

Young Swede looks to shine at WJHC

Hitmen superstar paving road to NHL

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Photo courtesy of Brad Watson

Victor Rask is leading the Calgary Hitmen in scoring and will likely suit up for Team Sweden in the upcoming 2012 world juniors.

Roughly 7,000 kilometres from home, Victor Rask is well on his way to turning his dream of playing in the NHL into a reality.

This past spring, the 18-year-old Rask was drafted in the second round, 42nd overall, by the Carolina Hurricanes in the NHL entry draft, and this fall had the opportunity to compete in his first NHL training camp, an experience the soft-

spoken Swede won't soon forget.

In the meantime, Rask, originally from Leksand, Sweden — a small town northwest of Stockholm — moved to North America in the summer to play for the WHL's Calgary Hitmen.

In spite of a WHL schedule that is roughly double the length of the Swedish men's league Rask was competing in back home, his adjustment of the North

American style of play has come with very few hiccups.

For instance, through the first two months of the WHL season, Rask leads the Hitmen in both goals and points.

"The language barrier isn't the factor it is with a lot of the European players," Hitmen head coach Mike Williamson said. "Victor is a player that makes guys around him better."

"He's got an unbelievable skill set. I think what's going to really allow him to be an impact player at the next level is that he is strong on his skates."

At 6-foot-2 and 194 lbs, Rask is on the short list of players being looked at to suit up for Team Sweden in the upcoming 2012 World Junior Hockey Championship, which is being held in Alberta for the first time since 1995.

"It will be fun to play (in the tournament)," Rask said. Team Sweden is "a really good team, and there are really good players back home in Sweden. It is tough to make the team, but I'll do my best."

Williamson is equally excited for Rask to get the opportunity to compete on the world stage, despite admitting the Hitmen would definitely miss his skill set.

"It's a great opportunity for him to go

and play at that level," said Williamson, who might miss Rask for a handful of games during the world juniors. "The players, when they come back, are usually better players because they've been pushed to a different pace."

Rask also competed in the 2011 World Under-18 Hockey Championships in Belarus this past spring, scoring five points in the tourney. However, the United States defeated Sweden 4-3 in overtime to win the gold medal.

Despite the heartbreak, all his international experience should pave the way for the talented Swede suiting up for the Hurricanes on hockey's biggest stage in the not-so-distant future.

"He's a tremendously skilled player," Hitmen teammate Jimmy Bubnick said. "He's so good with the puck. He's strong in the corners and he protects the puck well."

Coupled with Rask's enviable on-ice talent, Williamson said it's his dedication to the game that could really take him to another level.

"Victor wants to be a player and he wants to get better," his bench boss said. "He's willing to do extra off the ice as well."

**ATHLETE
of the
MONTH**

Bärtschi sparks the Flames prospect pool

First-rounder ready to represent Switzerland at world juniors

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Calgary Flames fans will likely be keeping a closer eye on Team Switzerland than usual Championships in Alberta this year.

There is an easy explanation for this — Sven Bärtschi.

The Flames' 2011 first-round draft choice has been lighting up the WHL with the Portland Winterhawks, having scored 39 points in only 17 games, and will likely be suiting up for the Swiss at the tournament.

"I'm really excited," he said. "I'm really lucky that I've been drafted by Calgary and that the world juniors are in Calgary."

"I didn't get to play against the Hitmen," he said — referring to a hip injury that kept him out of the lineup when the Winterhawks visited Calgary. "So it'll be good to be back in Calgary for the world juniors."

Bärtschi remained grounded, yet optimistic about Switzerland's chances.

"I think our chances are really good. It's kind of tough for us because we're such a small country," he said. "It's not like Canada where you have 60 players, or more, to choose from."

However, the Winterhawk is excited about playing in front of the Sad-

dledome faithful.

"I want to show them what I can out there," he said.

"They expect a lot from me, but I expect a lot from myself, too."

With an aging core and little in the prospect pipeline for the Flames, inhabitants of the Red Mile have plenty to be excited about with a prospect like Bärtschi.

John Weisbrod, the Flames assistant general manager, recognized the need for fresh blood. "While we've gotten some good role players and character guys, we haven't been successful in drafting skill."

"Sven is a high-skill player and can play the game at an uptempo pace. One of the things that makes him so good is that he's a high hockey sense guy."

All of this is good news for an NHL franchise that is lacking in solid top six talent — particularly when hated division rivals Edmonton and Vancouver are full of homegrown talent. Both teams have 10 or more draftees in their starting lineup compared to Calgary's four.

Beyond his skill set, Bärtschi seems to possess a maturity not often found in younger players. Former Winterhawks



Photo Courtesy of Bryan Heim/ Portland Winterhawks

Flames prospect Sven Bärtschi will be lighting the lamp for Team Switzerland at the WJHC.

teammate, and current New York Islanders forward Nino Niederreiter saw Bärtschi as someone who "gets along with everybody. He was a rookie last year and was very quiet."

