

31st Year of Publication

Ric Dolphin's

Insight

into Government

Alberta's independent newsletter on government & politics

Volume 31 Number 03

Week ending Sept 23, 2016

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PETER'S PIGGYBANK

HAPPY 40TH, BIRTHDAY HERITAGE FUND. SAY! HAVEN'T YOU LOST WEIGHT?



After several years of delivering double-digit returns, The Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, which turns 40 this year, slowed considerably in 2015-16. But if the first-quarter report for the current fiscal year, delivered to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee last week, is anything to go on (and often it isn't), things might be looking up in 2016-17.

Too early to tell, of course. And if further elucidation is required, we recommend you peruse Alberta Investment Management Corp's (AIMCo) latest annual report, outlining its investment strategies and returns for the public funds in its \$90.2B bucket, including the \$17B Heritage Fund and the \$52B Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund. You might also reference the latest forecasts from Canada's top economists, consult a Magic 8 Ball, then bury it in the backyard.

We josh, of course. Since Alberta Finance spun off AIMCo in 2008, it has done a pretty good job in its eight years, most of them under the leadership of the affable Dutchman, CEO **Leo de Bever**. The Beev left for his heavenly reward (\$3.7M) at the end of 2014, and now enjoys his dividend years, chairing corporate boards in Calgary, and, one imagines, when in his schnapps, telling old war stories like the one about he made Alberta rich by buying up Australian lumber rights.

Leo was replaced by the more buttoned-down and hornrimmed **Peter Uebelein**, who looks like an accountant and came here from Boston where he managed a US\$4T mutual fund for Fidelity. 2015-16 was his first full 12 months as captain of Alberta's ship of funds. (Although, technically, the real manager and director of the corporations' \$90.2 billion portfolio is Chief Investment Officer **Dale Mac Master**, an 18-year vet, whose total compensation was \$2.2M last year—a quarter million more than Uebelein.)

Under Uebelein, the annual increases have slowed—a 9.1% return in 2015-16 from 9.9% the previous year. But then investment conditions in the oceans where AIMCo fishes—the US, the UK, Europe—have tightened.

Continued on next page...

POLITICAL PULSE

PC RACE: MAN DOWN

SCHWEITZER BREAKS CAMP BEFORE THE TENT'S PITCHED

For one or other of those competing Calgary groups that have sprung up in the last year to bring the right together—Get Alberta Working, or Alberta Prosperity, or Annihilate the Orange Bastards... one loses track—the young Calgary lawyer, former Manitoba PC party President, and Jim Prentice's 2014 leadership campaign manager **Doug Schweitzer**, 37, was the golden boy: youthful, confident, polished, centrist... almost—dare one breathe it?—*Lougheedian*. At least that's what his fan base were selling. We find him a tad dull.

Anyway, Doug was all set to announce his candidacy for next March's Progressive Conservative Leadership contest. He had, he said, "attracted a talented team, and developed campaign infrastructure that is unrivalled" and team Doug had reputedly hosted "hundreds of meetings across Alberta."

He was also close to the PC administration, notably executive director **Troy Wason**, and had helped the PCs with their finances following the disaster that hipsters (anyone under 45) simply refer to as "5/5." However, this week, two days after telling supporters he was about to dive in, Doug dove out.

"This is a note that will disappoint some of my friends and supporters," he said in an email. "I have made the decision not to pursue the Leadership of PC Alberta at this time."

The reasons for his withdrawal had a familiar but unconvincing ring: "I am concerned about the Party's commitment to a fair leadership process. In particular, the rules that have been established have raised some serious concerns that go to the legitimacy of the process."

Federal Conservative MP **Jason Kenney**, who resigned as the MP for Calgary-Midnapore this week and is contesting the Alberta PC leadership (*Insight* Sept. 9 & 16), has also complained about the PC's rules governing who is eligible to be a delegate at the convention.

Of the 15 delegates elected by members from each riding, five must be constituency association board members. Then there are the "automatic delegates" who do not need to be elected. They include every CA president, members of the party's central executive, all sitting and former MLAs, and 20 delegates chosen by the Young Progressive Conservative Association.

Kenney considers this a stacking of the deck by the current progressive PC establishment that views with horror this former Reformer, his plan to dissolve the party, and create a new one from a PC-Wildrose coalition.

