

Rotary Club of Calgary West
(A Year of Rotary Fun and Fellowship)

The Weekly WESTERNER

Box 4572, Station C, Calgary, Alberta T2T 5N3
Holiday Inn, McLeod Trail, Fridays 12:15 pm

President: Karl Herzog **President-Elect:** Sa'adat Keshavjee

Past President: Lynne Thornton **Secretary:** Ron Morrison

Treasurer: Des DeFreitas

Directors: Stan Beveridge, Ron Brookes, Bryden Horwood, Bruce Taylor,
Bernie Ward, David Williams

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It definitely was a fall day in beautiful Calgary – unpredictable, changeable weather with a crisp breeze.

President Karl Herzog got us started with our usual unaccompanied national anthem and **Ron Brookes** gave a very inclusive invocation. Sergeant-for-the-day, **Kurt Schurer**, took the responsibility of directing tables to the buffet line, completely ignoring the call for the scribe's table to follow the head table. Little did he know there was a special guest at the scribe's table, one **Laura Frank**, executive assistant to **The Honourable Ron Liepert**, Minister of Health and Wellness, guest speaker for the day. But he got lots of razzing from the membership for actually holding up the lunch proceedings. Some days you just can't win.

Lunch was lots of southern fried chicken, salads, mashed potatoes with chicken gravy. Not a calorie in sight!

President Karl's head table consisted of: **Tim Anderson**, Mayor of Redwood Meadows and chairman of the Group Study Exchange, Minister Liepert, **Bryden Horwood**, director of International and Community Service, **Marg Henschel**, the Ticket Queen, and **Steve Rickard**, Micro Credit King. (Marg suddenly came up in the world when she stood on her chair to see what it looked like from Steve's vantage point!)

Visitors and guests were introduced by **David Williams**. We were blessed by a number of spouses, offspring, visiting Rotarians and an MLA, **Alana deLong**, from Calgary Bow.

A delightful "visitor" we haven't seen in ages was **Fred Ronicker**, a Calgary West charter member, currently residing in Fort Worth, Texas. Fred was in excellent spirits, but was accompanied by a walker to help him get around after a bad hip break in April. He spent some time in rehab and is still working on his mobility. Fred's wife, Clarice, passed away in early summer, so he was in Calgary to finish disposing of household effects and putting the house on the market. He'll return to Fort Worth where he has a son, brother-in-law and nephew for good company. It was wonderful to have a visit!

We embarrassed **Don Alexander**, by singing "Happy Birthday" (in several keys) on the very day. Have a terrific year Don.

President Karl read a letter received from **Jo Johanson's** brother, **Carl**, thanking Jo's Rotary friends for the very moving tribute at the memorial service. Carl was impressed by the Past President's Honour Guard, invented by **Stan Cichon** for the occasion. Meeting so many of Jo's friends and colleagues made **Carl and Leslie's** grief a little easier.

Steve Rickard spoke about the visit to Calgary of two women spearheading an initiative in Micro Credit. **Emily Peel** is a native of Liberia, schooled in the US, and **Deborah Lindholm** is a successful American business woman, and world traveler from San Diego. Both women are Rotarians. After the amazingly courageous stand taken by Liberian women to stop the fighting, killing, raping and displacement of thousands of villagers, Emily and Deborah saw the desperate need of families to get back on their feet. To them the obvious answer was Micro Credit, small loans of \$100 to \$300 to women so they could start their own businesses.

With several success stories to encourage more women to participate, more money is needed for loans. The success of the grassroots women's movement in the country has ousted the corrupt president, Charles Taylor, and democratically elected **Ellen Johnson-Sirleas**, a woman, a first for that African country. Great strides are being made every day, but there is still corruption to overcome in some of the elected official's positions. President Johnson-Sirleas has two and a half years left in her mandate.

But I digress. **A coffee and dessert will be held on Thursday evening at 7PM at Fort Calgary** so you could come to meet Emily and Deborah. Emily will have spoken to 11 Rotary clubs in the Calgary area. Unfortunately, she won't be at our meeting on Friday as she leaves Friday morning. You are invited to meet her on Thursday evening.

Marg Henschel announced **the Christmas party** is November 13 at the Calgary Golf and Country Club. Tickets are very well priced at \$65.00 each for a wonderful evening. So dig out your wallet and put on your best bib and tucker, dancing shoes and polish up your appetite for a great way to kick off the Christmas and Holiday season.

Chuck Morrison is again scheduling for the **Salvation Army Christmas Kettle** campaign. He may be already all signed up for the times we have been assigned. So if you are disappointed you didn't get your name on his list, call the Salvation Army office in Calgary and see where you could help them. They can use every volunteer, at your convenience, over the crucial next few weeks. Tell them you are from Calgary West Rotary, they like to hear that too.

Roy Thurm is in charge of the donations for **Alpha House**. He reminded us we need to bring socks, mittens, toques and NEW underwear for both men and women. The cold season is upon us and it's toughest on the people with the least. Roy recognized Jo Johanson for starting this seasonal drive.

David Watson is organizing our **annual Feed the Hungry** day at St. Mary's Hall. It's a bit different this year as we are officially sharing the day with St. Stevens church. We often share with Brownies and Boys and Girls clubs, but that's been "unofficial". So if you want to participate in this terrific day, contact David post haste.

David also had a number of invitations to fundraising events in the community, but declined to read them all out in the interest of time. He wanted to let us know we had received the invitations, just so we didn't feel "left out". If you'd like to participate in any of the events, please contact David.