"I'm sure this year he's starting to help out the younger guys," Niederreiter said.

Not bad for a sophomore playing his second year of North American hockey.

Coming off a fifth-place finish last year, the Swiss are in Group A for this year's tourney, meaning Bärtschi will be suiting up in front of the Saddledome fans.

Calgary kickboxer hungry for gold

Bronze medallist pursues gold medal effort at world championships in Spain

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To say Maeghen Cotterill is a busy person would be an understatement.

She's the mother to her two-year-old son, she manages and teaches at the dojo she owns, she runs a non-profit organization – and she's also training for the World Karate and Kickboxing Council World Championships, to be held Nov. 1-5 in Cadiz, Spain.

An appearance last year at the World Championships in Portugal earned Cotterill a bronze medal in light contact ladies 55-kilogram kickboxing.

Leaner and brimming with confidence, she said she feels the gold medal is hers to win.

"I've lost a lot of the excess weight I had after my pregnancy," Cotterill said. "Having gone through a world event, I'm a lot more confident and comfortable in the ring and know what to expect."

She said the birth of her first child, Hadrian, is why she abstained from participating in the inaugural 2009 World Championships in Dublin, Ireland.

Still recovering from her pregnancy, she found it important to travel to Portugal last year after qualifying at the World Karate and Kickboxing Council provincials and nationals. Although it was tough shedding the last of her baby weight, Cotterill was determined to qualify.

Her husband, Ron Mistafa has seen the effort she puts in.

"It seems that it's easy for her, but it's not. She's just driven to the point where she wants it so bad," he said.

"More than anything, it's the support she gets, both from friends and family."

Performing in the under 60-kilogram division, she earned three gold medals at provincials for point sparring in sport karate, continuous kickboxing and traditional hard style forms.

The 2010 nationals saw Cotterill also capture a silver medal for continuous kickboxing and a fourth place finish in point sparring.

HUMILITY GOES LONG WAY

Despite the accolades, Cotterill remains humble and grounded about her performance.

"The fourth place finish actually was more important to me than the medals," Cotterill said. "Karate was something I hadn't really kept up on, so being able to go right back into that and do as well as I did was really good for me."

In between qualifying appearances at the provincials and nationals – which saw six gold medals and one silver

in the 55-kg division – Cotterill was also been training six days a week.

Beyond weight and cardio training, part of Cotterill's training regimen involves Muay Thai – a variant of kickboxing originating from Thailand that utilizes the elbows and knees. Earlier in the year, she also participated in a local amateur tournament.

She said that the experience has improved her confidence and made her more aggressive, and that training in Muay Thai has helped round out her technical skills.

Her trainer of nine years, Corey McDonald, spoke highly of the benefits of Muay Thai.

"Absolutely, it has helped out with her punches," McDonald said. "Maeghen has always been a natural kicker, so getting her to work on that has helped greatly."

Her Muay Thai sparring partners have been males – some significantly bigger than her.

"Going full contact against guys who are much bigger than her is a great mental boost for when she steps in to fight a girl who weighs 120 pounds," McDonald said.

McDonald is very optimistic about Cotterill's chances.

"Maeghen is probably one of the top three female fighters in Canada right now and hopefully in the world if all goes well," he said.

A FULL SCHEDULE

Amidst everything else, Cotterill has also maintained her teaching schedule at 5 Elements Martial Arts, located in Avenida in southwest Calgary.

She has taught in some capacity since she was eight, as a senpai (the highest ranked student who does not have a black belt who assists the sensei) and later as a full-



Photo: Trevor Presiloski/Calgary Journal

Maeghen Cotterill puts up her guard. She will be participating in the World Karate and Kickboxing Council World Championships in Cadiz, Spain.

fledged instructor.

While she enjoys working with the children's groups, she has a special fondness for working with developmentally challenged individuals.

Founded in 2009, the 5 Elements Athletic Foundation helps underprivileged kids with training and equipment costs, as well as arranging transportation to provincial, national and world tournaments. Last year, seven students accompanied Cotterill to the World Championships. This year, she's looking to take nine students with her.

"I would say that every student who is going to Worlds has benefitted from the non-profit organization in some way. Training, hotel rooms, we do what we can to help," McDonald said.

Months of success for Alberta lacrosse

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Alberta lacrosse has taken gigantic strides since the end of the National Lacrosse League season in May.

It started back in June with the sale of the Calgary Roughnecks to the Calgary Flames, continued in August with the Minto Cup (a national tournament to determine Canada's best team), and finished in September with a successful National Lacrosse League Entry Draft.

Okotoks Raiders defenceman Aaron Tackaberry was a key component in two of those aspects.

With his Jaromir Jagr-esque mullet, the defender helped drive his junior-A Okotoks Raiders to their best finish ever at the Minto Cup.

In the semi-final game against the eventual champions, Whitby Warriors from Ontario, the Raiders fought hard but lost 8-4.

However, Tackaberry said it was a big step for Alberta lacrosse.