(**Alison Redford's** old campaigner **Stephen Carter**, 55, announced on his podcast this week that he wanted to manage Redford pal MLA **Sandra Jansen's** [Calgary North East] leadership campaign "because I want to kick the shit out of Jason Kenney." It can only be a matter of days now before Catholic Kenney's sexuality comes to light.)

While one can understand Kenney's complaint about a stacked deck, it's hard to understand Schweitzer's. He is a unity candidate, but has no plan to kill the party. His plan is more organic, somehow. Vague actually. And he's moderate centrist of the type one would expect the progressive establishment to embrace. He was recently seen taking a selfie with PC party President **Katherine O'Neill**,

Turn to Political Pulse on pg. 5...

Nonetheless, AIMCo's returns handily exceeded their "benchmark" targets in most categories and the corporation did better than a number of other public sector investment shops. The BC Investment Management Corporation, for example, posted an average return of -0.2%.

The Heritage fund fared worse than AIMCo overall, due to an investment mix of lower risk and shorter term instruments, including bonds—a particular challenge in these days of zero and negative interest rates.

The Heritage Fund delivered a 4.7% return on investment in 2015-16—roughly half the AIMCo average and a return 62% less than the 12.5% in 2014-15, which was a 21% lower than 2013-14's return. Lower returns mean less revenue for the gov't: \$1.03B this year, down from \$1.47B in 2014-15.

The value of the fund—its net assets—was \$17.7B in 2015-16, down from \$17.9B the year before—a 1.1% drop. But then the fund's worth hasn't changed substantially in the 30 years since the Getty gov't began making withdrawals to augment lost resource revenue—resource revenue, by the way, that amounted to \$2B in 1991-92. That is roughly the same in *unadjusted* dollars as the forecast resource revenue for 2015-16.

The boffins from AIMCo and Alberta Treasury who faced the Heritage fund committee last week, had no easy explanation for the decline in 2015-16 investment income, beyond the aforementioned investment limitations attached to the fund: not enough high risk, long term equities, too much fixed income—those blasted bonds—in the Heritage bucket.

There ensued some shop talk about bonds and how one can make a profit even at the zero or negative return rates. Apparently one buys short term bonds early on, say when they are at 0% and before the "zero shock" has passed, then wait for the bond rate to drop to -0.5%. Those 0% bonds can now be unloaded for a 25% markup.

At least we think that's what they were saying. We majored in journalism, late medieval history, and scaffolding. Our investment portfolio includes equity in a falling down Edmonton house in a falling market. Our investment strategy involves short term positions in Super Max tickets.

One suspects that many on the nine-member Heritage Committee, all of whom are rookie MLAs, were similarly disadvantaged—although **Dr. Bob Turner**, 68, (Edmonton-Whitemud), a well-compensated oncologist, likely has investment knowledge, as does Wildrosier **Scott Cyr**, 39 (Bonnyville-Cold Lake), is a chartered accountant with some fluency in boffin-speak.

Nevertheless, these annual meetings with the AIMCo executives tend to subdue committee members into a sort of trance: either they're daydreaming, or are reduced to tongue-tied awe at being in the presence of high-level financiers who pull in \$2M a year and thus must obviously know *so much*. Questions are few, and the meetings never last the allotted hour.

However last week Wildrosier Cyr did ask the AIMCo executives about the 3% of the Heritage fund that Finance Minister **Joe Ceci**, had previously instructed to be invested in Alberta industry—preferably renewable energy. Part of Ceci's so-called "growth mandate." This would be part of gov't's plan to invest in Alberta jobs, diversify the economy, and mitigate the 100,000 positions lost to the oil slump, and the additional job casualties expected when the NDP gov't

initiates its carbon tax in January, and the minimum wage jumps in October.

Having heard a number of lectures from de Bever and his execs at past quarterly meetings, we know that these AIMCo lads aren't crazy about Alberta investments. Their mandate is to get the best return wherever it can be found. And with offices in Toronto and London, the corporation's investors are in the habit of casting their nets far and wide: a BBC broadcasting centre in London, a forest in Australia, and a P3 autopista in Chile are all part of the AIMCo portfolio. The favoured equity this year was Global Equity which returned 19%. In fact all classes of equity were profitable this year with the exception of one: "Canadian Equity" which saw its returns decline by 7% in 2015.

