

The background of the entire page is a collage of various newspaper clippings, including headlines and photographs, rendered in a light, faded grey tone. The text 'TED CONEY' is prominently displayed in the center in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. Below it, the same text 'TED CONEY' is repeated in a lighter, semi-transparent blue font, creating a layered effect.

TED CONEY

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Mentions in [The Daily Herald-Tribune](#), Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada

20 years of coffee and camaraderie with the CO-OP SENATORS

By CHRISTINA GRANT
Herald-Tribune staff

There are no membership fees, no agenda, no formal meeting rooms and they don't keep attendance.

But you can set your clock to their schedule and if anyone is late — well, they better have a good excuse.

Meet the Co-op Senators.

"Every morning the store's open, we're here" says Wesley Hudz, a retired Sexsmith farmer and one of about 12 regulars who meet at 8:30 a.m. sharp downstairs at the Grande Prairie Co-op cafeteria every day except Sunday.

The men drink coffee, occasionally eat breakfast and talk.

Ed Coney, a long time Bezanson resident, is one of the group's founders. At 87, he's also the oldest and the group's self-appointed spokesman.

"We give Mulroney his orders every day. Only trouble is, he doesn't listen," Coney says with a chuckle. "And we give city hall a going-over when they need it."

Coney started coming to the Co-op with his buddy Henry Dumas (now deceased) over 20 years ago for coffee. A couple more friends grew to a full table's of regulars.

Today numbers are steady despite some members passing on. There always seems to be younger men on the sidelines although the average age at the table right now is 75.

The 'Senators' moniker evolved one Christmas season.

"The girls (waitresses) make us take every Christmas, and we give them chocolates. We were wondering what to put on the card. I suggested 'The Senators' and it stuck," recalls Coney.

The men carry the title with good humor. Since they get together regularly and thoroughly discuss all current matters ("Everything but religion" according to Coney), it seems appropriate.



Meet some of the Co-Op Senators. From left to right seated around the table are Ed Coney, Wesley Hudz, John Nedohin, Jim Horrigan, Tom Fitzpatrick, and Rudy Marek.

Coney insists there's no trick to becoming a senator. "Just sit down and push yourself in."

Good-natured ribbing is as much a part of the daily half hour sessions as serious conversation.

Despite the laughter, members quickly discover they are part of a real club when they wander in as little as 10 minutes late.

The men have a distinct sense of partnership with the Co-op. All are members and many do the bulk of their shopping there.

"The Co-op has always been the place to meet neighbors and friends," says Tom Fitzpatrick, a retired farmer from the Clairmont area.

For Jim Horrigan, a retired businessman in the construction field, the meetings are a way to stay current. "We get to know what's going on around town. But it's strictly gossip."

Gwen Simpkins has been a waitress at the Co-op cafeteria for seven years. She says the senators always sit at the same table, and are without exception some of the best customers.

"They're always very friendly. They know all our names, and when there's a new girl they make her feel at home. If one of us is sick or away, they'll ask about her."

The special relationship is highlighted at Christmas when the senators' table is laid with a white tablecloth and fruit trays.

Simpkins says the staff would miss the group if the meetings suddenly ended.

"The Co-op just wouldn't be the same without them."

The 'has-beens' have also been around for 20 years

At the back of the Co-op dining area another group of men meet regularly.

They too call themselves 'senators', but they don't like the name as much as the older guys.

The men call themselves 'the has-beens' and most have been getting together for 20 years or more.

"It's not a formal thing, it just happens," says Dick Beairsto, long time Grande Prairie city engineer. "Mostly we insult each other."

Sam Drader, an RCMP mem-

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ber for 28 years and longtime city alderman, bears the brunt of many conversations.

"Our main objective has been to tell Sam what to do on council," says Jack Mackie, the city's first mayor.

The group meets at about 10:00 a.m. most mornings and

again at 3 p.m.

"We've been a dozen different places, but ended up at the Co-op," says Mackie, adding that no more than eight from a 'pool' of 10 manage to meet on a given morning.

The men drink coffee and play a game called 'One to One

Thousand' to see who picks up the tab that day.

They always sit at a corner table in the farthest reaches of the room because of the "good view of everybody" it offers.

The men admit they never agree on anything.

Mackie and crew know the

older senators, but the two groups remain separate. Eventually, however, they admit they may make the move to the table under the trophy counter now inhabited by the senior senators.

"Maybe, someday. If they'll let us," says Walter Bielecki with a large grin.

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Rash of accidents strikes Grande Prairie

An 18-year-old Peace River woman was listed in satisfactory condition in city hospital today following a two-vehicle accident yesterday in Grande Prairie.

RCMP said Corine Lynn Hafner was driving her car north on Clairmont Rd., about 3:30 p.m. when she was in collision with another car, driven by Ernest White, 56, of Grande Prairie, at 103 St.

Damage was estimated at \$650.

Grande Prairie RCMP reported several other ac-

cidents in the area yesterday, resulting in several thousand dollars total damage.

A pedestrian, Edward

Coney, of the city, was slightly injured, but not reported hospitalized, when he was struck by a truck about 1:30

p.m. at 101 St. and 102 Ave.

Police said Mr. Coney was crossing south at a crosswalk on 101 St. when he was hit by

the vehicle driven by Allan George Delke, 28, of Wembley.

At 12:05 p.m., a two-vehicle accident at Clairmont Rd. and 97 Ave. resulted in \$650 total damage.

A truck driven by Dollard Olliver Dallaire, 20, of Peace River, was in collision with a car operated by Cheryl Arlene Lowe, 21, of Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dallaire was westbound on 97 Ave. and Miss Lowe was northbound on Clairmont Rd.

RCMP also reported that a car received \$1,500 damage when the driver lost control on ice about six miles west of the city.

Daniel William Delaney, 23, of Wembley, was westbound on a hill on Highway 2 about 9:15 p.m. when he lost control of his car, entered the south culvert ditch, and flipped.

Mr. Delaney received superficial injuries.

A herd of cattle was involved in another accident at 7:45 p.m. near Grovedale.

Police said Eugene Speed, 20, of Grande Prairie, was driving north on a foggy-icy road when he was in collision with the cattle.

His vehicle received \$1,600 damage and there was \$175 damage to the cattle. One animal was shot on the spot.

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