"That semi-final game was very tough to lose, but I still think we were with them the entire game," he said.

And he spun the performance into being selected by the Rochester Knighthawks with the 36th pick in the NLL draft.

"I didn't know where I would be going, but to be going to Rochester is just fantastic," said the 19-year-old. "I'm excited to go somewhere to open my wings in another neck of the woods."

Tackaberry wasn't the only Alberta player selected, with Raiders captain Barclay Hickey and Edmonton Miners forward Darren Kinnear both being picked up by the Roughnecks.

"The two of us coming out of the Minto showing everybody that we can play, getting drafting and getting the chance to play in the NLL – that's a big stepping stone for Alberta lacrosse," Tackaberry said.

Tackaberry stands out among the group because he was drafted to play in the eastern United States, something Roughnecks general manager Mike Board said isn't very common.

"I think it's important for us to be supportive of Alberta lacrosse, but more importantly it's other teams, and not just us, taking Alberta kids," said Board.

"I mean Rochester picked an Alberta kid, so to me that shows Alberta is starting to develop some lacrosse players that are catching the eye of NLL GMs around the league."

Board and Tackaberry believe it's just a beginning of things to come for Alberta lacrosse.

"There has been a history of kids being drafted, but the real success is having the kids drafted each year," said Roughnecks captain Andrew McBride, who also acts as an assistant coach with the junior-A Raiders in the summer.

"What we are doing as coaches is making sure we have players selected every year and really get them

put out across Canada."

Now with only nine NLL teams compared to 13 when he was drafted back in 2002, McBride added it's even harder to be drafted.

McBride agreed the type of players drafted likely started playing around the time the NLL made its first stop in Alberta with the Roughnecks back in 2001. (The Edmonton Rush joined in 2006.)

"It always helps to have the ability to have people playing at a high level with the Edmonton Rush and Calgary Roughnecks, they have something to strive for," said McBride.

The sport took another step forward in August when the Minto Cup was hosted in Okotoks for the first time ever. It wasn't until 2003 that Alberta was included in the junior-A battle for national supremacy.

"Having Alberta as part of that is very important because the kids that are playing in Alberta have something to shoot for," Board said. "It exposes the younger players to (junior lacrosse) because they are finally able to watch the Minto Cup."

McBride added: "The opportunities for kids to take their games to the next level is even more of a reality. The future is bright and I can't wait to see what happens in five years."

Paintball evolves into competitive sport

Fledgling sport battles on to gain presence

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Photo Illustration by: Trevor Presiloski/Calgary Journal

Brian Clayards takes a position in the "snake." He has been a professional speedball player for 2 years.

"When I was playing, I was able to travel around the world and get paid to do it. We had guys like Pepsi wanting to get in, but I think they were hoping for a TV deal."

- Mike Carey

Without ducking for cover, Brian Clayards raises his semi-automatic weapon and sets his sight on five people and prepares to open fire.

Taking aim, he lets out a short burst on one of his intended targets and tags one of them.

Onlookers cheer Clayards as he seeks out his next target.

The 27-year-old is a professional paintball player who competed at the Canadian Professional Paintball League's national championships late last month at the Agricultural Building on the Calgary Stampede Grounds.

Once seen as a recreational activity that was slightly more physical than laser tag, speedball has been gaining ground as a legitimate team sport.

Clayards, who participates in an indoor variant of paintball called speedball, has been playing for 13 years and has been a part of the Canadian Professional Paintball League team the Vancouver Vendetta for two.

He's also had a front row seat for the changes going on in the sport.

"It used to be, if there was a dispute, guys would scrap right on the field," Clayards said. "It's gotten better.

"In sports like baseball, you're told what to do and execute a game plan. In speedball, you have an opinion on the game plan. It's like a game of chess: you're a pawn, but you're expected to think and react," he said. "Players have a lot of independence."

But that independence can be daunting.

"I've seen teams who are up like 4-0 and blow it because something unexpected happens," Clayards said.

"You have to make quick decisions out there. You can't just do what the coach tells you. I've done it before and gotten tagged."

While the sport continues to gain momentum, it's still faced with challenges.

Businesses within the industry have gone bankrupt or filed for liquidation, such as Small Parts, a former industry giant based in the U.S.

With it went sponsorships for professional paintball teams and small decline in the sport's profile.

Most professional players aren't paid for their participation, and there are only a handful of professional

teams that have any kind of financial support.

"When I was playing, I was able to travel around the world and get paid to do it. We had guys like Pepsi wanting to get in, but I think they were hoping for a TV deal," said Mike Carey, one of the organizers for the nationals.

Creating an audience following has been another challenge for the sport.

"Unfortunately, it's not a fun game to watch."

The biggest issue is one that is somewhat familiar to what the NHL faced from FOX when they attempted to aggressively market their product in the '90s; because the action is so fast-paced it's hard to keep track of everything.

