

Watson honours 15 with inaugural Order of Ottawa

By TONY LOFARO, Ottawa Citizen November 15, 2012

OTTAWA — Fifteen prominent residents were inducted into the new Order of Ottawa, including transplant recipient H  l  ne Campbell, Ottawa Mission director Diane Morrison, former mayor Jim Durrell and businessman Moe Atallah, the city announced Thursday.

Former Citizen publisher Russell Mills, airport boss Paul Benoit, francophone activist Gis  le Richer and community builder Sara Vered are among some of the other recipients. Citizen sportswriter Don Campbell will receive the Brian Kilrea Award. A formal induction will be held at city hall on Nov. 22.

“The Order of Ottawa enables us to recognize outstanding residents and meritorious service within our city,” said Mayor Jim Watson in a news release. “These remarkable individuals have made a difference to countless people in our community, and make our city the special place it is.”

Diane Morrison, executive director of the Ottawa Mission, said she was “surprised” when Watson called her about a week ago to tell her the news.

Morrison is stepping down from her job next spring after 21 years at the helm.

“I can’t believe the changes that have happened at the mission. It is three times the size, and we’ve made so many changes to the building and programs here. It’s been an amazing journey with a lot of support from the community,” said Morrison, 68.

She said she is proud of many accomplishments, but particularly the hospice at the mission.

“People were dying on the streets, dying in our beds and in rooming houses, and that doesn’t happen much any more. We have a hospice for the homeless here with 14 beds, and we have women and men that come in. Some of the women really touched my heart because they’ve said, ‘This is the nicest place I’ve ever lived in’. It’s kind of a sad statement but it says something about the dignity they’re allowed to have here.”

Morrison said she’s not sure what she’ll do after retirement but will certainly “give back to the community.”

Former mayor Jim Durrell said he was delighted to be part of the inaugural awards.

“I feel very honoured because I’ve worked very hard in this city and I did so because I believe in the people of this city and I believe in the city itself,” said Durrell, who was mayor from 1985 to 1991.

“The city has been extremely good to me and my family and I’ve tried to give back, so the award is very much appreciated,” he said.

Durrell said he was proud of his accomplishments, especially his part in helping to bring the Ottawa Senators to town.

“It has created thousands of jobs and countless millions of dollars in economic impact, and it’s had a very positive effect on the city,” he said.

Citizen sportswriter Don Campbell said he’s honoured to be mentioned in the same company as Ottawa hockey legend Brian Kilrea.

“It’s a honour to receive an award from someone who you look upon as your coaching idol,” said Campbell, 53, who covers the Ottawa 67s.

“The award itself is really nice, but with Brian’s name on it gives it an extra special meaning. Over the years covering the 67s, and being on the road and being on the bus you learn so much about how he respected his players, how he treated them and put them first,” said Campbell, a Citizen reporter for 28 years.

He said in hockey circles, Kilrea was the “coaching standard.”

The other recipients include: Allison Fisher, executive director of the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, Robert Gillett, former president of Algonquin College, Marc Jolicoeur, regional managing partner of law firm Borden Ladner Gervais LLP, retired engineer Terry Kelly, Nazira Naz Tareen, founder and former longtime president of the Ottawa Muslim Women’s Organization, and Christine Tremblay, founder and executive of the AOE Arts Council.