmail.com

Terry Kellar, STA Chair

tkellar@sympatico.ca

Jane Moysey, Membership Chair

jane@janemoysey.com

Brian Nelson, Official Plan Chair

briannelson@sympatico.ca

Terry Thompson, Budget Review

terencethompson@rogers.com

Michael Seguin Past-President

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705-607-1440

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Call for membership info, or visit the website and click on JOIN NOW today!

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