So for hard-nosed investors of wishing not only to get the best returns for Alberta, but earn top bonuses for themselves and continue to enjoy a cosmopolitan lifestyle, terms like "stagnant Alberta real estate prices" "uncertain energy futures" and an "an up-and-coming manufacturer of solar panels, utilizing hemp, and animal waste. And he's in Tofield!" lack appeal. Not that they can ever say that. It has to be framed in ecomeese.

Pressed by Cyr on how much of the allotted \$547M from the H Fund for Alberta Enterprise had been spent, **Rod Babinneau**, a portfolio analyst for the gov't, allowed that some work had been done but these things take time. "There's just not a store you can go to and buy these off the shelf," he said, that patrician note of condescension managing a small leak. "These are individual private investments that take time to analyze and invest in. This was introduced last year. We're about 20 per cent of the way there. It just takes time to get these invested."

At that point CEO Ueberlein (right) jumped in.

"... We cannot have a forced march in terms of the pace of this investment," he said, adopting the slightly exasperated, slightly paternal tone we remember de Bever using in addressing a committee that, for the most part, he considered to be ignoramuses. "I wish it were otherwise. I know how satisfying it would be if we said, 'If this is the third quarter, thou shalt have 75% of this invested,' but that is a recipe for suboptimal returns. We give you our word that we are doing everything that we think is feasible and reasonable to try to make the best possible investments in Alberta, but we have been forthright in resisting that pressure to sort of put a quota or a timeline on the investment of that."

In other words: butt out and let us do the job we are being paid for. We'll get back to you on this - eventually.

On Tuesday evening, the public will have a chance to ask questions of AIMCo executives and senior Alberta Finance officials at the annual general meeting of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee in the Federal Building. If past years are anything to go by, maybe two dozen people will attend and, invariably, several of them will ask why Alberta's fund hasn't grown to the size of Norway's sovereign wealth fund—the world's largest—which is currently worth around \$1.1 trillion?

The quick answer is that Norway (pop. 5.1M) puts all of its resource revenue into the fund and prohibits any withdrawals beyond a maximum of 4%, an amount matching the fund's expected annual real return (which covers about 20% of the country's budget).

Alberta, from the time Lougheed set up the fund and channelled 30% of royalty revenues into it for a decade has



had higher costs associated with oilsands development, is required to share the tax proceeds with the federal gov't, and has chosen to use part of the oil wealth to reduce taxes, spur investment, and attempt to diversify the economy through initiatives like the Heritage Medical Research Fund and the Heritage Science & Engineering fund.

Alberta stopped putting resource revenue into the fund when the recession hit in the late 1980s, and despite several plans to resume pay-ins—the most recent being Premier **Jim Prentice**'s scheme to reduce the province's dependence on resource revenue by 50% while doubling the fund's size within a decade—economic exigencies (and political changes) intervened.

So the fund, although having poured \$38B into gov't coffers through , has barely grown in unadjusted dollar value from its \$16B peak in the 1980s, and its real per-capita value in 2015 dollars has fallen from \$11,000 per Albertan in 1985 to around \$4,000 today. Many find this shocking, including the NDP, which takes every opportunity it can to blame the situation on the Tories. Though these days, as a gov't with the biggest deficit in Alberta history, the Dippers have remained rather quiet on the subject of replenishment.



POLITICS DISPLACES HARMONY DYSFUNCTION IN THE ETHICS AND ANIMOSITY COMMITTEE

Just over a year ago, still rubescent in the afterglow of their combined screwing of the PC Party, Premier **Rachel Notley** and Wildrose Leader **Brian Jean**, lit cigarettes, hugged, nibbled each others ears—we speak figuratively, though Brian's ears are almost impossible to resist—and jointly announced the creation of the Select Special Ethics & Accountability Committee. (Whose renaming in the above headline will become clear.)

It was to be a harmonious and egalitarian committee signalling a new era of non-partisan, communal cooperation. There were to be eight opposition members and eight Dippers. Of course that didn't count the chairwoman—but the chairwoman, like the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, is supposed to be non-partisan and disinterested, casting a vote only in the event of tie. Ties would occur with hot regularity later on, but let's not jump ahead.

The E&A committee was charged with devising fixes for four pieces of legislation that the eight Dippers, the three Rosers, the two Tories, and the two singles (Liberal and Alberta Party) agreed—for the most part, and at the onset—needed to be fairer and more efficient.

