



The Lakeshorian

WEEKLY BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF MONTREAL-LAKESHORE

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This Week's Program...

Barbara Engels, District Rotaract Co-Representative and member of the Rotaract Club of Downtown Montreal, will talk to us about **joint projects and partnerships**.

Birthdays and Anniversaries this week...

Happy Birthday, Jennifer Neville...

...Saturday, March 25th!

Future Programs...

Mar 28: T.B.D.

Apr 4: [Evening Meeting] T.B.D.

Apr 11; **Kim Nguyen**, Director, Annual Giving and Administration for the **Old Brewery Mission**, will tell us how we, as individuals, can make planned gifts to the OBM part of our estate planning management.

Special Events...

Mar 30: **Board Meeting**, Holiday Inn, 6 for 6:30 pm.

June 2: (Friday) **Our Annual Auction**. In less than eleven weeks we will host our most important fundraising event of this Rotary year. It will provide the lion's share of the funding for our club's projects in 2017-2018.

Last Week's Meeting...

Eleven members, one visiting Rotarian and three guests braved the early hours of one of the biggest snow storms in our city's history to hear our Member of Parliament, **Francis Scarpaleggia** tell us about the electoral process in Canada and the various alternatives to the First-Past-the-Post system we now use.

Present were **Wayne, Helen, Lawrence, Bill, Stan, JP, Anne, Knud, Brenda, Cameron** and Honorary Member **Joe Maxwell**. We were also pleased to welcome Visiting Rotarian **Olivier Blackman** as well as **May Whitley**, guest of **Francis**, **Anita**, guest of **Stan** and **Winnifred**, guest of **Cameron**.

President JP congratulated our 2017-2018 club officers, **Helen** (President) and **Semi** (Treasurer), for attending the compulsory **Grants Management Seminar** in Cornwall on Saturday, March 11th. [JP also attended, we learned later in the meeting.] Helen also attended the District International Service Committee meeting Saturday morning, in her capacity as our International Service Chair for 2016-2017.

The Ace of Spades remained hidden as the 50/50 uncovered the 3 of Clubs instead, so the pot will continue to grow.

Cameron, wearing his Club Secretary hat, announced that the District Training Assembly would take place on Saturday, April 8th at the NAV Centre, Cornwall ON, from 08:30 to 16:30.

He also said the District Budget will be voted on at the District Training Assembly and added that he has a copy of the latest revision of the budget, which our club's Board will review at its March 30th meeting.

Wayne introduced guest speaker **Francis Scarpaleggia**, MP for Lac-Saint-Louis. "First elected to the House of Commons in 2004, he was re-elected to Canada's Parliament in 2006, 2008, 2011 and 2015. He is the Chair of the Liberal Caucus.

"Francis has served on several House of Commons committees, including Public Safety and national Security (Vice Chair), Environment and Sustainable Development (Vice Chair), as well as Transport, Canadian Heritage and Government Operations and Estimates. He was also a founding member of the all-party committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care. Most recently he was Chair of the House of Commons Special Committee on Electoral Reform.

"Francis did his undergraduate work at McGill, and earned a Master's degree in Economics from Columbia University. Later he obtained his MBA from Concordia University.

"He worked in the private sector corporate financial analysis, taught Business Administration at Dawson College then entered the world of politics as senior political advisor to Clifford Lincoln whom he succeeded as MP for Lac-Saint-Louis.

"Francis lives in Kirkland with his wife and two children.

"It should be noted that dedication runs in the Scarpaleggia family. Francis's father, Maurice, joined Rotary in 1966 and maintained 100% attendance in the Rotary clubs of Sainte-Thérèse and our own club for 40 years until his death in 2006."

Francis thanked **Wayne** for those remarks and said he remembered his Dad bringing him to this club often as a guest.

"I'm going to talk about that today, electoral reform. The topic has figured prominently in the news over the past two or three months and caused quite a stir recently when the Prime Minister announced that he would not be going ahead with electoral reform.

"Electoral reform is not a new idea. We have discussed the subject here in Canada since 1921. There have been commissions and parliamentary committees looking at it, so it bubbles to the surface every now and then.

"So, why did it come up in the last two years? Well, in a non-partisan way I think it is correct to say that there was frustration, especially on the Left, with the previous Harper government. There was a sense that the government was in some ways abusing its democratic power through things like prorogation. You will recall that, at a very important time when the government was under attack, and prorogued Parliament for a few weeks. Debate in the House of Commons was cut off.

