Royal City Men's Club

General Meeting Thursday, November 6th, 2025

Ron East – Secretary

Warren Gregg – President presiding. Meeting opened 10:55AM

Number of members present 64

Remembrance Day moment of silence

Ken Marchant – Activities Committee Chair – update

- **Remembrance Day**
- **Xmas luncheon (door prizes)**

Martin Alderwick – Membership Chair

Welcome Elmer Walkerton

Poppies distribution thanks to Bob Berry

Kerry Gennings introduced our Speaker Dr Alex Souchen

Topic: Munitions Disposal and Post-War Reconstruction in Canada

Bio:

Dr. Alex Souchen is an Associate Professor at the University of Guelph, cross-appointed between the Department of History and the Bachelor of Arts and Sciences Program. His interdisciplinary research explores the history of science and technology and the environmental legacies of warfare in the 20th century. He is the author of *War Junk: Munitions Disposal and Postwar Reconstruction in Canada* (published by UBC Press in 2020), and co-editor of *Silent Partners: The Origins and Influence of Canada's Military-Industrial Complex* (published by UBC Press in 2023). He has also published many articles on military pollution and the ocean dumping of munitions after the World Wars in North America and Europe. His next book will examine the history of Canada's industrial front during the Second World War and the environmental and health risks of explosives production.

Presentation:

"The Surprising History of War Junk"
Brief description: During the Second World War, Canadian factories produced an astonishing array of munitions and supplies. However, when the war ended in 1945, a major disposal crisis emerged as much of this materiel became surplus to requirements. So what happened to Canada's surplus munitions and supplies and what impact did they have

on postwar Canada? In this presentation, Alex Souchen will recount the many afterlives of Canada's surplus munitions and supplies and show how the Canadian government planned an "exit strategy" that helped Canadians reduce, reuse, and recycle leftover war junk to build the foundations of peace.

Note: **In the course of the Second World War, Canada's factories, mines, and fields produced billions and billions of dollars worth of goods and foods to support the war effort. The nation created and produced more than Canada's million men and women in uniform needed to fight and win, so arms, equipment, food, minerals and metals were sold or, if our Allies did not have the money to pay, given away for the cause of victory. This was an astonishing feat of production and organization, a massive effort by every sector of the Canadian economy and by Canadian workers and business leaders. Canadians won the economic war, and their efforts from 1939 to 1945 also ensured that the postwar years would be very different than the bleak decade that had preceded the war. (Arming the Nation: Canada's Industrial War Effort 1939-1945 by J. L. Granatstein)**

2 part presentation

1) **A History of Munitions Disposal post W.W. 2**
2) **The Dark Side – Risks and Problems**

$3.5 billion in war materials – excess

Disposal:

Surplus – competition between Government (Army Surplus stores) and private sector

Speculators – danger of deflation

Establishment of War Assets Corporation – John Berry appointed head

Increased regulation – mrdications were destroyed

Post -War transition – shortages, veterans returning home, social security introduced

Reverse logistics – returns – be a wholesale distributor, not retail – public unhappy with re-packaging – supported status quo

Preferences: shipping, automotive – preferential sales

Surge – post-war baby boom

Material overseas – given away, left, sold locally (Dutch)

Recycling – planes, tanks etc – scrap metal

Ordinance, chemical weapons – destroyed – incineration, dumping (world's oceans, Great Lakes) – toxic smoke and soil pollution as well. Controlled detonation – millions of tons Canada dumped 500 tons per week – no documents

Re-cycling, scrapping of shells – dangerous, cost, safety

Mustard gas, radioactive waste hard to dispose of.

400,000 tons of German ordinance dumped in North Sea

700,000 tons dumped in Europe's oceans

Also Asia Pacific and Japanese munitions

The U.S. dumped 400,500 tons per day up to 1970's

Long term dangers to fishing

Legacy: tools of death and destruction

Gun culture given big boost in U.S. after WW2 – purchase of war surplus weapons

All part of 're-construction'

Questions

Meeting ended 11:00 AM