

# Deciding when to retire: Mandatory retirement set to end

In some cases, retirement is planned for and anticipated. It is a chance to spend time with family and enjoy leisure activities and relaxation.

However, for many Ontarians, the desire, will and potential for work is one they actively seek and enjoy and, because someone turns sixty-five, that doesn't always change.

It is no secret that people are healthier and living longer, so why should they stop working if their health is good, they desire activity, and they are filling productive roles in Ontario's workforce? Our government believes it is unfair to insist that they stop working simply because they turn 65.

That is why, as of Dec. 12, 2006, Ontarians will have a choice about when to retire.

By ending mandatory retirement, we are allowing workers to decide when to retire based on lifestyle, circumstance and priorities – their own.

With that in mind, the government provided a one-year transition period to ensure everyone is ready for the new law to take effect. The Ending Mandatory Retirement Statute Law Amendment Act was approved by the legislative assembly in an overwhelming 60-5



## commentary

*Essex MPP Bruce Crozier*

vote in December 2005.

When the legislation takes effect, it will amend the Ontario Human Rights Code to protect people aged 65 and over from age discrimination for most employment purposes. The legislation also amends a variety of other statutes that have provisions connected to mandatory retirement.

With the effective date only two months away, employers should take certain steps to prepare for this new legislation:

- Familiarize themselves with the requirements of the Act and its possible effect on their workplace policies and practices.
- Consider what changes may be necessary to existing policies to comply with the end of mandatory retirement.
- Discuss with their unions any changes that might be required to their collective agreements.

Workers and their unions should also understand the provisions of the Act and how they apply and then talk to their employers about how the new law will be implemented in their workplace.

I would encourage employers, unions and workers to actively prepare for the end of mandatory retirement. For example, some employers may need to adapt their human resources policies and practices to comply with the law.

For more information, please visit [www.labour.gov.on.ca](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca). A toll-free telephone line is also available for public inquiries at 1-866-400-8355.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Municipal politics at a new low

Since 1962, I have witnessed many elections in the municipality of Essex, but never have I seen such a negative, cold-blooded strategy of character defamation as the one being waged against Mayor Ron McDermott. His opponents continue to spew an ongoing litany of lies and misinformation designed to sway enough vulnerable voters to affect the election outcome.

For example: 1. Mayor McDermott is a "liar" because he put incorrect figures about the decreasing debt, and taxes, in his brochure. FACT – The figures are confirmed by BDO Dunwoody Financial Auditors, as reported in the media and on candidates' night.

2. "The mayor is an alcoholic you know – drinks in the Legion every night." FACT – Ron McDermott is NOW and ALWAYS has been a non-drinker, other than Pepsi.

3. "Did you know the mayor didn't pay for his pies at the Harrow Fair?" Please! FACT – Tout paid by cheque #005 drawn on the CIBC 8/31 in the amount of \$235, made out to Harrow Fair Board.

It goes on and on.....

Tout, I want to congratulate you on staying out of the muck and deception that is so insulting to you and the taxpayers. Thank you for representing both our towns in such an honest and hard-working manner during the last term and for accom-

plishing so much. Where others fan the flames of north/south animosity, you show us that we can work and grow together, and become a great community!

*John Garinger  
Essex*

### The responsibility of the press

The art of journalism, the ancient ritual of "word-smithing", is a time-honoured profession. It is also a business. For many owners, the bottom line drives everything. For others, ownership can portray personal preferences.

Conversely, our finest newspapers go to great lengths to be fair and balanced. It is not just a market-driven commodity. Freedom of the press is not a property right of owners. It is the inalienable right of the people. It is a right to free expression, inseparable from their right to inform themselves through objective reporting, politically diverse editorials and conflict of interest-free opinion pieces.

So what has this got to do with the Essex Free Press? First, let me say I admire what the new publisher has done with the paper. It has relevancy. It looks like a modern weekly. However, there is a serious issue with the editorial page: the Bill Gay column. Most weeks, Mr. Gay serves us journalistic pablum, high school cheerleader pieces on his favourite politicians or personal interests that hardly belong on an editorial page.

