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EDITORIAL

A Tribute to Lois Hole



"Sometimes I wish we lived in a less hectic world, where everyone could find time to enjoy a simple breakfast. I hate to see people going hungry. It hurts, especially when there's no need for it. We are rich enough to feed everyone, and yet, somehow, we're not quite smart enough or fair enough to do it."

—Lois Hole, 1933–2005

LAST FALL, ATTENDEES OF ALBERTA Theatre Projects' Bob Edwards Luncheon in Calgary were treated to a delightful and rousing speech by Lieutenant Governor Lois Hole. Alberta's "Queen of Hugs" reminded her audience of the importance of the arts in our lives and the need for arts education in our schools. "Well educated citizens, who must have a solid grounding in the liberal arts, are the foundation of any nation's prosperity and cultural worth," she said. "The arts enrich us all; they are not a frill, they are an absolute necessity."

The staff of *AlbertaViews* exchanged happy looks. Hole had, as she so often did, displayed the rich, progressive spirit we hope to capture in this magazine.

Four months later, Lois Hole died at age 71 after a long battle with cancer. When putting together this issue, which looks at women, and particularly women in politics, we were reminded of her grace, strength and commitment. We were reminded of her capacity to stand up and say her piece, regardless of whether she had been asked, and to do so with such tact, clarity and good humour as to elevate discussions where others may have caused offence.

Shortly after her appointment by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien in 1999, Hole declared: "I want to give support and legitimacy to the groups that need it most, to the people who often go unheard in our culture... While the position of lieutenant governor is not a platform for activism, neither is it one without substance. My primary goal is to encourage people to carefully consider our more vital issues of social justice, in the hopes that positive change may result."

A tireless advocate for public education, public health care and the arts, Hole often pushed the boundaries of her traditionally ceremonial role. At that same ATP luncheon where she so eloquently spoke of arts education, Hole joked that Premier Klein's absence was his way of avoiding the displeasure of sitting through her criticisms. And when a new women's hospital in Edmonton was named after her just weeks before her death, Hole took the opportunity to speak out in favour of public health care. Never silenced by the limitations of her position, Hole always spoke from the heart.

"I have faith in a better future," she once said, "because I have faith that most human beings want to do the right thing. If we can put aside differences of ideology, if we can learn to love one another, then one day we will enjoy a world where no one need live in fear, where no one need go hungry, where everyone can enjoy a good education, the fellowship of friendly neighbours, and the security of a world at peace with itself at long last."

A portion of this issue of *AlbertaViews* focuses on the systemic barriers women face in politics. But we just couldn't focus on women in politics without pausing to remember Lois Hole. Her compassion, acuity and strength made us so proud. In a province where women make up half the population but account for only 16 per cent of MLAs, one could argue that we might benefit from having more women in our legislature. Having more people of Lois Hole's ilk in our government would do this province a world of good.

—AlbertaViews Staff