

Karl Alzner



WELCOME HOME CAPTAIN CANADA
Herald Hockey, Page C1

WHY THIS CALGARY ACTOR COULD BE TV'S HOTTEST NEW STAR
David Kopp, leading man in iPod
Entertainment, Page D1




CALGARY HERALD

PROUDLY CALGARY SINCE 1883

calgaryherald.com

Monday, January 7, 2008

MILLIONAIRES ROW

\$22,020,000

- BUILT IN 2000, WITH:**
- 91 rooms
 - Indoor pool
 - Library
 - 2 elevators
 - Gym
 - Concert hall



The Balm mansion on Pump Hill Close has been assessed as the most valuable home in Calgary. Annual taxes are \$114,580.

Exclusive Pump Hill home to Calgary's priciest residences

PAULA BEAUCHAMP
CALGARY HERALD

It's a \$22-million palace — Calgary's highest-assessed home and the crown jewel of what is believed to be Calgary's most expensive street, Pump Hill Close, where the average home is worth more than \$5 million.

But Alfred Balm, owner of the 91-room, 15,450-square-foot mansion at 27 Pump Hill Close, says he won't be cashing in on his home, despite city council's upward evaluation of his property released Friday.

"It's not for sale," Balm said on the weekend through the intercom of his stately home.

When asked if he knew his home had been assessed as Calgary's most expensive residence, Balm speculated

whether the home was, in fact, Canada's most expensive.

"It is very possible," he said, but searches have revealed at least four pricier properties in Ontario and British Columbia.

Asked why Balm's home — and, indeed, the cosy nine-home community in Pump Hill — is so desirable, the former chairman of Canadian Fracmaster Ltd. said "if you walk around it you may understand why."

"Perhaps it's because such nice people like ourselves are living here," he said, part tongue-in-cheek.

When the city released its 2008 assessments Friday, some 8,146 homes were valued in Calgary's million-dollar home club — a figure that is up 10-fold in three years.

In 2005, 815 Calgary homes



\$7,070,000

This Pump Hill Close home is part of millionaires row.

had broken the \$1-million barrier.

While Balm's multiple-acre property was valued at almost twice the price of the city's second and third most expensive homes, neighbouring properties on Pump Hill Close are holding their own.

All are members of the magic million-dollar club.

One home, complete with views of the city skyline and Glenmore reservoir, is valued at more than \$7 million; another would fetch almost \$6 million if sold today, the city estimates.

SEE HOMES, PAGE A4

“Perhaps it's because such nice people like ourselves are living here



Two Canadian soldiers dead in Afghanistan

CANWEST NEWS SERVICE
KANDAHAR

Two Canadian soldiers were killed Sunday when their light armoured vehicle rolled over about 40 kilometres southwest of Kandahar City.

The Canadian Forces on Sunday night identified one of the dead soldiers as Cpl. Eric Labbe of the Second Battalion of the Royal 22nd Regiment based in Valcartier, Que. Labbe was born in Rimouski, Que.

The name of the second soldier is being withheld at the request of the family.

"This is a very difficult time for the families and friends of our fallen soldiers," Gen. Guy Laroche, Canadian forces commander in Afghanistan, said today. "Our thoughts are with them. We are saddened by this

tragic loss. They will be missed and we will honour their sacrifice in the service of Canada, and their contribution to bring peace to the people of Afghanistan."

Military spokesmen say the incident is unrelated to enemy action. The soldiers both died on the scene. They were in the turret of the vehicle, a LAVIII eight-wheeled armoured vehicle, moving across a dirt track soaked with rain, when the incident occurred.

The vehicle was moving to a position to set up camp for the night. Two other soldiers inside were unhurt.

They were part of operation Teng Azem, or Steadfast Decision, an operation to flush insurgents out of the Zhari district of Kandahar province.

The death toll for Canadian troops in Afghanistan is 76.

INSIDE TODAY

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Complete weather information
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Speed camera backed, poll says

Albertans OK with double whammy from red-light radar

HERALD EXCLUSIVE



TONY SESKUS
CALGARY HERALD

Nearly two-thirds of Albertans support using red-light cameras to capture speeders at intersections, though many believe the scheme will ultimately become a "cash grab," a new Herald poll reveals.

