Three Edmonton men honoured with the Order of Canada

Three Edmonton men, including an Arctic scientist, a trailblazer in biochemistry, and a longtime pillar of the legal community, have been appointed to the Order of Canada, Gov. Gen. Julie Payette announced Thursday.

Lisa Johnson Updated: June 27, 2019

“The Order of Canada is being recognized for a contribution to your country, and that’s really special. It could easily be overlooked, all the things you’ve done, all the efforts you’ve made,” said John England, who was recognized for his extensive contributions to Arctic science and for his environmental advocacy. A professor emeritus of earth and atmospheric sciences at the University of Alberta, he has made a life-long study of the environmental and climatic history of Canada’s Arctic islands and continues to push for a national polar policy, something he said is long overdue.

“I’ve always been passionately Canadian. It’s important to be exasperated — if there’s something that’s missing or being ignored, you have an obligation to be unsettled by that,” said England.

Brian Sykes, distinguished professor emeritus of biochemistry at the University of Alberta, received an Order of Canada for his pioneering contributions to the field of nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy and for his commitment to education and science. His work helped biochemists determine the structure of proteins nanometres in size.

“I didn’t know it was going to turn out this way. I was just fascinated with this. You follow your nose. You go do what you want to do. Paint whatever you want to paint or sing whatever you want to sing,” he said.

Sykes wanted to raise his two sons in Edmonton because, he said, “it’s one of the best places to live, (and) I tried to make it a better place — through my research or my teaching,” he said.

Former chief justice of the Court of Queen’s Bench of Alberta, Allan Wachowich was honoured for his lifelong commitment to the law and for his dedicated service to his community as an engaged citizen and volunteer with multiple charitable initiatives.

“I’m very honoured,” said Wachowich. He found great satisfaction in his work as a lawyer, because he felt like he was helping people, he said.

“A person should have a philosophy that you have to leave this world a better place than when you started doing your work,” he said.

Wachowich said he also owes his success to the great teachers he has had and to his family, who made great sacrifices for his education and career.

“It’s all due to what my parents and wife and my own children and my brother and my sisters did. It’s an honour to the family — not just me,” he said.

A total of 83 appointments were made Thursday by the governor general on the recommendation of an advisory council. The recipients, which include some of the country’s most prominent community builders, artists, musicians, scientists, historians, philanthropists, social advocates and business people, will be presented with their insignia at Rideau Hall in Ottawa on a date to be announced.

Source: Edmonton Journal