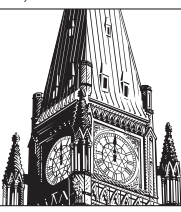


LETTERS



Election's over already

If the polls are right, it's hard to believe that an election is going to change anything.

Susan Riley, A10

Our mission is failing

Canada must start talking about a retreat from Afghanistan because our troops cannot win the war.

Colin Kenny, A11

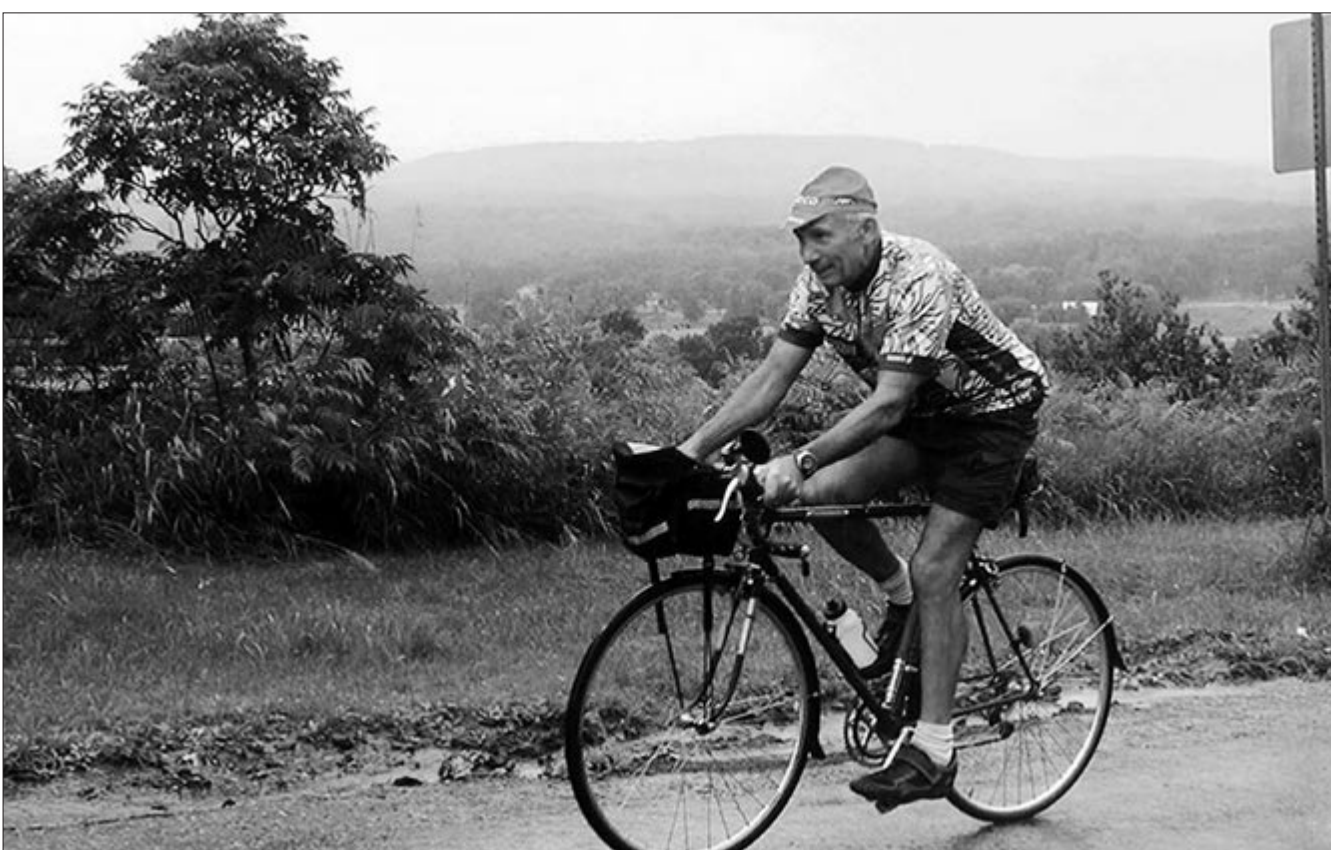


PHOTO BY COLIN ARCHER

Les Humphreys, shown bicycling last year in Sterling, Ont., writes that there are some traffic issues with segregated cycling tracks like the one on Ottawa's Scott Street.

