

## Mayors and Councillors: the political commitment

Maude-Emmanuelle Lambert

One cannot speak of the Municipality's history without mentioning the people who contributed to its development through their political commitment. Several Councillors and mayors stood out throughout the Municipality's history: they have provided essential infrastructures, contributed to its economic development and to the implementation of sports and recreational activities. Some of them served their fellow-citizens for several years, even decades.

### A few prominent figures

The development of the village of Quyon is closely linked to the name John Egan. The first MP of Pontiac County, Egan established a saw mill on the Quyon River in 1846 (he had already built another facility of this type in 1840 at Pontiac Village, which was possibly the largest facility of its kind along the Ottawa River), in the heart of the village bearing the same name, where Dowd Mill is actually located on Egan Street<sup>1</sup>. Several families have settled around this establishment, and the small village of Quyon took shape. Egan also gave land to various religious denominations to build Churches in the Onslow Township and in Quyon. However, in 1857, while he is barely 46 years of age, the businessman dies prematurely, victim of the cholera epidemic that hit Quebec City, where Parliament seated at the time.

His assistant Walton Smith, also in the timber trade, was also a citizen who was very committed to the village's development. From 1860 to 1865, and again from 1873 to 1875, Smith was Mayor of Onslow. In 1875, when the municipality of the village of Quyon was created, he became the first mayor and held the position until 1878. In 1860, he also had the large three-story pine house built, located at 1020 Clarendon Street, which is also known as the Mohr house. Smith was also postmaster for 26 years.

Philemon Wright's nephew, Joseph Wyman Jr. settles with his wife Sally Olmstead on lots 3 and 4 of the 4<sup>th</sup> Concession in the Onslow Township (223 Clarendon Street) around 1835. He founded a hamlet that he named Woburn, in honor of the town in Massachusetts where he was originally from. The hamlet is then known under the name Billerica, but in 1956, the name is officially changed from Wyman (name that had been used since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but was recognized later by the Quebec Geography Commission). Wyman played an important role in the region's communications history. As of the 1840s, he was in charge of transporting the mail between Aylmer and Portage-du-Fort. His mill provided timber for the

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard M. Reid, « [Egan, John](#) », *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.

construction of buildings to house the kitchen and dormitory for the men who worked on the site of the Georgienne Bay Canal (1854-57) to the village of Pontiac. Councillor in Onslow over the course of several years, he would also become its Mayor in 1877.

Son of Captain Donald Charles McLean, former employee of the Hudson's Bay Company (H.B.C.), who became famous for having travelled the distance from Montreal to Hudson Bay by snowshoe, Hector M. McLean was Mayor of Eardley for 17 years and Prefect of the Ottawa County for 5 years (Eardley had long been in the Ottawa County). He would also be Mayor of the village of Quyon from 1889 to 1891. He was the owner of the old Egan Mill (which previously belonged to Walton Smith) from 1886, which he then sold in 1897 to the Dowd Milling Company.

John James Muldoon, resident in the Beechgrove hamlet, considered as the heaviest man in Canada at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (weighing in at 461 pounds), also served as Councillor in South Onslow for several years (including 1895-1897) and was also postmaster.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, North Onslow experienced a few turbulent or unstable years. Between 1897 and 1904, for reasons unknown, Patrick Farrell and William Mooney exchange the position of Mayor at least three times. This municipality became more stable in January 1906 when Patrick O'Reilly was elected, and remained in the position until 1925. He was, incidentally, the longest serving Mayor in North Onslow, with a total of 19 years. Second to him was Andrew Daley with 14 years of service, from 1937 to 1951<sup>2</sup>.

Certain Councillors have also served for long periods of time. Bernard Armitage participated in the creation of the Municipality of Pontiac, representing North Onslow for 30 years<sup>3</sup>. Leo Gibbons for his part, who sat on the Quyon Municipal Council from 1965 to 1975, returned to politics at the end of the 1980s as Councillor for Quyon within the new municipality<sup>4</sup>. President of the Quyon Agricultural Society, Kenneth Bronson served during 35 years as Mayor (1961-1975) and as Councillor for South Onslow, and the Municipality of Pontiac.

Another key figure with civic commitment is undoubtedly S. Wyman Mackechnie. Actively involved with the Quyon Agricultural Society and the Quyon Milk and Cheese Coop, this Ayrshire dairy farmer received the Medal of Agricultural Merit in 1953<sup>5</sup>. Mayor of South Onslow from 1941 to 1951, he was first a Councillor in the 1930s. In his book largely autobiographical, *Weathering the Thirties* (1982), he explains how he came into municipal politics when certain of his fellow citizens asked him to run for office at the time when negotiations between the

<sup>2</sup> « North Onslow Mayors from 1855 to 1970 », *The Equity*, August 20, 1970.

<sup>3</sup> « Award for 30 years on council », *The Equity*, July 6, 1983.

<sup>4</sup> Denise Belec, « Gibbons wins close race », *The Equity*, August 24, 1988.

