

The plebiscites of Regina's 1985 civic election

I never vote for anyone; I always vote against
W.C. Fields (1880-1946)

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Abstract: The Regina civic election of 1985 was unusual insofar as it included three plebiscites. Electors were asked to vote on proposals to fluoridate the municipal water supply, and to sell light beer at Taylor Field and low alcoholic beverages at Exhibition Park. Results of the plebiscites indicated clear rejection of each proposal. Nevertheless, rejection was unevenly expressed across the city and some neighbourhoods voted in favour of the proposals. Generally, votes for and against the proposals contrasted inner city with suburban areas and northern suburbs with southern suburbs. This paper explores the background to the plebiscites, interprets the voting patterns associated with each and comments on their outcome in the longer-term.

Introduction

Canada is a federal state in which political power is shared by the national and provincial governments. A third level of government, namely that of civic or municipal administration also exists but remains relatively neglected as a field of academic study. Such neglect is surprising in view of the impact and immediacy of municipal decision-making on the lives of citizens (Sancton 2000). In Regina, studies of civic governance have been mostly confined to ones defining the city's electoral history and comparing the merits of alternative electoral systems (de Vlioger 1980; Brennan 1989). Studies by geographers or with predominantly geographical themes are not found. Consequently, the city's electoral geography remains largely unexplored. In addressing this topic, the following discussion focuses on the background to and outcome of three plebiscites conducted as part of Regina's 1985 civic election. These plebiscites are selected for review for

two reasons. First they focus on selected issues in public health and safety and, second, they were conducted at the same moment in time and thus the ‘mood of the electorate’ can be viewed as neutral when drawing comparisons between the plebiscites.

The Plebiscites

In 1985, Regina’s electorate was asked to vote on two bylaws and one question. Bylaw 8034 proposed fluoridation of Regina’s municipal water supply. If the majority of voters voted in favour of the Bylaw, City Council would proceed with final passage of the same within four weeks of the election. A second bylaw, Bylaw 8081, sought approval for the City to apply for a license to sell light beer at Canadian Football League (CFL) games at Taylor Field, home of the Saskatchewan Roughrider Football Club. In this case the result of the plebiscite would not be binding. Instead, if the majority of voters voted in favour of the Bylaw, City Council could choose to pass the Bylaw at its discretion. The third proposal was presented as a question rather than a bylaw, but it also concerned the sale of alcohol and was similarly framed. It asked electors whether they were in favour of the sale of low alcoholic beverages at Exhibition Park during sporting events attended primarily by adults. Again, a vote in favour of the question would not be binding on City Council.

Data and methods:

The background to the plebiscites was established through a search of City Council records for 1985 and from examination of feature articles, editorials and letters to the editor appearing in *The Leader Post* in the one month preceding and one week following the election. On Election Day, October 23 1985, polling took place in 113 polls spaced across ten wards and in 26 special polls located in hospitals, care facilities and retirement homes. In addition, the votes from an advance poll were allocated at the ward level. Approximately 50% of 113,721 persons on the voter list recorded eligible votes. Results of polling were obtained from City of Regina Archives and are summarized in Table 1. A base map showing poll boundaries was provided by the same source. This was digitized and used in presenting poll-by-poll results for each plebiscite. The following interpretation of the plebiscites and their long-term outcome is guided by informal interviews conducted with city councillors, primary stakeholders and leaders of advocacy groups associated with the plebiscites where these could be identified. The discussion is necessarily speculative in places. Privacy of the ballot box plus the absence of exit polls and the records of formal

Table 1: Results of plebiscites by poll type.

Poll type	Number and proportion of votes cast for and against					
	Fluoridation of the municipal water supply (Bylaw 8034)		Sale of light beer at Taylor Field (Bylaw 8081)		Sale of low alcoholic beverages at Exhibition Park	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Advance	583 (48.5%)	619 (51.5%)	390 (32.8%)	798 (67.2%)	415 (34.2%)	799 (65.8%)
Special	490 (32.6%)	1,012 (67.4%)	288 (20.7%)	1,104 (79.3%)	353 (21.7%)	1,270 (78.3%)
Election day	24,558 (45.1%)	29,895 (54.9%)	21,526 (40.3%)	31,881 (59.7%)	22,155 (40.2%)	32,918 (59.8%)
Total	25,631 (44.8%)	31,526 (55.2%)	22,204 (39.7%)	33,783 (60.3%)	22,923 (39.6%)	34,987 (60.4%)

Source: City of Regina Archives

political parties makes questions pertaining to voting behaviour difficult, if not impossible, to answer with complete certainty.