Separated cycling tracks aren't best choice

Re: Danes could teach us a lot about cycling, Sept. 2.

As a lifetime cyclist and cycle commuter for more than 50 years, I cringed at Kelly Egan's suggestion for bike lanes separated from the travelled portion used by other traffic.

Such a system was in effect in postwar Britain. Bicycle lanes on either side of the roadway were separated from the travelled portion by a grass median, and, in suburban areas, there would also be a pedestrian sidewalk, separated from the bike lane by a second grass median.

All of this looked ideal from the point of view of the urban planners but what they failed to anticipate was interactions at intersections. Wherever intersecting traffic joined or crossed the roadway, the bike lane would be blocked while intersecting traffic waited for highway traffic to clear.

Road traffic in the 1950s was much lighter than it is today, but cross traffic was significant enough that serious cyclists chose to ride the highway rather than suffer the constant inconvenience of having to wait at every intersection.

As traffic volumes increased, bike lanes became parking spots for urban residents and ultimately became extra traffic lanes after road widening.

On the north side of Scott Street from Bayview to Churchill, the former railroad right-of-way, shared by pedestrians and cyclists and cited in Egan's column, is a very good example of a very poorly segregated bike facility.

Separated from the roadway by a grass median, like bike lanes in postwar Britain, the Scott Street version forces through bicycle traffic to give way at every intersection. The transition from bike lane to roadway across intersections is also poor, causing a jolt strong enough to dislodge lights, mirrors and bells, as the bicycle navigates across.

The Scott Street path is bidirectional, with eastbound bike traffic running counter to vehicular traffic on Scott, which means that vehicles entering Scott from the north, unaware of the contraflow bike traffic, would expect to see bicycles coming from the left, as per normal

traffic flow, and not from the right. This is another recipe for accidents.

At night, contraflow bicycle traffic on Scott Street is faced with headlamp glare from westbound automotive traffic, which can obscure hazardous potholes and roadside detritus.

My preference is for bike lanes on the roads rather than on segregated or even separated bike lanes. I believe that cyclists should have the mobility and accessibility of normal traffic. Under the law, bikes are regarded as vehicles.

LES HUMPHREYS, Almonte

Safer alternatives

Re: Young cyclists should be taught the do's, don'ts, Sept. 4

While we do not condone sidewalk cycling, we recognize that cyclists do not undertake it for pleasure. They do it for lack of a safer alternative. A decision based on a core issue like safety will not be affected by education or even by a police crackdown.

A recent reader response posted on the *Citizen's* website by a paramedic who attended at the tragic Kanata

cycling accident illustrates why: "I will personally never ride on a road that I feel is unsafe and will instead opt for careful riding (i.e. slow and with courtesy) on the sidewalk — and I advise my family and anyone else to do the same ... I would rather be fined 100 times than wind up in the Intensive Care Unit."

Sidewalk cycling is common in Ottawa. The 2002 Ottawa Decima survey found that a high percentage of commuters who cycle — 28 per cent — use sidewalks for at least part of their commute. This shows a strong preference for separation from motor traffic.

Sidewalk cycling could be drastically reduced with proper facilities such as dedicated and segregated bike lanes and intersection improvements. If safer infrastructure were available, cyclists would gladly use them instead of facing the conflicts, the obstacles and the risk of getting a ticket when they ride on the rough, unpleasant concrete surface of a sidewalk.

GABRIEL DUROCHER and DIANNE COX, Ottawa Cycling Vision Ottawa

Wellspring helps patient 'get on with living again'

Re: Ottawa Cancer Centre fundraising under way, Sept. 5.

I am delighted to hear of this development in the treatment of cancer in our community. As a physician, I see first-hand the impact of cancer on the day-to-day lives of my patients, but as the sister of a cancer patient, it has truly taken on a new meaning.

My brother was diagnosed in 2004 with osteosarcoma, the bone cancer that Terry Fox had. He was a very active and fit 33-year-old man at the time. The Ottawa Hospital physicians and staff did an exceptional job in treating his cancer, including saving his leg, and ensuring he could walk again.

However, the treatment of his cancer, albeit extremely successful, had left him with new challenges and limitations, challenges that a young fit man was completely unaccustomed to facing.

