

# BEST EDITORIAL (LOCAL AFFAIRS)



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## Forum • Editorial

### A great Santa parade, but was it successful?

### La police des chats

C'est finalement arrivé. Je savais que c'était une question de temps avant que mon tout n'arrive. J'entendais tellement parler d'eux. Surveillance, indiscretions, menaces, agressions verbales, délation, tous les moyens sont bons pour la police de la SPCA de l'Outaouais associée à l'administration municipale de Gatineau. J'en ai entendu ces dernières années des histoires de gens qui dénonçaient leurs tactiques.

Je suis arrivé à la maison cette semaine et un petit feuillet au logo de la Ville de Gatineau m'attendait. Le message était clair : « Plusieurs voisins nous ont confirmé que vous avez des chats. Si vous n'achetez pas vos licences avant telle date, vous serez mis à l'amende. » Merci Gatineau pour venir déposer à votre porte pendant la nuit, comme bien d'autres le font. Mais vous capitalisez sur l'assurance que nous sommes attachés à ces animaux. Votre attitude est loin d'être honorable. En fait je ne serais pas surpris d'apprendre que votre police de la SPCA qui sillonne nos rues, fonctionne à la prime.

Le message très ambigu de la Ville et de leur SPCA affiliée est qu'on m'accorde un privilège et que je dois leur payer une redevance. Vous vous présentez chez moi avec arrogance et agressivité. Croyez-vous vraiment que je vais de bon cœur contribuer financièrement à votre organisme. Non, je vais plutôt me tourner vers d'autres SPCA plus respectueuses des règles du bien-vivre ensemble.

## Bulletin d'Aylmer

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Marcel Leclerc

Who came to see Santa in last Friday's parade? Tens of thousands, apparently! And although it is difficult to figure out how the organizers come up with attendance numbers, it is clear that the parade attracts thousands. Are they all from Aylmer, or are there plenty from across Gatineau? Visitors from the Pontiac? From Chelsea, Wakefield, from Ottawa?

Aylmer's public events are always well organized, and popular. Yesteryear's festivities, Outaouais en fête, the old Aylmer auto show, and many more, all attract a lot of people and by local businesses. The tag-line for the businesspeople is: more shoppers coming to Aylmer, yippe!

The business association, APICA, the city itself, large retailers like Galeries Aylmer, and other organizations all contribute money and volunteers to promote, organize, and staff these celebrations. All in the hopes that the events will generate increased business for our retailers, besides providing fun for Aylmer's residents. But is this true? Do these events bring measurable business to our shops and stores — who, in turn, support so much of our community's social, sports, and cultural life? The answer isn't as clear as the organizers claim.

For example, if the purposes is to stimulate, are the events themselves achieving that end? No. If shop-local is advertising across the

later to visit some of our stores? No. Do the local malls and shops get together for a major sale or promotional event at the same time — say, a "Santa discount" for the night of the parade, or "Santa bucks", redeemable at the shops, or are flash mobs created to help specific stores? No. (Except for this cheery newspaper which does undertake advertising-in-common.)

So how are the organizers and politicians counting their success? Brute numbers? Or are there post-event surveys of businesses? Are there on-the-street interviews to discover visitors' intentions? If business is a goal, these last two would be important features of the event planning — anyone seen them? It seems anyone assume that a lot of people lining the street, watching a band at the parc des Cèdres, or taking a buggy ride on Principale, automatically means more business for our shops and restaurants. True? No.

Our own informal surveys say this doesn't work. Most visitors remain unaware of the shops, restaurants, bistros, and services here. None are mentioned in advertising! The expensive ads in the big media don't invite visitors to come early and check out the sales or the Christmas menus at local eateries. Advertising does not target the actual source areas of most

## FRED RYAN Bulletin d'Aylmer

Fred Ryan asks a lot of questions, both rhetorical and practical, regarding the retail success of a community event. Without scolding, he points out the flaws in the marketing plan and offers some workable ideas to improve it. It's what a good editorial should do: point to a problem and offer reasonable solutions, all in an accessible, persuasive voice.

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# OP-ED

## EDITORIAL

### Retail booze in Nunavut? Proceed with caution

Despite its sometimes questionable recommendations, last fall's report of the Nunavut Liquor Act Review Task Force got at least one thing right: that Nunavut's destructive relationship with alcohol is rooted in culture, specifically "drinking culture."

By this they mean the widespread veneration of the 60-ounce plastic jug of vodka — by large numbers of binge drinkers who consume liquor as if there were a prize at the bottom of the bottle.

"Our recommendations place major emphases on efforts to change the drinking culture..." the task force said.

By "culture" they mean learned behaviour: what people actually do in their lived lives. Alcoholism and other forms of substance abuse are not genetic or confined to any particular race. They're rooted in unhealthy practices that people learn and then transform into rigid habits and destructive addictions.

The people of Nunavut aren't alone in this. Binge drinking and chronic alcoholism fester throughout the world's northern regions. Russia, Finland, Norway, Alaska, Ireland, the United Kingdom and many other places also suffer from dysfunctional drinking cultures.

Substance abuse isn't genetic. It's rooted in learned behaviour. And that's why the task force recommends using the levers of government to change the drinking culture.

To that end, they urge harm reduction, not prohibition. They're stated goal is two-fold: to promote moderate drinking and to reduce bootlegging by eliminating incentives that motivate the buying and selling of illegal liquor.

But the Government of Nunavut, and MLAs, must exercise caution in carrying out its recommendations. Regardless of what the government may decree, these deeply-rooted practices won't change overnight.

For starters, after this fall's territorial election, the GN will look at experimental retail sales of beer and wine from either of its warehouse outlets in Iqaluit and Rankin Inlet. This is aimed at reducing bootlegging and promoting moderate drinking.