The committee was formed on the heels of Bill 1, which banned union and corporate donations to political parties, and had received unanimous approval in the House in June 2015—albeit reluctantly from the Tories for whom corporate donations were their oxygen. For the most part the sun-dappled, multi-party committee went cheerfully to its task, which included a full review of the *Election Act* and the *Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act*. Also on their agenda: *The Conflicts of Interest Act*, and the *Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act*.

The committee was given one year to get input from interested parties, receive briefings from gov't and agency experts, review all the prepared research material, compose and debate amendments to the legislation, and finally, deliver recommendations for change to the Legislature by Sept 29—next Thursday.

But as a legislative aide noted part way into the process: never in the history of any provincial or federal gov't have

four pieces of legislation been reviewed by a committee in so short a time. That should've tripped the alarums.

It hadn't helped that the committee, chaired by **Jessica Littlewood** (Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville), a 33-year-old former office secretary, was all rookies save for Tories **Richard Starke** (Vermilion-Lloydminster) and **Sandra Jansen** (Calgary North West), and lone Liberal **David Swann** (Calgary Mountain View). The chairwoman had been a little lackadaisical about scheduling meetings during the first six months, there having always seemed an excuse for postponement—two budgets, the federal election, the Christmas holidays, the replacement of three NDP members promoted to cabinet in February.

Nonetheless, during the 12 times they did meet (for a total of 24 hours) between Sept. 29 and July 6, the committee managed to dispense with the least contentious legislation—the *Whistleblower Act*—unanimously passing amendments that tightened the rules and protections for public employees wishing to report bad bosses or unsound procedures, and designating the Public Service Commissioner (who's also the Ombudsman) as the gatekeeper for all complaints, eliminating the employee's supervisor (and possible retaliation).

So far: kumbaya.

But in May, the winds shifted. The opposition MLAs realized there were still three acts to deal with in four months—four months that would be broken up by summer vacations for MLAs and support staff.

To the opposition members, this looked like an NDP end-run. The Whistleblower act, simpler and non-contentious, had taken seven months. Why were the Dippers rushing through these three more complicated and fraught bills? Politics, perhaps?.

The two pieces of legislation up next—the *Election Act* and the *Election Finances and Disclosure Act*—were laws that directly affected the mechanics of electioneering and put limits on donations. And it seemed clear to the opposition that the NDP leadership—in particular chief of staff **Brian Topp**—planned to push through the sorts of election reforms that they had championed federally in Ottawa in 2008-09. That was when he and **Anne Magrath** (currently Notley's principal secretary) were both working closely with the late federal NDP leader **Jack Layton**.

Not to get too deep into the political machinations and the jostling that went on between the NDP and other parties in their unsuccessful attempt to topple the minority Tories—you can read Topp's side of things in his memoir *How We Almost Gave the Tories the Boot* (2010)—but one of the contentious issues was election financing.

The Tories, like today's Alberta Wildrose, had developed a most effective, computerized small-donor fundraising program. And they planned to rescind earlier Liberal legislation that channelled taxpayer's money into federal election campaigns based on the number of votes a party had received in the previous election.

Faced with electoral defeat, the Tories backed down, the legislation remained in place, and, as a partial result of the \$4M or so the federal NDP received from the taxpayer, they were able to finance a decent national campaign that helped them become the official opposition in 2011.

No wonder, then, that Topp and other's in the Premier's office, wanted to install this system in Alberta—especially now that their largest source of election financing - the unions - is prohibited from contributing. The NDP members on the committee—increasingly resembling Stepford Wives—were instructed accordingly (or so every opposition member of the committee is convinced).

Henceforth the Dippers would have very little to say during debate on the election acts, beyond the recurring talk-

See 'Dysfunction,' p. 5...

PAY & PERKS — PART 2

SALARIES & FINANCES IN K-12 EDUCATION IN ALBERTA

Salaries shown for school superintendents are for the year ended Aug. 31, 2015. Benefits ranged from \$9,184 (Northland School Division) to \$101,086

(Calgary Public) and covered pensions, insurance and medical coverage, any car allowances paid, and included pension contributions made by Alberta Education.