Fluoridation of the Water Supply

Great controversy surrounds the issue of fluoridation of public water supplies. Proponents of fluoridation point to its beneficial effects on dental health, and especially on the dental health of children (Health Canada 2002). They argue that community fluoridation is safe, inexpensive, practical and effective. In Canada, endorsement of this view is expressed by the Canadian Public Health Association, the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Dental Association, and in Saskatchewan, by Saskatchewan Health (SaskHealth 2003). Opponents of fluoridation point to its association with a long list of health risks including dental fluorosis, skeletal fluorosis, thyroid problems, immune disorders, heart disease, various cancers and infertility (Groves 2001). In addition, some opponents argue that fluoridation is undemocratic and violates basic human rights and specifically the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Graham and Morin 1999; Millership 2001). The purpose of the current discussion is not to pronounce

on the relative merits of these arguments, but rather to describe the context of the 1985 plebiscite and to interpret the voting patterns it produced.

The 1985 plebiscite was not the first time Regina residents had been asked to vote on fluoridation. In 1954, a plebiscite on fluoridation was defeated quite decisively with 59.6% of voters voting against the proposal. Despite this, a similar question was put before the electorate in 1958. This time the margin between those voting 'no' (51.3%) and 'yes' (48.7%) was quite narrow. The closeness of this vote provided support for a further plebiscite in 1965. This too was defeated with 57.9% of voters voting against the proposal. In April 1985, Regina Citizens for Fluoridation (RCFF) presented a petition to City Council requesting that a bylaw be submitted to electors. As the petition contained 6,825 valid signatures it fulfilled the 5% requirement of the Urban Municipality Act and was accepted by Council in anticipation of a plebiscite being included in the October election (Regina City Council 1985a).¹

Introduction of the petition caused heated debate. First, the Pure Water Association of Canada (PWAC) and the Regina Council of Women (RCW) objected to what they considered was obscure and misleading wording of the proposed bylaw (Regina City Council 1985b, 1985c, 1985d). Specifically, the bylaw proposed:

That the fluoride ion content of water supplied to the residents of Regina by the Corporation of the City of Regina shall be adjusted to a level between 0.8 mg/l (milligrams per litre) and 1.2 mg/l (milligrams per litre).

Objection focused on the word 'adjusted' when in reality an 'increase' was being proposed, and on the use of metric units and scientific terminology. Still greater controversy attended City Council's decision to grant \$28,451 to the City's Health and Public Affairs Departments to provide the public with 'information and education about fluoridation.' The PWAC, RCW and others claimed that the 'information' provided by the Departments was biased in that it presented only arguments in favour of fluoridation (Regina City Council 1985c, 1985d). Amidst accusations of misspending of public funds and undemocratic behaviour they called for a balanced presentation of the arguments and/or financial support for groups opposing fluoridation. In reply, the City's Board of Health and Social Planning argued that no funds would be used to "support any citizens group, pro or anti" and recommended to City Council that the public education program should proceed (Regina City Council 1985e). Undaunted, the PWAC asked City Council to rescind the motion granting funds to the Health and Public Affairs Departments, and should it fail to

do this, that it grant the PWAC a similar amount (Regina City Council 1985f).² Set against this highly charged background Regina's daily newspaper, *The Leader Post*, urged voters to settle the issue (*The Leader Post* 1985a). However, in a clear attempt to steer public opinion in favour of a 'yes' vote, the newspaper charged opponents of fluoridation with resorting to "scientifically unsubstantiated claims" and engaging in "excessive scaremongering."

In the lead up to the election the RCFF was backed by the Saskatchewan Dental Therapists Association and the Regina Health District. The RCFF mounted an extensive campaign which included information displays in four shopping malls, advertising on four large billboards at locations around the city, the printing and distribution of 60,000 fluoridation facts sheets, several television and radio presentations and an Election Day telephone canvass (Saskatchewan Archives Board no date).³ The PWAC was supported by Mothers Against Fluoridation and Dr. Morris Schumiatcher, Saskatchewan's highest profile lawyer. Among other strategies, the PWAC invited renowned American biochemist Dr. John Yiamouyiannis to address a public meeting at the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History (*The Leader Post* 1985b).⁴ Pro and anti fluoridation supporters conducted a lively debate in the pages of *The Leader Post*. The RCFF ran a series of advertisements inviting the electorate to "Turn on to Fluoride!" and argued that millions of Canadians including the residents of Ottawa, Toronto and 57 Saskatchewan communities drank fluoridated water (*The Leader Post* 1985c). To counter this, the PWAC advised voters that fluoridation was forbidden in many European countries, and was not practiced in many of Canada's largest cities including Calgary, Montreal, Quebec City and Vancouver, or in the overwhelming majority of Saskatchewan communities (*The Leader Post* 1985d).

