

# TOP TEN NEWSMAKERS OF 2006



RALPH KLEIN



ROSE LUNDY



CAPT. NICHOLA GODDARD



BISHOP FRED HENRY

Everyday Albertans made their voices heard just as loudly as the politicians in the year's most compelling stories

## TOP 10 NEWSMAKERS



- Rose Lundy
- Jack Davis
- Jessica Ernst
- Capt. Nichola Goddard
- Bishop Fred Henry
- Morris Blitt
- Ralph Klein
- Ed Stelmach
- Stephen Harper
- Brian Hunter

**EVA FERGUSON**  
CALGARY HERALD

A tidal wave of political change swept across the Alberta landscape in 2006, bringing forward a number of dynamic public figures among the Herald's top 10 newsmakers. But well beyond the political arena, many ordinary Calgarians also filled the newspaper's pages for effecting change in areas including health care, the environment and municipal development. Calgary's **Rose Lundy** initiated significant policy change within the Calgary Health Region after suffering a miscarriage while she sat in the emergency waiting room of Peter Lougheed Hospital on July 18. About 40 strangers surrounded the 34-year-old Lundy as blood pooled around her feet and tissue fell to the floor. Her husband, Rick — who described the northeast emergency room as a "zoo" at the time — repeatedly begged triage nurses to help his wife as her bleeding intensified during their three-hour wait. They were told there were no available beds. The Calgary Health Region vowed

to investigate the Lundy case but, two months later, the region came under heavy fire again when two more women came forward with similar stories from the same hospital. Ultimately, the Lundys and the other two women's ordeals led the health region to bring forward policies to give miscarrying moms privacy and added support in local emergency rooms. Social workers are to spend 16 hours a day — double the previous time — in Calgary emergency rooms to help families who are dealing with various emotional issues, including child loss. Special rooms, designed to get miscarrying women away from busy waiting rooms, have also been established in the Peter Lougheed, Rockyview and Foothills hospitals. In January, the Lundys will travel to Edmonton to meet with officials of the Capital Health Region and offer advice on how they can come up with their own policy to deal with miscarriages. In response to the controversy surrounding the emergency-room miscarriages, as well as news of his \$1-million compensation package, health region chair **Jack Davis** became a newsmaker as well. Davis told the Herald in October he

wouldn't disagree that the authority failed the women who miscarried, but added the region is not in crisis, arguing it is simply juggling a capacity crunch and unprecedented growth. The spotlight initially shone on Davis in September when Alberta Auditor General Fred Dunn called for greater transparency in how the Calgary Health Region reports pay and benefits, arguing salaries must include "deferred compensation" which brought Davis's total earnings in 2005-06 to \$1,006,000. In total, senior health region executives and management — including Davis — received nearly \$8.3 million in deferred salaries in the 2005-06 fiscal year that are not considered part of the base salary and benefits documented in the health authority's annual report. It was originally noted by the opposition Liberals that Davis's 2006 salary was \$593,000 — a 10.6 per cent increase in his total base compensation. But the auditor general said a true reflection of Davis's 2006 salary must include \$413,000 in deferred payment that's allocated to a supplemental executive retirement plan.

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# CITY & OBSERVER



JESSICA ERNST



STEPHEN HARPER



MORRIS BLITT



JACK DAVIS



ED STELMACH

## Fighting for power and principle

### 2006 REWIND

#### FROM BI

**W**e shouldn't have to try to piece this all together. It should be quite transparent," Dunn said at the time.

Rural landowners were also looking for truth and transparency in 2006 when concerns of rapid coal bed methane development were raised in Alberta's countryside.

**Jessica Ernst**, an environmental consultant living just outside the hamlet of Rosebud, became a symbol of those concerns after demonstrating how her well water had deteriorated to the point she could set it aflame.

Tests showed high concentrations of methane in her water and, with several CBM wells in the area, Ernst raised the spectre they had something to do with her troubles.

