

The Weekly Westerner

Box 4572, Station C, Calgary, Alberta T2T 5N3
Grey Eagle Hotel, 3777 Grey Eagle Drive (Corner of 37 St SW and Glenmore Drive)
Mondays 12.10 pm - 1.30 pm

President: Gerry Meek **President-Elect:** Bill Fitzsimmons **Past President:** Tim Anderson
Secretary: Karl Herzog **Treasurer:** Judy Cochran
Directors: Marlene Doherty, Darren Grierson, Ken Montgomery, Alex McFadden

Together We Are People of Action - Building Community

June 29, 2020 Edition: 53.40 Reporter: Judy Cochran Editor: David Williams

President Gerry Meek was ready to preside over his last meeting of the year. Always a smile and warm welcome for all participants joining in. As he says, no matter the weather, it is always warm inside on the Zoom meeting. Today, we had 55 warm participants to get our meeting underway at 12:03 pm.

As it was our Canada Day program, we were treated to the singing of our national anthem by **Don Edie**. He has a full and rich voice. Gerry recommended the other off-key singers remain silent! Thank you, Don.

President Gerry introduced our guest speaker, **Peter Veress**. Peter has 25 years experience in immigration consulting. He has held many roles, including working for the Canadian government. He has a passion for the integration of foreign investors, workers and their families into Canada. He has an extensive practice as president of Vermax Group Inc, a group of immigration specialists. Welcome, Peter.

Peter takes us through a brief history of immigration in Canada starting with the First Nations people approximately 6,000 years ago. Fast forward to 1650 with the first European explorers followed by the French from 1608-1750, then came the English, Irish, Scots, and Welsh settlers (thank you, **David Williams**, for the clarification!). From 1900-1950, Canada saw the arrival of immigrants from South and East Asia. Today we see immigrants coming to Canada from all over the world for as many reasons.

Peter knows this is a very emotive topic, but asks that we de-politize and de-emotionalize to be able to appreciate what he is going to present today as he looks at the basic mechanics of immigration in our country. 20% of our population is born somewhere else, even higher in some centers like Toronto where it is 30%. Peter's definition of a Canadian is an immigrant with seniority! Most of us can trace our ancestry back to other places than Canada. Canada has the second largest land mass of any country, but matches the population of Mexico City. We need immigrants to

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- 1) Help our economy compete on the global market.
- 2) Recover the loss of an aging population. In 2017, Canada had more seniors 65 and older than children under the age of 15. This brings up many issues, including social obligations to our seniors.
- 3) Canada has trillions of dollars in debt amassed by all three government levels. To pay this off, we need a tax base of 60 million people. Peter interjects a fun fact: if you are female born after 1960, you are likely to have more husbands than children! The average birth rate is 1.56 children per family. A graph shows a dramatic fall in our natural increase compared to population growth, but the migratory increase matches 1:1 the population growth.
- 4) Finally, there are skill and labour shortages, even given our current staggering unemployment stats. This occurs in trades, IT, meat packing plants, agriculture, and the service industry.

Peter introduces us to what he calls the Three Pillars of Immigration to show how we select our immigrants. In 2019, there were 313,580 immigrants coming into Canada. Remember, we lose about 70,000 to emigration – those leaving Canada for a variety of reasons.

First Pillar: economic Immigration accounting for 61%. Under this pillar are four programs:

- 1) Federal Skilled Worker Program
 - very restrictive
 - under 35, need Master or PhD, almost perfect English, five years work experience
- 2) Federal Skilled Trades Program
 - already here in Canada on a work permit; usually skilled workers only
 - criteria must have a job, established, and no criminal record
 - then can apply for permanent residence
 - there are Canadian prime ministers who would not qualify or, for example, Jason Kenney!
 - need to show no Canadian is willing or able to take the position
- 3) Canadian Experience Class
 - requires one-year experience, age, language, other requirements
- 4) Provincial and Territorial Immigration Program
 - since 2004, Alberta has been rethinking this concept given our economic situation



– we want to be able to choose our own immigrants suited to our needs

Second Pillar: Family Class Sponsorship Program accounting for 24% of the immigrants. This includes grandparents, parents, common-law partners and spouses, dependent children. It is not the same as in the USA and the “train of immigrants” as President Trump refers to it.

Third Pillar: The Humanitarian/Refugee making up 15%. It is the smallest group, but receives the most press. A refugee is a person outside their habitual place of residence and has a fear of harm due to race, religion, nationality, social group or political belief with no state protection. The government brought in 29,000 people, but a growing number are brought in privately, currently 19,000. A group of five could sponsor a refugee, or our Rotary club could become a Master Agreement Holder sponsoring five refugees. Both scenarios require money and a plan for integration.

Under this pillar are public policy on an international crisis, either man-made, or natural.

Lastly, the Immigration Act allows for humanitarian and compassionate circumstances. One of Peter's clients was a 17-year-old girl who was brought to Canada to live with her grandmother as her father was in prison for killing her mother. On his release, the father came looking for his daughter. The girl was permitted to remain living in Canada with her grandmother. This speaks volumes for our country; and there are many other cases.

