

The Essex Free Press is an independent weekly newspaper, locally owned and operated by The Essex Free Press Limited

The Essex Free Press is published every Wednesday from  
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## Pride and persistence

The timing couldn't have been better. After 28 years of devotion both to his business, Essex Home Hardware, and his chosen community, Ib Fynbo was honoured Saturday night as the Essex Citizen of the Year for 2006.

Through a thin veil of humour, Ib hinted during his speech that he's been waiting 28 years to be named to the growing list of honorees. If you didn't know him better, you might think he was expressing a bit of impatience that it took so long.

free press

### editorial

*laurie brett*

But impatient is hardly the right word to describe the man who took a pile of rubble – the remains of his Talbot Street store after the 1980 explosion – and turned it into a small kingdom of successful local businesses. Persistent, tenacious and proud might be more suitable descriptors.

It seems completely appropriate that we head into Small Business Week – October 15 to 21 – with Ib Fynbo on our minds. Where critics see empty storefronts, Ib sees opportunity. The glass is always half full and obstacles are rarely insurmountable; they're merely challenges to overcome.

Timing is everything and Ib's nomination for the award comes at a time in his life when he has much to celebrate and much still to achieve.

Congratulations Ib!

## Calling all candidates

Kingsville and Leamington have bravely embarked upon the municipal election campaign with early all-candidates meetings. Last week the issues in both of these communities were crystallized when candidates went head-to-head in a public forum.

But in Essex, where the issues are murky and getting muddier by the day as nasty rumours and misinformation get kicked around, there is no official word on whether there will be an all-candidates meeting.

There's no doubt that the ward system complicates the facilitation of this type of pre-election event. But we owe it to ourselves to stage one large public meeting where opposing candidates can make their positions known on issues that matter and members of the public can judge for themselves which politicians are acting in good faith and which are not.

Susan Whelan is as astute an observer of the political landscape as you will ever find. How could she be anything else? She's the daughter of one of Essex County's most famous politicians, Eugene Whelan, and a ten-year Member of Parliament for Essex where she served with distinction in and out of cabinet. Susan Whelan has seen and heard it all.

In a recent discussion with Whelan, we talked about the municipal election campaign and she expressed some disappointment about how the issues seem to be forgotten in favour of innuendo and personal attacks. She says that anyone can be a destroyer, but few can be builders. Candidates must run for the right reasons, not to "get" someone they don't like or settle old scores, but in order to better contribute to the well being of the community. Of course this requires a good knowledge of the

issues with a work ethic to match.

Before you vote, ask candidates how they intend to build, rather than tear down. Are



### opinion

*bill gay*

they willing to accept responsibility for their actions or will they, when things go wrong, as they invariably do, simply blame the municipal staff and volunteer committees? Can they put the needs of the town above their own appetite for votes and overpowering need for personal aggrandizement? Are candidates willing to do the reading necessary and spend the sufficient time obtaining important

information from staff before attending council? Some councillors I have observed don't look over their package until 15 minutes to post time, if at all.

I remember a powerful speech delivered by Gene Whelan about 15 years ago during the capital campaign to restore the Essex Railway Station. He recalled the role of so many of our forebears in the rail industry in this county. Using a great sense of humour and old-fashioned common sense, he challenged us not to abandon our priceless heritage. "Who we were is who we are," he said.

Can our municipal candidates elevate themselves to the level of patriotism and goodwill of the Gene Whelan model, or are we consigned to the darkness of small-mindedness and ill feeling that characterizes so many elections at all three levels of government?

Only time will tell.



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#### Subscriptions

Canada: \$37.10

U.S.: \$80.00

(Prices include GST)

Payable in advance to The Essex Free Press Limited.

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We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP), towards our mailing costs. Second Class Mail Registration No. 1495.