The two mayoral candidates, Larry Schneider and Henry Baker, aligned themselves with the opposing campaigns. As the incumbent mayor, Schneider gave low-key support to proponents of fluoridation. Baker, who had served as Regina's mayor from 1959-1970 and 1974-1979, was unapologetic in his opposition to fluoridation which he likened to the use of sodium fluoride to kill infestations of rats on farms in the 1930s (*The Leader Post* 1985e). Somewhat ironically, whilst Baker's opposition to fluoridation seemed to strike an accord with much of the electorate, on other issues his campaign had much less appeal and he was defeated decisively in his bid to regain the mayorship.⁵

Results of the plebiscite produced a clear if not overwhelming victory for the anti-fluoridation campaign with the size of the 'no' vote (55.2%) being similar to that recorded in 1965 (*The Leader Post* 1985f). Nevertheless, rejection of the proposal was not expressed evenly across all polls or in all

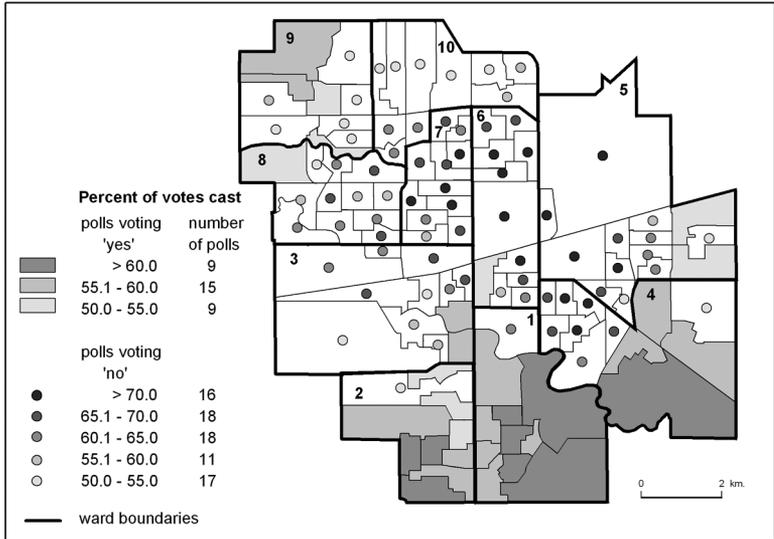


Figure 1: Result of plebiscite on fluoridation of municipal water supply. (Source: City of Regina Archives)

parts of the city. Greatest opposition (67.4%) was registered in the 26 special polls, 17 of which rejected the proposal. In total, the special polls accounted for 2.6% of voter turnout, but 3.2% of the ‘no’ vote. An obvious explanation for this phenomenon is not available. However, as most persons participating in special polls were elderly, it is tempting to attribute the large ‘no’ vote to the wisdom or conservatism that reputedly accompanies age, or to the possibility that dental health is not the most pressing health care priority of elderly persons. Results of the advance poll were more balanced with just over half (51.5%) voting against fluoridation. Presumably the two campaigns were able to muster approximately equal numbers of their most committed supporters. However, on Election Day itself the proposal was rejected by a clear majority (54.9%) of voters.

Despite the overall victory of the ‘no’ vote, fluoridation was rejected by a majority of voters in only 80 of the city’s 113 electoral polls (Figure 1). This feature of the plebiscite reflected the greater spatial concentration of the ‘yes’ vote. On Election Day, half (50.7%) of the ‘yes’ vote was drawn from just 37 (32.7%) of 113 polls. Polls voting ‘yes’ were largely confined to suburban areas of the city and particularly to large parts of Wards 1 and 2 and smaller parts of Wards 4 and 9. Together these four wards accounted for 52.0% of the ‘yes’ vote. By and large voters in the inner city opposed fluoridation. The ‘no’ vote was particularly strong in Wards 6 and 7 where

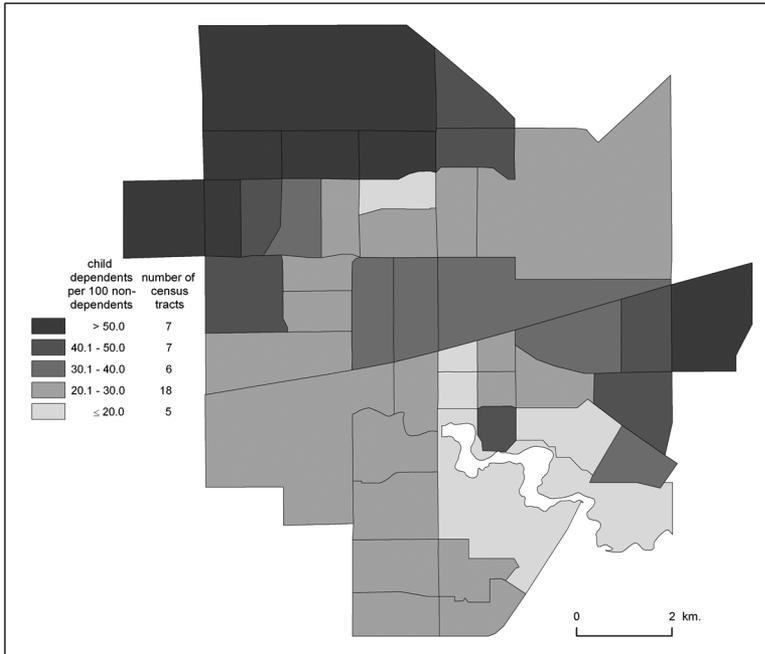


Figure 2: Variation in child dependency ratios, 1986. (Source: Statistics Canada, 1988a)

it exceeded 70% in nine of 22 polls. In the same wards only one poll voted in favour of fluoridation and did so by the narrowest of margins (50.2%).

