

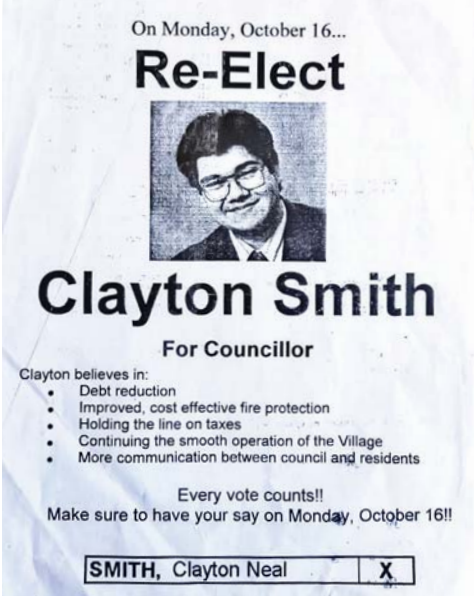
Canada’s Youngest Mayor Has a Message for Youth Today

By Tara MacIsaac
The Epoch Times

Clayton Smith, 19, returned to his parents’ house after being sworn in as mayor of a central Alberta hamlet in October 1995. “I guess you can refer to me as ‘your worship’ now,” Mr. Smith joked with his father. “Not while you’re living in my basement,” his father quipped back. But in all seriousness, his parents were proud; his mother wrote eagerly to her family back in the Philippines to let them know they now had a mayor in the family. Mr. Smith was the youngest mayor ever elected in Canada, and he still holds that record almost 30 years later. So what qualities did this kid living in his parents’ basement have that landed him the role of mayor for New Norway, Alberta? The hamlet’s size helped—New Norway’s population was about 300 at the time, so he didn’t have a lot of competition. But a good measure of pluck, hard work, and a civic-minded upbringing was involved as well.

Early Influences, Meeting People
Mr. Smith’s advice for young people today is this: “Get involved in the community, get to do some volunteer work, get to meet people and network with people,” he said in an interview with The Epoch Times. “You never know who you’ll end up meeting, and you never know the kind of influence or ideas you’ll get from somebody.” That’s how he got his start. His first summer job, when he was 16, was with the city. In a bigger town, his experience might have been limited to trimming hedges or cutting grass on city property. But in New Norway, he was able to take a peek into many aspects of the city’s operations.

He helped the town foreman with water testing, maintenance, and many other tasks around the community. He got to know the village administrator, who managed the hamlet’s operations. He was all over New Norway, meeting store owners and other townspeople. It was an offhand comment by the town foreman that planted the idea of getting into politics. The two would sometimes discuss local politics and village happenings. When a vacancy came on council, the foreman said, “Why don’t you run?” He followed that musing with, “I guess you’re not old enough yet. You’re not 18.” When Mr. Smith turned 18, he was ready to run for council. He was doing a “stinky” job at the time—helping build an addition to a pig barn just outside of town—and was eager for a change anyway, he said.



▲ Clayton Smith (L) shakes hands with the late Halvar Jonson, then-MLA and Alberta health minister, during a youth forum in Edmonton in the 1990s, not long before Mr. Smith became mayor of New Norway, Alberta, at the age of 19.



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Clayton Smith

▲ A campaign flyer from when Clayton Smith was up for re-election in 1995.

He had recently graduated from high school and wasn’t sure about his next step. Council seemed like a good move to make. He picked up a nomination form, and got the requisite five signatures—three of them came from former mayors, so Mr. Smith was strongly endorsed. On a lunch break from the pig farm job, he filed his nomination papers. It was shortly before the deadline to submit at noon that day, so he stuck around. “Twelve-o’clock rolled around, nobody else filed their papers. So, I was on village council at that point just by acclamation,” he said. The administrator shook his hand and congratulated him.

‘You Got It, Young Man’
A little over a year later, there was a general election for council. He campaigned on maintaining a balanced budget, continuing the smooth operation of the village, and purchasing a new fire truck. “I got the most votes for the council election,” he said. He had 60 percent of the town’s vote, so his fellow councillors chose him as mayor. Mr. Smith accepted. “You got it, young man,” one of his fellow councillors remarked. No one made an issue of his age. “Most people thought I was 30,” Mr. Smith said with a laugh. He looked older than 19. He served for the next three years, with one of his outstanding accomplishments being the realization of his campaign promise to get the hamlet its own fire truck. He also helped strike a deal with a developer who had bought up a large chunk of the town’s land. The developer failed to do anything with it, so the town bought back the land and established incentives for people to buy and develop it within a year. By the end of his term, the lots were all sold and the once-empty land was filled with houses.

Looking Ahead
Mr. Smith was interested in pursuing politics further—perhaps provincial office, or even federal office one day. But he realized he needed more life experience first. “I couldn’t be the mayor in my parents’ basement forever,” he said. “I hadn’t paid a mortgage, I hadn’t paid my own bills.” His parents’ house was where he first developed an interest in politics. In the early 1980s, Mr. Smith was captivated by what he saw while watching

the news with his father—the nuclear arms race, the economic turmoil of the time. His father had to go on employment insurance for the first time in his life, and that impressed upon the young Mr. Smith how much the broader political and economic conditions can impact individual Canadians. “He’s a blue-collar guy. He was a truck driver, welder, machinist—a handy guy,” Mr. Smith said of his father, who is now retired. “He wasn’t a politician or anything, but he paid attention to the news.” Being a kid in his parents’ basement did have its benefits, Mr. Smith said. He wasn’t busy with a family of his own and all sorts of adult responsibilities, so he was able to devote himself to his work for the town.