"In hockey, you have the puck. Football, you have the ball. Most other sports have a way of capturing and directing the viewer's attention. With paintball, you really have to pay attention to everything to take in the whole picture," Carey said.

Despite paintball not being the most spectator-friendly sport, Carey was quick to mention webcasts of the national championship have been getting a positive response with more than 20,000 unique visitors checking out last year's event.

As paintball continues to gain ground as a competitive sport, it draws on unique parallels to the gaming world to attract younger players into its raft.

Raymond Emsley, who manages the M.R. Paintball pro shop at Calgary paintball park Rampage City, said: "Kids, when they come in, the first thing they do is walk in the pro shop and start looking at guns. They start immediately making connections to Halo or Modern Warfare: that gun is from Modern Warfare."

Carey is quick to see the likeness between video games and paintball. "Older guys, like myself, call the area we play on fields, but when younger players come in, they refer to them as maps, like from video games. A lot of newer people look at it like it's a video game," he said.

One other area of overlap between paintball and video games is the universal aspect of it.

"Anyone, it doesn't matter their shape, size, how athletic they are, can come in and be a paintball player. It's very inclusive," Clayards said.

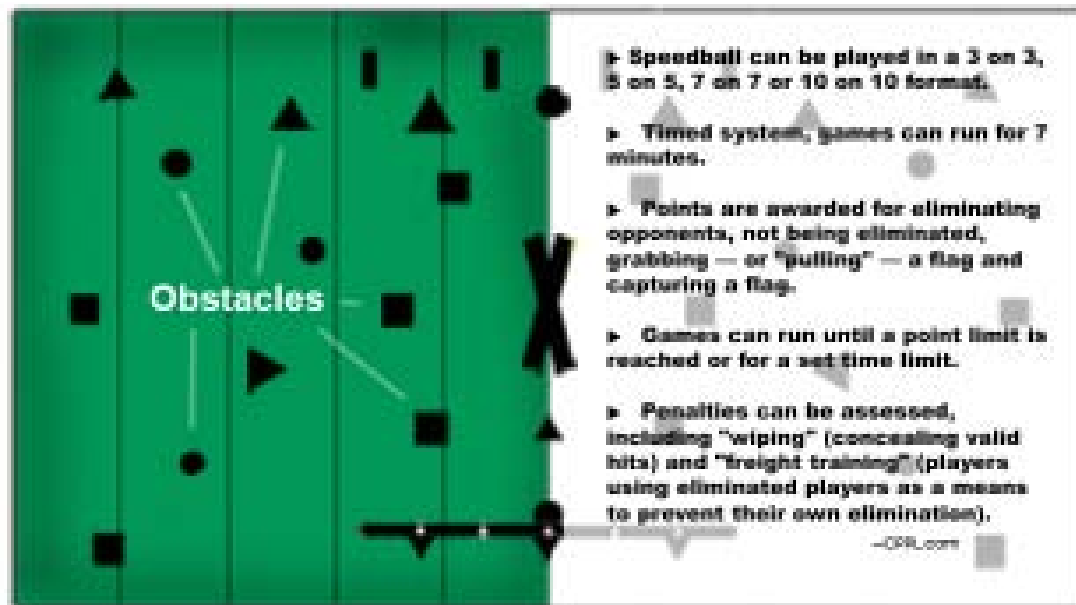


Photo Illustration by: Eva Colmenero/Calgary Journal

Young adult cancer survivors face significant hurdles

Cancer survivors have issues post treatment

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Photo courtesy of: Franco Giovanella (<http://www.sxc.hu/>)

The majority of cancer research has been geared towards children typically under the age of 15 or adults over the age of 40.

The effects and damage that cancer can wage on an individual are very well known. However, those who can be the most adversely affected by a cancer diagnosis are also the ones who have the least amount of assistance when it comes to dealing with their disease.

"If you're a pediatric oncologist in a kids hospital, 90 per cent of your patients are under 15 years of age. If you're an adult oncologist, more than 90 per cent of your patients are over the age of 40. So, the adolescent, young adult population in the cancer world is 10 percent of everybody's focus. In other words, we're nobody's focus," says Geoff Eaton, executive director and founder of Young Adult Cancer Canada.

Eaton is also a two-time cancer survivor, being first diagnosed at age 22. Young Adult Cancer Canada was founded as a way to try and make sense of what he describes as being a "very unique and challenging experience."

He is far from alone. According to the Canadian Cancer Society, 6,800 cases of cancer were diagnosed with young adults aged 20-39 last year, a number which has been increasing steadily since the 1980's.

Despite this, there hasn't been a lot of attention focused on young adult cancers. Eaton references a 2006 study he conducted that examined eight major granting agencies in Canada that dealt with cancer research.

Of the \$76 million spent in 2006, \$61,000 was spent

on young adult cancer research or 0.08 per cent of the total funds available.

Elissa Bulloch also finds that there is a lack of attention being put forth from the cancer community for young adults.

The 29-year-old, terminally ill with brain cancer, has found her experiences mixed.

