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Broadbridge, Ron

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City chamber manager retiring after 25 years

By Henry Bury
THE INTELLIGENCER

Belleville businesses are losing a friend and advocate. Ron Broadbridge is retiring in October as general manager of the Belleville and District Chamber of Commerce and a search is now underway for his successor.

He has held the top chamber post for the past 25 years, a rarity within the approximately 170 member groups of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

"Only one other chamber general manager has a longer tenure than me, Debbie Nicholson of Sudbury, but she is younger," said Broadbridge, who is turning 60 in November. "I had the benefit of 15 years in the newspaper business before joining the chamber."

He never intended to stay a quarter-century with the chamber.

"But I found it such rewarding work that I really wouldn't have wanted it any other way," he said.

"It's also, in the same respect, a younger person's job because it's demanding physically and you have to be in two or three places at the same time. I didn't want to stay until I can't do that. So I think it's a good time to leave while I'm still healthy and able to enjoy my retirement."

He and his wife, Susan, a retired teacher, live in Crofton in Prince Edward County.

The county native graduated from Prince Edward Collegiate Institute and then earned his Bachelor of Arts in sociology. He went to work for the Peterborough Examiner as a "proof boy" picking up and delivering ad proofs and moved up to the advertising department.

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INTELLIGENCER PHOTO BY HENRY BURY
Ron Broadbridge is retiring as general manager of the Belleville and District Chamber of Commerce in late October.

Broadbridge to retire

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Broadbridge joined The Intelligencer's advertising department in 1968 and became advertising manager in the late 1970s.

In 1981, he went across the street to take over the vacant general manager's position with the Belleville chamber when it was located on Pinnacle Street across from Market Square.

Thus began Broadbridge's quarter century of helping Belleville businesses work together for the betterment of the community. Under his leadership, chamber membership has grown from 170 to more than 600 which, he noted, is important "because you need a critical mass in order to be effective and in order to truly represent businesses in an advocacy sense ... we are the voice of business."

He said the role of general manager is to try and draw businesses together so that they can network and gain from each others services as well as to promote tourism in this area.

"It's key that I am always positive to the board of directors in representing the city elsewhere and I think I have done that," he said. "Belleville is regarded in a very positive way, especially within the chamber of commerce movement."

Broadbridge has spent a good portion of his job outside the local community, trying to attract visitors to this area and also representing the chamber at the provincial and national level.

"The chamber has given me an opportunity to meet regularly with community leaders and that gives me a sense that what you do really matters," he said. "I will certainly miss the daily interaction with the members of the chamber and the directors."

A "roast" for Broadbridge has been scheduled for Friday, Oct. 13 at the Royal Canadian Legion on Pinnacle Street.