

Feds reconsider Rusk for EI benefits

DINA O'MEARA
Medicine Hat News

PEOPLE

Rhonda Rusk finds out today if she will receive employment insurance benefits again after being told staying by her hospitalized daughter's side is no excuse for not looking for work.

Her daughter Kimberly, 6, received head injuries Dec. 1 when other tobogganers crashed into her as she was being pulled up Kin Coulee hill. She remains in a semi-coma in Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary, with her mother by her side.

Rusk was cut off benefits because she indicated she was unavailable to work on employment insurance forms.

But a Dec. 30 News article on the Rusk's plight brought her case to the regional Employment Centre's office in Lethbridge and a

new set of forms were issued to Rusk, said Monika Hamel, family spokesman.

The medical form requires a doctor's signature that the EI recipient is incapable of looking for work, she said.

Another Hat mother knows the anguish the Rusks went through trying to deal with Canada Employment Centre bureaucracy.

Margo Plotsky was also threatened with being cut off from employment insurance during her daughter Kristy's search for a new heart.

"When you're in a position like that, it's not easy," said Plotsky. "Any money when you're in that position helps."

After taking 14-year-old Kristy to Edmonton for medical tests instead of attending a meeting at the Hat Canada Employment Centre, Plotsky was told her benefits would be cut off. "She's off work to be with her daughter," said Plotsky. "It's a ridiculous situation."

Kristy suffered from a rare heart condition, restrictive cardiomyopathy, which turns heart muscles into fibrous material restricting heartbeat. She received a new heart May

26 and is doing well, said Margo.

Hat MP Monte Solberg went to bat for Rusk, calling the regional Employment Insurance office in Lethbridge after reading the December News article.

"It's pretty distressing the way it all unfolded," said Solberg. "It seemed unjust at Christmas time that a person would be denied and have to go through all those hoops when they're facing a personal tragedy in their life."

When asked why Rusk was not offered the option of filing a medical form to stay on benefits right away, Mike Clemis, with Canada Employment Centre in the Hat, said until he receives a client release form, he can't comment specifically on Rusk's file.

However, her case was handled with the utmost propriety, he said.

"We act on information when we have it."

Mom cut off for staying with daughter in hospital

Horsman wheeling 'n dealing in Asia

MEDICINE HAT NEWS

BUSINESS

A Hat firm will be trying to sell fertilizer in Thailand and the Philippines next week as part of the federal government's 12-day trade mission to Asia.

The Horsman Group is trying to ink contracts for Agrium, a Calgary-based fertilizer manufacturer, Jim Horsman of The Horsman Group said this morning.



HORSMAN

"We're representing their interests and we'll be looking for opportunities to sell their product, fertilizers, in Thailand and the Philippines primarily."

The Team Canada trade mission begins in South Korea Tuesday, then heads to the Philippines on Jan. 15.

More than 40 Alberta oil companies, trucking firms and school divisions are represented, as well as the Alberta government.

The Horsman Group's director for Asia, Greg Hansen, has arranged meetings for Agrium with distributors and purchasers in Thailand and the Philippines.

Agrium is looking at possibly building a plant overseas, Horsman says.

The company is already selling fertilizers in Asia, Horsman notes.

"They're doing business there already. We're just trying to increase it."

This is the first time The Horsman Group has participated in a trade mission.

Snow problem



Derik Boksteyn leaves his hockey stick and skates on the bench for awhile Sunday in favor of a shovel to clean the ice at an outdoor rink in Kiwanis Central Park. The eight-year-old cleared an area so he and Derrick Packard could practise their hockey skills.

— News photo Peter Mah

Reformers pooh-pooh poll results

ROD EDWARDS
Medicine Hat News

POLITICS

Reformers around the Hat don't trust the popularity polls that show leader Preston Manning falling behind Jean Charest and his Progressive Conservatives.

"The media has been kinder to the Conservatives than to Reform," says Ralph Erb of Seven Persons, who supports the PCs provincially but Reform nationally.

"They don't like Reform's agenda."

But Ed Elford and Tim Seitz of Medicine Hat said today the poll shows the Conservatives are regaining respect.

"I don't think the Conservatives are dead," says Elford.

The latest poll showed 18 per cent of Canadians support the PC while Reform has just 11 per cent, the same as the New Democrats.

Seitz says he supports Charest but still believes the Conservatives and Reform should join forces if they want to oust the Liberals from government.

He says he expects the Conservatives to take more seats in the next election but the vote again will be split between the Bloc Quebecois and Reform so the Liberals will be re-elected.

Larry Samcoe of the Hat Reform association says the shift in support to the Conservatives means Canadians are not happy with the Liberals but are opting for "Liberal B — Charest."

