

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Joseph Reijnen

BY PAULA BOON

Joseph Reijnen enjoys having a business in downtown Huntsville.

"This is a unique town," says the owner of Muskoka Jewellery Design, who has also been a member of the Downtown Huntsville Business Improvement Association since 1995.

Reijnen adds that he is glad to see a growing number of specialty shops on Main Street.

"We need even more of those to compete with the box stores," he says. "Specialty businesses make the downtown viable. Tourists don't come to Huntsville to go to Wal-Mart. They come to taste the downtown."

Working out of a building which has housed jewellers since the turn of the last century, Reijnen adds his own flavour to the Main Street mix. His store sells the work of fifteen artists including himself as well as offering jewellery repairs and remodelling.

"We like to do alternative forms of jewellery that are unique to the area," he says, describing the Muskoka line he started developing last fall. "It's landscape jewellery with trees

and things. We slice drill cores of Muskoka granite as a backdrop."

Reijnen feels fortunate to be located so close to the waterfront and hopes to take advantage of that proximity when River Mill Park is completed. He says, "I have a space out back and it could be a café or a shop overlooking the park."

If he had his way, Reijnen says, Main Street would be closed off in the summer from Brunel Road to Centre Street to create a more relaxed, inviting atmosphere where visitors would be more tempted to spend time wandering.

"A pedestrian mall would be fantastic, with cafes on the sidewalk. I know a lot of people talk about the problems it would cause, like parking, but I think it would be great," he says. "It would have a European flavour."

Born in Holland, Reijnen always loved art as a child and originally attended art school to study sculpting. In his first year, he was introduced to a friend who was a silversmith and immediately became intrigued by the media and processes involved.

"It's still sculpting," he says, "just smaller

sculptures."

After deciding this was the avenue he wanted to follow, Reijnen completed one apprenticeship in Holland and another in Germany, emerging from his training as a master silversmith.

Then, in 1976, he decided to see more of the world and chose Canada. He moved to Oshawa, where an aunt and some friends lived. Not long after, he met his wife Karen and they had two sons, Michael and Matthew.

In 1988, the family made the move to a log home near Huntsville. "We loved the environment and felt this was a better place to raise young kids," he explains.

For several years, Reijnen did various jobs to make ends meet. All that time, he spent his free time doing jewellery repairs for various businesses at home.

Finally, in 1997, he opened his own store in the Empire block on Main Street with Karen looking after the front of the store. When the current location at 68 Main Street East became available three years ago, he jumped at it. Reijnen says business is good, with the new

Muskoka line selling well and many requests for custom commissions.

When asked about plans for the future, Reijnen says that he and his wife are already planning for retirement and hope that their eldest son Michael, who has been working with him for several years, will decide to pursue a retail location of his own.

Retiring will leave him with more time to do the things he loves: travelling, reading, canoeing and kayaking.

"And of course I will keep working on designs I want to do," he says. "I couldn't stop completely."

Thanks to Christine Riviere-Anderson for suggesting that Joseph Reijnen be profiled. If there is there someone you'd like to see in this space, please call Paula at 789-5541 or e-mail pboon@metrolandnorthmedia.com.



LETTERS

Mayor Doughty is doing a good job

I have been watching the ongoing saga of the constant unfair criticism of Mayor Claude Doughty and some of the members of council since the past election. Most of this criticism and negative attitude seems to be coming from supporters of the former Mayor Hugh Mackenzie and former finance chair Sven Miglin. Maybe one day all these people will realize the election was over a year and a half ago, the people have spoken and they will get over it and get on with life. Mayor Doughty won by a large majority, so obviously the voters in this community decided it was time for a change.

I was surprised to see Miglin writing a letter to the editor criticizing the present mayor and blaming him, saying Mayor Doughty bears full responsibility for the financial situation the town is in at this time, with very high debenture costs and very low municipal reserves (i.e. no money in the bank).

To the best of my knowledge, the new council did not enter into any major financial commitments in 2007 so, Mr. Miglin, how can it be Mayor Doughty's fault? Mr. Miglin indicates that staff have perhaps taken their instructions directly from the present mayor. Was that not even more the case with the previous mayor and yourself as finance chair? Did you and the mayor not run the show? It is my opinion, and that of many others, that the very poor financial situation the town is in right now, with very high debenture costs and very low reserves, is strictly the responsibility of the previous mayor, finance chair and the council that followed every recommendation made by the mayor and finance chair, without question.

The previous council did not have a revenue problem. In fact, they enjoyed perhaps the largest increase in new assessment and taxation in their terms of council than any previous council has enjoyed. In my opinion, Mr. Miglin, your council had a major spending problem.

The readers of the Forester may remember that over two years ago I wrote an article in the Forester, at their request, and at that time did a summary review of the town's financial situation and of the Strategic Plan funding. At that time, I indicated that I believed the debentures for the town could be close to \$700,000 per year and that the cost to the taxpayer could be \$700,000 to \$800,000 per year in 2007 and

onward for the debentures and other costs relating to the strategic plan.

