

A call to (link) arms

The message of President Clinton during his recent speaking engagement in St. John's got me thinking about interdependence and what that means to this city. Specifically, his idea of communitarianism got my creative juices going to try to apply this ideal to the continued betterment of our home.

For starters, let's take a closer look at what communitarianism is. It is a way of looking at the world that neither focuses on the individual nor ignores each of us as unique people. What it does is emphasize the need to balance individual rights and interests with the needs and interests of the community as a whole. This isn't necessarily a concept we see very often. Really ask yourself how much you know about the personal lives of celebrities and how much you know about the consultations on the North East Avalon Regional Plan. And then ask yourself which one impacts your life more directly.

Beyond the balance of individual and community, the idea of communitarianism takes an active interest in how individuals are shaped by their community. Many times our values as individuals reflect those held by the people we live next to and around the corner from. Perhaps President Clinton, who focuses on how we do things, would ask 'how do we make sure the community values are the ones we want?'

We have values as a community. We value our deep roots and connection to this place, as evidenced by the emphasis we have on friends, family and neighbourhoods. We value charity, as evidenced by the high per capita rate of donations and the coming together when tragedy strikes. We value humour and socializing, as evidenced by our ability to laugh at ourselves and to join together to celebrate our many achievements.

So in this geographical area that we share, what else do we value and how can we work together to show that we value it? Those are tough questions, but the next few are pretty easy. Why do we work together and focus on community values – because it helps us now and we have that responsibility to our children. What do we do – we talk about common goals and put them ahead of our differences. Who does it – people in this community from all walks of life because everyone has something to contribute, a reason to contribute, and a need and responsibility to contribute. So let's figure out how we all, to the last person, get involved to build more parks and playgrounds, how to cover more land during clean-ups, and how to fill food banks and the coffers of worthy causes.

'How' is a pretty big question and a pretty tough one. It's one that the St. John's Board of Trade constantly asks itself and works towards. How can I as the Chair of the Board of Trade marshal resources to enrich this community? How can you become involved?

It's not often I am asked as Chair of the Board of Trade to make a direct call to action. More often than not, I am asked to respond to issues and articulate the position of business on the hot topics of the day. Now is my chance to put aside the urgent for the important. That's often a different way of looking at the world.

Take a look back at the title of this column and think for a few moments about the difference the word in brackets means. That one word, 'link', represents a singular concept that changes the entire tone of what's to come from adversarial to accommodating. Let us link arms to make ours a community of singular vision and ensure that the northeast Avalon is a better place to live.

'How' is not a destination, not by a long shot. It's a journey. But it's a journey of the many, not the few. It's time to take that journey.