A Lasting Impact
Over the following years, his job as mayor gave his resumé a major boost. “It was a big part of my life, because some of the job opportunities that I had—basically having that on my resumé got my foot in the door,” he said. Since those days, Mr. Smith has always had some involvement in politics, but is now a civil engineering technologist by trade. He has volunteered with various constituency associations, which are volunteer-run organizations established by political parties, including in Edmonton where he now lives. “The role of mayor and serving on council helped me to pick a career path,” he said. “I had the chance to go over engineer drawings and plans, and that helped me pick a career in civil engineering and surveying.” In his current role, he feels he can still help communities thrive by establishing good infrastructure. He remains civic-minded. He suggests young people get out to volunteer, and that their parents encourage them to do so.

“When you volunteer, a lot of people that care about the community, that are involved in the community, they’re also volunteering. So you can meet quite a range of people,” he said. Some of them would probably be keen to help a young person run for office as well, or continue in other ways on the rewarding path of contributing to one’s community, Mr. Smith said. “You never know where you go from there.”

New Quebec Rules Require Two-Thirds French on Store Signs

The Quebec government has published new rules requiring French to take up most of the space on storefronts and outdoor commercial signs. French must be the dominant language on commercial signs, even where the business name is in English. Stores like Canadian Tire will have to include generic terms or descriptions in French on their storefronts that take up twice as much space as the English brand name. The regulations, which will come into force in June 2025, also strengthen French-language requirements on product packaging.

Alberta Pulling Out of Federal Dental Plan, Smith Says

Ottawa is infringing on provincial jurisdiction with its federal dental plan, and Alberta wants no part of it, Premier Danielle Smith has announced in a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Health-care planning and delivery is an area of provincial jurisdiction and the Canadian Dental Care Plan infringes on that right, Ms. Smith wrote in a June 25 letter to Mr. Trudeau. The province is instead asking Ottawa to negotiate an agreement for Alberta’s share of federal dental funding, which will be used to expand provincial dental coverage to more low-income Albertans. Beyond jurisdiction issues, the chief reason for the opt-out, Ms. Smith said, is that the Canadian Dental Care Plan replicates existing provincial coverage.

30 YEARS

► The federal government is ending the northern cod fishery moratorium off the north and east coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador after more than 30 years.

BC Natural Gas Plant Gets Green Light

A new liquified natural gas export plant is to be built on the B.C. coast near Kitimat. The project was given the green light after Haisla Nation and its partner Pembina Pipeline Corporation announced a final investment in the Cedar LNG plant, a US\$4 billion floating liquefied natural gas facility. The Haisla Nation is a majority owner in the project with a 50.1 percent stake while Pembina has a 49.9 percent stake.

Population to Reach 63 Million by 2073

New projections by Statistics Canada suggest the nation’s population could reach 63 million by 2073, with the number of people aged 85 or older set to triple. The agency says migration will be the key driver of population increase under all scenarios, while natural growth only plays a “marginal role” as the population ages and fertility rates remain low. The Canadian Press contributed to this report.

Premier Eby Begins Campaign for BC Election While Expecting Third Child

By Chandra Philip
The Epoch Times

B.C. Premier David Eby started campaigning early ahead of the provincial election scheduled for Oct. 19, saying his wife is expecting their third child near the end of June. On June 20, seven days before the expected arrival date of his daughter, Mr. Eby held a campaign event in Vancouver, saying he was getting a head start before taking some time off to be with his family. The BC NDP leader introduced four candidates for his party, including Randene Neill, a former broadcaster, and Baltej Dhillon, the first RCMP officer to wear a turban on duty.

“While I’m spending time with my family, welcoming our 3rd child, our amazing BC NDP candidates will be out connecting with people about what matters most,” he said in a June 20 post on X, formerly Twitter. **Parties Campaigning** The provincial NDP has been polling higher than the Conservatives in recent surveys, with the BC United Party, formerly the BC Liberal Party, falling behind both. A May 30 Angus Reid survey indicated the BC NDP had an 11-point lead compared to the Conservatives among decided and leaning voters, with 41 percent and 30 percent voter

support respectively. The BC United sits at 16 percent. This is a loss of 18 percentage points from the popular vote of 33.77 percent that it received in the 2020 election, when it was the Liberal Party. B.C.’s Conservatives have also been announcing several new candidates over the past few weeks, including former Surrey mayor Linda Hepner. United Party MLAs Elenore Sturko and Lorne Doerksen crossed the floor to the Conservatives on June 3 and May 31 respectively, and former United candidate Chris Moore announced his switch to the Tories on June 19. Conservative and United leaders have said some have made attempts

to unite the two parties, but the efforts haven’t succeeded. The BC United Party is also out campaigning, with leader Kevin Falcon taking aim at the cost of living, saying his party will make life more affordable by balancing the budget, fixing child care, and boosting economic prosperity for the province. BC’s Green Party is out door knocking and talking with voters as well. While the party platform includes health care and affordability issues, including support for basic income, it is also focusing heavily on climate change policies. The Canadian Press contributed to this article.