MLAs passed so-called "speed-on-green" legislation last month that could soon permit red-light cameras to perform a double function of speed and red-light control.

Calgary police are interested in giving the new tool a try.

And while that's bad news for speeders, the new Herald survey conducted by Leger Marketing shows the majority of Albertans — 64 per cent — back the new initiative.

Pollster Marc Tremblay said the results indicate that if police push ahead with the strategy, they'd do so with some significant support.

"There's going to be a third of the population or so... who are not really going to be happy with this," he said.

"But if it's done in the spirit of helping to reduce fatalities and accidents — if it's shown as a deterrent, not a cash grab — I think it would help."

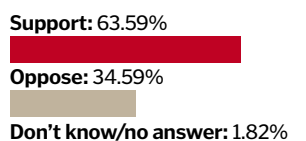
The poll reveals residents have high expectations for the strategy, which has received a mixed response from Calgary city council. The survey found 75 per cent of Albertans believe red-light cameras can be an effective deterrent to help reduce the number of people speeding through intersections.

SEE CAMERA, PAGE A5

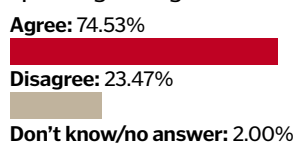
POLL QUESTIONS:

The Government of Alberta recently passed the so-called "Speed-on-Green" legislation.

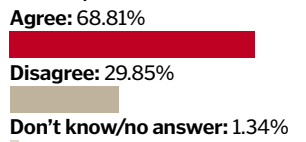
1. Do you support or oppose the new legislation that allows municipalities to use red-light cameras to also issue tickets to those who speed through intersections?



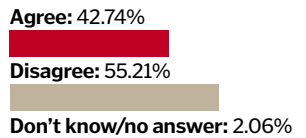
2. Red-light cameras can be an effective deterrent to help reduce the number of people speeding through intersections:



3. This legislation will become a cash-grab by police forces and municipalities:



4. This is an acceptable way to add revenue to law enforcement coffers:



Boarder missing after avalanche at B.C. resort

A snowboarder is unaccounted for after an avalanche at Big White ski resort near Kelowna on Sunday morning buried skiers on a high alpine run.

Two rescued skiers — one of them a 12-year-old boy — were partially buried after a ridge broke away high in the Parachute Bowl just before 11 a.m.

About 50 people took part in a search, 13 of whom were taking an avalanche safety course elsewhere on the mountain.

Big White vice-president Michael Ballingall identified the missing man as Lee, a man who works in the resort hotel's housekeeping department.

See story, Page A6

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Med school too long, suggests journal

Three-year degree would reduce doctor shortage

JANICE TIBBETTS
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE
OTTAWA

Canada's top medical journal is raising the prospect that the country's medical students could spend less time in school to save time and money and help reduce a shortage of doctors.

The Canadian Medical Association Journal, in an editorial in the current issue, adds its voice to a new and expan-

sive debate that is taking place among the nation's medical faculties.

The three authors, all of whom are doctors, suggest that undergraduate medical degrees could be cut to three years from four.

"Is this extra year necessary?" asks the journal, a publication of the Canadian Medical Association. "Cutting one year would reduce training costs and costs to universities and taxpayers."

The editorial estimates the extra year of training costs taxpayers about \$70,000 per student. According to the Canadian Federation of Medical Students, 9,151 students were enrolled in Canadian medical schools in 2006-2007.

Fast-tracking doctor trainees would also reduce student debt by reducing tuition fees, which range from \$2,181 annually at Laval University in Quebec City to \$16,862 at the University of

Toronto, says the journal.

Medical schools at the University of Calgary and McMaster University in Hamilton, Ont., offer three-year medical programs. No evidence exists that graduates are any less competent or perform worse on their exit exams than those who have completed four-year programs, said the editorial, written by editor-in-chief Paul Hebert, senior associate editor Kenneth Flegel and public health editor Noni MacDonald.

"There has been no uproar to suggest the three-year programs are inferior," said Hebert, a graduate of a four-year program at University of Ottawa.

The tacit support for a shortened program comes as the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada, representing the country's 17 medical schools, embarks on a review of medical education expected to continue

into 2009.