He was frustrated by the response of the system to his recovery, as his post-treatment therapy was limited to learning to walk. He was a triathlete, a long-distance runner, a wakeboarder and a skier. None of this was covered in his recovery.

He sought private help, including deep tissue massage and in-depth gait and personal training, in order to be able to resume his previous activities. Others in his situation may have also benefited from some support in managing the emotional and psychological aspect of this illness and the resulting disability.

A program such as the Wellspring clinic described in this article would allow those

in a similar situation to access these services that allow survivors to "get on with living again." Cancer care needs to be holistic and complete, and a program such as this will allow survivors to live life to the fullest, whether they have been cured, are in remission, or are still being actively treated.

DR. PAMELA EISENER-PARSCHKE, Chief of staff, Bruyère Continuing Care

Refugee board was right

Re: Lesbian war deserter pleads for asylum, Sept. 9.

Janice Tibbetts' coverage of the Federal Court hearing into the case of Bethany Smith is a fine example of balanced journalism. Unlike other local media that have treated this case as a cause célèbre created by the American military's policy on homosexuals, Tibbetts skillfully reported the facts on both sides of Smith's claim to refugee status in Canada.

What emerges is a fairly clear-cut example of a case that the Immigration and Refugee Board got right when they rejected the claim.

What Smith fears is not persecution because of her sexual orientation, it is prosecution for desertion. The 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees distinguishes between the two. Prosecution in itself is not persecution unless it is being applied in such a manner that singles out the defendant for unfair treatment based on that person's race, religion, nationality, social class or political opinion.

Ironically, rather than claim that her imminent posting to Afghanistan is proof of her being persecuted, Smith might have had a more credi-

ble claim if she had cited the automatic discharge of homosexuals from the U.S. military.

RAPHAEL GIRARD, Ottawa

Don't boo Heatley

Dear Ottawa Senators fans: your beloved Dany Heatley may finally be coming back to Ottawa, regardless of what he may have said or what he may have done.

You've got to accept him for who he is.

Yes, perhaps he's a whiner and justified or not, but he is a 50-goal scorer — a powerhouse player (with the right support).

He should not be taunted or jeered, but applauded and cheered. Fans should encourage him to perform for the team.

Summer is over — it's hockey season and this year the Sens may just have a better team. Good luck Sens. And to Heatley: get over yourself. Whatever happened, it's time to prove what you can really do.

GUY PAQUETTE, Kingston

ABCs of life

Re: Playing the game vs. values in life, Sept. 7.

Right on, Kelly Egan! Although I'm an 82-year-old lady, having just finished my own 300-page memoirs in six weeks (now published), I couldn't agree more with his column.

What a parallel: I'd also finished reading Dr. Theodore Dalrymple's brilliant observations in his aptly titled book *Our Culture: What's left of it* when I picked up my *Citizen*. Who's duplicating the dignity of a Mario Lemieux or a Wayne Gretzky in their cho-

sen hockey lives or a Tom Lehman, Arnold Palmer or our Mike Weir in their golf lives? These men have been all mindful of their chosen sport but show us all their respect for humanity by participating joyfully in life while reflecting their own life values.

Last year I was one of eight eulogists at the funeral of my down-to-earth, practical, well-loved husband saying he had simple ABCs of life — awareness, bravery and candour. Can we have a few more please?

NORMA DIXON, Fitzroy Harbour

Give up your seat

In my two years living in Ottawa, I have not seen a single person give up their bus seat to someone who is far older than the average bus rider. It happens to me all the time, and I am 69 years of age.

I must stand while those in their teens, 20s, 30s and 40s sit smugly and ignore simple courtesy.

The worst I've ever seen took place last winter when I saw a man on crutches, only one leg, stand at the front of a crowded No. 7 bus when not one person gave up his or her seat. I was standing at the back and could not get off without saying something to these inconsiderate citizens of Ottawa.

In my country, the United States, such behaviour would be called out immediately. Canadians like to tell the world how friendly they are but they're not. Some of them are simply ignorant, having not been taught courtesy and respect at home or in school. These Ottawans ought to be ashamed, very ashamed.

ALAN BACH, Ottawa

It's disturbing RCMP execs need 'transformation'

Re: RCMP to pay \$220,000 to 'transform' three officers, Sept. 9.

In late 2007, the "RCMP Five," a group of RCMP officers and a civilian employee, were commended by Parliament for their courage in insisting that the force's brass investigate the mismanagement of the Mounties' pension fund.

