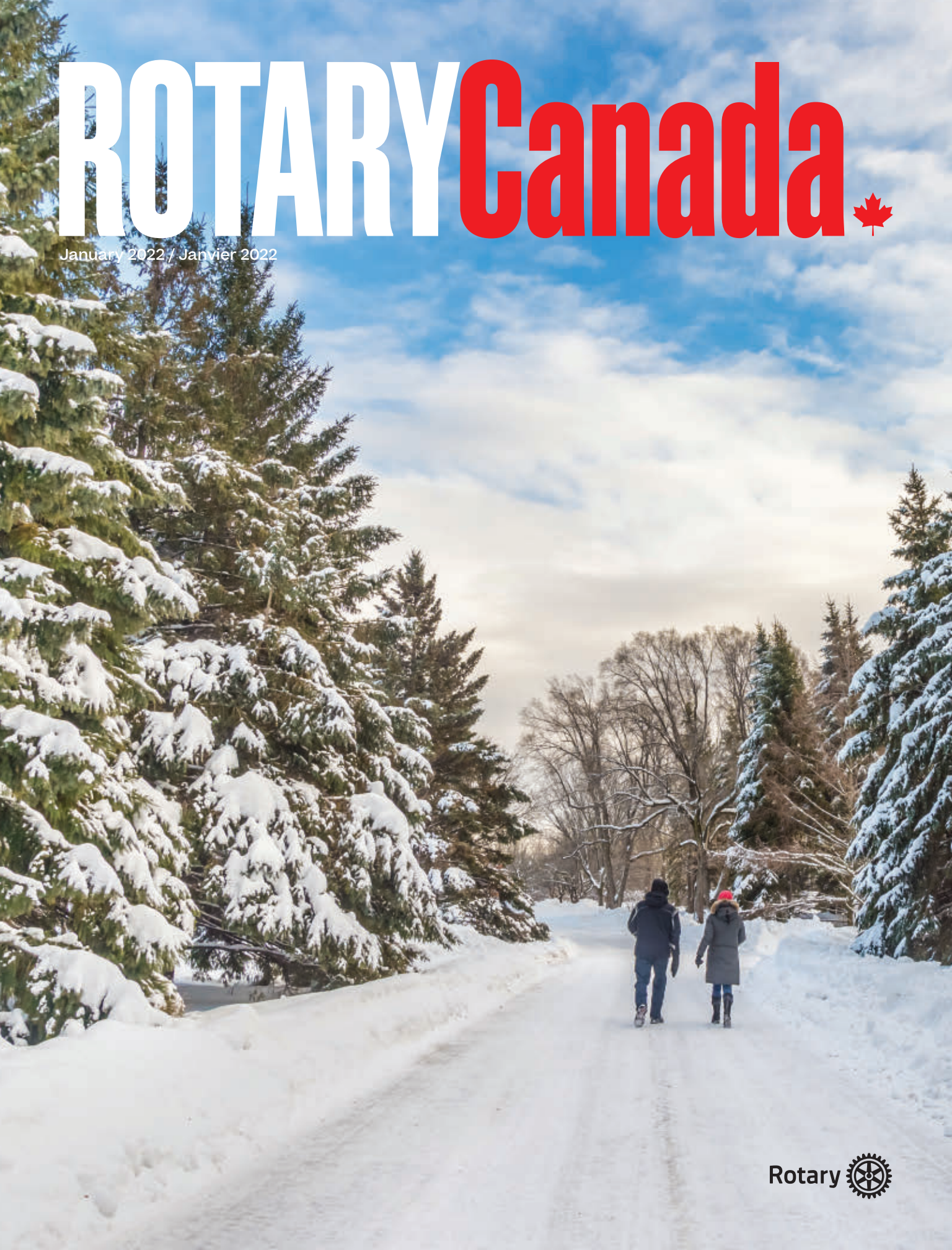


ROTARYCanada

January 2022 / Janvier 2022



The business of Rotary

“Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!”

Readers who just celebrated Christmas might recognize this admonition that Marley’s ghost wails at Ebenezer Scrooge in the opening pages of *A Christmas Carol*. Borrowing from Dickens’ famous book, 2001-02 RI President Rick King chose *Mankind Is Our Business* as his presidential theme.

But what does this statement mean for us as Canadian Rotarians?