<sup>5</sup> « [1953 Winner, Mackechnie](#) », in the exhibit *One hundred years of agricultural merit*, St-Ephrem Museum.

Municipality of South Onslow and Hydro-Ontario began for fixed payments over 20 years (\$300,000), a sum deemed well below the value of the facilities.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, in the Eardley sector, the Lusk family played a predominant role on the Municipal Council. At least two of them, Isaac Lusk and Jos F. Lusk served on the Municipal Council.

### **Characteristics of municipal representation**

Generally, pioneering families (Wyman, Mohr, Merrifield, Lusk, Mulligan, etc.) whose names are found in the local toponymy, have all had, at one time or another, a Mayor or a Councillor in the four municipalities that form the Municipality of Pontiac today. Furthermore, in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, as in most rural municipalities in Quebec, politics, to a great extent is controlled by merchants (Smith, Lough, Mohr) and the few members of liberal professions (Dr. Ashely in Quyon). At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the improvement of farming techniques and the orientation towards milk and cheese production resulted in the development of several successful farms. These producers (including the Mackechnies, the Kennedys and the Bronsons, to name a few), would play an increasingly important role within municipal councils, reflecting the transformation of economic activities that were present within the municipality and confirming the long decline of the forest industry.

Although today, close to 50% of the population in the Municipality of Pontiac is francophone, they have largely been absent as elected representatives in the west part of the municipality in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In their history, neither South Onslow nor North Onslow or Quyon have had a French-speaking mayor. On the other hand, to the east of the Municipality, in Eardley, a few francophones served on the Municipal Council in the 1970s (Albert Tremblay, Ephrem Martial and Marcel Lavigne). The first French-speaking Mayor of the Municipality of Pontiac is Marcel Lavigne, elected in 1979.

As everywhere else in Quebec, the women were late in entering municipal politics. Although, Quebec is the first Canadian province to grant women the right to vote (1940), the first woman elected to be in charge of a municipality is Elsie Gibbons from Portage-du-Fort in 1953. If no woman seemingly served on a council before then, one must not however conclude that they did not influence municipal politics.

---

<sup>6</sup> See this subject under chapter « The Councillor », *Weathering the Thirties* (Shawville, Dickson, 1982), p. 71-81. Finally, Mackechnie mentions that the new mayor « was (...) determined in his demand for an assessment of one million dollars on the company property. In this he was supported by five councillors. The other said little or nothing either way. Finally the company agreed on the condition that he municipality lower its rate from ten mills on the dollar to six. With the company's valuation as a base, this was possible and the council agreed. In fact the board had planned to move in that direction all along as more total revenue would be received thus removing considerable load from the local taxpayers. Thus went into history one of the few cases of substantial tax reduction to be found in municipal records anywhere. », p. 80.

The Mayors' spouses have undoubtedly played an important role within the framework of their husbands' mandate, if not only to draw attention to various issues. Many of them however, were very involved in their community. A few of them were President of various subsidiaries of the Women's Institutes, such as Mrs. S. Wyman Mackechnie, Mrs. J. Fred Lusk, Mrs. Russell Taber and Muriel Bronson whose spouses are Mayor or Councillor. In the 1950s in Quyon, there was a Secretary-treasurer (non-elected), Velan Cooney Browlee under William Burke's administration (1959-1975). Joan Brady held this position at the time the Municipality of Pontiac was newly created in 1975, and it is mentioned that in 1978, two employees of the municipality, Mary Ann Glazer and Idena Fraser acted as President and Secretary of elections<sup>7</sup>.

In Pontiac in the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s (at least until 1995), H  l  ne B  lisle was a Councillor under Marcel Lavigne's and Edward McCann's administration. In 1998, Denise Th  riault-Levasseur is elected as Councillor at the time when Bruce Campbell was elected mayor<sup>8</sup>. Near the end of the 2000s, the feminine representation had slightly increased, with the presence of Lynn Beaton (2009-2013), In  s Pontiroli (2009-) and Nancy Draper-Maxsom (2013-) as Councillors<sup>9</sup>.

### **The Prefects**

Finally, a few mayors from the Municipality of Pontiac's territory have also been Prefect of the Pontiac County (known today as the Pontiac RCM). They include Walton Smith (Onslow, and the village of Quyon) from 1872 to 1879, Patrick O'Reilly (Onslow, northern part) from 1921 to 1924, Herbert Young (Onslow South) from 1932 to 1933, P. H McCann (Quyon) from 1933 to 1935, S. Wyman MacKechnie (Onslow, southern part) from 1947 to 1949 and William Burke (Quyon) from 1961 to 1971. Hector M. McLean, Mayor of Eardley and of Quyon, was Prefect of the Ottawa County.

### **The Municipal Council in 2015**

The 2015, the Municipal Council is comprised of Roger Larose (Mayor), Nancy Draper-Maxsom (district 1), Thomas Howard (district 3), In  s Pontiroli (district 4), Brian Middlemiss (district 5) and Dr. Jean Amyotte (district 6).

---

<sup>7</sup> « Election statistics in the Municipality of Pontiac », *The Equity*, January 11, 1978.