Three factors are suggested to account for the voting pattern. Of these, the first recognizes that the greatest benefits of fluoridation are reputed to accrue to children. Thus, notwithstanding the initiatives of Mothers Against Fluoridation, it seems reasonable to assume that the strongest 'yes' vote would be registered in areas of the city with large numbers of children, and conversely, that the 'no' vote would peak in areas with relatively few children. However, dependency ratios for children aged 0-14 fail to support this view (Figure 2).⁶ Specifically, areas (census tracts) with high dependency ratios in the northern and eastern suburbs generally opposed or offered weak support for fluoridation whilst areas with lower dependency ratios in the southern suburbs exhibited strong support. At best a weak positive correlation between support for fluoridation and child dependency is suggested. Unfortunately, differences in both the number and geometry of electoral polls (Figure 1) and census tracts (Figure 2) prevent measurement of a correlation statistic.⁷

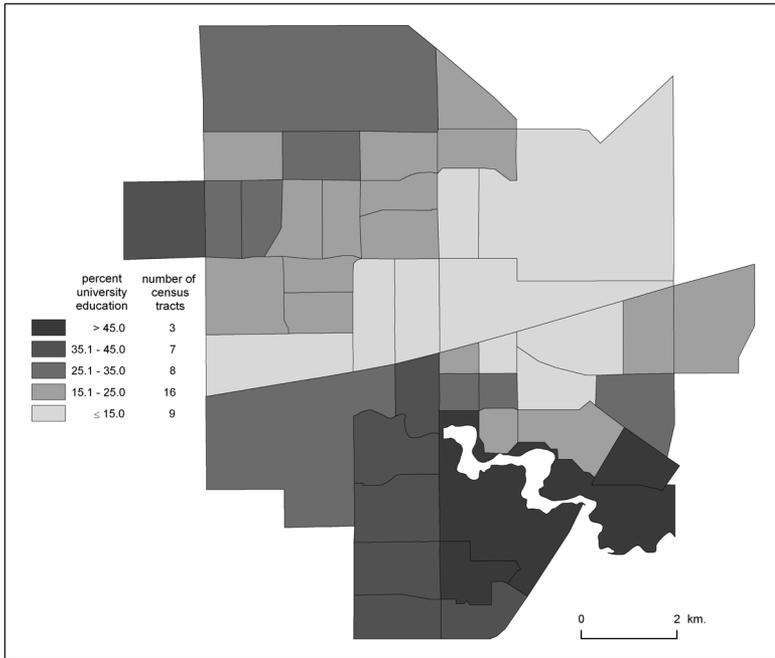


Figure 3: Variation in population 15 years and over with some university level education, 1986. (Source: Statistics Canada, 1988b)

A second explanation of the voting pattern is found in the educational status of Regina’s population. Here the argument is made that the pro-fluoridation campaign drew most of its support from persons with high educational status (Nelson 2004). In 1986, educational status exhibited distinct zonation (Figure 3). High educational status in the suburbs was contrasted with comparatively low educational status in most inner city neighbourhoods. In addition, educational status tended to be slightly higher in southern than in northern suburbs. Comparison of the distributions in Figures 1 and 3 seems to support the claim of pro-fluoridation campaigners. Polls that voted ‘yes’ tend to match with census tracts showing high-educational status, and polls that voted ‘no’ match tracts with low-educational status. Again, a precise statement of the association is not possible as the different geographies of the polls and tracts preclude correlation analysis. Also, some caution is warranted in comparing the distributions. One cannot assume that all of the most educated voters in high-education tracts voted ‘yes’ and, conversely, that all of the least educated voters in low-education tracts voted ‘no.’ Despite

this, the association between voting preferences and educational status seems strong and provides a credible explanation of the voting pattern. At the same time, this explanation is not meant to imply that a vote in favour of fluoridation represented a 'preferred' or 'correct' outcome to the plebiscite.

The third, and perhaps the most intriguing, explanation for the voting pattern is based on the nature of Regina's water supply and distribution system in the 1980s. In 1985, Regina's potable water was derived from two sources: Buffalo Pound, a large lake 55 km west-northwest of the city, supplied most of the city including the southern suburbs; local wells supplied the inner city and some neighbourhoods in the east of the city. Local well water was much harder than water from Buffalo Pound. It contained high levels of iron and manganese and, as drinking water, it was generally less desirable than water from Buffalo Pound where recent upgrading of the treatment plant had eliminated problems of odour and taste. Based on these conditions it is suggested that residents of areas receiving well water might have been less trusting of or willing to accept the addition of another chemical, namely sodium fluoride, to their water, and hence were more likely to vote 'no' (Calam 2005). Of course, the association between water source and voting preference may simply be coincidental.