Earlier this year, hundreds of anxious residents packed town halls to try to understand what CBM development will mean for them. Many worry about the impact the industry may have on Alberta's landscape, both above ground and in the water beneath the soil.

"Am I a landowner or am I a guinea pig?" Ernst told a meeting of landowners in March.

The government argues there is no evidence that CBM activity has caused Ernst's water woes, or any others.

For their part, the industry and the province assure Albertans the resource is being developed properly and safely.

More than 7,700 wells have been drilled in Alberta and the industry projects some 50,000 more over the next two decades.

Another Albertan's plight led to questioning of the government in 2006.

**Capt. Nichola Goddard** was killed in mid-May during a rocket-propelled grenade attack by the Taliban in the Panjoway district, just east of Kandahar, Afghanistan.

The 26-year-old Canadian officer, originally from Calgary, was the first Canadian woman ever to be killed in combat. Her death touched off a firestorm of controversy among Canadians who, according to several 2006 surveys, were deeply divided over Canada's military mission in Afghanistan.

Leading up to Remembrance Day, Tim and Sally Goddard said Canadi-

ans should continue to question the Afghanistan mission, but that this country has a duty to keep troops in the war-ravaged nation until 2009.

"I think we're people of our word. We've said we will stay until 2009 and bear those consequences. We elected the politicians that made the policy. We're the ones who have made that decision," said Sally Goddard in an interview with the Herald.

Nichola's parents also provided the Herald with a series of e-mails their daughter wrote on the days leading up to her death May 17, her father's birthday.

The compelling letters gave readers unprecedented insight into Goddard as a person, in particular one in which a village interpreter was surprised that a woman would be in the army.

She wrote about what he tells her after having a conversation with five other Afghan men who were watching her.

"He turned to me and said, 'Please excuse their staring. They are just very surprised that you are a woman working with all of these men.'

"I have told them that you climbed over the mountain with us with your heavy bag and that you had no problems. They think that you must be very strong. I explained to them that you are just like the men, and that you can do everything that they can do the same as them."

Goddard added: "It was perhaps the greatest statement of equality that I have ever heard — and it was given by a Pakistani-raised, Afghan male in the middle of an Afghan village that is only accessible by a five-kilometre walk up a mountain."

Calgary's **Bishop Fred Henry** also made headlines in 2006, working for what he believed in.

In a pastoral letter issued June 20, Henry called a Catholic school board decision to continue to fundraise through gambling "a failure in Catholic leadership" and threatened to blacklist schools that continued to make money that way.

"It is morally wrong for a Catholic institution to formally co-operate in an industry that exploits the weak and vulnerable," Henry said, noting that church law gives him the power to remove the "Catholic" designation for schools that disobey doctrine.

Initially, the board stuck by its decision, arguing casino funds were integral to school activities.

But the bishop refused to back down, vowing to make it an issue in the next civic election. By September, he convinced Catholic schools to wean themselves off fundraising through gambling.

Under the new deal, parent school councils that have commitments to

fundraise by volunteering at casinos through the 2006-07 school year will be allowed to fulfil those promises.

But schools with casino commitments running into the fall of 2007 will be examined on a case-by-case basis and, by 2008, no more gambling revenue is expected to be collected.

Meanwhile, another Calgarian may have pushed ahead development in East Village by finally deciding to shut down the legendary St. Louis Hotel, closing the book on one of downtown's most storied watering holes.

**Morris Blitt** decided he wanted to sell to the city when council moved up the start of the smoking ban to Jan. 1 because he believed his tavern "would die a slow death" once the ban came into effect.

He had also become fed up with the deterioration of the area due to the prominence of drug dealers and prostitutes, now fixtures on his doorstep.

"Until the last five or six years, I wasn't worried about my physical well-being," said Blitt, who's run the hotel for more than 30 years.

"I've never been afraid to kick someone out for doing crack or smoking drugs. But I'm never sure which one will be the one who turns around and stabs me or shoots me."

