



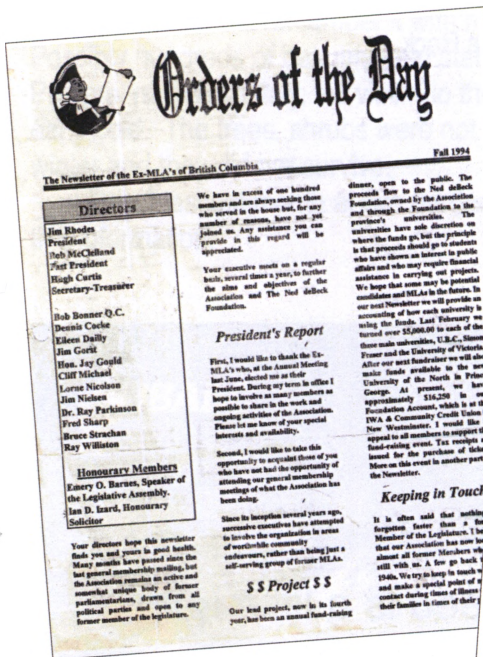
Orders of the Day

The Publication of the Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia

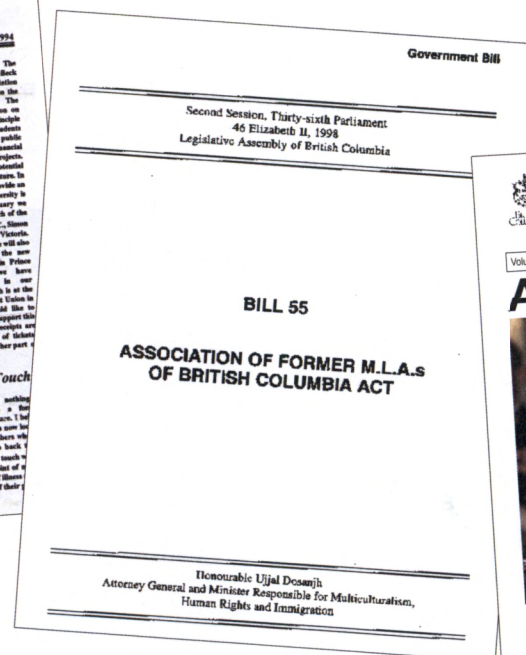
Volume 20, Number 1

January 2014

OUR TWENTY-FIRST YEAR



Early issue 1994 by McClelland



Our Act, passed by the Legislative Assembly of B.C. on February 10, 1998



When then-Association President Bob McClelland first thought we should have a newsletter for Members, it's likely neither he - nor anyone else - thought it would grow and continue over two decades.

Wisely, he also named it as 'Orders' or 'OOTD' as we've often called it. Now we have a large number of subscribers who have not served in the legislature, but obviously enjoy receiving each issue.

In 2013 we provided 188 pages in eleven issues, January to December.

To our Members, friends and most valued advertisers: Happy Anniversary, and thanks!

Under the Distinguished Patronage of

Her Honour

The Honourable Judith Guichon, OBC
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Thank You and Miscellany

Orders of the Day is published regularly throughout the year, and is circulated to Association members, all MLAs now serving in Legislature, other interested individuals and organizations. Distributed throughout BC and into Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario.

Material for the newsletter is always welcome and should be sent in written form to:

P.O. Box 31009
University Heights P.O.
Victoria, B.C. V8N 6J3

Or faxed to: 250-477-2532

Or emailed to ootd@shaw.ca

Annual subscription rate is \$40.00 for those who are not Association Members.

Editor: Hugh Curtis
Layout/Production/Research: Rob Lee

Waddell appointed. Former MLA and Member of Parliament **Ian Waddell** is among 32 B.C. lawyers appointed the title of Queen's counsel.

In a news release, Attorney-General Suzanne Anton said the title of Q.C. is awarded to selected lawyers every year "to recognize exceptional merit and contribution."

If you go, you'll be caught, too. During a first visit to the U.K. and London did you, as with so many others from world wide, see Dame Agatha Christie's play "The Mouse Trap"?

Christie (1890-1976) is believed to have stated before or after opening night, "It may have a little run on stage."

Some little run! Sixty-two years - 1952 to 2014, and still going.

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The Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia is strictly non-partisan, regardless of members' past or present political affiliation. Founded in 1987, the Association was formally established by an Act of the British Columbia Legislature on February 10, 1998.