Long-term outcomes:

Since 1985 the issue of fluoridating Regina's water supply has not returned to the forefront of the political arena. However, the issue has not disappeared completely. Opponents of fluoridation claim success in preventing the question of fluoridation being re-introduced during the 1997 civic election (Bryde 2004). Currently, approximately 50% of Saskatchewan's urban municipalities, including the cities of Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw and Swift Current, fluoridate their water. In 2002, the Regina Urban Environment Advisory Council noted that children in Moose Jaw had a lower incidence of tooth decay than children in Regina, and attributed this difference to fluoridation of Moose Jaw's water supply (RUEAC 2002). Although plebiscites on fluoridation have been defeated four times it is not inconceivable that a fifth plebiscite might be presented at some future date.⁹ Irrespective of the merits of arguments for and against fluoridation, a plebiscite might be justified simply on the grounds that it is already 20 years since the last one. Since 1985 the composition of Regina's electorate has changed considerably as part of wider changes in the city's social geography and demographic structure. Arguably, a decision made

in 1985 should not be binding on a substantially different population in 2005.

Beer Sales at Taylor Field

Taylor Field is located in Regina's North Central neighbourhood on a two-block site approximately 0.5 kilometres northwest of the central business district. It is bounded on the south by extensive areas of open space that are used for parking during sporting events and by the mainline of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). On its remaining sides the Field is surrounded by an area of predominantly low-income single-family dwellings most of which were built before 1930.

In 1985, Taylor Field, unlike the other stadiums in the CFL, was dry... or was at least 'officially' dry. Furtive drinking in the stands was *de rigueur* and unquestionably some fans arrived at games already more fortified to brave the elements than was generally deemed acceptable in a public place. Despite this, or perhaps in order to quell disruptive behaviour stemming from illicit drinking, a proposal to sell beer at Taylor Field was presented by City Council under the terms of the Liquor Licensing Act. Specifically, the Act required that a question be addressed to the electorate in the form of a proposed bylaw.

Approval of the bylaw was unlikely from the start. Early in the election campaign *The Leader Post* carried a feature article alerting readers to the negative aspects of alcohol consumption (*The Leader Post* 1985g). Similarly, the Saskatchewan Safety Council expressed concern over alcohol-related accidents and advised citizens to vote against the proposal (*The Leader Post* 1985h). Even the Roughrider's management were divided on the proposal as they feared approval of the bylaw might alienate some season ticket-holders (*The Leader Post* 1985i). Then on the eve of the election *The Leader Post* expressed the view that the plebiscite had been "introduced to Regina City Council through the back-alley of secrecy – the council legislative committee" and "got its impetus, not from a cross-section of the community asking, but from the desire for an added revenue source" (*The Leader Post* 1985j). Set against this background it is hardly surprising that the proposal was rejected by a margin of three (60.3%) to two (39.7%).

Rejection of the proposal was not evenly expressed. Greatest opposition (79.3%) was registered in the 26 special polls, only one of which (Extencicare Parkside) voted in favour of the proposal. This feature of the plebiscite is somewhat curious insofar as the residents of retirement

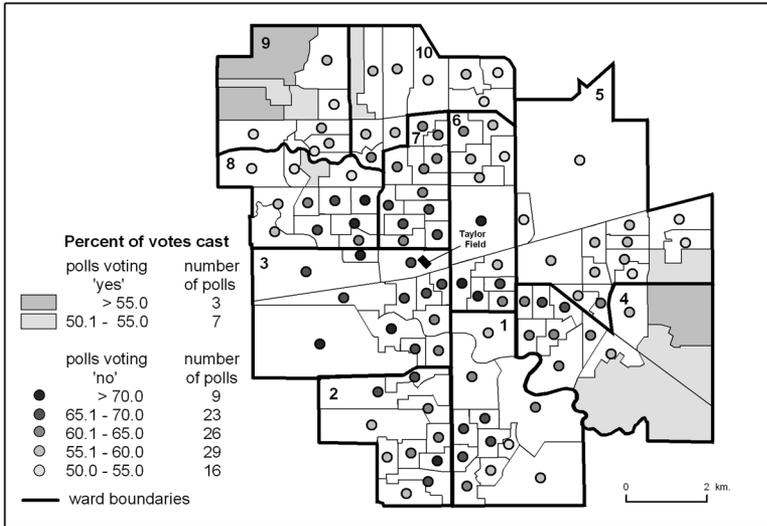


Figure 4: Result of plebiscite on sale of beer at Taylor Field. (Source: City of Regina Archives)

homes and care facilities would be relatively isolated from the any negative consequences stemming from the introduction of beer sales at Taylor Field. The proposal was also rejected by over two-thirds (67.2%) of persons voting in the advance poll. On Election Day itself the proposal was rejected by three out of five (59.7%) voters, and in 103 of the city's 113 electoral polls. Rather predictably, the 'no' vote was generally strongest in inner city polls close or adjacent to Taylor Field (Figure 4). Residents of these polls could expect to be more affected than residents of more distant polls by any anti-social behaviour stemming from the sale of alcohol at Taylor Field. Significantly, the few polls that voted 'yes' were located at great distance from Taylor Field in suburban areas in the northwest and southeast of the city.