A city plan will now see the hotel building preserved as part of a massive revitalization effort in the East Village. Parts of the area that the hotel sits on could even become part of a highly touted urban campus.

Blitt said he could have sold his property to a private developer for a lot more than he's getting from the city, but he wanted to contribute to positive development of the area.

The St. Louis's Nov. 24 closing bash toasted one of its most faithful customers, also a newsmaker this year, **Ralph Klein**.

Canada's longest-serving premier suffered a personal blow in the early part of the year when his party only gave him 55 per cent support in a leadership vote.

It was a surprising result for a politician who'd enjoyed huge popularity since being elected as an MLA in 1989.

He ultimately fell to the party's desire for new blood in a government facing criticism over its lack of a plan for unprecedented Alberta growth.

In fact, on Aug. 31, Klein's last day in the legislature, he openly admitted the Tories had no plan for Alberta's scorching economy and he only foresaw the unsustainable growth emerging as little as six months ago.

Klein also conceded his opponents' charges he didn't have a

growth strategy were right all along.

Still, pundits say the ultimate result of the Tory leadership vote may be sweet revenge for Klein, who is good friends with new premier **Ed Stelmach** and is expected to remain an important link between Calgary interests and the government.

But the spotlight clearly is now on Stelmach, one of the Herald's top newsmakers, after he turned a relatively quiet leadership campaign into a stunning second-ballot victory Dec. 2.

The MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, who still works at his family farm in the riding, was known within the party as "Steady Eddie" and "Honest Ed."

And while he'd been criticized for a lack of charisma, he's now being seen as a thoughtful everyman Albertans can identify with, much like Klein.

Since his election, Stelmach has outlined a plan focusing on five broader issues he said Albertans identified during the leadership campaign.

They include governing with integrity and transparency, managing growth pressures, improving Albertans' quality of life, building a stronger Alberta and providing safe communities — and all of this with a reduced cabinet, shaving departments from 24 to 18.

The plan took a page from **Prime Minister Stephen Harper's** playbook. He became another big newsmaker in the first few weeks of 2006 after being elected leader of the country.

As Alberta's first prime minister in 27 years, the Calgary Southwest MP gave the West new hope that its voice would be heard.

Some still see him as the hard-right Reformer who, in 2001, wrote the infamous firewall letter that urged Alberta to collect its own taxes, run its own health-care system and establish its own pension plan.

Throughout 2006, however, he portrayed himself as more of a moderate, consensus-builder trying to make peace with the East by declaring Quebec a "nation within a nation."

By year-end, Time magazine named Harper its Canadian Newsmaker of the Year, calling him a "warrior in power" who was "once dismissed as a doctrinaire backroom tactician with no experience in government."

Harper has so far slashed more than \$1 billion worth of federal programs, been a staunch advocate of Canada's first major deployment of troops in five decades and negotiated an end to softwood lumber disputes with the U.S.

Still, the business community felt somewhat betrayed late in the year by his government's Oct. 31 announcement to tax income trusts, a huge financial blow to Alberta's energy industry.

Newsmaker **Brian Hunter**, a Calgary trader with Amaranth Advisors LLC, also made headlines by sending shockwaves through the business community in 2006.

The 32-year-old's performance in the previous year, 2005, made him one of the world's top natural gas traders, earning him an estimated \$75 million to \$100 million US, according to *Trader Monthly* magazine.

But things started unravelling for the financial star toward the fall of 2006, when he bet heavily on natural gas futures and Amaranth, a Greenwich, Conn.-based hedge fund, lost \$6 billion of its \$9.5 billion US in assets. Ultimately, Hunter left Amaranth. But it wasn't clear whether he was fired or left on his own. The hedge fund collapsed.

According to the *National Post*, Amaranth's demise struck a huge swath of investors, including Morgan Stanley, Credit Suisse Group, Bank of New York Co., Deutsche Bank AG and Man Group PLC, who all ran funds that owned units of Amaranth.

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