

## Senate change more democratic

It is not entirely unfair to describe Canada's unelected Senate as "a taskless thanks." Yes, the Senate performs many tasks, some of which are even useful, e.g. they review new legislation, and over the years various senators have conducted lengthy investigations into matters of public interest.

Even so, as unpopular as elected politicians may be, the Senate is even more unpopular, thanks to its' primary roll as a repository for partisan cheerleaders. There are many people - NDP Leader Jack Layton among them - who want to nuke the entire institution. Layton says that in this modern age there is no room for a second tier of politicians in a democratic society, which is why he wants a national referendum to ask Canadians whether or not they favor abolishing the Senate.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper says he'd consider Layton's idea to abolish the Senate but that is not his first choice. He'd prefer reform.

That is why earlier this month the Conservatives re-introduced two Senate reform bills that had died in the last session of Parliament, one fixing a Senator's term to an eight-year maximum (as opposed to age 75 now) and the other opening the way for electing Senators by holding 'consultations' with the provinces and encouraging provinces to run Senate elections to pick worthy candidates.

For most people, the mere mention of the Senate induces a giant yawn. It shouldn't. Why? Because despite the unsavory nature of giving so much authority to people whose major credential for the job is past political favor, the Senate is directly involved in every piece of legislation which makes its way through Parliament.

For me, the question is not abolition - pretty well every western democracy has a Senate - but changing it to make it more responsive and, most of all, more democratic.

Which is why, of course, Harper has given any time at all to Layton's proposal for a national referendum on the subject. And why Government House Leader Peter Van Loan, in introducing the Senate reform package, said, "The Senate must change. And if that change cannot happen through reform, then we believe that the Senate should be abolished. This is not our preferred route. We prefer to try to reform the Senate before resorting to abolishing it."

A poll conducted earlier this month for CanWest News Services and Global National found 64 per cent of respondents favored a referendum. Asked to choose between abolition and the status quo, abolition won narrowly 45-41 per cent. When asked to reform the Senate, including making it an elected body, only 24 per cent still favored abolition while 52 per cent favored reform.

The most obvious - and most odious - problem with our current Senate is that Senators are not elected.

That's the thing that got up the nose of Ontario voters in the referendum during the recent provincial election when they overwhelmingly rejected a proposal that would have seen a host of MPPs chosen by political operatives being able to take a seat in the Legislature.

As troubling as that proposal was, those appointees could at least claim an indirect electoral blessing, since they would have been chosen on the strength of their party's showing in the general election. But Senators can't even claim that. Many Senators are very accomplished individuals, but when you get right down to it they are still political hacks, chosen at the partisan whim of the prime minister and not the least bit responsible to the voting public.

Harper, a graduate of the old Reform Party, was long an advocate of the so-called 'Triple-E' Senate, the 'E's' standing for "elected, equal and effective." Obviously the 'elected' part is popular, and there is a good argument that could be done without going through the impossible task of getting the approval of Ottawa and all the provinces for changes to be made. The U.S. Senate also began as an appointed body and only gradually grew into an elected body when various states balked at the notion and began running unofficial senate elections. In Canada, apart from Alberta, and to a lesser extent British Columbia, the other provinces have ignored the issue. Shame.

The 'effective' part of the equation also seems reasonable, but it's the 'equal' part, where all the provinces would have the same number of Senators - just as all 50 U.S. states have two each - where the Triple E breaks down.

That would require a protracted constitutional debate that nobody wants. And while it's one thing to have a system like that for 50 states - where no small group could hold the entire Senate to ransom - it's another thing in Canada, where six small provinces could lord it over the four biggest provinces. Nothing fair or 'equal' about that.

In short, the Triple E Senate is a non-starter. But Senate reform, after decades of talk, may finally become reality.

Imagine.



**National  
Affairs**

**Claire  
Hoy**

# A 23-year roller coaster ride

*"As the rain falling out of the clouds becomes the life origin for plants, so the stream of creativeness becomes the source of life for a man. Let us feel the pulse of a creative spirit within a man, which sustains his or her vitality, for it is the only way for one to join the river of eternity. As this truth submerges a man in joy like the sunrises, he or she feels incredibly happy. The spirit of creativity like a stream flowing in a man and watering a dry land of his or her soul, refreshing it and awakening up new forces - a creation of action. It seems that time and eternity merge within a man. Let us aim at awakening within ourselves this state producing success and desire for harmony."*

Augustinas Rakauskas

It's been said that time flies.

I think it's always gone by just as it should, hour by hour, day by day, year by year.