Orders of the Day was conceived, named and produces in its early stages by Bob McClelland, former MLA and cabinet minister, following his retirement from office.

Sometimes all we need is a little help.



The Foundation for Children with Intestinal & Liver Disorders
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The Association is pleased to provide space for selected not-for-profit children's organizations at no cost.

Cold snap - a little perspective needed!

In the early days of December 2013, southwest coastal B.C. was cautioned about an approaching spell of 'cold' weather. And, it arrived with overnight marks of -1 to -6 or 7 Celsius.

No one in news media circles bothered to check past circumstances.

Let us look back to, we believe, 1955 in the same part of B.C. This was not in December, but the second week of November. We recall quite heavy snow falling on war veterans paying their tributes at the Victoria Cenotaph, coping with snow still falling.

There is no, or little record as to how many of these brave older men and civilians in the usual crowd suffered lasting effects from that experience.

Gardeners will remember it with real regret. Possibly hundreds of beautiful and stately Lombardy Poplars, natives of Italy, fell victim to the sudden and early cold. The trees, shrubs were not yet fully rested for winter and they did not survive.

Enquiries last month at two garden shops brought this information:



Photo source: BC Archives A-03448

Another big Victoria snowfall - February 1916

1. "We don't see them around here very much."
2. "Lombardys are grown in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba. They're used as windbreaks, and can withstand real cold."

We can only assume that these shrubs do in fact make it through the worst of winter. The B.C. plants experienced a sudden drop in temperature, from mild, even relatively warm night temperatures too early and too quickly.

Any comments from our readers?



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At sombre Centre of the Universe, there's light at the end of the tunnel

(Ed. note: one year ago (January 2013) we were pleased to present a lengthy article on the early years of the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory in Saanich, Vancouver Island.

The feature dealt extensively with Dr. W.E. Harper, who researched many potential sites in Canada before finding and recommending this location to his colleagues in Ottawa.

The facility has stood and functioned for its many purposes for the several decades - that is, until the year just ended.

Federal budget cuts threatened one important part of the complex known as "The Centre of the Universe" - most popular with locals and tourists alike.

This was a worrisome circumstance. While the year started badly, it is now apparent that Ottawa revisited its' decision and "The Centre" is set to continue in operation. Good news!

For background, please see [Orders of the Day](#), Volume 19, Number 1, page 5.)

By Cindy Hamett
Victoria Times-Colonist, Nov. 26, 2013

The Centre of the Universe might be in for a meteoric change if a vision for food service and more futuristic displays are built into a plan to reopen the facility to star-gazers and school children.

The centre opened in 2001 as an educational arm of the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory, a national historic site, on West Saanich Road.

The National Research Council shut down the interpretive centre on Aug. 24 due to financial constraints, promising it would look at maintaining some form of public access on weekends and during special events.

On Saturday, about 30 people including representatives from the council, the observatory and community stakeholders met and designed a plan to resume partial public access to the centre.

"From the beginning, we were encouraging a community-based solution," said Dan Wayner, vice-president of the National Research Council Canada.

Volunteers with the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada offered to conduct Saturday night viewings for the public, beginning in April or May.

"We didn't actually stop the Saturday night viewing," Wayner said. "At the end of the season, initially, we didn't have a clear outlook on how they would be continued but now we see a way forward."

The observatory is anchored by the Plaskett telescope, built beginning in 1914.

Wayner said the council will help with the transition of the building's operation over the next "several years." That assistance will mean providing public access to the building without fees, covering basic operating costs and contributing to municipal taxes.

"But this is still subject to negotiation," Wayner said. "The community first needs to become organized and come forward so that we can actually talk and come to a conclusion of how we are going to work together."

The non-profit group Science Venture, which runs youth summer camps at the University of Victoria, has proposed a six-month pilot project of workshops for school tours and science camps during school breaks and professional development days.

The facility had cost an average of \$310,000 a year to run and brought in between \$50,000 and \$60,000 in revenue, Greg Fahlman, general manager of the NRC Herzberg Institute of Astrophysics, said recently.

Don Moffatt, a University of Victoria astronomy graduate and business analyst, will lead the group looking at short-term steps for getting the Saturday night viewings and school tours back on track.