Despite the apparent explanation of the voting pattern provided by distance from Taylor Field, an equally satisfactory explanation is provided by differences in household income. In 1985, median household income exhibited distinct zonation in which high income suburbs were contrasted with low-income inner city neighbourhoods (Figure 5). Comparison of Figures 4 and 5 shows that greatest support for beer sales tended to be in high-income neighbourhoods, whilst greatest opposition was frequently associated with low income areas. It is possible that the voting pattern also reflected the distribution of Roughrider season ticket holders. Here it is assumed that, because of their high cost, most season tickets would be

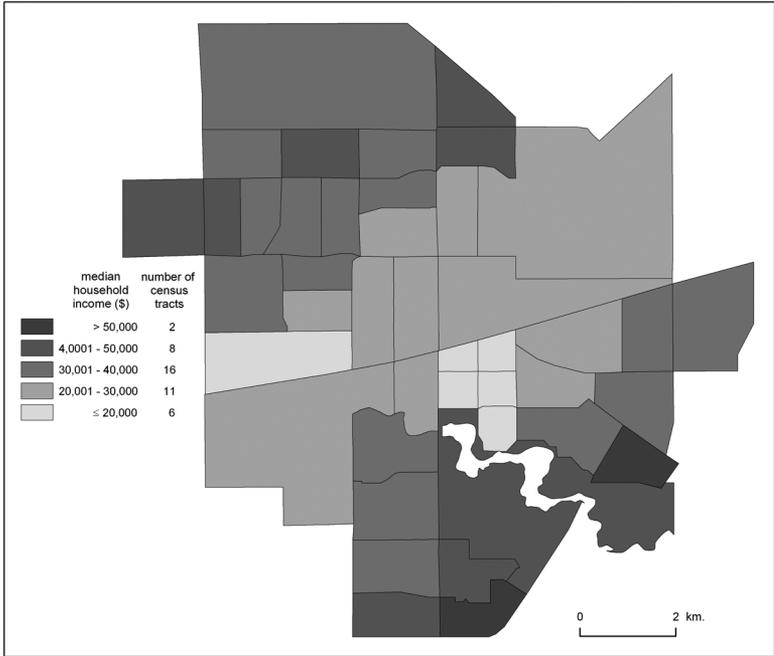


Figure 5: Variation in median household income, 1985. (Source: Statistics Canada, 1988b)

purchased by high-income suburban residents. However, in the absence of data showing the distribution of season ticket holders in 1985 and a retrospective survey to ascertain their then views with respect to alcohol sales, this conclusion must remain speculative.

Alcohol Sales at Exhibition Park

Regina Exhibition Park is located on a 41.3 hectare site four blocks west of Taylor Field. Like Taylor Field its southern boundary is marked by the right-of-way of the CPR mainline. However, except for a three-block area immediately north of the Park, it is otherwise surrounded by non-residential land uses. These include Pasqua Hospital to the northwest of the Park and the Royal United Services Institute Armouries to the northeast. Much of the rambling site is devoted to livestock and exhibition barns, and parking lots. In 1985, a trotting course and stadium (Queensbury Downs) and sports arena (Agridome) were located at the centre of the site.

In September 1985, a delegation from the Regina Exhibition Association approached City Council and requested that a question regarding the sale of low alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, cider) at the Park be included in the forthcoming election (Regina City Council 1985g). The delegation stressed that the primary intent of the proposal was to permit alcohol sales at horse racing events, but asked that legislation be written in such a manner that it would cover other sporting events (e.g., motor racing and rodeo) attended primarily by adults if and when the Association developed these. By their very nature these events would take place at Queensbury Downs. Events at the Agridome, including hockey, were not specifically mentioned in the proposal.

