



## Probus Club - of Central Edmonton March 2017

Editor: Ken Hoffman

### **Speaker: March 21, – Merwan Saher, Auditor General of Alberta**

We heard from Merwan Saher the Auditor General of Alberta at the March meeting. He started by noting that “state auditing” started in ancient Greece in the City state of Athens. Before a City leader left Office, his records were subject to audit. The leader had to come through the audit with a clean report before he could leave.

In Alberta, the role of “state auditor” started with the inception of the province in 1905. From these early days to 1978 the Officer was called the Provincial Auditor. He had the unusual role of signing the cheques of the Province. In 1978, when Peter Lougheed was Premier and Merv Leach was the Provincial Treasurer, legislation came into force which fundamentally changed the role of the Office. It was stripped of the incompatible function of being the government accountant, thus enhancing its independence. Independence was further improved by establishing the Auditor General as an Officer of the Legislative Assembly. The Auditor General Act expanding the scope of the Office to look at systems related to value for money (called performance audit) and requiring the Office to table its reports in the House.

Merwan, drawing on the Office’s current business plan, he spoke about the focus of the Office and criteria used to select work. He made copies of this available to members at the meeting. Key points made were the target resource split between financial statement auditing and performance auditing was 70/30. The Office work is anchored in what he called the Results Management Framework. This framework and its three components (Governance, Oversight and Accountability for Results) are described in the plan. He wrapped up by speaking of the future and the importance of consulting with Albertans.

If you were unable to attend, you can obtain the Office’s plans and reports on its website [oag.ab.ca](http://oag.ab.ca).

### **Tour: March 24– Alberta Legislative Building**

We toured the Legislative Building on March 24. Our tour guide, Michael, was informative and engaging as he spoke about the history of the building, its features and the people whose portraits hang on the walls.

He started by pointing out the military flags that adorn the main level. What was of interest is the flags could only be touched by members of the relevant regiment. Many of these regiments no longer exist thus the flag cannot be removed or cleaned. The main floor also includes the fountain and the base of the staircase leading to the Assembly the following picture are four members standing on these steps:



At the top of the picture are the doors to the Assembly. Michael explained the history of the door and meaning of the carvings on it. When in session only MLA's may use these doors. He also pointed out the dome of the building and the palm trees that grow there:



Picture from [expedia.com](https://www.expedia.com)

The second floor contained the pictures of the Province Premiers. Each picture tells a unique story. We then went to the third floor to hear about the various Lieutenant Governors that represented the Queen in Alberta. He also pointed out a curiosity on this floor. It is a point where the sound of the fountain changes. At this "Magic Spot". The sound of the water fountain in the rotunda below is reflected through the Grand Staircase and off the dome and seems to drop from above the listener.

This final picture is a Lego model that was found when we walked underground from the Leg. Building to the Federal building:



I can say that, while I have been in the Legislative Building many times, this time I departed having learned a great deal more about the Building. Thanks to Michael.