A quote from **Yogi Berra**, a former US baseball player: “The future ain't what it used to be.” Here are some factors affecting the future of immigration:

1) More provincial involvement

– we need to determine what type of worker is best for our economy

– oil workers, agricultural, diversified industries

2) More rural and northern programs

– currently 60% settle in Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver

– see immigration as a positive solution to a problem in settling these areas

3) Artificial intelligence

– offer data at a faster pace with more security

– there are both plus and minus factors

4) Covid pandemic

- created an economic fallout
- there are travel bubbles where Canada will accept residences from some countries such as Australia, NZ, but not hot spots like US and Brazil
- Canada and other countries are protecting their autonomy, and economy
- there is less temporary travel in the world

A closing comment: we must be vigilant to protect our successful Canadian experiment and not turn on minorities for political reasons.

Q & A

1) President Gerry : Is there a perception that Canada is welcoming?

The government does strive for a positive experience. 50 years ago, when Peter's family immigrated, it took 4 ½ years for the process to be completed. Peter's father was an established engineer at the time. Today, it would take one year with progress tracking along the way. To ask a recent immigrant, Peter expects they would answer that, yes ,there was a soft landing and Canada is welcoming.

2) **Bill Fitzsimmons:** How can Rotary contribute beyond sponsorship?

The best way is to have an open, honest dialogue on the subject. Or sponsor a Citizenship ceremony.

3) **Duncan Stanners:** The immigrants' degrees are not being recognized which leads to under employment.

Peter agrees and offers a quip that the best place to have a heart attack is in a taxicab, as the driver is likely to have been a doctor in his homeland. RBC released a report citing Canada is losing \$15 billion due to a lack of credential recognition. A fine line between protecting our standards.

4) **David Watson:** Are immigrants better in larger or smaller communities?

Larger communities, as that is where the jobs are; the networks are and the communities. There is a push to move them out to smaller communities, but they do not want to be isolated; they want to be integrated. We need to give them a soft landing and level the playing field. Without a plan there is no possibility for improvement, to upgrade their education, their job position, and the result is ghettos. We not only have to finish the race together we need to start together and be running in the same track. There is a pay-forward situation where an immigrant from Africa may come with "baggage", however the payoff is in the second generation. Stats show the second generation is more efficient and productive than their Canadian counterparts.

5) **Robyn Braley:** Please comment on the role of farm workers and oil workers.



There is a seasonal agricultural workers program in place bringing in 20,000 people. It has been in place for 30 years and is a bilateral agreement with Mexico and the Caribbean countries. There are rules around who can or cannot come. Consular officials make the rounds to ensure worker safety. We cannot deny exploitation or illegals, but this is a small percentage.

In closing, President Gerry notes some of our members shared their own stories of immigrating to Canada in the Chat. Gerry then thanked our speaker for a very enlightening presentation.

Next up was **Sa'adat Keshavjee** with his last Rotary Insight of the year. He reflected on our vision, mission and core values, on the past year with President Gerry and upcoming year with President Bill, and on all we have to celebrate together. My favourite was his categorization of our members – which category do you fall into: leaders, drivers, passengers, runners, disrupters, mess cleaner-uppers, grammar correctors, complainers, quiet back-benchers, critics, strict SAAs, singers, etc? He encourages us all to take on new challenges.

Bill Quinney presented a word wheel and a thank you video from the students of CanLearn.P4L.

Marlene Doherty reminds us that cherry sales close July 1 with 2,145 lbs sold to date. Drivers will be needed for deliveries around July 10 when the cherries arrive.

President Gerry reminds all who have not yet paid their club dues to do so by June 30, or contact **Judy Cochran** to advise otherwise. On July 1, the club will be charged for dues by Rotary International and District based on the number of members on our roster regardless of whether they have paid their dues or not.

Next week, under President Bill, **Jennifer McCue** from Bethany Care on Coping with Covid.

Tim Anderson is the new chair of the Program Committee.

Thought for the week: "People of character do the right thing, not because they think it will change the world, but because they refuse to be changed by the world."

Final words from President Gerry in appreciation for all the support in difficult and challenging times, but we were still able to accomplish so much this year. Good Luck, Bill.

Coming Events

June: Rotary Fellowship Month	
1	Zoom Meeting: Calgary's National Music Centre
8	Zoom Meeting: Mark Neufeld, Calgary Police Chief
15	Zoom Meeting: Can Learn Presentation
22	Zoom Meeting: Gerry Meek Day. Programme



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29	Zoom Meeting: Canada Day Special - Immigration and New Canadians: Peter Veress
	July Stampede and Okanagan Cherries Month
6	Jennifer McCue, President and CEO of Bethany: Bethany's journey through the pandemic
13	Diversity: Rotarian Anila Lee
20	Bill Fitzsimmons' program for the club.
27	TBA

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