

# Henderson cites change in ratepayers' goals



"Things have been too busy to be hectic," says retiring town manager Dean Henderson. "But that's good. I'd just as soon be busy all the time."



BY FRANK TOUBY

Little has changed in Mississauga but the issues, says town manager Dean Henderson who resigns from the post Jan. 1, 1974 to go into private practice as an accountant.

"And there is the growth; that has changed," says Henderson. "When I came to the area it was then Toronto Township and it was just starting on the development path with the beginnings of Applewood Acres and Orchard Heights.

"In 1949 and 1950 we saw the start of what was to come for this area which was a predominantly rural community with a population of around 23,000."

Henderson started his government career in 1952 as treasurer for Toronto Township.

After his discharge from the armed forces following World War II, Henderson studied accounting and later became a chartered accountant.

"That was in the old days. You learned the hard way by being an apprentice," he says. "I think it's a lot easier when you study at a university because the courses are programmed to teach, whereas on-the-job training means you're mainly working and learning is sort of a by-product."

When he says little has changed, Henderson is in part referring to the present stream of ratepayer activism. He's seen that before.

"People seem to be emphasizing different things now," he says. "In 1952 the emphasis was on taxes and their rapid increase. There was a real ratepayers war on about high taxes.

"Now that's straightened away and people are looking for different things. They're more concerned about their lifestyle — I don't like the word, but I guess it's the only one that applies.

"And housing is now a big thing. It's sad not everyone can have a single-family

house, but I'm not sure everyone wants one. Think of the sprawl we'd have if everyone who moved in had a single-family house."

"People are now talking about leisure time and how to fill it. I never seemed to have any.

Henderson began getting less and less leisure time in 1960. Then, in addition to being Toronto Township treasurer, he assumed the additional duties of township manager.

"The job was not much different then than now," says Henderson. "The only thing that made it harder was being treasurer on top of everything else."

That ended in 1966 and Henderson concentrated his efforts on being township manager.

"Then the job was not much more difficult because of the increase in staff," he says. "But getting out of the treasurer's job helped a lot."

Henderson says he doesn't feel the election of a "reform" council will have any great impact on the morale of town staff.

"That kind of change is nothing," he says. "These adjustments have gone on before. In 1953 and in 1966 there were council upheavals. (Councillors) Kehoe, Clarkson and Grice came on in a reform spirit in 1966."

Staff has nothing to do with politics, says Henderson. "They do their jobs and follow the policy guidelines laid down by council. I don't think anyone's worried because of a council shake-up. They can follow the new council's policies just as they follow the old council's policies. It doesn't really matter who's on council."

He says in many states in the U.S. the average tenure of a manager or other municipal staff members is around four or five years because of politics: "Here, it's more of a permanent thing."

Henderson is seldom seen by Mississauga residents

and his name rarely appears in the papers.

"A town manager should try to keep out of the limelight," he says. "Political people set policy with the advice and guidance of town staff. But the town manager shouldn't get publicly involved in any dispute with council.

"The urge has been there lots of times," Henderson says; adding, "I'm a Mississauga citizen, too."

He has been for 15 years, since moving into the house he still owns at 1559 Applewood Rd. where he lives with his wife Margaret, daughter Heather, 19, and son Ian, 17.

In February he starts, at age 48, into his own private accounting practice.

"It's something I've had in mind for a long time," he says. "I'd planned this move some time ago. I have a partner in the practice, so you can see it's not anything I've decided on the spur of the moment."

There may be some changes in his daily routine:

"Maybe I can finally have a routine," he says. "The most hectic thing about being town manager was not being able to organize my day because so many things cropped up in the day that you never could tell if what you planned in the morning would be anything near to what you were doing in the afternoon.

"Still, I'd just as soon be busy all the time."