

Address to

**Canadian Polo Association &
Polo Training Foundation Canada Fundraiser**

Calgary Polo Club

2004 August 8

Deputy Mayor Diane Colley-Urquhart

Good evening everyone. Thank you for inviting me here today. It is a pleasure to bring greetings on behalf of Mayor Dave Bronconnier and my colleagues on City Council.

I'm sure most of you are already aware that Britain is considered one of the leading polo countries in the world. One of the principal players in the equestrian world in the U.K. is our guest here today. Colonel Robert French Blake is Extra Equerry and Polo Manager to His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, positions he has held for the past eleven years. Please join me in welcoming Colonel French Blake and his family here from England.

Looking at his C.V., I doubt there are many others in the polo world whose resume reads like Colonel French Blake's. After spending close to 30 years with the British Army, from commanding large units in England and abroad, to planning firing exercises, training, testing, equipment and financial management, and many, many other jobs, Colonel French Blake joined the largest polo club in Europe, the Guards Polo Club in Windsor.

As Chief Executive from 1989 to 1991, he was responsible for managing all of the clubs activities on a daily basis, from staging of special events including the Cartier Polo International to completely restructuring the office, and achieving a net increase of over \$400,000 in overall profitability of the Club.

Colonel French Blake also acted as Estate Manager and personal consultant to Galen Weston's Fort Belvedere residence in England, a property once belonging to

Edward VIII. His work at Fort Belvedere from 1991 to 1993 included overseeing the program for the Maple Leafs Medium and High Goal Polo Teams.

In addition to holding the position of Extra Equerry to His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, Colonel French Blake is a Member of Her Majesty's Bodyguard, is involved with the International Sporting Agency, is a recruitment and management consultant, and since 2000, has been an Alpaca farmer.

It is a pleasure to have Colonel French Blake and his family join us for this fundraiser and I hope that our guests have the opportunity to not only meet many involved in the polo community while they're here, but that they have the chance to visit some of our outstanding attractions and sites here and in Calgary.

Before I wrap up, I'd just like to say how vitally important it is that amateur athletes receive the funding and support required to continue and to excel in their chosen sport. One of the missions of the Canadian Polo Association is to raise funds to support amateur polo teams to compete internationally. The funds raised this evening will go towards these teams and to support the start-up and continuation of junior polo programs across Canada. I hope that today's event is a success in that regard.

Thank you again for inviting me here today, and enjoy your evening.