

# COG

## The Rotary Club of Calgary

The Rotary Club of Calgary is an organization of professional and community leaders who come together through commitment and fellowship to create opportunities and a better future for generations to follow.



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## Mayor Naheed Nenshi – “State of the City”

Ron Esch introduced our mayor who delivered his annual address to the Rotary Club of Calgary. Always warm and engaging, Naheed Nenshi began his presentation with the hilarious story of a conversation he had with his mother on his second place ranking in the Maclean’s list of the fifty most important people in Canada. Congratulating the club on our centennial, he went on to express his admiration for our commitment to the Rotary/Mattamy Greenway and its embodiment of Service Above Self.

The mayor noted that Calgary is recognized as one of the most livable cities in the world. We can claim to have an effective civic government, an entrepreneurial spirit, a clean environment, and be mostly free of the unemployment problems that plague many other places. In recent polls Calgarians have indicated satisfaction with their quality of life (88 per cent), with the performance of their city government (95 per cent), and with the value received for their property taxes (67 per cent). He reminded us that 2013 was a year of unparalleled challenge as we endured the costliest natural disaster in Canadian history. The current estimated cost of the disaster, which is between five and six billion dollars, would be sufficient to double the size of our current LRT system.

Mayor Nenshi described how the city is working to finish outstanding repairs and to mitigate the impacts of future flood events. He ascribed the city’s resilience to two things: the dedication of 20,000 municipal employees that he calls his colleagues (including emergency services, garbage collection, roads and transit), and the character of the citizens who call Calgary home.

There are a number of successes from 2013 that are worth noting. We have two new recreation complexes, which are the first new facilities to open in quite a few years. The airport tunnel has been completed on time and within its planned budget, and the tunnel roadway will soon be open to traffic. Finally, a newly released 311 app is providing faster ways for citizens to connect with its government. Looking forward, the Mayor identified three areas of focus for the city’s administration. The first of these is transit. When he first took office, he found, to his surprise, that the

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Laily Pirbhai thanks the mayor



Hayden Smith: Go Canada!



The rush to buy gala tickets

transit authority did not have a long-term strategic plan. City council, working with Calgary Transit, has remedied this, leading to the creation of a \$1 billion capital plan to improve our transit system. We are buying new C-Train cars to replace the aging U2 units, and to operate four car trains. Transit stations are being made safer, and their platforms being lengthened to accommodate the four car trains. Finally, GPS equipment is being installed on all buses, so that transit riders will soon have real time bus arrival information.

Secondly, processes for obtaining development permits are becoming faster as the city strives to “cut red tape”. For example, Brookfield Office Properties approached the city with a proposal to build “something spectacular” on the site of the former Calgary Herald building, but only if it could obtain permits within six months of applying for them. The city and developer both brought their best efforts to a process that concluded with the needed development permits being issued within five months, a truly astonishing result!

Finally, the mayor spoke of the one issue that keeps him awake at night. He is most concerned about the availability of affordable housing. Before the floods, the city’s vacancy rate for rental housing stood at 1.1 per cent. Since the floods, this number has dropped further, effectively to zero. House prices have soared with the booming economy, and salaries are not keeping pace. The mayor is keen to address this, and his solution has remained the same since he first campaigned for elected office: to allow secondary suites. The mayor will continue to work to realize the right of every Calgarian to have a safe and affordable place to live.

In closing, Naheed Nenshi paid tribute to former counsellors Barb Scott and Sue Higgins: two women who exceptionally demonstrated their love for our city, and who embodied the Rotary motto of Service Above Self.

Laily Pirbhai thanked Mayor Nenshi for his address and presented him with a certificate to acknowledge our customary donation to CAWST.

## Meeting Highlights

Our meeting in the Crystal Ballroom began with Michael Pierson honouring the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympic Games as the head table marched in. As always, Michael provided piano accompaniment as we sang *O Canada*, and we reflected on a thoughtful invocation, this time delivered by Andrea Serink. A special thank-you went out the volunteers in the front entrance who had to manage our larger gathering, and to Carol Rosdobutko of Sandler Training, our COG Sponsor for the week.

Club Co-Secretary Chris Harper welcomed our visitors and guests (there were too many to acknowledge individually this week), and mentioned two club members celebrating birthdays: Frank Sparks and Michael Broadhurst.

This week’s club announcements included the following.

- The club extends its condolences to the family of Sue Higgins.
- February 23<sup>rd</sup> marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rotary International.
- The membership committee will host a New Members Event on Thursday, March 6<sup>th</sup> at the Ranchmen’s Club.



- David Bromwich described the programs we support in Uganda through Curly Galbraith's legacy.
- Bill Avery gave us an advance taste of the cavalcade of entertainment that is being planned for the club's centennial gala that will be held on May 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

*[Editor: Thank-you Thalia Kingsford for your fine report on this week's meeting.]*

## Rotary Club of Calgary Centennial Gala Tickets

Get your tickets at [www.rotary100.ca](http://www.rotary100.ca). Tickets are \$100; that's just \$1 for each of our 100 years.

## TRF & CRCF Matching Points Program

As part of our club's centennial celebrations, a goal of 100 Foundation donors in our 100<sup>th</sup> year has been established; and your participation is encouraged for this Rotary year. Please note that Member donations to either the Rotary Foundation (TRF) or Calgary Rotary Clubs Foundation (CRCF) will be matched by the Club with Paul Harris credits on a 1:1 basis, *up to 500 matching credits per year*.

## Upcoming Meetings

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| March 4  | <b>Dr. Remo Panaccione</b> , IBD in Alberta<br>Fairmont Palliser Hotel     |
| March 11 | <b>Camp Victoria</b><br>Lunchbox Theatre – please note the change of venue |



## Many Thanks to This Week's COG Sponsor, Carol Rosdobutko and Sandler Training

### Mayor Nenshi has given us the "State of the City Address"

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