While Bulloch does find that the hospitals in Calgary do reach out to patients, she finds that at times there's an impression of being brushed away.

"They're really quick to put you on antidepressants. I mean, I've got cancer, I'm pretty sure I should be sad. Are you trying to make me go away?" she says, chuckling.

"I find that we're kind of supporting each other if we can find each other. My brain oncologist connected me with a girl, who has the same cancer as me."

But, sharing the same cancer sometimes isn't enough.

"I had a friend named Barry, who was 60. He was this great man, totally happy go lucky. But, I look at him being 60 and me being 30 and it's different lifestyles, different genders and different ages, yet we're treated all the same," says Bulloch.

Dr. Ardythe Taylor is one person who is providing assistance to young adult cancer patients.

"The programming in cancer centers is traditionally more focused to older people because cancer has traditionally been more prevalent in older popula-

tions," says Taylor.

Taylor runs the Breast Cancer Supportive Care Foundation, an organization that assists breast cancer survivors through the recovery process. The foundation offers survivors a three month post-treatment program.

As a result of feedback from young adult survivors who have participated in the program, it offers a group specifically for young adults.

Taylor says that her foundation was created to try and fill in the gaps in the cancer patient system, noting that medical professionals are strapped for time and resources.

"You're out of sync with your peers. You have this perspective on mortality at a very young age that your peers just aren't thinking about."

Cancer patients feel like "they're thrown into a void, this void where they've been really closely cared for in the cancer center. But the cancer center, their work is done once the patient is stabilized," says Taylor.

Unfortunately, the resources simply aren't in place from the health care field for young adult patients in post-treatment.

"Right now, demand for our programs (at Young Adult Cancer Canada) is far exceeding our ability to supply them," says Eaton, acknowledging the need to help young adult cancer patients, noting that there were eight local groups for young adult cancer patients nationwide, a number that has shrunk to six.

Local Calgary school against pride?

Student says she encountered difficulties in trying to make private school queer-friendly

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Photo illustration by Tessa Clayton/Calgary Journal

Earlier in the school year, students at Rundle College were denied forming a pride club by school officials. Principal Wayne Schneider feels that the school's existing peer support group was sufficient and a pride club was not needed.

Calgary private school Rundle College has begun to recognize queer students within the school after denying a 16-year-old student the right to start a Pride Club this academic year. But other students maintain that the denial is simply part of a pattern of policies hindering support for queer students.

Inara Dattadeen, a Grade 10 student at Rundle, wanted to start up the school's first LGBT club for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students in the fall, only to be told by administration staff such a club would ruin the school's reputation.

"The homophobic and transphobic atmosphere created by many students needs to decrease and/or stop completely," Dattadeen said of her reason for wanting to start the club.

"By increasing the amount of awareness and information about the LGBT community, I believe that the school will become more educated and hopefully will become more queer-positive."

However, Rundle College principal Wayne Schneider insists that there are support structures in place for queer students and that there wasn't a need for a separate club.

He also denied that anyone within the school's administration had said anything about a Pride Club being detrimental to the school's reputation.

"No one said that or even intimated that. That was never part of a conversation," Schneider said.

"We have a large peer support group in the school. We felt that the umbrella of (sexual orientation) came under an already existing club."

Despite turning down the pride club, Schneider says that the school is "very supportive" of diversity, be it queer-related or otherwise.

However, Dattadeen said a LGBT club at Rundle would help her and other students to feel safe, but she said she

has made some progress at Rundle College since her pride club was turned down last fall, arranging for Calgary Outlink, a health and support group for Calgary's queer community, to do a presentation at the school.

Administration also allowed "a day of silence" to commemorate LGBT issues this year at the school.

"Their change in attitude this year has created a more positive outlook on this situation and I feel better now that there has been more effective communication and activity between myself, the school counsellor, and the admin," Dattadeen said.

"I don't expect Rundle to change overnight, but over time I hope to educate the school on diversity (specifically sexual diversity) to create a safe space for every student."

Schneider, when asked if Rundle College is a safe place for queer students, said that "we have a very safe and secure building" and added that the building is "psychologically safe."

He also said that he's "not naive to the fact that gays and lesbians" are confronted with issues in society and that it is a much bigger issue than Rundle College, but does feel the school has a responsibility in handling issues, particularly in cases of bullying.

Dattadeen is not the only student who says she has been discriminated against at Rundle College because of her sexual orientation.

Diamond Simpson, formerly known as Gordon Simpson, left Rundle in 2011 after being told the school wouldn't recognize her transition from male to female.

She said she was not allowed to wear the school's female uniform, and the school refused to go through her records and change her name and gender.

"The best way to describe why I left Rundle would be because they wouldn't allow me to be me," Simpson said.

Simpson has since transferred to Central Memorial

High School, where she said administrators are more supportive, allowing her to register under her preferred name, wear what she wants and is recognized as being female.

While Schneider said that he is forbidden from talking about students specifically, he denied that requests like Simpson's had ever come his way.

