

Hello again. I hope things are going well.

I'd like to start with a tribute to a very special lady who died last week at the age of 95.

Her name was Annie Welsh but she was known to the world as "Ash Pan Annie" because of her remarkable story.

Annie was a toddler when the Halifax Explosion occurred in December, 1917. The blast destroyed her home and took the lives of her mother and four-year-old brother. Annie was blown into the family stove where the warm ashes protected her against the blizzard which swept the city shortly afterwards. She was found alive, a day later.

I encountered Annie several times at the annual services commemorating the Explosion and I was always impressed by her great zest for life.

You will be greatly missed, Annie.

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I went to see an interesting movie the other evening.

It was a documentary titled Mint State and it was made by two creative talents from HRM, Lawrence Curry and Zac Barkhouse, who's the son of District 8 Councillor, Jackie Barkhouse.

The movie looked at the history of money by telling the story of a rather special man from Sydney Mines named Rev. Dr. Bernard O'Connor.

Dr. O'Connor is a Catholic priest who has served his church in various capacities in different countries and now lives in Rome.

He collected medals, rare banknotes and coins for 45 years and then, two years ago, auctioned everything for more than \$500,000 in order to set up an educational fund so that others might study numismatics, his passion for so many years.

The film is an imaginative look at the history, culture and politics of coins.

Congratulations to you both, Zac and Lawrence.

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Statistics are very useful tools but, in my opinion, they should always be considered in the appropriate context before drawing conclusions from them.

There was a good example of this the other day when Statistics Canada released its national crime figures for 2009.

On the surface, some of the findings seemed to suggest HRM's metropolitan area was faring worse than other major centres across the country, particularly in respect to violent crime and the number of homicides last year.

However, let's consider the context.

First, homicides aren't necessarily random acts. Typically, they involve people who know each other and the same is true when it comes to attempted homicides.

Second, our *overall* crime rate has decreased by almost a third in the last five years.

That's no coincidence; that's thanks to good police work and an increasingly involved public as we implement the various recommendations from the mayor's Round Table on Violence.

And third, a new survey has found that roughly 9 out of 10 of you have faith in our police and feel perfectly safe living in HRM.

As I said earlier, context is everything.

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And finally, on a personal note, it's almost time for me to honour a public commitment I made earlier this year to run in next Monday's 104th Dartmouth Natal Day Road Races.

I committed to the 10-km run and I've been training religiously for ages. (Well, for several weeks anyway.) No, seriously, after my last effort in the recent Bluenose Marathon, I hope I know what I'm doing this time!

This is going to be a busy Natal Day Weekend for me because, as well as the run, this is also tea-party time. Please consider this my personal invitation to join me and members of Regional Council for tea on Sunday between 2 and 5 p.m. in the Public Gardens and in Dartmouth on Monday, from 1-3 p.m. at Sullivan's Pond. (Pre-supposing I've actually *finished* the 10-km run – not to mention the 5.4-km parade - by then!)

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