

BEST FEATURE SERIES

DANIEL J. ROWE

The Eastern Door

A timely and important story about fentanyl and its appearance in a vulnerable community. Lays out the facts, but humanizes the general issue of substance abuse and addiction by humanizing it through the eyes of a regular guy who has just had enough of his demons. The series is fairly loosely connected, but it works because it comes as a serious matter of concern to the community from opposite directions, finding common ground in solid information about fentanyl and its hyper-addictive qualities, and in the hard-nosed hope reflected in the opening of a new addiction treatment centre. It is just solid journalism, well told.

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SARAH ROGERS

Nunatsiq News

A heartbreaking series on a rash of suicides by young people in a remote northern community and the power of radio in mobilizing that community. This is a very sensitive piece of long-form journalism and unquestionably important to the people directly affected by tragedy. It also poses solutions intended to bring the community together. A very difficult choice between this entry and the first place winner. Commendable work.

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For years now, when Lakeview Terrace residents open their taps, discoloured water comes out. The city continues to say it's safe to drink, but many residents don't want to take the chance or simply don't want to drink brown or orange water.

"My hard science background is telling me that it could be potable, if you drink the discoloured water once or maybe a few times, but not if you use it and drink it every day for years. No scientist in this world knows or can tell us how our internal organs are going to be affected by our yellow, reddish, sometimes dark-brown drinking water," argued Joan Trif, a long-time Lakeview resident.

"It is unbelievable that in the 21st century in our community, just a few kilometres away from Canada's Parliament, people are stripped of one of their natural human rights - to have safe, good drinking water. I am sorry to say, but it seems to me that our elected officials have wrong priorities in spending our tax dollars. For example, they are now building a new bike path on Lucerne Boulevard just a few metres away from an existing bike path parallel to the Ottawa River, but citizens in the Lakeview Terrace community have no clean drinking water."

Financially supported by councillor Richard Bégin, a group of Lakeview residents did carry out tests on their water. The conclusion of the tests is that the water is potable but, as Mr Bégin noted, "understandably, no one wants to bathe in brown water, let alone drink it."

Along with other residents, Mr and Mrs Trif have been dealing with this water problem for the past five years and it appears this problem will remain for at least a few more.

In the 2017 budget (not officially adopted yet), Gatineau earmarked funds to solve the yellow water problem and added this project in the 2017-2021 investment plan.

"The first step will be to change the water mains on Vanier Road between Aylmer Road and Lucerne Boulevard (2017). The next step (scheduled for 2018) will be to improve the water mains for Lakeview residents, mainly those who live on Crescent Street," said Deschênes Councillor Richard Bégin.

The Lakeview water infrastructure project is planned over two phases. Stage two is scheduled for 2019. At the same time, Gatineau will look to solve the water problem on Christophe-Colomb Street.

A lingering problem for years, Mr. Bégin explained that one reason why the city is only acting now is because the province has modified some of their rules to fund infrastructure projects.

"The government of Québec needs to contribute to fix or replace such infrastructure. Previously, the issue of yellow water was insufficient in itself to obtain funding. Now, the government does consider it eligible. Québec's financial contribution for projects of the like is crucial," explained Bégin.

Over the years, the yellow water issue has also become a priority for council, following a steady flow of complaints. For example, the Trifs lodged more than 100 calls to the 3-1-1 in water-related problems, and they are not alone. Sylvie Lemay, who lives on Christophe-Colomb, has also regularly complained to the city about her discoloured water. This issue affects various neighbourhoods across the city, but mostly those in older neighbourhoods.

The city indicates that the causes of discoloured water are numerous, but the main culprit is corrosion in cast-iron water mains. Another contributing factor is that the resting period for water in the mains tends to be longer in sparse neighbourhoods, such as Lakeview Terrace, causing the water to become discoloured.

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LAURENT ROBILLARD-CARDINAL

Bulletin d'Aylmer

This is ultimately a story about discoloured water and infrastructure. The reporter has serious and unquestionable expertise on this file and goes to great lengths to include real people who are simply fed up with having brown tap water. Possibly because of previous stories by this reporter the government is finally acting with a medium-term plan. The story is compelling and of obvious interest to those affected, but ultimately this is a story about brown water without a "smoking gun" to provide evidence of a dire threat to public health.

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