Moffatt, who conducted public education out of the observatory in the 1990s, started a petition asking the government to reconsider the closure. It now has more than 2,000 signatures.

Moffatt is most excited about the long-term vision for the centre, which will be overseen by chairwoman Dale Ryan, director of public relations for Butchart Gardens. Business leaders will look at how to make the centre a sustainable education and tourist site.

Hayley Rosenberg, owner of Nourish restaurant, said everything from onsite food and refreshments to displays that honour the history of the centre and showcase future technologies were discussed as possibilities.

'Accelerometer' will monitor twisting of B.C. legislature dome

By Rob Shaw

Victoria Times Colonist, Dec. 12, 2013

The B.C. legislature's dome will be outfitted with an "accelerometer" to figure out how much it is twisting and whether taxpayers need to spend millions in repairs.

Politicians on the legislature's management committee voted Thursday to monitor the dome with the device for several months to see if it is moving, before deciding how much if anything to spend on stabilization.

"It may well be it has come to rest where it is and there may not be any additional movement," said Speaker Linda Reid.

"We need to learn that before we decide on the next course of action. We're measuring it first."

MLAs were told two weeks ago that the green copper-plated dome was "twisting" and was one example of more than \$5.7 million in critical upgrades needed to stabilize the 115-year-old capital building.

On Thursday, they said the concerns may have been slightly overstated.

"I was a bit disappointed today that the crisis we were told about two weeks ago is going to be managed by a measurement," said NDP house leader John Horgan.

Still, that's the appropriate and prudent thing to do because MLAs appear to have "got a bit ahead of ourselves" in debating the issue last month, Horgan said.

Instead of \$5 million, MLAs are looking at putting aside \$3 million in capital upgrades in next year's legislature budget, which won't be finalized until January, Horgan said.

Engineers last noticed the legislature's dome had moved in a 2006 report. The accelerometer will tell engineers what additional movement is recorded over the next six months.

Engineers have also said the rest of the historic building is deteriorating rapidly and suffers from old brick walls that aren't reinforced, a lack of sprinklers, overcrowding and obsolete systems for power, plumbing, lighting and communication.

The cost of repairing the building has varied widely in recent years, from as much as \$70 million identified last month to more than \$250 million in seismic work and long-term maintenance flagged by engineers in 2006.

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To mark the 100th anniversary of the Legislative Buildings, and to enact Bill 55 to formally recognize the Association of Former MLA's of B.C. in statute - February 10, 1998, Victoria

A memorable day for British Columbia

Hon. Dale Lovick, Speaker

Premier Glen Clark

Leader of the Opposition
Gordon Campbell

Clerk of the Assembly
E. George MacMinn

Law Clerk Ian D. Izard

The House met at 11:00am.

Participating in the proceedings (in part):

- The Lieutenant-Governor, Garde B. Gardom
- Mr. Speaker
- Premier Clark
- Hon. U. Dosanjh, Attorney-General
- Mr. Campbell
- Gretchen Brewin, Deputy Speaker
- Ms. E. Gillespie, MLA
- Ms. Ida Chong, MLA
- Hon. J. Pullinger, MLA

Address from the Bar of the House

Mark Rose, President of the Association of Former MLA's of B.C.

(Ed. note: with leave of all MLA's present, the House now heard from Mark Rose, speaking as a former MLA. This is a rare privilege for a private citizen to address the Assembly. Few are given the



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opportunity, and in Mark's case, it was fitting and well deserved. These were his remarks.)

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly, I am here today on this historic occasion honouring almost 700 former members elected to this assembly. I thank the Speaker's office and all others who had anything to do with the construction of today's program, featuring, of course, the bill that was just passed, granting statutory recognition and legitimacy for our association of former MLA's.

Governor General Lord Tweedsmuir once said: "Public life is regarded as the crown of a career, and to young men it is the worthiest ambition." During the 20 years or so that I served as an elected representative, I worked with hundreds of talented, distinguished and dedicated women and men who entered public life with the highest ideals and a genuine desire to serve their electors. Democracy cannot exist without elections. Yet today, unfortunately, many if not most of our citizens do not regard those elected to public office as either particularly distinguished or dedicated.

