My wish for Calgary is that we sustain our rich and long history. The Calgary Jewish Federation is the largest Jewish community fundraising organization in Alberta. The “Jewish” in our name reminds us to care about every Jewish individual in our community. It means that we are required to make Jewish education, camp, Israeli travel, and the panoply of Jewish experiences accessible for everyone. It empowers us to dream about a world where future generations are more secure than previous ones, and therefore are able to build an even stronger, more vibrant Jewish community. We need to continue to welcome newcomers to our community and integrate them into Jewish life along with those who might need special accommodations to take advantage of all we have to offer. We need to expand our programs and leadership opportunities for young adults. They are our future. We need to continue to work with our day schools to strengthen the Jewish education of our children.

It is necessary to continue our connection with the land and the people of Israel. I am proud of the way in which we have expanded our work in Israel. We are not only sending more young people to Israel, we are building enduring relationships among members of our community and our partnership community in the Upper Galilee, and we are leveraging our philanthropic investments there to have a lasting impact on the quality of life in that region. We should be doing even more to connect members of our community with Israel and the global Jewish community, which will only continue to grow and deepen and strengthen their personal Jewish identity and bind them to community in powerful ways.

We need to raise more funds to meet the pressing needs of today and to build a foundation of endowed funds for our future. The immense resources within our community can give life to dreams in the most impactful and meaningful ways. We need to continue to work together, to match community priorities with donor passions, values, and ideas. Everyone can be a philanthropist; anyone can make an impact for generations to come. Imagine the power you have, even if you can only make a small donation!

There is no question in my mind that the greatest challenge we face is that of leadership. We want to nurture our collective future, we need to invest in developing leaders who will be the passionate champions of the collective in our community. Going forward, it is important that our investment in programming aimed at empowering young adults must be at the core of our strategy.

In closing, I want to again thank the board of the Calgary Jewish Federation for their outstanding stewardship and leadership, the volunteer and professional leadership of our partner agencies, our community Rabbis for their support, and the dynamic professional staff of the Federation, Collectively, we build community – we weave the fabric within which Jewish life happens. Todah rabah to all of you.

Although I am sad to be moving on, I am pleased to be leaving Federation in the capable hands of Adam Silver. Ronnie and I wish each and every one in our community a Happy Chanukah. May each candle you kindle on your chanukiah remind you that as individuals, and as a community, we can and do make miracles happen. As Anne Frank reminded us: “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

Shalom, LIshiyot, and Am Viyardai Chai!

L’hitasrot,

Drew Steffensen, CEO, Calgary Jewish Federation