In contrast to the well publicised debate over beers sales at Taylor Field, the proposal to sell low alcoholic beverages at the Park was rarely mentioned in the printed media or at City Council during the lead up to the election (*The Leader Post* 1985k). Rather curiously, voter support for the proposal was not sought by the Association and, although it recognized that alcohol sales might help secure the position of horse racing at the Downs, it had little sense of the potential revenues such sales might generate. Yet despite the low-key introduction and apparently non-controversial nature of the proposal it was firmly rejected at the polls. As with the fluoridation and Taylor Field plebiscites, greatest opposition (78.3%) was registered in the special polls all of which voted against the proposal (Table 1). Almost two-thirds (65.8%) of persons voting in the advance poll also rejected the proposal. On Election Day the proposal was rejected by three out of five (59.8%) voters, and in 104 of the 113 electoral polls. Opposition tended to be greatest in inner city polls adjacent to Exhibition Park and least in suburban areas especially those in the southeast of the city (Figure 6). On a poll-by-poll basis the voting pattern closely resembled that of the Taylor Field plebiscite ($r_s = 0.905$).

In explaining the voting pattern the same distance bias and social (income) status relationships are suggested as proposed for the Taylor Field plebiscite. However, in view of the untroubled manner in which the Exhibition Park proposal was introduced, it is possible that it became inseparable from or confused with the Taylor Field proposal in the minds of the electorate and was rejected simply for being 'guilty by association.' Taken together the outcome of the two plebiscites are surprising in at least one respect. Popular belief views suburban areas as bastions of conservative values where liberalization of laws pertaining to alcohol consumption might be least expected. In 1985, this was not the case in Regina.

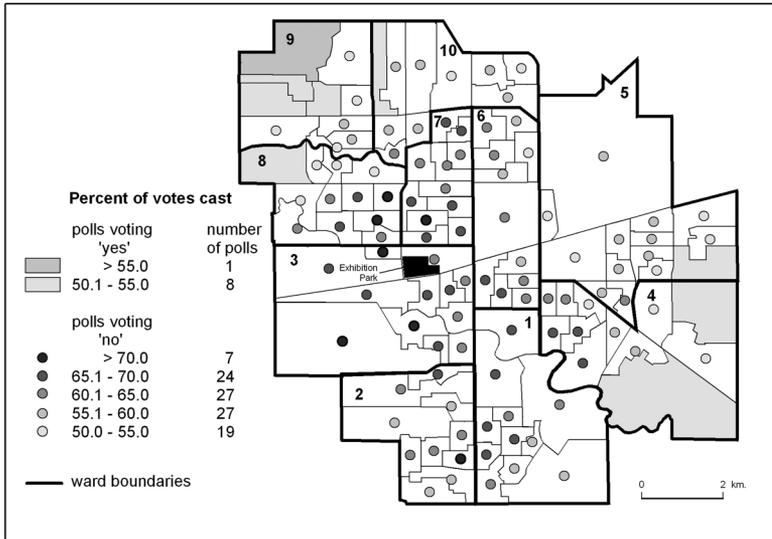


Figure 6: Result of plebiscite on sale of alcoholic beverages at Exhibition Park. (Source: City of Regina Archives)

Long-term outcomes:

In June 1988, the provincial government passed the Alcohol Control Act. The Act replaced the existing Liquor Licensing Act and provided new provisions under which alcohol could be sold at sports stadiums. Most importantly, it nullified the results of the plebiscites on sales of alcohol at Taylor Field and Exhibition Park and provided the City with powers to enact bylaws pertaining to the sale of alcohol at sports stadiums without first submitting such bylaws to the electors. In 1989, upon the request of The Regina Exhibition Association, City Council passed Bylaw 8852 to allow the sale of beer and wine at all events held in the Agridome (Regina City Council 1989a, 1989b).

Successful implementation and operation of Bylaw 8852 paved way for the introduction of alcohol sales at Taylor Field. Under the terms of the Act, City Council passed Bylaws 9361 and 9482 in 1992 and 1993 Regina (City Council 1992, 1993). These permitted the progressive introduction of light beer sales at Taylor Field for games and special events involving the Roughriders. Passage of the Bylaws brought Taylor Field into line with other stadiums in the CFL where beers sales were allowed. Arguably, in passing the Bylaws the City acted in the interest of the general (tax paying) public. Beer sales were expected to improve the profitability of the Roughriders and thereby increase the prospect of a financial return to the

City under the terms of the Club's lease agreement. Also, beer sales fitted with the City's strategy to expand and improve its hospitality service industry in anticipation of Regina (Taylor Field) hosting the Grey Cup in 1995.¹⁰