If the Free Press wants to run Mr. Gay's pieces, such as last week's tribute to former Free Press publisher Ken Brett, I suggest placement in a special memorial section and not on the most important page of the newspaper. It contributes little to a page that should be for meaningful issues and intelligent discussion thereof. And it reeks of self-interest.

A few weeks ago, Mr. Gay subjected us to his continuing political love-in with Susan Whelan. His column was more in keeping with the writings of a paid Liberal media and PR employee. And there lies the serious ethical issue for the Free Press. Mr. Gay actually owns and operates a public relations and marketing company, yet he is mandated by the Free Press publisher to write conflict of interest-free editorial page pieces.

The burning question for the Free Press is as follows: Does Mr. Gay have or has he ever had a contract, paid or donated, with any organization, company, person(s), political organization or its representative that he has written about? If so, then Mr. Gay and the Free Press need to fully disclose those past and present connections. Readers need to know that those who are entrusted with journalistic licence are objective and provide conflict of interest-free journalism. Indeed, people have a right to that assurance.

*Robin Blencoe  
Essex*

### Re: The responsibility of the press

I thank Mr. Blencoe for his letter. I believe that a robust page of letters to the editor indicates an intellectually-engaged community and, as always, I welcome well-written letters to the editor that are publishable.

I appreciate the paraphrased quote from the 1981 Royal Commission on Newspapers, which, if our readers are unaware, was established 25 years ago to review the newspaper industry. The Kent Commission urged Ottawa to restructure the newspaper industry to prevent newspaper monopolies. The quote went something like this: "Freedom of the press is not a property right of owners. It is a right of the people. It is part of their right to free expression, inseparable from their right to inform themselves."

With one community weekly under Brett ownership, the Essex Free Press can hardly be considered to have a monopoly on the news in the area.

I would like to address some issues raised in Mr. Blencoe's letter.

First, in regards to Mr. Blencoe's comments on Bill Gay's column. Over the past 52 weeks, Mr. Gay's column has appeared 51 times, each time clearly titled "Opinion". He has never appeared as an editorial writer nor have I imposed any limitations on the topics available to him.

Mr. Gay has written 21 times on politics (federal, provincial and municipal)

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and world issues; 14 times on local issues, most of them focused on heritage projects, volunteer efforts and saving Harrow High School; 5 times on sports; 5 times on North American car manufacturers and their plight; twice on Canada's involvement in the mission in Afghanistan; and once on Christmas past, present and future (his only personal piece).

On only three occasions has Mr. Gay reminisced: once on March 22 when he dared to write about local popular culture and our penchant for frequenting the Dairy Freez and the Deluxe Restaurant, neither of whom he represents as a media consultant; once on July 12 when he wrote about Boblo Island and the summer fun many of us remember; and once on Nov. 1 when he wrote about my great-uncle, K.E. Brett, who he described as a "builder of Essex".

Having reviewed hundreds of weekly community newspapers across Canada, I can assure Mr. Blencoe that columnists of Mr. Gay's type appear on editorial/opinion pages in most community newspapers. Within the context of community news, the opinion page is indeed the right place for reflections on matters pertaining to this community, whether they be

current events or reminiscences.

I would be interested to know what our readers think of Mr. Gay's column. I believe that we would be hard pressed to find another person in the town of Essex who has the ability to be both a thoughtful commentator and a local "cheerleader".

As for self-interest, I have often considered it ironic that the Essex Free Press seldom uses the newspaper to promote itself. We did so in January 2006 when we announced our 110th anniversary. As the oldest business in town, I concluded that 110 years of serving the community merited some form of recognition. But on a regular basis we are too busy extolling the virtues of people of distinction, providing reliable news coverage on events happening in our community, and promoting local businesses and organizations. There is little time left for self-promotion.

In his column, Mr. Gay is not "entrusted with journalistic licence". He is given space to write about topics that he feels may be of interest to our readers. It is important not to confuse objective journalism with opinion writing.

*Laurie Brett  
Publisher and Editor  
Essex Free Press*