Why is the contemporary criticism about public figures so pervasive, I wonder. The BBC News's Martyn Lewis, who has thought about these things, asks this question: is it because, through our news sources, people are unwittingly

conditioned to grow up in a world where successes and achievements appear to be much less important than mistakes and failures? Certainly we need people to probe motives. We need them to ferret out injustices and highlight controversies, but not exclusively so. By concentrating only on exceptions, the public receives a distorted view of the world. Since the public is intoxicated by any caption that humbles the prominent among us, positive comments are seldom reported. Denounce and demean: is that the maxim of the media?

But we politicians contribute to our own degradation when we indulge in petty partisanship and resort to name-calling as a substitute for reasoned debate. Despite all this, some of us thrive on politics and get used to being targets. As Winston Churchill said: "Politics are almost as exciting as war, and quite as dangerous. In war you can only be killed once, but in politics many times."

Mr. Speaker, as president of the former MLA's, I invite you and all sitting members to join our association once you become eligible. And may your eligibility be of your own choosing and not be determined by an unanticipated vengeance of the part of the voters.

(Ed. note: source for this recollection is Hansard of above date, pages 6581-6586 inclusive, ISSN 0709-1281.)



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Emilie Campbell's winery story

One of the big events in our life this year was to connect with Emilie's Mom's birth family. The story of that meeting is below. If you see fit to print this in Orders of the Day, that would be fine. People are always amazed when Emilie tells the story.

Genealogy has become such a popular thing nowadays, as we boomers search out our roots (for example, my Dad was born in Scotland and his dad was born in Northern Ireland. We had always assumed in the family that it was a timing/mistiming issue, to ensure that the baby was born abroad! Not so, for 4 generations back from my Dad, they lived and farmed in Northern Ireland. So we are as much Irish as Scottish (Scottish on my grandmother Gilmour's side).

It still boggles the mind to think about all the things that had to align for us to connect with the Thurmeier's:

We decided to go to Osoyoos at the last minute.

We decided to do a winery tour but had to stop for lunch break in Oliver.

That put us later into the afternoon and we carried on to do our 9th winery (don't worry. We were sipping, taking turns, and generally being conscientious! We were trying to get stamps on a wine passport, for entry in a prize draw. 4 stamps got you a shot at a nice prize, but 9 stamps was a

bigger prize!). We needed one more stamp and we chose Rustico winery, as I had just read good things about it on the Internet.

On the opposite side of the coin, Rick Thurmeier had to choose to vacation right at that time, and had to choose to visit his friends Don and Susan who live in Naramata. Don and Susan retired to Naramata from Winnipeg and always bring their guests down to Rustico. 15 minutes either way and we would have missed each other!!

Emilie was asking after the Thurmeier's of Winnipeg because that's where her Mom had been born. But, the only reason Rick Thurmeier is living in Winnipeg is because his dad retired there from the Air Force. All the other Thurmeier's were in Saskatchewan, where Emilie's grandmother had also hailed from before going to Winnipeg to have her baby. So, it was a total fluke that the Winnipeg connection panned out!

Since then, we visited all the aunts and cousins from Winnipeg, to Humboldt, to Saskatoon, to Regina, to Calgary, and to Victoria. It has been a tremendous experience and a connection that Emilie continues to cherish. She thought that she would never find her Mom's heritage. Unfortunately, her Mom died in 2010, and her grandmother died in 1998. What an amazing re-connection that would have been for the 2 of them.

Mike Campbell



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Per Emilie:

Last Sept.22/12, my husband and I were at "Rustico" winery (Oliver) for a tasting. Beside us was a couple from Winnipeg. As the tasting wore on, I got my nerve up to ask (as I have been for the last 25 to 30 years) if they knew of my Mom's birth family name. She was born in Winnipeg in 1928 at the Misericordia Hosp., and given up for adoption in Regina at several months of age. All the documentation I have is a Baptismal Certificate from the Misericordia Hospital giving Mom's name at birth (Thurmieir; I assumed a French descent and pronounced it like the ending of "Chevalier"), and that of her birth mother. I have never had any luck finding that name in Winnipeg, on the internet, nor finding any birth records in Manitoba or Saskatchewan.

So I said to this gentleman beside me, "Pardon me for asking, but do you know this name (Thurmieir), I don't think it is very common." He said, "You're right, it isn't very common. But actually it isn't French, it's Austrian. And it is pronounced "Toormire". And my name is "Thurmeier". (the spelling on the baptismal certificate is wrong!).

And I said, "Well, my Grandmother's name is Emilia".