So the question remains: were the fears of those who advised against the introduction of alcohol sales justified? More specifically, did the introduction of beer sales at Taylor Field result in negative impacts on the local neighbourhood? Such evidence as exists suggests that it did not. In its 1993 report to City Council recommending passage of Bylaw 9482, the Executive Committee (of Council) noted that "Experience at Taylor Field during the 1992 season showed no negative impacts from the issuance of the licence.... Your Administration is not aware of any concerns in respect to areas of jurisdiction by the City" (Regina City Council 1993). Since 1993, Taylor Field has hosted two Grey Cups and over 100 football games and special events. Cognizant of its civic responsibility, the Roughrider Club has engaged with Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, Saskatchewan Government Insurance, City Council and others to ensure that any potential for adverse effects from the sale of beer are minimized, and hopefully eliminated completely. Initiatives have included provision of increased security at games, termination of beers sales after third-quarter intermissions, operation of designated driver programs and shuttle bus services, and development of an outreach program to elementary and secondary schools stressing the benefits of healthy lifestyles. These initiatives appear to have been successful. In the view of one veteran city councillor the substance of the 1993 Executive Committee report probably still holds true, and adds "I served 10 years on the Board of Police and during that time we had no reports of concern that I recall" (Badham 2005). Instead, neighbourhood concerns have focused on the slow clean up of litter in the neighbourhood following the 2003 Grey Cup game and vandalism of and theft from vehicles of fans attending games at Taylor Field (Dundas 2005).

Sadly, beer sales failed to save horse racing at Queensbury Downs. The last race was run in the fall of 2002. Whilst sales at Agridome and Taylor Field are now routine at most events, few in attendance seem to know, or care, whether the beer is made from fluoridated water. It very likely is. In March 2002, Regina's Molson brewery closed. Most beer now consumed at Agridome and Taylor Field must be shipped from Edmonton or Saskatoon where the breweries use municipally supplied fluoridated water.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion has focused on the context and outcome of three plebiscites conducted as part of Regina's 1985 civic election. Each plebiscite was convincingly if not overwhelmingly rejected. Typically, opposition to the proposals reflected long-standing social status divisions or distance bias effects both of which contrasted inner city with suburban areas, and northern with southern suburbs. In addition, greatest opposition was expressed in special polls most of which were conducted in retirement homes and extended care facilities. Although special polls did not determine the overall outcome of the plebiscites, they might easily have done so had the Election Day polls been more evenly contested. This is no small point. In 1985, special polls accounted for 2.6% of voter turnout. By the 2003 election this share had increased to 3.3%. Over the next few decades societal aging is likely to result in both absolute and relative increases in the size of Regina's elderly population. The population living in care facilities is also likely to increase. Consequently, astute politicians and advocacy groups in future elections may benefit considerably by appealing to or fostering the support of these constituencies.

In 1988, the City again included three plebiscites as part of the civic election. However, since then plebiscites have not been used as an instrument for measuring public opinion. Their absence does not reflect a lack of unique or sensitive issues in civic affairs in recent years. Instead, it more likely reflects increases in the powers of City Council to determine policies without recourse to direct public consultation. Such was the case in the passing of Bylaws 8852, 9361 and 9482 to permit alcohol sales at Agridome and Taylor Field. It also reflects the power of City Council to resist public pressure. For example, in 1995 City Council declined to hold a plebiscite to assess public support for the opening of Casino Regina in Union Station, and this despite the Station being designated a Heritage Railway Station by Parks Canada in 1991. Had City Council conducted a plebiscite it might easily have been lost as was the case when casino plebiscites were held in Saskatoon in 1995 and 2003. Finally, perhaps the absence of plebiscites simply reflects the reluctance of electors to join or form advocacy groups and engage in the political process.

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Notes

- ¹ The Act stipulated that for acceptance a petition must be signed by more than 5% of the electorate. This set the required number of signatures at 5,555 (i.e., 5% of 111,091 electors). The original petition contained 6,875 signatures. After scrutiny by the City Clerk's office this total was revised to 6,875, an amount well in excess of that required.
- ² Immediately after the election City Council rejected a motion by Alderman W.J McKeown calling for the City to provide assistance to the Regina Pure Water Committee to help meet its financial obligations.
- ³ The RCFF's archival record includes its correspondence with City Council, extensive notes on its campaign strategy, a statement of expenditures, plus various clippings from *The Leader Post* and some of the information circulated by the PWAC.
- ⁴ In 1993, the Museum was renamed the Royal Saskatchewan Museum.
- ⁵ Baker entered the campaign late and with a largely unrealistic platform including a proposal to have the provincial government declare Taylor Field a heritage project that would require building a dome over the playing area and greatly increasing its capacity to 50,000 spectators. To date, none of these proposals has been undertaken.
- ⁶ Child dependency is measured as the number of children aged 0-14 divided by the population aged 15-64, times 100. A very similar result is produced if dependency is based on children aged 0-4.
- ⁷ The external boundaries of Regina as defined by the City in 1985 and the census in 1986 differ slightly but both boundaries encompass virtually identical populations.
- ⁸ Educational status is defined as the proportion of the population 15 years and over with at least some university level education.
- ⁹ A precedence exists. Between 1957-1971, Calgarians rejected fluoridation four times, but then approved it in 1989 and voted to retain it in 1998.

- ¹⁰ The Grey Cup is the oldest and most coveted trophy in Canadian professional sport. Each year the leading CFL teams in eastern and western Canada compete for the Cup at a host venue selected from cities with CFL teams.

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