There was a perception that the government was not listening to the people. On things like climate change the government wasn't acting and people kept bringing up the fact that the government had more power than they should have, because

of the electoral system. The government that got elected with 39 percent of the vote had a majority of the seats in the House.

"Frustration was building up, especially on the part of the NDP and the Green Party and so they started calling for electoral reform and, in fact, introduced a motion that the government should get rid of the First-Past-the-Post system in favour of the Mixed Member Proportional system. Many liberals, including myself, actually voted against that motion. Why? Because we weren't sure that Canadians wanted that, or indeed, any particular alternative system. Neither the Conservative government nor we, the third party with only 36 members, were in a position to know exactly what Canadians wanted in terms of the various alternative electoral systems.

"In preparing our platform for the 2015 election, we came up with the idea of democratic reform. More than electoral reform, it touches all aspects of our democracy: If you're going to prorogue Parliament you need to have a debate in the House first, which is not now the case. Parliamentary committees should be more independent, so that the government representative on the committee does not run the show. These are all part of a democratic reform agenda.

"Included in that agenda was the idea that this was going to be the last First-Past-the-Post election system.

"After the election, with less than 40% of the popular vote, we had won a decisive majority government with over 54% of the seats in the House. Soon there was a push from the Left, led by the NDP, to reform the electoral system so that they would have a share of the power. Under a proportional representation system like they have in some parts of Europe and Israel, the number of seats assigned to each party would reflect the percentage of the popular vote each party had won, which is not the case now.

"Let's look more closely at the Electoral Reform Committee that I chaired last year. We felt it should be composed like every other Parliamentary Committee, with a Liberal majority, reflecting the Liberal majority we have in the House. But there were a lot of complaints from the opposition parties. 'This isn't fair,' they said. 'You're going to have a majority on the committee; the recommendations of the committee will reflect your particular partisan interest.' So the government did make an exception. We set up the committee proportionately, reflecting the electoral vote percentage, not the percentage of seats in the House. So the Liberals were not a majority on the committee, meaning the other parties, if taken together, would make a majority.



"We were asked to look at certain aspects of electoral systems and choose a system that would encourage voting by having meaning for every voter, so voters for minority parties would not become jaded and stay home on Election Day; a system that would increase the confidence of Canadians that their vote matters, even if their candidate doesn't win; a system that would allow for local representation.

"We considered a truly proportional system where that number of seats assigned to each party would accurately reflect the percentage of votes that party received, and the occupants of those seats would be names on a list compiled by each party.

But the people said 'No way. We want an MP who stands up for the values of our riding's population.' They wanted to have an attachment to their representative.

"We discovered that the reform of electoral systems is very complex. You have our system, with ridings. You have purely proportional systems, in which MPs are not attached to a riding but rather taken from a list.

"And then you have Mixed Member Proportion, which is what the NDP and the Green Party were pushing for. You have MPs who are elected in their respective ridings, which we know creates a distorted result, so you create a second layer of MPs who are elected by proportional representation. That way no one should feel that their vote is wasted.

"My party preferred a ranked ballot system. The voter goes into the voting booth and ranks the candidates—first choice, second choice, et cetera. This system issued in Australia. If none of the candidates gets 50% of the vote, a computer drops the last candidate, by total vote count, then looks at all the ballots that had that candidate as number 1 and takes their second choice instead. That process is repeated until one candidate has 50% of the votes and he/she is the winner."

Francis described the differences of opinion among the members of the committee. The Conservative members wanted a referendum of the Canadian people to get their input. The NDP and Green Party members said the committee had a mandate so a referendum would not be needed.

After getting input from electoral system experts worldwide and crossing the country with 18 public hearings, the committee returned to Ottawa to write its report. The majority members, consisting of Conservatives, NDP and Green Party, recommended the most proportional system possible and that a choice between that and the present system be put to the Canadian people by means of a referendum. The Liberal members disagreed, so they wrote a minority report, pointing out that there is not sufficient time between now and 2019 to have such a referendum and, further, that the people are not sufficiently engaged in the topic of electoral reform to respond to a referendum in any numbers that would be meaningful.

Ultimately, as we know, the Prime Minister decided to discontinue any further work on electoral reform.

As often happens when we have a popular speaker, there were lots of questions and comments on the topic.

Francis was thanked by **Stan** for a very informative look at the inner workings of a parliamentary committee with a very difficult mandate.