I also commented on the fact that I believed reserves were being depleted and that this was not a good situation for our town. I indicated at that time that this was quite an ambitious undertaking that the councillors had committed the taxpayers of Huntsville to. I also stated that I hoped that future councils were not going to be inhibited by the spending and debenturing of what is now the previous council.

I also commented that future councils may not be as lucky to have the tremendous assessment and taxation growth as the Mackenzie/Miglin council enjoyed. Mr Miglin responded at that time that I was wrong, and that things were going great. Well, now we have over \$700,000 in debenture payments and low reserves, reserves so low the municipal affairs have put Huntsville on notice, and assessment growth at a much lower rate. I might ask who was correct?

The previous councillors, in my opinion, were not all aware as to what the total financial commitments were that they were committing the town to, and that is quite unfortunate. I believe the previous council left the present council in one hell of a mess. One of the interesting items that I noticed was quite a bit of creative financing by the previous council. One item was a \$25,000 revenue from taxation for the River Mill Park project that brought the payments down \$25,000 per year for a number of years. This item was from taxation from the proposed townhouses that were to be built adjacent to the park.

How can you count on revenue from a source that is hypothetical and may not have been built, and as we find out now, never will be built? Thus, no source of revenue. Another item was \$100,000 of new taxation directed totally to the strategic plan. Many of the taxpayers might like to have shared this revenue to repair the potholes and bumps on our roads, and improved snowplowing. Rumours are still around indicating that money slated for the fire department and public works was diverted to the strategic plan.

I would like to compare councils for the readers: Mackenzie/Miglin council: Large increases in revenue from taxation, larger increases in spending. Large increases in debt and debentures, and a large

decrease in reserves. Theatre built and completed, Park started and not completed.

House/Clark years 1991 to 1997: Very small increase in revenue; we were in slow times. Small increases in spending. New fire hall and library built and completed, with no debenturing or debt. Reserves increased.

Mr. Miglin, did you do a good job? Let the readers and taxpayers decide.

In my opinion we should support the mayor and this council. For those of you who want to be negative, think about it. Research the situation for yourself. Look at the past council's record. Find out if you are being led astray. Please talk to the mayor and see what is truly happening, or did happen. Look for the truth. It might be helpful for all concerned.

Also, I believe the conflict charges against Mike Greaves are total crap, again coming from the unhappy supporters of the former regime. Greaves is not perfect, but as a new councillor he has worked very hard and does his homework. He, as a businessperson, is allowed to continue to work and make a living in this town. That is what the conflict of interest guidelines are all about, so councillors can continue to do business in their community. He declared his conflict at the council table and left the room, as he should have. Greaves voted on nothing.

In closing, my final comment to the people of Huntsville is that, considering all the issues that Mayor Doughty has had to deal with, I believe he is doing a good job. I believe the council will be quite productive and do a good job for the town of Huntsville in their four-year term. I understand that the River Mill Park should be completed this spring, considerably under the original budget, the King William corridor will be finished with new trees and landscaping, we have new street lighting in the downtown area and, as most of you should have noticed, we have had much-improved snowplowing and snow removal the past two winters.

Huntsville continues to be the leader in Muskoka and area. We all should be proud to call Huntsville home.

Ron House
Huntsville

Why not ensure a fair price for gas?

To the best of my knowledge our fuel comes from the refinery (storage) in southern Ontario.

Let's say a load of fuel is ordered for one of our gas stations in Huntsville. That load is transported to Huntsville in a quantity of approximately 50,000 litres.

That load of fuel was purchased at X amount per litre. As of the morning of April 17 the fuel oil company decides to raise the price/litre by nine cents. Let's also assume that at the time of the increase the stock of fuel in the underground tanks was at 50 per cent. How can the fuel company justify this increase (25,000 litres x nine cents equals \$2,250) when the fuel was purchased at X amount? Why do they receive this new-found wealth? This is just one load of fuel on one given day.

As with every business, they do have to profit in order to survive, but this is blatant gouging. Can the government not impose a fair cost to the consumer based on the original cost of this fuel at the refinery (storage) level?

We are living in a greed-driven society in which our "affluent" leaders are heading the pack.

Steve Garner
Huntsville



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Congratulations

Dr. John Digby

Tracy Robinson, Secretary of the Huntsville Hospital Foundation Board of Directors, congratulates Dr. John Digby for being named the Foundation's 2008 Volunteer of the Year. The announcement was made during the Huntsville Hospital Spring Gala on April 19.

Digby, as he is affectionately called by those who know and love him, was instrumental in the completion of the \$5 million campaign to build and equip the day surgery at Huntsville Hospital. He co-chaired the campaign with the late Dr. David Allan, for whom the new unit is dedicated. Dr. Digby continues as a valued member of the Foundation Board.

Thank you, Dr. John Digby, for your passionate support of our hospital.

Huntsville District Memorial Hospital Foundation continues to support:

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- Fairvern Nursing Home
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