Among other things, the schools are considering whether to shorten medical programs to three years and whether to admit students into medical studies without undergraduate degrees.

Medical schools, with the exception of those in Quebec, generally require four-year degrees as a prerequisite. After graduating from medical school, students advance to studying their specialties, which means an additional two to six years of training.

The journal editorial questions the value of four years of general medical theory and whether the time could be better spent moving directly to specialties.

"Almost all medical schools are dominated by specialists and there is a constant pressure to expand the curriculum," Hebert said. "The issue is what do

we actually need to know to become a doctor? What is the core?"

Hebert stressed that the editorial does not advocate a three-year program. Rather, the authors simply raise the benefits in a debate that needs to occur, he said.

Andrew Padmos, chief executive officer of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, was in the first graduating class of McMaster's three-year program in 1972. He cautioned that a shortened program, while it has a cachet to it, is too fast-paced for some students.

"If we're talking about saving the system time, one of the things that would be most helpful would not be requiring everybody to have an undergraduate degree to get into medical school," said Padmos. "That would change things to a great degree."



Photo Illustration, Herald Graphics, Photo, Lorraine Hjalte, Calgary Herald
Billy Macdonald, who lives on Pump Hill Close across the street from Calgary's most expensive house, says the owners put on a great Stampede breakfast.

FROM A1 HOMES: 'The neighbours are great'

That is, of course, if you could convince anybody on Pump Hill Close to sell.

Sam Silberman, a resident of 21 years, said houses seldom turn over on the street. One neighbour sold a home simply to move a few doors down.

While Silberman was surprised to learn he lived in the city's priciest pocket, he could quickly pinpoint its appeal.

"It's fantastic. The neighbours are great and it's quiet," he said.

Silberman's daughter Debra, 21, who has lived on the close all her life, said it was a nice "normal" place to grow up, where neighbours' children played together.

"They are normal neighbours," Sam Silberman said of the Balms. "We see them and wave to them."

Pointing to the generosity at No. 27, Billy Macdonald, who lives across the street from the Balms, said they put on a great Stampede breakfast.

Macdonald said it can be a challenge backing out of his driveway some days.

"Lots of people come into the cul-de-sac to look," he said.

A third neighbour, who asked not to be named, said lot sizes in the street and the location make it so appealing, with Pump Hill "getting closer to the centre" all the time.

"When we first came here it was at the edge of Calgary," he said.

The only downside to living on Pump Hill Close, neighbours say, are the busloads of sightseers that clog the street and the hot air balloons that sometimes hover above — principally to gawk at the sprawling

mansion at No. 27.

At one point residents considered turning the close into a private gated road to protect their privacy.

At night, say neighbours, the closed-off community of Pump Hill comes into its own.

"There are only two real entrances (to the community) so it's nice because there is no traffic through here," Macdonald said.

Built in 2000, Balm's 91-room mansion includes two elevators, 14 bathrooms, an indoor pool, sauna, gym, library, auditorium-concert hall and studio.

But it is also the surrounding community the multimillionaire loves.

Living on Pump Hill Close provides the advantages of living in the city, he says, while enjoying a lifestyle that feels very removed from it.

"It's like living in a park with a few homes on it," Balm said.

Pump Hill is located near 90th Avenue in the city's southwest.

According to city estimates, Calgary's second most expensive home is 5909 Elbow Dr. S.W. The Bel-Aire home is valued at \$11,280,000.

The third most expensive home, 3809 4th St. S.W. in Elbow Park — a massive 14,647-square-foot mansion — is valued at \$11,090,000.

According to the city assessments released last week, five neighbourhoods — Eagle Ridge (\$1.81 million), Bel-Aire (\$1.74 million), Roxboro (\$1.64 million), Upper Mount Royal (\$1.55 million) and Britannia (\$1.27 million) — now have median home assessments above \$1 million.

PBEAUCHAMP@THEHERALD.CANWEST.COM

Facebook postings threaten fair trial

JODIE SINNEMA
EDMONTON JOURNAL

Four teens charged with killing a cat in a microwave oven during a house break-in in Camrose were named recently on the popular Internet website Facebook, along with postings that included threats of violence against them.