The alternative is Manning because Reform would take Canada in an entirely different direction.

"I don't think the poll is a reflection on his leadership but we have our work cut out for us to convince Canadians that there is an alternative," adds Samcoe.

Reformer Myra Anderson of Irvine is skeptical of national polls particularly those that show the Bloc with 12 per cent of support.

Who outside of Quebec would pick the Bloc? she says.

"I would like to know who they are polling."

John Layton, another Reform supporter, says the polls don't prove anything.

Ontario Premier Mike Harris was low in the polls just before his Conservatives were elected, Layton adds.

Trio faces charges for glass-smashing spree

ANDREW EHRKAMP
Medicine Hat News

POLICE

Charges are pending today against three Hatters after 60 to 70 car and truck windshields were smashed between Medicine Hat and Bassano this weekend.

Bassano RCMP have three adults in custody in Gleichen and will charge them later today, Const. Robert MacKenzie said this morning.

"These were all parked vehicles outside residences, and there seems to be a particular reason for doing this other than trying to cause dam-

age."

Hat police and RCMP are gathering evidence today after cars and trucks were smashed in the Hat, Redcliff, Tilley, Brooks, Duchess, Rosemary and Bassano.

The trouble is most Hatters may not have glass insurance as part of their policy because it costs too much, says Perry Yanke of Cedar Square Insurance.

It's often cheaper to buy a new windshield than buy glass insurance, he adds.

For example, Yanke says, a new windshield for a 1996 Buick car may cost \$375.

Glass insurance may be \$135 with a \$100 deductible, Yanke notes.

A vehicle's side windows are covered by most insurance policies because they are most often broken by vandalism or attempted break-ins, Yanke explains.

Front windshields may be broken for other reasons, like flying rocks, he adds.

Motorists can buy a \$140 glass policy, including the deductible, which is separate from their regular insurance policy, Yanke says. "It's user pay."

Once the windshield is broken, coverage ends and you must renew the policy.

Linder legend on rodeo circuit

ROD EDWARDS
Medicine Hat News

BOOKS

Herman Linder, an Alberta jurist once said, has been to baseball, what Babe Ruth was to baseball, what Gordie Howe was to hockey and Knute Rockne was to football — a legend.

Review

Justice Kenneth Moore's description of Linder in a 1981 speech to the 50th annual Rangemen's Dinner in Calgary, honors an Alberta cowboy well-known to Medicine Hat Stampede fans.

The 89-year-old Cardston cowboy was honored last year by the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede for his lifetime devotion to the sport.

He also officially opened last year's Medicine Hat rodeo.

His glory, his pain and his enduring faith in the rodeo — one of the old west's greatest legacies — is told

in a just-published book called The Linder Legend, The Story of Pro Rodeo and its Champion.

Author Harald Gunderson, a former Hatter living in Calgary, writes from personal experience in the world of bucking horses as well as his close association with Linder.

Gunderson chronicles rodeo's history through the life of the man he calls a walking, talking museum.

The story is told with a generous selection of pictures and anecdotes about some of the greatest Canadian and American cowboys who ever lived.

Ralph W. Murray, the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association's general manager from 1983-1995, said Linder's achievements make him immortal.

But his greatest contribution, said Murray, was his work to establish rodeo as the popular and respected sport it is today.

Linder gave up competing in 1939 after capturing 22 championships at

the Calgary Stampede, a record unmatched by any cowboy.

He got out of the tough sport with little more than a smashed knee and chipped spine.

But he stayed involved for many years as a rodeo producer and still is a fulltime rancher and horse buyer.

The book tells about Linder as a young man who was involved in a meeting in Boston in 1936 where a decision was made to stage a one-day strike by competitors to get a better deal for rodeo cowboys.

The Cowboys' Turtle Association was born that day to record the fact the cowboys were slow to get started but ready to stick their necks out.

It was the forerunner of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, an affiliate of the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association and similar groups in Australia and New Zealand.

Since those days, Linder was inducted into six Cowboy Halls of Fame, including one in Oklahoma City where a display case shows his trophies from three continents and four countries.

Linder is a quiet-spoken individual whose life inspired others and drew praise from everyone who knew him.

He kept a diary for years as he, in Gunderson's words, blazed like a meteor across the rodeo world.

In it, Linder made an entry that probably best reveals his simple but sincere ambition.

"Early on I hoped I'd have a grandson who could say rodeo is a good sport and my Grandpa helped make it so."

The book is available at the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede office and by writing Sagebrush Publishing, 327 Wainwright Rd. S.E., Calgary T2J 1H9.



Herman Linder, 89, is captured on film by Dorothea Schaab for The Linder Legend.