This is not about the job or vocation you pursue, nor is it about your classification in Rotary. The dealings of your trade are, or should be, a drop of water in the ocean of your daily existence. While it is reasonable and appropriate to generate value in our vocation, Rotarians look beyond an earnings statement to establish real value.

Charity: Kindness and tolerance in judging others.

Mercy: Compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone whom it is within one’s power to punish or harm.

Forbearance: Patient self-control; restraint and tolerance.

Benevolence: The quality of being well-meaning; kindness.

The year just passed has been one in which these qualities were in short supply in many places. As we enter 2022, Rotarians can continue to make a difference in their communities by remembering that it’s not about how many projects have been completed, or their value, but rather that mankind is our business, and to treat one another, and those we serve, with humility.

ROD THOMSON

Chair, Rotary Canada Advisory Board
Rotary Club of Abbotsford, British Columbia

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PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Doug Thompson (left) and Cosmin Paiu help expand a community centre, a COMMIT project in Nandarola, Nicaragua. Read more about COMMIT and the Rotarians at its core in “A Commitment to Long-Term Care,” beginning on page 4.

FIELD NOTES

A fruitful pairing

Initiated in 2015, the partnership between The Rotary Foundation (Canada) and Global Affairs Canada helped thousands worldwide

Last June, The Rotary Foundation (Canada) submitted its fifth and final annual report to Global Affairs Canada (GAC), a department of the government of Canada. The report summarized the status of each grant approved during the partnership between The Rotary Foundation (Canada) and GAC. The partnership dated to May 2015; scheduled to expire in September 2020, it actually concluded in June 2021 following a no-cost extension for one aspect of the program.

During the partnership, The Rotary Foundation approved 131 global grants, totalling more than \$15.2 million (all monetary figures are in U.S. dollars). Projects funded by the grants were implemented across five continents, with 46 in Africa; 46 in Central America and the Caribbean; 20 in South America; 15 in Asia; and four in Europe. Each of the projects was initiated and implemented by members of Rotary, and they fell into five of Rotary's seven areas of focus. (At the partnership's inception, protecting the environment was not yet an area of focus, and the area of focus devoted to promoting peace was not applicable under the partnership agreement.) For purposes of the report, projects were broken down into three categories: health, education, and economic development. Some highlights appear at right, and a more in-depth account of the partnership will appear in a future issue of *Rotary* magazine.



Thanks to the partnership, entrepreneurs and families in the Coto Brus region of southern Costa Rica were beneficiaries of microcredit programs designed to allow entrepreneurs to borrow money and to support business growth, family welfare, and economic development there.

By the numbers

73

Number of grants focusing on health projects, totalling \$7,109,036.50

41

Number of grants focusing on education, totalling \$5,907,991

17

Number of grants focusing on economic development projects, totalling \$2,216,395

72

Number of grants that focused on children (across the three categories)

150,000

Approximate number of children who benefited from the grants

27

Percentage of health grants that focused on improving water sources and sanitation facilities

11

Number of countries that gained access to potable water and sanitation — improvements that affected 825,000 people

22

Number of grants that focused on prenatal care and maternal health; 14 of the projects were implemented in eight countries in Africa

2,600

Number of women who received training about loans aimed at expanding their skill sets, abilities, and economic statuses; projects funded by the 22 education and economic development grants were implemented in 12 countries, with the most — nine — occurring in Honduras



FEATURE

A commitment to long-term care

With help from 'boots on the ground,' volunteers make a lasting impact in Nicaragua

THROUGHOUT THEIR careers — he as a family physician, she as a registered nurse — Doug Thompson and Janice Rauser have worked at Stratford General Hospital in Ontario. But they didn't get to know each other until they were nearly 6,000 kilometres away from home, taking part in a volunteer medical assistance mission to Nicaragua in 2013.

Seeing that the needs of the rural villages they visited went well beyond health care, Thompson and Rauser started an organization that would address those needs in a comprehensive way. They named it COMMIT: Canadian Outreach Medical and Mission Team. "Although we set up medical clinics to provide free health and dental care, our goal from the outset was to make a long-term commitment to the villages we adopted, something that would benefit them long after we had left," says Rauser. "Our vision was for clean drinking water,

sanitation, educational support, and microeconomics."