And he said, "My Grandmother's name is Emilia".

At this point, I don't think there is a dry eye in the place!

So we chat outside for a bit and exchange e-mail addresses. And I go home and pace for 10 days till "Rick" is home from holidays.

Bottom line: I found my Mom's birth family at that little winery on that fateful day when all the stars aligned. "Rick" is actually my Mom's first cousin. And we are all part of a large Austrian-descent, Saskatchewan Prairie, Catholic family. Besides receiving the Family tree, I have connected with a host of "Cousins" and two "Great Aunts", whom we met this summer on a "Prairie Road Trip" to Winnipeg for Rick's daughter's wedding.

Needless to say, "Rustico" is now my all-time favourite winery. And I thank the lovely lady doing our tasting for asking "Where are you from?" She also was from Winnipeg.

This "story" is also my all-time favourite, and I hope you enjoyed hearing it as much as I enjoy telling it.

Sincerely,
Emilie Campbell

(Ed. Note: Emilie Campbell's mother-in-law is our own Jean Campbell, long-time supporter of this Association, and widow of the late Dan Campbell, an outstanding Minister of Municipal Affairs in the W.A.C. Bennett government of those many years ago.)



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Book Review

"Boundless Optimism: Richard McBride's British Columbia"

By Patricia E. Roy

UBC Press, 2013, \$32.95


Patricia E. Roy's *Boundless Optimism: Richard McBride's British Columbia* has been released in softcover. McBride was premier of British Columbia for a dozen years after 1903 during a brief window of unparalleled opportunity with respect to provincial resources and barely emergent government policy. He lost his sight and died at age 47 from nephritis, or Bright's Disease after a powerful career in B.C. politics. Biographer Roy was honoured with the 2013 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Canadian Historical Association. UBC Press provides this overview of her latest work:

The first decade and a half of the twentieth century was mostly a time of unprecedented prosperity and growth in British Columbia. Although its colonial history was still etched in the public

psyche, BC was coming into its own as a province of Canada and starting to realize the untapped economic potential of its natural resources. Born just months before British Columbia ceased to be a British colony, Richard McBride juggled his imperial, national, and provincial identities while developing one of the most important political careers the province has ever seen.

McBride built a reputation as a charismatic and optimistic leader who was dedicated to a vision of a modern, industrialized, wealthy province. A product of his time, McBride firmly opposed Asian immigration and often promoted industrial development at the expense of First Nations interests. But he also had great forward vision: he introduced party lines to stabilize the BC legislature; he vigorously supported provincial causes in Ottawa; and, above all, he encouraged the building of railways in many regions of the province. *Boundless Optimism* puts McBride's political career into historical context, chronicling his passions, his many accomplishments, the downsides of his optimism, and his role in making British Columbia the province it is today.

Source: *British Columbia History, Winter 2013*



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Member/Reader Survey

It's been a long while since we canvassed Members/Subscribers and readers as to their views about *Orders of the Day*. It's time again so please complete the questionnaire and mail or email your views.

Please use a ✓ or ✗ in the appropriate box.

	Enjoy Very Much	Enjoy Somewhat	Do Not Enjoy	Waste of Space
News about Former MLAs (brief items)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historic Photos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Letters to the Editor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Comments on newsletter in general: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____				

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Thank You

Hunger games at Victoria city hall

(Ed. note: Some of us may wish to read this more than once to marvel at this classic report on how not to function as a mature civic government.)

*Victoria Times Colonist
November 22, 2013
By Bill Cleverley*

How many Victoria city councillors does it take to order lunch?

They can't. They have a policy against it.

Or do they?

About two hours into a mind-numbing discussion this week surrounding governance, standing committee makeup and the council procedure bylaw, it was suggested that rather than taking a break for lunch, they order in.

Simple, right?

Afraid not.

This is the same council, remember, that 18 months ago decided to forgo catered lunches in order to trim city expenses. The largely symbolic gesture was estimated to save the city about \$12,000 a year.

So when tummies started grumbling Thursday, Coun. Shellie Gudgeon made a formal motion that they order in.

In light of the policy, Coun. Charlayne Thornton-Joe wanted clarification.

"We are ordering food. We will pay for it ourselves individually and continue the meeting at the same time. That's the intention," explained Mayor Dean Fortin.

Not so fast. Coun. Geoff Young had a concern.