<sup>8</sup> Fred Ryan, « Upset in Pontiac election », *Quebec Post*, November 6, 1998.

<sup>9</sup> See [Archives des r  sultats des   lections municipales](#) (since 2001), MAMROT.

### Mayors of the Municipality of Pontiac (since 1975)

Name	Election (mandate)
William Burke	1975-1979
Marcel Lavigne	1979-1990
Edward McCann	1990-1994
Marcel Lavigne	1994-1998
Bruce Campbell	1998-2005
Edward McCann	2005-2013
Roger Larose	2013-2017

### Appendix 1. The Mayors on the territory of the Municipality of Pontiac

#### Onslow and the northern section of Onslow, as of 1878<sup>10</sup>

Name	Election (mandate)
John Beahan (Behan)	July 25, 1855
Walton Smith	January 23, 1860 (1860-1865)
Andrew Bolger	January 20, 1866 (1866-1869)
William Lough (Logue)	January 17, 1869 (1870-1873)
Walton Smith	January 15, 1872 (1872-1875)
Patrick A. Farrell	January 25, 1875 (1875-1877)
Daniel Beahan (Behan)	February 5, 1877 (1877-1878)
Robert McKinney (Onslow, northern section)	March 4, 1878 (1878-1885)
Patrick Farrell	January 12, 1885 (1885-1887)
William Mooney	1887 (1887-1889)
Nicholas Morrissey	1890 (1890-1894)
Robert McKinney	1894 (1894-1896)

<sup>10</sup> « North Onslow Mayors from 1855 to 1970 », *The Equity*, August 20, 1970.

William Mooney	January 11, 1897 (1897-1902)
Patrick Farrell	March 2, 1902
William Mooney	January 18, 1903
Patrick Farrell	March 2, 1903
Nicholas Morrisey	March 7, 1904 (1904-1905)
Patrick O'Reilly	1906 (1906-1924)
John James O'Donnell	1925 (1925-1929)
Patrick J. Dolan	April 2, 1929 (1929-1937)
Andrew Daley	March 1, 1937 (1937-1951)
James McGoff	May 7, 1951 (1951-1953)
Daniel Farrell	January 21, 1953 (1953-1957)
Harry Foran	October 22, 1957 (1957-1962)
Everett Steele	October 12, 1962 (1962-1969)
Sherwood Henderson	February 6, 1969 (1969-1975)
Bernard Armitage	1975

#### **South Onslow, separated from Onslow in 1876**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Election (mandate)</b>
Hugh Mulligan	1876
Joseph Wyman	1877
Thomas Sally	1878
Hugh Mulligan	1879-1891
Dennis Kennedy	1891-1901
W. W. MacKechnie	1900-1902
Richard Sally	1902-1904
W. W. MacKechnie	1904-1906
Dennis Kennedy	1906-1913
John Hickey	1913
Alex Erwin	1914
Dennis Kennedy	1915
Courtney Charles Hutchison	1916
William Burden	1916-1920
Herbie Young	1920-1923
Courtney Charles Hutchison	1923-1927
Herbie Young	1927-1933
Ambrose Kennedy	1933-1941

S. Wyman MacKechnie	1941-1951
Austin Clarke	1951-1952
John McBane	1952-1961
Kenneth Bronson	1961-1975

### **Village of Quyon (Quio Village), seperated from Onslow in 1875**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Year of election (mandate)</b>
Walton Smith	1875-1878
William Lough (Logue)	1878-1880
Joseph Amm	1880-1882
Dr. F. D. Astley	1883
Joseph Amm	1883-1889
Hector M. McLean	1889-1891
J. P. O'Donnell	1891-1893
W. H. Meredith	1893-1903
William Regan	1903-1904
George T. Mohr	1904-1906
William-F. Harrison	1906
Geo. Guthrie	1907
James Moyle	1907-1911
Fred A. Davis	1911-1923
Dr. R. S. Dowd	1923-1928
P. H. McCann	1929
J. P. Daley	1942
Fred R. Hutchison	1947
Basil Stanton	1949
J. P. Daley	1953
C. Russell Taber	1955
William Burke	1959-1975

### **Eardley (partial list of mayors and councillors)**

<b>Name</b>
Hector M. McLean
Meredith Caldwell
Isaac Lusk

David A. Dowd
Abraham J. Payne
Emanuel R. Faris
G. Kenneth Campbell
Jos. F. Lusk
Ira Merrifield
Hewitt H. Bell
Athanase Chamberland
Clifford Bradley
Albert Tremblay
Ephrem Martial
Marcel Lavigne

### Sources for list of mayors

[Archives of municipal elections results](#) (since 2001), MAMROT.

[Directory of municipal elected representatives in the Outaouais from 1845-1975](#), Regional Centre of the Outaouais Archives

Janko Pavsic, [Padrem Québec](#) (prosopography of Executive Directors and Directory of municipal entities in Quebec).

*Souvenir of Centennial. Quyon, South and North Onslow* (1975).