Ted Valentine is organizing a special **Halloween** meeting for Friday, October 30. He needed a head count, so several assistants were buzzing around the room trying to get Rotarians to say if they were coming. (We all should have responded to the email sent out, but as usual, we didn't.) We are urged to

wear a costume, wig, mask, hat, funny shoes, or just come as ourselves to join in the fun. Seems there is some special entertainment up Ted's sleeve. Guests are welcome, but the Holiday Inn does need notice of extras please. Should be spooktacular!!!

Sergeant-at-arms **Kurt Schurer** was into history, but I didn't understand it and it didn't get recorded somehow, so apologies to Kurt for the extra effort he put in.

One very surprised **Gordon Rodrigues** won the 50/50, the first in a really, really long time. He netted \$36.

GUEST SPEAKER

Tim Anderson introduced The Honourable Ron Liepert, Minister of Health and Wellness for Alberta. Ron was first elected as an MLA for the constituency of Calgary-West, November, 2004. He served as the Minister of Education and most recently is taking the heat for the health care woes in Alberta.

Ron was born in Saltcoats, Saskatchewan, where his primary education began in a one-room school house. After his senior high schooling, he moved to Alberta and enrolled in the Columbia School of Broadcasting. Mr. Liepert accepted Premier Lougheed's invitation to become press secretary where he served from 1980 to 1985. His government connections kept him busy in a number of high profile conferences and negotiations for the province. In 1991, he joined Telus and was involved in the negotiations to purchase Ed Tel and the BC Tel merger, also contributing to the rebranding of AGT to Telus. He then ran his own PR company for four years before returning to his interest in politics.

Some Calgary West members know Ron as a former board member of the Pinebrook Golf and Country Club – where he still likes to find time to play a round or two.

Ron recognized Rotary's involvement with the Rotary Flames House at the Children's Hospital. The Alberta government contributed 4 million dollars from lottery funds to join Rotary and the Flames in the initiative.

There are changes in the wind in health care. Alberta has chosen to reduce taxes and not implement new ones, such as a sales tax. Other provinces have a stable income stream from a sales tax, but Alberta is largely reliant on resource revenues.

Just over a year ago, oil was around \$130 a barrel, gas was near \$12 and the Canadian dollar was around 75 cents relative to the US dollar. This year the average price of oil is projected to be \$75, gas about \$4 and the dollar will likely be close to par.

For every \$10 change in the price of a barrel of oil, it costs the provincial treasury \$1 billion, for every dollar change in the price of gas, it's another billion dollars and for every 4 cent change in the dollar it is a further billion dollars. Do the math.

The Alberta government has promised to hold the line on spending for the next two years, including freezing salaries, to balance the books in three years, even though Albertans' expectations remain high.

In answer to the frustration Liepert heard on the 2008 campaign trail, he and his department created the province-wide Alberta Health Services Board, moved operations for Emergency Medical Services under that board, developed and released a new pharmaceutical strategy, and developed two new strategies for health care delivery called Vision 2020 and one for Aging in the Right Place.

The big question still is: How do I access the health system? Once people get in, their experience tends to be one of excellent service, but the wait is too long. Obviously, throwing more money at the system isn't the answer; the system has been receiving annual increases of close to 10% in each of the past 10 years.

From the president of the Canadian Medical Association, Ann Doig, "We all agree that the system is imploding...we all agree things are more precarious than perhaps Canadians realize. We know there must be change." But every time there is a move to change, to introduce new, innovative ideas, there's resistance. We need to push aside the fear-mongering and political rhetoric in favor of open, constructive dialogue and decisive action.

We need to flip the system and move the patient from the bottom of the organisation chart to the top. Some feel the solution is to hire more family doctors. But then you need more nurses, more radiologists, more specialists, more acute care beds, the list of "more" goes on and on. So do the dollars.

Liepert's vision is "quality care for every Albertan", the right care in the right place for the patient, with the system serving the patient. Part of the vision is a model where physicians are paid to treat the patient, not just churn patients through the system because that's how the doctors currently get paid. Thus, in answer to the question: "Why do I have to go back to my doctor every time I need my prescription refilled?" pharmacists will now play a greater role in primary care delivery and reduce the demands on the physicians. Pharmacists can now renew your prescription, and they will be compensated for refilling prescriptions and discussing overall drug therapy.

Recognizing that Albertans are fed up with bottlenecks and barriers, there is extensive review of legislation, some of which is 100 years old.

"We have much to be proud of our system. People survive strokes in Alberta at a rate well above the national average. Our researchers and clinicians develop approaches and protocols that become international best practice."

Nothing occurs overnight. It will take a lot of hard work and commitment to change.

Minister Liepert concluded by saying: "I am committed to a strong, publicly funded health care system in our province. I am committed to push through necessary change, which I recognize will be opposed by some at every turn. But most importantly, I am committed to moving the patient from the bottom of the organisation chart to the top."

A round of thoughtful questions were asked by members.

The Minister was thanked by Bryden Horwood and appeared delighted with his Boltman.

NEXT

October 30	"The Great Houdini" – A Hallowe'en Surprise
November 6	Remembrance Day Celebration. Also, Mark Verrall, a medic in Bosnia and Afghanistan
November 13	Ezra Levant – Human Rights Commissions
November 13	Christmas ball in the evening
November 20	District Governor Steve Allen
November 27	Canadian Football League Commissioner?
December 4	Club assembly