"I'm happy to have people order food, provided it involves no expenditure of staff time. I guess that means that people can go out and phone to get food brought in and have it brought to the table, but we are totally defeating the purpose if we have staff do it."

Maybe it's time to revisit the no-catering policy, said Coun. Ben Isitt over protestations from the mayor to stick to the issue at hand. "We see this every time that lunch becomes an issue the ad hoc manner," Isitt said.

Perhaps, Fortin responded, because council had endorsed the no-catering policy, he should simply rule the motion to order lunch inappropriate "because this is something that has been done and it needs to sit for a while before it's brought back up."

"It sat for two years," countered Isitt, but he conceded there should probably be notice of motion given to change the policy and to allow for proper debate.

Meanwhile, trying to steer the debate back to the issue lunch Fortin said the motion to order in food, was still on the table (even if lunch wasn't).

"Failure to support the motion means at some point we'll have a scheduled break for 15 or 20 minutes, at which time you can go get your own food and bring it back," Fortin said.

But supporting the motion didn't make sense either, said Coun. Pam Madoff.

"I think an indication informally [asking] who would like to order lunch. That's fine. But if you do it by majority, it means we have all agreed to do this and some of us have got a lunch here," Madoff said.

"I just think we are going sideways again and it's just frustrating."

At which point the motion was dropped and the meeting carried on for about another hour before a short break was called so councillors could get themselves something to eat.

(Ed. note: thankfully the majority of Greater Victoria residents reside beyond Victoria City boundaries. Thus we're not involved in this nonsense, save for our amusement.)

Norris



January 3, 1984

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Letters

Hugh Curtis
Editor, *Orders of the Day*

I want to sincerely thank *Orders of the Day* for your ongoing support for the Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation. My understanding is that you have been our loyal supporters for some time now. For this we are most grateful.

As you may well know, Royal Columbian Hospital is the only hospital in B.C. that has a trauma, neurosciences, cardiac, high-risk maternity and neo-natal intensive care unit (NICU) all on one site. This means that RCH is the only hospital in the province that can care for a mother and her unborn child if they are involved in a motor vehicle collision or the mother has a serious heart or neurological problem that requires immediate treatment or surgery.

Royal Columbian Hospital has the second-largest Level 3 Neonatal Intensive Care Unit in the province. Since 1997, the Canadian Neonatal Network has recognized RCH's Variety NICU as consistently ranking among the top in the country for achieving excellent survival rates for neonates (babies who are born before their due date) and very low rates of complications relating to prematurity.

I hope that these reasons alone are enough for you to want to continue a partnership with Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation. If yes, I would like to supply you with an updated version of our advertisement for publication and appropriate recognition.

For further information, please contact me at or at 604.520.4438.

Sincerely,
Julie Coghlan
Director, Marketing and Communications
Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation

Hugh:

Keep up the good work. I very much enjoy the historical articles that you do.

Regards,
Wally Oppal, Vancouver

(Ed. note: the Honourable Wally is a relatively new Member of this Association. He often sends a note such as this.)

Thank you for generously supporting BC Family Hearing Resource Society.

For the past 30 years, BCFHRS has been giving deaf and hard of hearing children the gift of communication. Thanks to your loyal and generous support, we have been able to expand our specialized programs and services to we can teach children and their families all across the province. We have been able to continue to provide our parents with the support, education and guidance they need to help their child thrive. And we have been able to offer a variety of programs so parents can choose the best communication option for their child. Together we can continue to help children with deafness and hearing loss realize their fullest communication potential.

Thank you again for your support. An official tax receipt is enclosed for your records. If you would like more information, or if you would like to have a tour of our Centre, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,
Cathy Cruickshank, Interim Executive Director
BCFHRS
November 2013



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The Association is pleased to provide space for selected not-for-profit children's organizations at no cost.

Slam the door on knob ban

Calgary Herald

Saturday, November 23, 2013

It's hard to resist a bit of word play and stop oneself from asking: What knob dreamed up this new policy? The City of Vancouver has decided that beginning in March, new homes must be built with levers to open doors, rather than knobs. The levers will also be mandatory on bathroom faucets.

This one's a head scratcher. The ostensible purpose of the new amendment to Vancouver's building bylaw is to make life easier for seniors and the disabled. That's a noble cause when it comes to public buildings, of course. They should be made as accessible as possible.