We don't often worry about the effects of gravity on our demeanor, or the effects on our skin, considering the earth is travelling at roughly 67,000 mph through space.

As a mere pup, I arrived on the Caledon scene at the eager young age of 21. To alter a very popular Hollywood movie phrase, I didn't "know nothin' 'bout birthing no stories."

And so it began, some 23 years ago.

I grew into my role and chosen career through the Citizen. I grew into myself and into my community.

You know something, time does fly, and like the massive suction produced by the intake manifolds on modern jetliners, it carries you along for the ride.

And the memories. You can't spend more than two decades in a job and not have them, in spades. My role at the Citizen provided me with plenty of opportunities to learn and evolve.



**Mark Pavilons**

There was getting hit in the head with a puck at a hockey game at Mayfield arena, good enough for three stitches. It provided some interesting dinner conversation at our company party that evening.

I met Captain Mark Phillips (ex-husband of Princess Anne), singers Gowan and Kim Mitchell and movie producer Norman Jewison. I met heads of state and even an African chief.

I also met the likes of Ralph, Peter, Aldo, Tony, Terry, Pat, Carol, Ed, Sylvia, David, Ernie, Sarah, Debbe, Marion and a handful of Margarets, Peters, Johns, Bobs and Richards. I couldn't possibly list everyone who made my job fascinating. Some are very well regarded and all have a place reserved in my heart and thoughts.

By my estimates, I have likely encountered more than 3,000 people in my years at the Citizen - spoken to them, shook their hands and shared small talk.

Some left an impression on me and I hope I returned the favour.

Cleaning out my office and desk drawers was an unusual exercise, but one that was inevitable. It's amazing what a person can accumulate in a couple of decades. Like a packrat with exceptional hoarding abilities, I have amassed a veritable treasure trove of junk - lost files, books, pamphlets, faxes, sticky notes, folders,

brochures, books, cards, trophies and more business cards than I could ever count. I filled three recycling bins, and then I filled them again.

Many of my belongings moved with me, from my family homestead to my first apartment to my first home. During each of these life changes, a few trinkets and possessions ended up in my desk, under my work station and in various boxes.

This recent chore was not unlike wrapping up a loved one's life. Twenty-three years is a substantial chunk of a person's life.

Some of the memories have faded, but most remain. There were many late-night assignments; driving through snow storms (and rear-ending a snowplow near Shelburne); developing photos and using hot wax to layout the newspapers by hand. I remember the first fax machines, laptops and Macs.

Regardless of technology, the job has remained essentially the same. Good, old-fashioned reporting, reading reports, interviewing people, taking notes and writing stories. While media have changed tremendously, you can't replace people. People interact with one another and that sets the stage for everything in life.

I have found that journalism seems to be a misunderstood profession. I am still asked if it's a hobby and do I get paid to write a column in the Citizen. Yes, people, being editor of a community newspaper is a full-time, professional-type job. It's just a bit more hectic and bizarre at times, since the source of all the news is, well, other people.

At times, I've felt like a counsellor, information officer and social worker.

Most will know me, not from my public appearances at almost every major event in Caledon, but from my weekly columns. These have been a source of great joy for

me over the years. At last count, I've written close to 1,500 of them. I have my favourites and these are filed away, likely to be pulled out to embarrass my kids when they start dating!

My columns, in the past nine years, have focussed on family - relationships and children. While some criticize me for constantly writing about my family, I believe it's the cornerstone for all of us. What's more important than raising a family and being friends and mentors to the generation that follows? What's more vital than teaching the future doctors, lawyers and politicians about right and wrong, about compassion for our fellow men and women?

I'd like to think community newspapers have heart and soul and are reflections of those who write for them. I hope I've given the pages a personal touch.

While I'm leaving my current post, I'm not moving away.

My family has made a commitment to this wonderful community. It's home.

Hopefully, Caledon will progress as it should and opportunities will open up for our offspring to live, work and play in this place we've helped create. In a nutshell, we love this place.

I will be replaced and life will go on at the Citizen.

I will begin anew and be welcomed at my new workplace.

It's an exciting time. We don't really have the luxury of waiting for life to happen. We have to live it. We have to change, adapt and move forward.

As one door closes, another opens. When one chapter is done, there's one more waiting to be read (or written).

Thank you to all who've crossed my path and touched me in some way. Those experiences will accompany me always.

**TAKE THE SMOKE OUTSIDE**

905-799-7700  
smokefree-peelregion.ca

Region of Peel  
Working for you  
Public Health

There is no safe amount of exposure to second-hand smoke.

Adapted with permission of the Thunder Bay District Health Unit