University of Victoria student Sean Sutherland, who graduated from Rundle in 2011 said he is more relaxed in his new school environment after attending a school where he felt he had no support after announcing he was gay.

"The school let me down when it came to supporting my sexuality," Sutherland said. "The topic was never once brought up in any school-related occasions and often felt like it didn't realistically exist in the environment."

"Even when it comes to topics such as bullying, the school refused to acknowledge that it was a major problem for LGBT students. It was a very heterocentric environment that was borderline homophobic."

Sutherland said the majority of his classmates treated him as a "pariah."

"When I first came out I was very alone so when I got bullied I dealt with it by following some self-destructive behaviours. But as time went on I made some trustworthy friends that I could lean on when I got bullied."

"Only on one occasion did a teacher stop an individual from calling me or someone else a 'fag.'"

Sutherland said his biggest regret was that, unlike Dattadeen, he did not try to start an LGBT club before he graduated.

Disclosure: Calgary Journal editor-in-chief Trevor Presiloski also contributed to this piece. Calgary Journal reporter Hannah Cawsey is a former student of Rundle College.

Health superboard has not decreased wait times

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Most Albertans have heard traumatic stories relating to health care – long wait times and rushed patient discharges are common horror stories.

With an expected provincial election this spring, Albertans face a difficult choice regarding future healthcare decisions.

The Progressive Conservative Party, also referred to as the PCs, developed a five-year plan healthcare plan in 2010, which included eliminating health regions and appointing a superboard known as Alberta Health Services, or AHS.

Wildrose Alliance Party leader Danielle Smith, says the superboard was simply the latest change to a health care system that's been in decline since 2004.

"We've been seeing a decline in life expectancy, an increase in infant mortality, long waiting lists for surgeries, and long waiting lists in emergency rooms," Smith says.

"The problem is that we have a broken system. The structure's not working.

"The superboard has been a disaster. They've seen escalating costs and deteriorating services," Smith says.

"Hospital administrators have eight layers of managers they have to go through.

"We're pouring money into a funnel. Whatever is leftover gets spent on the front lines."

Alberta Health Minister Fred Horne argues AHS has been successful. He says people forget that taking various health regions and merging them into one superboard is a big transition.

He says over 1,000 beds are added each year and there are plans to add 5,300 new continuing care spaces over the next five years.

"Through centralizing administration, like payroll for example, we've been able to generate just under \$700 million in savings."

Horne says having one system makes it easier to regulate certain practices province wide. He mentions the new approach that doctors are taking in assessing lung cancer treatment. Because the new approach was standardized it saved \$15.4 million – funds that were used for other health resources.

The recent AHS waiting time numbers tell a different story.

While there are some benefits to standardization, there are also drawbacks.

As part of AHS's five year plan, goals have been made to reduce emergency room patient wait times, with the aim of admitting 60 per cent of patients within eight hours for March 2012.

Their numbers have fallen short.

Per the AHS website, last week the Peter Lougheed Centre admitted 34 per cent of patients, Foothills Medical Centre and Rockyview General Hospital had 41 per cent success while the Alberta Children's Hospital was at 57 per cent.

Alberta Liberal Party leader Raj Sherman says this goal is not good enough.

"They have such low measures and they're not even meeting their low measures," Sherman says.

Sherman notes that admission times can be used as a barometer to measure the quality of health care.

"In the United Kingdom, 95 per cent of patients need to be admitted from emergency within four hours," Sherman says. "If the CEOs and administration fail, they're fired. If they succeed, they're given a bonus."

However, Horne says while wait times are important, other factors must be considered when reviewing the health care quality.

He notes that looking at how well people fare after a hospital visit should be considered when reviewing the health care system.

"If you look at things like cardiac disease or cardiovascular surgery, the numbers are pretty clear," Horne says. "Alberta is the best place in Canada, if not North America in that area."

Opposition parties in Alberta argue otherwise.

Both Smith and Sherman agree on one thing – returning decision making back to hospital administrators will create a more dynamic health care system.

"We think we need to flip the model. Fund the front line first, and start squeezing those layers of administration that are diverting resources," Smith says.

"Everything in the Foothills Hospital should fall under the person running the Foothills Hospital," Sherman says.

"This is the problem with the structure of AHS. The buck can't stop 300 kilometers away."

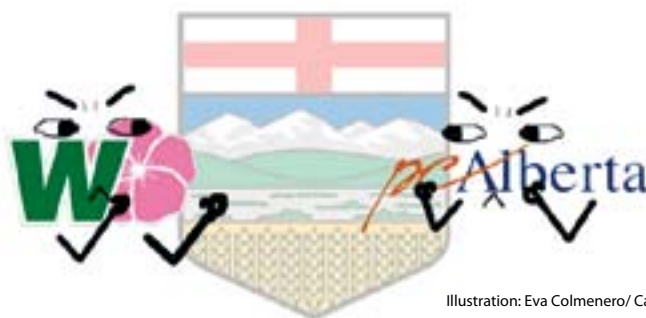


Illustration: Eva Colmenero/ Calgary Journal

Tories look to bounce back from Stelmach-effect

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With a provincial election all but called, talk has started to shift towards the battles that are going to be waged by the two major political parties in the coming election.