However, private homes should be left out of the equation. Seniors don't tend to move into new neighbourhoods; they stay in established, older areas (where doorknobs are profligate) and leave the new homes to young families. The small children in those

families are going to have a much easier time pulling a lever and leaving the house unnoticed. At least, doorknobs hinder their innocent escapes to some degree.

Nor should homeowners who purchase a house be required to eschew doorknobs in the event that 30 years from now, a disabled person or senior might buy that house. In fact, the new homeowners themselves might be the very seniors still living in that home and still prefer knobs over levers.

Doorknobs have value as ornaments, too, and can add an artful touch to a room that a utilitarian lever cannot.

Someone needs to slam the door on Vancouver's wacky idea and remind city council that there are far more serious problems demanding attention.

A Special Message for Recently Retired MLA's

We offer this suggestion for those who have left legislative office after the General Election in May.

For twenty years this Association has proven to be a useful and friendly way in which to maintain contact with former colleagues, and to follow progress in the new parliament.

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for 2014.**

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for 2014.**

In 1911, thirteen years after his death, the city of Vancouver unveiled a memorial to David Oppenheimer at Stanley Park

By John Mackie,
Vancouver Sun, Dec. 14, 2013

It's hard to overstate David Oppenheimer's importance to early Vancouver. As the city's second mayor from 1888 to 1891, he was instrumental in the creation of Stanley Park, as well as the construction of much of the city's infrastructure, from streets to sewers to streetcars.

Oppenheimer's Vancouver Improvement Company once owned and developed much of East Vancouver. His family firm, Oppenheimer Brothers, opened its first Vancouver warehouse in 1885, a year before the city was officially founded. Bryan Adams' Warehouse recording studio is in the old Oppenheimer Brothers warehouse in Gastown.

But he also had his detractors, who thought Oppenheimer blurred the lines between city business and his own - Oppenheimer had investments in many of the companies that built the infrastructure.

Oppenheimer died of a heart attack on New Year's Eve, 1897, a day before he would have turned 64. His body lay in state at the Masonic Temple at Cambie and Cordova for a couple of days, then his coffin was shipped by rail to Brooklyn for burial.

Vancouver used to have an Oppenheimer Street, but the city changed it to East Cordova in 1897. After his death, his friends thought the city should honour Oppenheimer. It took 13 years, but finally on Dec. 14, 1911, Vancouver unveiled a David Oppenheimer memorial sculpture near the Beach Avenue entrance to Stanley Park. When Oppenheimer died, the Vancouver World acknowledged his mixed reputation.

"Mr. Oppenheimer had strong views on public questions and made, no doubt, enemies, as all herculean minds do," stated the World editorial.

Thirteen years later, any misgivings about Oppenheimer were forgotten. B.C. Premier Richard McBride came over from Victoria to unveil the statue, which was executed by the great sculptor of early Vancouver, Charles Marega.

"A touching and heartfelt tribute, even if somewhat tardy, will be paid late this afternoon to the memory of



Photo source: BC Archives A-03291

Oppenheimer memorial, Stanley Park, circa 1913

one whose name will ever remain prominently identified with the first notable steps taken in Vancouver's march of prosperity," said the World 102 years ago.

"David Oppenheimer was a born organizer and leader of men. Although not a particularly brilliant public speaker, yet he had the ability to imbue others with a conception of his plans and a desire to carry them out."

David was one of five Oppenheimer brothers (David, Charles, Meyer, Isaac and Godfrey) who grew up in Blikastel, Germany, and emigrated to the United States in 1848. Oppenheimer's first stop was New Orleans, then he moved to California for the gold rush, where the Oppenheimer brothers sold mining equipment. When gold was discovered along the Fraser River in 1858, Charles moved north, followed by his brothers.

The company initially set up shop in Victoria, then expanded to Yale, Barkerville, Lytton, Hope and Fisherville, a long-dead town near Cranbrook. David started acquiring land in what would become Vancouver in 1878. In 1884, he was among the businessmen who successfully lobbied the provincial government to move the Canadian Pacific Railway terminus to Coal Harbour instead of Port Moody, and his land was suddenly worth a fortune. So he moved to Granville (the future Vancouver) in 1885 and set up shop.

David and Isaac were aldermen in Vancouver's first council in 1886, and in 1888 David became mayor. He was elected to four consecutive one-year terms before retiring from public office.