

Biography

Ralph Sultan, MLA

West Vancouver-Capilano

Ralph Sultan was elected to the BC Legislature from the riding of West Vancouver-Capilano in 2001. He currently serves on the Legislature's Public Accounts Committee and is Caucus Liaison to the Ministry of Finance. Ralph previously served as Chair of the Select Standing Committee on Health, which completed a landmark study on Childhood Obesity, and headed the B.C. Mining Task Force.

Ralph, born in 1933, is an economist, educator and businessperson who also maintains registration as a professional engineer (P.Eng.) in both B.C. and Ontario. He has been a registrant with APEO for 53 years, and has also been registered in Quebec and Alberta. Prior to attending university, he worked as a tree faller, as a lineman on the construction of the Kemano-Kitimat transmission line, as surveyor's helper on the Lillooet and Bridge River hydroelectric projects, as a soils technician for Ripley Klohn Leonoff of Vancouver, and as an International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers permit member.

He graduated from the University of British Columbia in 1956 with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. Perhaps his most notable accomplishment at UBC was to serve as President of the EUS (Engineering Undergraduate Society) which was tasked to raid the Ubysey student newspaper office frequently, and (in justifiable retaliation for their jibes against the engineers), throw such later-famous journalists as Allan Fotheringham in the lily pond.

Upon graduation with his degree in mechanical engineering, Ralph worked as a technical sales representative for Union Carbide Corporation of New York, where he specialized in new product applications marketing, including silicone gasketing on the Avro Arrow, tungsten carbide turbine blade coatings for the Rolls Royce Dart engine, as well as bulk oxygen installations.

In 1958 he enrolled in Harvard University's Graduate School of Business Administration, Boston. He was named Baker Scholar and in 1960 graduated with an MBA with High Distinction. During this study period he was employed as a "praktikant" by Atlas Copco in their compressed air drilling and mine equipment facility in Stockholm.

With a Ford Foundation Fellowship, he enrolled in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS), Harvard University, receiving MA and Ph.D. (Economics) degrees. His fields of study included money and banking, econometrics, and mathematical economics.

Prior to completing his final degree at GSAS he was offered a position as Assistant Professor at the Harvard Business School, where he taught and engaged in research, rising to the rank of Associate Professor. He co-authored *Problems in Marketing*, published by McGraw Hill. While at Harvard he also initiated the path-breaking Profit Impact of Market Share ("*PIMS*") project, and completed a two-volume study of price fixing in the electrical machinery industry, published by Harvard University Press (*Pricing in the Electrical Oligopoly, Volumes I and II.*)

In 1973 Ralph Sultan left Harvard and joined The Royal Bank of Canada as Chief Economist. He was at the bank a few weeks short of ten years, rising to successive appointments as Senior Vice President, Marketing; Chair of the Asset Liability Policy Committee; member of the Chief General Manager's operating committee; and latterly, Senior Vice President, Global Energy and Minerals, Calgary, with offices around the world.

He left the bank to become Executive Vice President of Anglo American Corporation's North American holding company (Hudson Bay Mining), a position in which he soon found himself in disagreement with the CEO, leading to his (Ralph's) abrupt departure.

Wings clipped, he sought and found respite with the J.W. McConnell Foundation, assisting the investment policy and personal investments of Canada's largest philanthropy. While with the McConnell's he formed a business relationship with a mining engineering classmate from UBC and the two of them bid for, and purchased, one of the world's largest lead-zinc mines at Faro, Yukon.

Subsequently, Ralph became Chairman of a trust company, President of a mutual fund company, and director of other businesses in the insurance, nuclear submarine vehicle, and fiberboard businesses (the latter a joint venture with Bechtel). While all were fascinating in their own way, one might say some were more successful than others.

In his spare time, Ralph found time to serve on the Harvard University Advisory Committee on Graduate Education; as chair of the Advisory Board to the Queen's University Business School, and, in Vancouver, as an officer of the Eagle Harbour Yacht Club.

Personal disaster struck with the sudden death of his wife of 43 years, Shirley, in 1999. Like Ralph she had grown up in less-than-royal circumstances in East Vancouver. She had found time to finance Ralph's education, be a successful mother of four (including two who became graduate engineers), earning two nursing degrees, teaching surgical nursing at Massachusetts General Hospital, and working as part-owner and operator of a rehabilitation clinic.

For the past almost-9 years, Ralph has served in the Legislature of British Columbia where his special interests encompass the engineering profession, health care, financial institutions, and providing a high level of service to his North Shore constituents.

He pretends to garden, messes around with his 34-foot trawler -- inaccurately named *Carefree* --, and visits as often he can with his four grandchildren. He regards his formative years in Mechanical Engineering at UBC, and the work and quantitative disciplines he learned there -- despite time out to court Shirley -- as keys to his academic success at Harvard and whatever else he has tried to do in life.

West Vancouver
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