If the GN goes ahead with this, they must prepare for a political backlash, especially in Iqaluit, where many residents will resist the idea.

Second, the GN must prepare for the possibility of increased, rather than decreased consumption. People can binge on wine and beer as easily as they can binge on vodka — and the early consequences of such an early experiment may not be pretty to look at.

The task force also recommends the eventual creation of a Nunavut Liquor Corp. that would hold a territory-wide monopoly over all Nunavut liquor sales, wholesale and retail — and a near-total ban on legal liquor imports from outside Nunavut.

We hope the GN considers all this with the utmost care.

Wrapping all liquor management functions together into a Crown corporation may turn out to make good sense. But government-run wine and beer stores? If it's the GN's goal to normalize the moderate, non-destructive consumption of wine and beer, they ought to instead consider — if communities want it — the licensing of such sales within existing retail stores.

The GN possesses little or no experience in running retail businesses. Entities like Arctic Co-ops Ltd., the North West Co. — and others — do possess that experience — they already know how to do warehousing, pricing, supply-chain management and security.

Also, MLAs must be prepared to rescind the 2010 motion that imposed a moratorium on the purchase of European Union alcohol products. The member responsible for it, Baffin South MLA Fred Schell, said this past March that the assembly should do just that.

If they don't, the proposed elimination of import permits could blow up in the GN's face. Residents who want Irish beer, Scotch whisky and Italian wine would be handed an incentive to break the law.

And if it's the GN's goal to reduce bootlegging, it's difficult to imagine how the liquor system's currently limited range of products would wean people away from bootleg vodka.

Yet another missing element is the virtual absence of treatment and counselling for alcohol and other substance abusers in Nunavut. The absence of such services contradicts the goal of harm reduction, especially if new supplies of retail wine and beer come flooding into a troubled community like Iqaluit.

As for alcohol education committees, it's encouraging that the GN has decided to eventually eliminate them. Such bodies have existed in communities for more than three decades, and few, if any, have ever done anything that could be described as "education."

Replacing local alcohol education committees with carefully crafted purchase and import limits looks like a better way of preventing bootleggers from buying big quantities of legal liquor for illegal resale. JB

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## JIM BELL Nunatsiq News

While the issue of alcohol in our northern communities can be emotionally fraught, Jim Bell offers a non-hysterical, comprehensive overview of the issue and provides constructive suggestions on improving on the government's proposal to reduce binge drinking and deter bootlegging. A stronger, less abrupt conclusion might have pushed this piece into top spot.

Advertising: 1-800-263-1452 ext. 131 ads@nortext.com

### Team players

There once was a photo\* of the Shawville high school basketball team, vintage mid-1960s, that sticks in the memory because of the impressive collection of future high achievers that were in it: Bryan Murray, a future GM of the Ottawa Senators, Daryl Bean, a future president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, and Albert Armstrong, a future long-serving mayor of Shawville.

Makes you wonder who their mentors were or what was in the water.

It's also testimony to the fact that team sports have long been of great importance to Albert, who went on to coach hockey and promote recreation in the community through his early adult life.

So, when he was asked to run for council in Shawville in the late 1970s, it took less than an hour's reflection for Albert to realize it might be an opportunity to help move things forward in the area of sports and recreation. It never entered his mind that he might one day run for mayor, much less that one evening decades later he'd be feted by the community for having served as mayor for 20 years. Yet this is exactly what happened.

This past Saturday evening close to 200 people gathered in the Lions Hall to lavish praise on Shawville's outgoing mayor at a dinner held in his honor. From the comments of all speakers, it was clear that decency, kindness, patience and a willingness to make things work against all odds were the hallmarks of the Armstrong administration. As James Gibson, Mayor of Rapides des Joachims, put it, Mayor Armstrong was never known to say 'no' to anybody, he didn't have that word in his vocabulary.

That's not easy when you're juggling many competing demands on scarce budget dollars. You certainly can't make everybody happy all the time and there is a very high likelihood that you will make everybody

unhappy at one time or another. It comes with the territory.

Some might say being mayor is a thankless job. Not our Albert. He says he has always felt proud and privileged to be in a position to serve the community, and that he can't remember ever receiving a complaint or a negative comment from anybody over his 20-year tenure, only constructive suggestions about how things could be improved.

Sounds like team spirit.

Still, not everybody's ready to sign up for this job. But thank goodness for those that are. Better still, let's thank them.

To all ten outgoing mayors across the Pontiac whether they decided not to run again or came back more and were defeated — our heartfelt gratitude. In particular, let us thank those who, like Albert, chalked up many years of service as mayor, such as Litchfield's Mike McCrank (20 years), Thornhill's Ross Vowles and Clarendon's Jack Lang (16 years each) and Pontiac Municipality's Eddie McCann (12 years).

By serving their municipalities with dignity, they have bestowed prestige on the office of mayor and raised all of us up a little bit. That's a class act. Then again, this is the Pontiac, after all. Not Montreal. Not Toronto. And that's just fine with us.

Meanwhile, to everyone who has helped make it possible for kids to shoot a puck, throw or kick a ball, play a trumpet in a band, carry a spear in a play, or do anything that helps them build their own self-esteem while learning how to be a team player, keep up the good work.

Charles Dickson

\*If anyone has a copy of this historic photo of some local lads who made good, please send it in.

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## CHARLES DICKSON The Equity

Charles Dickson reminds us that editorials don't necessarily have to be critical. Here in this post-election editorial he salutes the outgoing mayors for their dedication to their respective communities. Dickson never quite ties together the link between team sports and municipal service, but there is no faulting the sincerity of this tribute.

Honourable Mention:  
**STEVE BONSPIEL, The Eastern Door**