"I think Redford being nominated has helped greatly offset the Stelmach effect," Anthony Sayers said, referring to how former premier managed to alienate faithful Progressive Conservative, or PC, voters.

A University of Calgary political sciences professor, Sayers was at Mount Royal University Feb. 10 to discuss the pending provincial election. In an hour-long talk, he went over the challenges facing the PCs.

The biggest challenge he said is the

Wildrose Alliance Party, which was a beneficiary of the Stelmach effect, becoming the leading party in opinion polls in late 2009 and gaining several seats after dissatisfied MLAs

crossed the floor in January 2010.

However, Sayers said that Redford's nomination has given the PCs an opportunity to bounce back and has seen Alberta's dominant political party of the past 40 years on the precipice.

Describing the budget that was announced on Thursday as being a "pre-election" budget, Sayers was asked by Mount Royal University political science professor Bruce Foster if the budget was the PCs way of forfeiting voters on the right of the political spectrum.

"Absolutely," Sayers said, who pointed out that the Alberta PC party has a habit of using right-wing rhetoric, but more recently has tended to govern with a more centrist standpoint.

He explained that the PC party's decision to appear to be more centrist with the budget is a way for the PCs to appear more populist, making them more appealing to voters.

Sayers went on to say that the Wildrose Alliance Party has also tried to make themselves more appealing to voters by moving away from more "far right" issues such as gun control, and making their talking points more moderate.

By potentially conceding an entire voting bloc to the Wildrose Alliance Party, the PCs could potentially be putting themselves in danger.

This could turn into a serious issue for the PCs, who haven't been accustomed to any serious political threats from the right in their 40 years of dominance in Alberta. This, combined with an inexperienced leadership which has "made some mistakes," could result in problems for the Tories down the road.

Despite both candidates being female, Sayers doesn't really see gender becoming an issue in this election, as Alison Redford replacing Ed Stelmach as leader of the PCs offset any sort of

appeal Danielle Smith may have had for female voters.

"The right traditionally isn't very female friendly," Sayers said.

He referenced

polls from 2008 which saw only 14 per cent of female voters saying they would vote for the Wildrose Alliance Party, compared to the 50 per cent of respondents who said they would vote for the PC party.

The breakdown was a little closer with males, as 33 per cent expressed interest in voting for the Wildrose Alliance Party, compared to 40 per cent of those polled saying they would cast a vote for the Tories.

Of more interest to Sayers was the geographic breakdown between parties. Southern Alberta and rural regions of Alberta has a great deal of support for the Wildrose Alliance Party, while northern Alberta and urban regions in Alberta are more inclined to vote PC.

One attendee asked Sayers about Glenn Taylor, leader of the Alberta Party. "I noticed there was no mention," he said.

"That's correct. The Alberta Party is going to be a non-factor for this election and will continue to be until (Calgary mayor Naheed) Nenshi decides whether or not to get involved with provincial politics," Sayers said.

"The Alberta Party will be a vehicle for Nenshi."



Photo: Drew Henn/Calgary Journal

Danielle Smith speaks out about the provincial health care system

911 pocket dials an epidemic in Calgary

Officials alarmed by the 38,000 accidental calls received last year

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Have you ever received a call on your cellphone only to hear background noise? It's known as a pocket dial: accidentally dialing someone without knowing it.

While most people laugh off the act and vow to lock their phone, one recipient in the city doesn't find the accidental dials all that funny – the 911 operators.

"We get about 300-400 erroneous 911 calls everyday, so obviously that takes up a huge amount of resources," said Nina Vaughan, commander of Public Safety Communications.

"Each call has to be processed to determine if there's an emergency. We call the cellphone back, and we've actually started to provide voicemails telling the person they dialed 911 and to please contact their service provider to lock their phone," Vaughan said.

On average, the city receives about 38,000 pocket dials a year. That's roughly 38,000 minutes a 911 operator wastes listening to the call, hanging up, and calling the person back.

Last fall the city ran a campaign to make people aware of the number of pocket dials received by 911 operators, but unfortunately did not see a decline in numbers.

"I don't think it resonates with people, the amount of wasted tax dollars associated with it. They just think 'whoops' and kind of go on," Vaughan said. "So we tried to make people aware of the scope of the problem and what they could do to help."

Although the numbers didn't decline, Vaughan said that citizens did remember the campaign and a large number of people surveyed recalled seeing advertisements on buses or billboards throughout

the city.

The campaign wasn't just to reduce the number of calls but to monitor the effects such calls have on receiving operators.

Roy Nelson, a process procedure and reporting analyst for Public Safety Communications, conducted a survey in November to see just how much a pocket dial can impact 911 operators.