In spite of this august praise, the RCMP decided in its typical manner that it was not the time for the RCMP to publicly commend whistleblowers who risked their careers to do the right thing. Their award for outstanding service was presented during a private dinner, with minimal publicity, in an Ottawa restaurant.

Contrast that with the case of the "RCMP Three" that has just surfaced. These senior executives are being sent for "personal transformation" and "accountability" training at the outrageous cost of \$220,000.

It is disturbing to think that these executives rose to their positions without these requisite skills and abilities. It begs the question: what are they like right now? This is not a frivolous question. Accountability can be measured. In making the judgment that these executives need such training, there should have been an assessment.

To ensure that there is accountability, our group will be sending an Access to Information Act request to the RCMP. We will not be asking

for personal information or to have these individual executives identified. Our request will be for the performance and change measurements that have been used and will be used to measure their permanent change. In other words, the types of measurements already taken to know what needs to be changed and the means by which the desired or necessary change will be measured on an ongoing basis to ensure that it is permanent.

The process used to award the contract — an advance contract award notice — is not intended to be used as screening tool. That it appears to have been used is ironic (as it circumvents accountability controls), inappropriate and a clear indication of the RCMP culture. We will also request how the RCMP determined that this company was the only one capable of effecting permanent change.

It appears that the RCMP has learned nothing since 2007. They are not ensuring those who already do good work and who want to speak out have the opportunity to do so without reprisals.

Instead, they appear to be sending three of the executives who have behaviour problems for corrective measures. If they have already identified three executives with a problem, one wonders how many others are there.

ALLAN CUTLER, Ottawa President, Canadians for Accountability

No one should suffer a slow painful death

At the age of 30, I had the difficult experience of watching my wife die a slow painful death from cancer.

Despite the best palliative care for her last few weeks, no medication could ease her pain and discomfort. At that moment, I became convinced that Canada needs assisted suicide and euthanasia legislation because no human being, and no family member, should have to needlessly suffer or witness this suffering. In the end of life, every human being should have a right to die with dignity.

Opponents to legislation have lost sight that "being alive" and "living" are two different things.

My wife was alive in a clinical sense. Her heart was beating and she was breathing. However, she had ceased to "live." She would no longer be able to take any pleasure in life and would never interact

with her loved ones in a meaningful way. Who gains by having this situation persist?

Why would someone be opposed to assisted suicide legislation?

I can only conclude that they've been lucky enough not to experience what I have or are willing to put their own religious and moral ideals above the interminable suffering of others. Death with dignity should be an individual choice, a choice made by a terminally ill person, their family and their health-care provider. The choice should not belong to ideologically-driven religious zealots and the politicians who need their votes.

It's time to pass MP Francine Lalonde's private member's bill, and it's time to end needless suffering.

CHRIS M. BEAUCHAMP, Ottawa

Cancelling rail plan became very costly to us

Re: Light-rail settlement to cost \$36.7M, Sept. 10.

This payout to Siemens and other contractors is an irresponsible, senseless, and unwarranted public expense.

How could the mayor and councillors throw away our hard-earned money that we give in taxes to the City of Ottawa every year?

Having lived in the Ottawa area for the last 40 years, I never have felt such disgust for a decision made as the one council members did in cancelling the north-south light-rail project.

No matter where in the city

the light rail service is to go, Ottawa needs this new public transportation system. All over the city, our roads are overloaded with commuter traffic. Cancelling the original rail plan was a very foolish decision.

And now the whole city pays with congested roads, and no money in the city's coffers to pay for other necessities.

What a sad state Ottawa is in.

How ridiculous are our mayor and council.

SHEILA MINOGUE-CALVER, Navan

WRITE TO US letters@thecitizen.canwest.com

We welcome Letters to the Editor, which must be exclusive to The Ottawa Citizen. For purposes of verification, please include your home address and home and business telephone numbers. Due to space limitations, letters of 300 words or less are preferred. We reserve the right to edit, condense or reject submissions.

Mail: Letters to the Editor, Ottawa Citizen, 1101 Baxter Rd., Ottawa, Ont. K2C 3M4

Fax: 613-726-5858

Citizen Online: ottawacitizen.com

Letters Editor: Kurt Johnson, 613-596-3785