COMMIT began its work in conjunction with Friends of the Orphans Canada, a service organization affiliated with the Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (NPH) children's home and school in Nandaime, a town in southwestern Nicaragua. In 2017, the group opted to become a subcommittee of the Rotary Club of Stratford, where Thompson has been a member for 43 years. This enabled them to partner with the Rotary Club of Granada, Nicaragua, to secure a global grant that helped finance the repair of two wells and the construction of four new ones in several villages in Nicaragua.

According to Rauser, NPH serves as the home base for COMMIT volunteers during their medical missions. To engage residents and support the local economy, COMMIT employs NPH students as translators and labourers. Older students can learn about the medical field by assisting COMMIT doctors and nurses

with basic medical procedures, such as collecting urine samples and taking blood pressure readings.

Over the years, Thompson says, COMMIT has provided more than \$500,000 in financial aid to eight rural villages. The group has shipped five containers of medical equipment and other supplies — everything from beds, wheelchairs, walkers, and defibrillators to computers, sewing machines, clothing, eyeglasses, and hearing aids. The group also bought a bus to transport children to and from the NPH school, where it has started music and sports programs and created a computer library with 12,000 books in Spanish.

Working alongside village residents, COMMIT has built more than 100 outhouses, renovated a community centre, and organized sewing co-ops in two villages. As Rauser notes, Rotary and COMMIT are a perfect fit for each other because the many projects that COMMIT volunteers carry out fall into all of Rotary's areas of focus.

To keep things running smoothly, COMMIT enlisted the aid of Edgar Avila, an NPH resident since childhood, to serve as manager of all its projects, along with Jimmy Espinoza, an organic farming specialist who heads an agricultural project that was launched in 2019. "Hiring them has been the most valuable asset to the success of our projects," says Rauser. "One of the most important things we learned from the start was that we needed someone in Nicaragua to look after our projects while we were out of the country."

Thompson concurs. "Boots on the ground are really important," he says. "If you neglect any one project, things can fail. Sewing machines break down, computers and printers get infested with wasps. A goat project that we started got eaten by dogs — literally."

According to Thompson, a major challenge was gaining the trust of residents. As an example, he points to the agriculture project. Local farmers were understandably skeptical, he says, "because they had been farming the land for generations. But they

Teamwork

In 2019, members of COMMIT worked with residents in Nandara, Nicaragua, to expand the village's community centre. Standing, from left: Jane Eligh-Feryn, Doug Thompson, Luis Fur, Cosmin Paiu, Pat Feryn, Cody Brown, Tessa Feryn, and Jimmy Espinoza; kneeling: Jhonny Flores and Janice Rauser.





were mainly subsistence cropping on very poor soil. We brought in Jimmy, who is a good communicator. He showed them what they could grow and the money they could earn by composting, restoring the soil, and planting cash crops. It's all about giving them a hand up, not a handout."

In addition to praising Thompson's medical skills, Rauser lauds her colleague for his soft-spoken humility and warm sense of humour. In facing the logistical challenges that inevitably arise during a mission, she says, Thompson never gets rattled and often reminds team members that they are having "another day in paradise." Rauser has adopted as her motto a phrase she found on the internet that is attributed to musician and motivational speaker Jana Stanfield: "I cannot do all of the good

that the world needs, but the world needs all of the good that I can do."

Adds Thompson: "All of these projects bring us joy because we know we have helped to make people's lives a bit better and ours a bit more humble."

David Knoppert, a retired pharmacist and past president of the Rotary Club of London-Hyde Park, Ontario, joined COMMIT after meeting Thompson on a volunteer medical mission in Mexico in 2016. Knoppert has spearheaded a project to provide hundreds of eco-friendly stoves to residents of several Nicaraguan villages. The toxic fumes from indoor stoves, he explains, are associated with high death rates, severe burns, and chronic respiratory disorders. He notes that, in addition to the health and safety benefits that

the new stoves offer, their increased efficiency reduces greenhouse emissions and has a positive impact on reforestation efforts. In the meantime, Knoppert and his COMMIT teammates have come up with some novel fundraising strategies to help finance the project. (For more on Knoppert's fundraising prowess, see page 6.)

