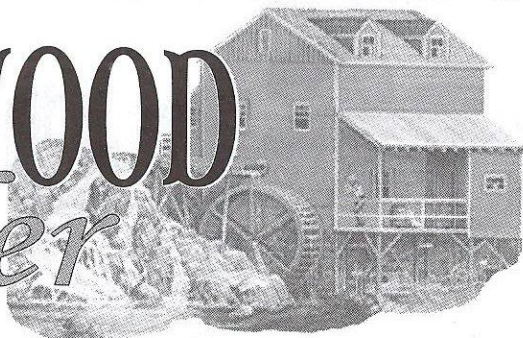
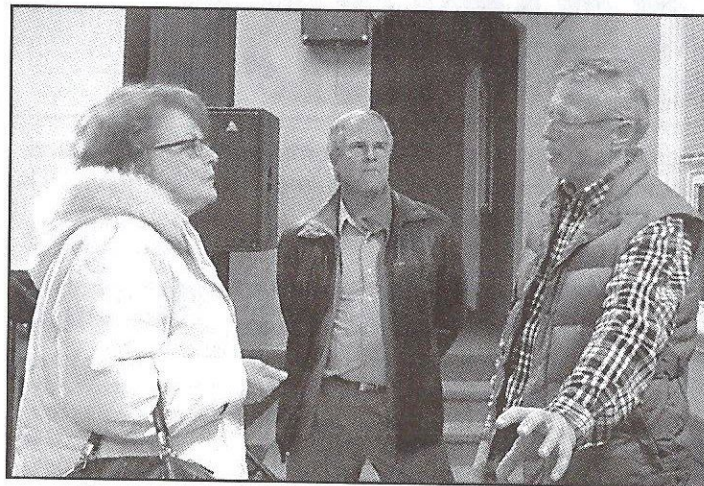


The ROCKWOOD Miller



Radon Gas: The Silent Killer



Carol Solomon of Rockwood speaks to presenter Michael Hoffbauer while CRC member Perry Groskopf listens, saying afterward "I don't want that quarry at all, mostly because of traffic, but my house is part of my retirement".

By: Vivien Fleisher

Over 70 people packed the hall in Eden Mills January 21 for an information session on radon gas and to pick up a home test kit. Radon gas, an invisible, odourless substance, is getting a much higher profile of late due to the decline in smoking: Health Canada can devote more resources to the issue and raise awareness. Referred to as "the silent killer", it's the highest cause of lung cancer after smoking.

Organized by Perry Groskopf of the Concerned Residents Coalition of Rockwood who have fought Hidden Quarry for over two years now, radon can be tested for and remediated in the home fairly easily. However, years of blasting could cause continual destabilization, potentially requiring ongoing testing and remediation by area homeowners.

CRC is trying to establish a baseline for Rockwood in the time left before the OMB makes their decision about the quarry. As Michael Hoffbauer of LEX Scientific emphasized, the findings may surprise homeowners. He busted a few myths, such as the belief that higher rates occur mostly around Canadian shield in communities like Elliot Lake. Not true: high levels have been discovered all over,

in places like Guelph and Owen Sound.

Radon's primary source is soil, not bedrock, and it's occurrence is erratic, prompting Health Canada to adopt the slogan "Test, test, test." Hoffbauer strongly urges people to forget about radon maps as they are simply not a predictive tool. The other pervasive myth is that a newly constructed house will be safe, but he says radon can enter any building regardless of age.

All this has ramifications for the real estate industry too: in the U.S., though not a requirement, many home owners are starting to demand radon tests as a condition of sale. And Guelph is now the first municipality to make it part of their construction requirements. (A reading of 200 Becquerels/m³ is considered acceptable; their test revealed a home in downtown Guelph that exceeded 8000.) Hoffbauer spoke about a client who works at a nuclear facility who set off detectors on his way into work: it turned out his home in Owen Sound tested at 1400 Bq/m³.

Though testing and remediation can be manageable, repeated remediation would not; Rockwood homeowners, not the quarry, would have to bear all that.

For more information or to obtain a test kit, contact pgroskopf@crcrockwood.org or call 519-856-2393.