

LOCAL NEWS

Swann to speak at Liberal event

By KAYLYNN HOHENSINN

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The Medicine Hat Alberta Liberal Constituency Association is holding its annual general meeting Thursday evening with Dr. David Swann as the guest speaker.

Swann served as Palliser Health Region's (PHR) medical officer of health for a decade in Medicine Hat before entering politics. He is currently the MLA for the Calgary Mountainview riding and a member of the Liberal party.

Swann was fired in 2002 from PHR for speaking out in favour of the Kyoto accord. With that controversy still vividly in mind, he will be speaking out again Thursday evening about key environment issues effecting Albertans.

"The board of health objected to what they thought of my making a political statement as opposed to a health statement," said Swann. "I considered that a violation of my democratic as well as professional responsibility so I ran in the next election."

The province, in Swann's opinion, is reluctant to do anything that might adversely effect the fossil fuel industry, something that is unfortunate when considering the amount of damage already resulting from carbon emissions.

The next election is expected within the next 18 months and already the Liberal party has more candidates selected than either of the other two parties. Swann feels both of the incumbents in the Medicine Hat area, Rob Renner and Len Mitzel are "vulnerable" and people are seeking a change after 35 years under a government with no new ideas.

"Neither have been showing real leadership. Mr. Renner has been in the caucus and in the cabinet for almost a decade and has been part of the decisions that have set this province on the course it's on; unsustainable. And now as the environment minister, he's very unwilling to tackle, very meaningfully, the climate change issue," said Swann.

Considering the future of alternative energy sources is a matter of high priority for Swann.

Emissions will have to be dramatically reduced in the coming years. Oil and gas investments will be challenged, Swann said, by new investments in renewable and energy efficient technologies.

Will the country be lagging behind or competitive with other countries?

Also a goal of Swann's is encouraging more women to enter politics. He pointed to Karen Charlton, manager of social development for the city, as a woman that has made tremendous community contribution over the years and shown impressive leadership with social programs in Medicine Hat.

"I would very much like to get her elected down there," said Swann. "There is a crying need for women in politics today. As they say, it's an old boys' club, middle aged men and older."

Women deal with situations differently than men, in a more conciliatory, negotiating way.

However, women are hesitant to run, in his opinion, because of the tone and attitude in political circles. "We have to make it a more supportive environment for women who bring a special set of skills and values to the political process that are so desperately needed."

The dinner begins at 7:30 at the Strathcona Centre and tickets are available by phoning 526-1708.