The Facebook web page that published the teens' names, a violation of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, has been shut down by the Camrose city police, said Sgt. Tony Thomsen.

The person who originally posted the names wrote, "They will all get their faces smashed in by January 6th."

Someone on the website wrote, "I think people like that should be shot."

"I would say these monsters should be tortured, let society at them," another poster wrote on a separate web page. "As their parents, I would not be sleeping. They would not be welcome back to my home or my life, and I am a parent of a 13- and 15-year-old myself. My motherly love would be gone."

By publishing the names outside court, the writer on Facebook was breaking the law and potentially jeopardizing the teens' rights to a fair trial.

One Facebook poster wrote: "You might have just caused them to walk free. . . . The last thing I want is a mistrial that could have been prevented."

Arthur Schafer, of the University of Manitoba's centre of professional and applied ethics, said, "Publishing of the names together with threats is itself bordering on shameful and is as worrying for society as the original act."

"We know they have been charged, we don't know whether they're guilty."

The mother of one of the teens charged with animal cruelty and other offences in the Camrose case said her son is "mortified" about the killing, and insists he wasn't directly involved with the animal's horrific death.

"He was there but he was not involved with the cat," said the woman, who can't be identified because her 15-year-old son is a minor.

The woman said one 15-year-old boy, who routinely carries a knife, instigated the break-in and it was his idea to kill the cat. Her son and one other teen left the house during the crime because they were upset, she said.

The three 15-year-olds and the 13-year-old who have been charged in connection with the break-in and the cat's death are scheduled to appear in Camrose youth court Feb. 7.

WITH FILES FROM SUMAN VARGHESE
EDMONTON JOURNAL

Ottawa couple finds rare purple pearl in dinner

WILLIAM LIN
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE
OTTAWA

A pair of Ottawa lovebirds got more than they were looking for when they celebrated their first anniversary by cracking open \$50 worth of clams: a purple pearl that could be worth thousands.

Their unforgettable find came last August, when Corinne Morgan and David Burns started their seafood fete with steamed littleneck clams.

Plucking out the meat from a clam with a fork and dipping it into butter, Burns took a bite — and felt a hard object.

At first, he thought it was a piece of shell. Then he pulled it out, revealing a pearl the size of a large pea. Wiping it clean with a napkin, Burns placed it in his wife's hand, saying, "Happy anniversary!"

Initially, they weren't sure what they were looking at. They thought it might be a black pearl.

"I knew it was purple, but I'd never

heard of such a thing," said Morgan, 45. "I thought at some point I could make a piece of jewelry out of it and said we'll just save it."

And that was that. For the next six months, the pearl sat, neglected, in a small cup on a living room stand beside their wedding photo.

It wasn't until last Thursday that they realized what it was. While watching television, they caught a show about a Florida couple who — just like them — had found a valuable purple pearl in a clam while eating at a restaurant.

"I said, 'That's purple. Our pearl's purple!' And I got all excited," Morgan said. "Now I want to know if it's worth anything. It could be worth nothing, but it's a great story for us, too. It was our first wedding anniversary."

The pearl is about eight millimetres in diameter. Experts say the chance of finding a high-quality purple pearl inside a clam is one in 100,000.

"I would describe this pearl as very rare for this size," said Vermont gemologist Antoinette Matlins, author of

The Pearl Book: The Definitive Buying Guide.

"If it is as beautiful as it appears in the photos, then it is not only very rare, but precious," Matlins said of the Ottawa couple's find.

A high-quality purple pearl of similar size could fetch thousands of dollars, Matlins said, although she added it was difficult to appraise the pearl without examining it herself.

The pearl's worth depends on its colour, shape, sheen and surface. A similar-sized purple pearl with high qualities could fetch at least \$5,000 US. The pearl's value drops by as much as thousands of dollars if it lacks certain qualities, such as shininess.

Morgan and Burns bought the four-kilogram bundle of clams at a local fish market.

Owner Gerry Oates said it's the first time he's heard of any of his customers finding such a pearl. "They got a good return on their product," he said.

Despite the pearl's potentially high material worth, Morgan said she may not sell it due to its sentimental value.



Jean Levac, CanWest News Service
Corinne Morgan and David Burns found a valuable purple pearl in a clam.