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a major challenge to COMMIT's efforts, forcing the group to suspend its mission trips since its visit to Nicaragua in January 2020. Not only did the disease take its toll on the region where COMMIT volunteers have been working, but the area also was ravaged by back-to-back hurricanes in November 2020. COMMIT was able to supply masks, face shields, hand sanitizer, and medical supplies to the Nandaime hospital and its mobile COVID-19 response teams, along with emergency supplies and funds for disaster relief. "We also hired the women of our two sewing co-ops to sew masks for everyone in their villages, and they were able to sell masks to people in the surrounding areas," Rauser says.

Last September, despite the pandemic, Rauser decided that an in-person visit could no longer wait. "We hadn't been down there for a year and a half, and I felt we needed to maintain our presence," she says. Rauser was accompanied by one of her five sisters; on previous trips, she has been joined by two other sisters, a niece, and all four of her children, who are now in their 20s.

Although she has been associated with Rotary through her work with COMMIT, Rauser hesitated before becoming a member of the Stratford club. "I had so much on my plate already," she explains, "and Doug has been our contact inside Rotary." Thompson finally persuaded her to join the club last March, which made for a noteworthy reunion when she travelled to Nicaragua in September and met with the members of the Granada club. "It felt special to do so as a Rotarian," Rauser says. "What Rotary does is amazing. Now I feel like I really belong."

— PAUL ENGLEMAN

Double duty
Above: David Knoppert fits a man with a hearing aid at one of COMMIT's 2020 medical clinics. He is also leading efforts to replace smoky indoor stoves (like the one shown here) with hundreds of eco-friendly stoves in the Nicaraguan villages that COMMIT serves.





PROFILE

What it's like to turn hobbies into fundraisers

I got serious about playing golf when I was in my mid-40s, and it's been important to me ever since. It's enjoyable, but it's also a challenge. I'm 68 now, and as I get older, it's a way to stay healthy and fit. When I went into semiretirement, I thought about how I could combine my passion for golf with my desire to do good.

The first idea I came up with was trying to play 100 holes in one day. I completed 70 and was able to raise \$20,000 for earthquake relief in Haiti. After meeting Doug Thompson, the co-founder of COMMIT, I became involved with the group, and between 2017 and 2020, I made four trips to Nicaragua with them. (For more on Thompson and COMMIT, see "A Commitment to Long-Term Care" on page 4.)

In July 2019, I attempted to break

a Guinness World Record: hitting the most golf balls, each one at least a hundred yards, in 12 hours. I did it at the driving range of the West Haven Golf & Country Club, where our Rotary club held its meetings before the pandemic. I hit 6,865 shots — the record is 9,959 — and raised \$10,000 for COMMIT. I also raised some terrible blisters on my hands. My training had focused on endurance, core strength, and flexibility. I had not even considered the possibility of blisters. Fortunately, a fellow Rotarian lent me a pair of gloves. Without them, I wouldn't have been able to continue. Nonetheless, the blisters were bad. They took a month to heal completely.

The following summer, I tried for another golf record: hitting the most 100-yard shots in three minutes. The record is 102; I hit 82 and was able to raise \$8,000. My wife,

Diane, had the job of placing the ball on the tee before each swing. We've been married 39 years. I'm fortunate that Diane trusts me, and we're lucky I didn't hit her in the nose.

I'd thought about raising funds by riding a bicycle all the way across Canada, but the logistics of that are complicated, especially during a pandemic. I decided instead to do a virtual ride on my old Schwinn stationary bike. It's not fancy, but it tells you your distance and time. I started, in October 2020, as if I were in Victoria, British Columbia, and I rode 40 kilometres a day all the way through to April.

When I started out, it would take me about 70 minutes to complete the 40 kilometres. It became a challenge: How fast can I do this today? My average time got down to about 55 minutes. My best was just under 49 minutes. When I started riding, I weighed about 165 pounds. After a few months, I was down to 145. If anyone wants to lose weight, try riding your bike across Canada.

To get sponsors, I began speaking to Rotary clubs across the country. Initially I was asking people to sponsor me for a penny a kilometre. In January, when I "reached" Ontario, Doug joined me at a meeting, and we switched our presentation to asking the club to sponsor the purchase of one eco-friendly stove, which costs about \$150. That turned out to be more effective, and along with shorter virtual rides from other Rotarians, we ended up raising more than \$50,000.

I tried to time my club presentations to coincide with my current location on my virtual ride. I spoke to 60 clubs. I didn't ride my bike during presentations, except to complete the final 500 metres in my last one. That was in St. John's, in Newfoundland and Labrador, and it brought my total trip to 7,176 kilometres.