"We looked at false phone calls and quite a large portion of them were because of unknown reasons," Nelson said.

From the survey Roy conducted, it was concluded that 23 per cent of phone calls received by 911 operators were a result of pocket dialing.

"The operators get very upset by this because it means that roughly a quarter of the time that they pick up the phone, it's not a real call. They find this demoralizes them, because a quarter of their time is spent doing unimportant work," Nelson said.

Throughout the last six months, surveys have shown that the number of dead cells being used has risen – along with the number of irresponsible calls from youth who have cellphones.

"As a user, you should know how to use your phone properly," Nelson said. "Find out if there's a way to disable the emergency calling function, or better yet contact your service provider to see if the function can be changed."

Calgary isn't the only city plagued with 911 pocket dials. It seems Canadians in general are forgetting to lock their phone before putting it away.

In eastern Canada, Toronto police started the "Lock it before you pocket" public service program to prevent repeating the nearly 107,000 pocket dials they received in 2011. The campaign website said the program was created in response to a steep increase in unintended calls from mobile devices which represents a threat to public safety and affects police resources that are already stretched to the limit.

Calgary is currently working to improve and implement a new pocket dialing campaign that is expected to be launched in the summer. The second campaign will take ideas learned from the less than successful first run. One of these lessons is aimed at informing citizens of what to do to prevent pocket dialing in the future.

"What we didn't do successfully and plan to do in the future is to offer solutions to prevent it," Vaughan said. "Any reduction would be a success. I'm aiming for zero because our operators are better off helping the people who need it."



Photo: Geoffrey Picketts/Calgary Journal

Calgarians dial and drive

Police and public grapple with bad habits and new laws

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Calgary police have handed out a total of 1,456 tickets for distracted driving since the distracted driving law came into effect. The law that prohibits drivers from using electronic devices while in operation of a motor vehicle came into effect Sept. 1, 2011.

Despite early adherence to the new law, drivers are starting to drift back into old habits and beginning to form potentially deadlier ones.

"I know, myself, I've hopped out at a red light and had a look. Sure enough, he's got his cellphone out and he's reading a text message," said Const. Jim Lebedeff of the Calgary Police Service's traffic education division.

Lebedeff has noticed that drivers are trying to get sneakier about using their electronic devices, despite attempts to educate them about the dangers of distracted driving.

"When the law first came into place, I knew it wasn't going to be a quick fix. The electronic age is here and it's ingrained. It's like when seatbelts first came into place, it's going to be a constant reminder," Lebedeff said.

A study performed by American-based Insurance Institute for Highway Safety shows that distracted driving bans may actually lead to an increase in collisions.

While there hasn't been any indicator of that happening within Calgary, police have seen some potentially dangerous behaviour emerging.

"What I've noticed is people looking down when they're stopped at lights or when they're driving. I've been driving for a long time and you don't tend to stare at your crotch when you're driving," Lebedeff said.

"They're trying to do it below the dash

level and they're thinking they won't be noticed. But when you're seeing heads bobbing down, other than falling asleep or having a medical reason for it, chances are good you're looking at your cellphone.

"It's a bad habit, a really dangerous one. I think that's one of the things we'd really like to hit home."

Although the law was meant to reduce collisions and make roads safer for drivers, the fact that drivers are getting more

reckless about electronic device usage could mean that the law may be resulting in more collisions.

Lebedeff's concerns are supported by a study done by the University of Glasgow. It found that there was

an increased chance of collisions when eyes were focused downwards on digital screens and that they decreased when their attention was directed upwards.

A statement on the Canadian Association of Emergency Physician's (CAEP) website cited a study where subjects drove while performing increasingly complex cognitive tasks.

The study found that drivers had difficulty driving when only being asked simple true and false questions.

When more complex "verbal distracters" were introduced that more closely mimicked dialling and talking on a cellphone, driving got increasingly worse.

Further, the Canadian Journal of Emergency Medicine's website says that in cognitive studies, a driver's response time increases as more factors are introduced.

With drivers taking added steps to try and continue texting while avoiding a ticket, and with police facing difficulties in handing out tickets, the biggest issue with distracted driving may be changing public attitudes.

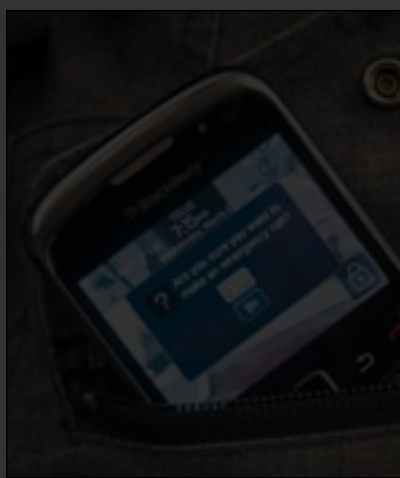


Photo: Geoffrey Picketts / Calgary Journal

The city is launching a new summer campaign to reduce 911 calls.

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