I'm thinking about another golf fundraiser: playing seven straight days, 36 holes a day. We could offer donors a chance to play a round of 18 holes with me. I'm so grateful for the donations we've received, and I think people would like to continue their support. COMMIT is a really great cause, and I enjoy being able to help out.

— AS TOLD TO PAUL ENGLEMAN

David Knoppert
Rotary Club of
London-Hyde
Park, Ontario

NOTES DE TERRAIN

Une histoire personnelle du District 7790

*par Jacques Châteauvert,
club Rotary de Québec*

MON CLUB, le club Rotary de Québec, a été fondé en 1919, dans ce qui est alors connu sous le nom de District 2 (la désignation du District 7790 a changé plusieurs fois depuis lors). Nous sommes au Château Frontenac depuis ce temps, car le président fondateur, Frank Carrel, résidait en permanence au Château Frontenac. Frank était propriétaire du *Chronicle-Telegraph*, le journal anglophone de Québec.

Dans notre district, du côté américain, le Rotary progresse rapidement. Le côté québécois sera sans progression jusqu'en 1940, sauf que tout change en 1941-42 lorsque Arthur Lagueux fut président du club Rotary de Québec et l'année suivante, premier gouverneur de district Québécois en 1942-43. De 1941 à 1943, Arthur fonda neuf nouveaux clubs; durant son année de gouverneur, il en fonda six, l'année suivante trois, et par la suite, trois autres, pour un total de 12. Je sais tout cela car en 1992-93, dans mon année de gouverneur, j'ai eu six invitations de 50e anniversaire. Arthur a été président du Rotary International en 1950-51.

Je suis membre du Rotary depuis 1968. Dans les années 1980, je me suis rendu compte qu'au Canada la moyenne était d'un Rotarien par 1,000 habitants, mais au Québec, c'était un par 5,000 habitants. Je me suis mis à fonder des clubs, et le district est devenu trop gros avec 76 clubs. Alors en 1989 il fut divisé en deux districts, avec environ 2 200 membres dans chaque district. Le sud devint le district 778 avec 32 clubs; le nord demeura le district 779 avec 44 clubs.

Aujourd'hui nous avons un beau district bilingue qui compte 50 clubs.

Le club Rotary de Québec s'est réuni au magnifique Château Frontenac depuis sa fondation en 1919.

Je suis nommé pour être gouverneur en 1992-93 à 47 ans, le plus jeune gouverneur du district à ce jour. J'ai donc décidé qu'il était temps de faire de grands changements. Premièrement, après l'acceptation du Rotary International, j'ai combiné dans la même fin de semaine le séminaire de formation des présidents (PETS) et l'assemblée de district qui s'étaient toujours tenus sur deux fins de semaine différentes.

Deuxièmement, j'ai dit à tout le monde qu'à partir de maintenant chacun pourrait parler dans sa langue maternelle et la traduction se ferait dans les 2 langues. Avant cela, toutes les réunions s'étaient déroulées en anglais avec une traduction en français. Troisièmement, j'ai demandé à chaque président qu'il y ait au moins une femme membre dans chaque club. C'est suite à cette fin de semaine que Jacques DeSerres du club Rotary de Québec m'a surnommé Jacques le bulldozer.

Il y a presque 30 ans, tous les clubs se réunissaient le midi ou le soir. Le premier club déjeuner dans la province fut le club de New Richmond en Gaspésie, qui faisait partie du district des Maritimes. Maintenant il est dans notre district. Tout le monde trouvait ça drôle, une rencontre de club Rotary le matin; aujourd'hui la majorité se réunit à ce moment de la journée.

Aujourd'hui nous avons un beau district bilingue qui compte 50 clubs. En 1985 il n'y avait que deux clubs dans la grande région de Québec; maintenant il y en a neuf. Les membres du club Rotary de Québec peuvent être fiers de notre club qui a donné au district 12 gouverneurs, un directeur international et un président international.

Pour que le Rotary reste en santé, nous les membres devons être fiers d'en parler et de faire connaître nos réalisations. Ainsi, plusieurs se joindront à nous pour un avenir meilleur. Car n'oublions pas que nous ne sommes pas au Rotary pour notre bien mais pour le bien des autres.



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