Highest base salaries for superintendents

Jurisdiction	2014-15 salary	(2013-14)
Edmonton Catholic	\$349,369	(\$320,008)
Calgary Public	\$295,300	(\$342,148)
Calgary Catholic	\$265,251	(\$242,261)
Edmonton Public	\$243,069	(\$260,268)
Rocky View	\$225,398	(\$234,749)
Elk Island Public	\$225,378	(\$222,827)
Fort McMurray Public	\$224,495	(\$224,495)
Parkland	\$219,450	(\$210,000)
Red Deer Public	\$218,730	(\$216,800)
Canadian Rockies	\$218,499	(\$170,138)
Elk Island Catholic	\$215,000	(\$195,000)
Black Gold	\$213,748	(\$213,748)
Chinook's Edge Public	\$213,458	(\$207,330)
Northern Gateway	\$213,354	(\$205,000)
Palliser Public	\$212,807	(\$210,350)
Grande Yellowhead	\$208,434	(\$190,477)

Lowest base salaries for superintendents

Jurisdiction	2014-15 salary	(2013-14)
Northern Lights Public	\$126,667	(\$228,427)
Medicine Hat Catholic	\$147,005	(\$142,001)
Northwest Francophone	\$149,034	(\$150,948)
Aspen View	\$165,000	(\$164,177)
St. Thomas Aquinas	\$169,860	(\$169,644)
Grasslands Regional	\$170,000	(\$163,000)
Prairie Rose	\$171,350	(\$161,000)
Living Waters Catholic	\$171,906	(\$170,529)
Clearview	\$172,837	(\$176,769)
Southern Francophone	\$175,319	(\$164,167)
Holy Family Catholic	\$177,211	(\$162,545)
Buffalo Trail	\$177,500	(\$170,463)
Horizon School Division	\$177,570	(\$170,457)
Northland School Division	\$177,718	(\$177,718)
Livingstone Range	\$178,850	(\$160,000)
East Central Francophone	\$181,337	(\$190,404)

BOARD OPERATING and RESERVE FUNDS (for year ended Aug. 31, 2015)

Ministry funding to school boards rose 4% from \$6.95 billion to \$7.23 billion. Boards ended their 2014-15 fiscal year with an operating surplus of \$75.85 million — down from the 2013-14 surplus of \$81.2 million which in turn was down from \$91.6 million in 2012-13.

Thirty-two boards, including charter and private school groups for a total of 74, ended 2014-15 with individual operating deficits — up from 27 in 2013-14, and from 19 in 2012-13.

Wild Rose School Division ran the highest deficit at -\$3.1 million (compared with -\$957K in the previous year), with Wetaskiwin Regional in second place at -\$2.3 million (up from -\$1.6 million in 2013-14), followed closely by Peace River public at -\$2.2 million (from a \$1.05 million surplus the previous year), then Aspen View Public at -\$1.7 million (from a surplus of \$444K), and Northern Gateway

Regional at -\$1.5 million (up from -\$680K).

Largest individual operating surpluses were \$40.4 million at Edmonton Public (up from \$38.2 million the year before); \$11.4 at Calgary Public (up from a \$9.1 million deficit in 2013-14); \$6.8 million for Edmonton Catholic (down from \$13.2 million in 2013-14); \$4.4 million for Calgary Catholic (up from a \$6.1 million deficit the previous year); \$4.2 million at Fort McMurray Catholic (down from \$4.7 million); \$3.1 million at Grande Prairie public (up from \$1.3 million); and \$2.7 million at Rocky View public (up from \$660K).

Operating reserves for all boards combined totalled \$438.3 million on Aug. 31, 2015 — up from \$434.2 million the previous year. Total capital reserves rose to \$199.3 million from \$147.4 million.

CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT — TEACHERS' RETIREMENT FUND (2014-15)

The Teachers' Retirement Fund grew its surplus in 2014-15 (year-end Aug. 31) to \$788.3 million from \$526 million in 2013-14. This amount — surplus to the benefits it is obligated to pay out over the coming decades — is a further improvement from the -\$825 million shortfall in 2013, -\$1.91 billion in 2012, and -\$1.96 billion in 2011.

Net assets available for paying benefits increased by about \$1.5 billion (to \$12.3 billion), but estimated amounts payable over time based on pensions already earned — accrued pension obligations — rose by \$1.09 billion (to \$11.28 billion). This represents a 10.8% year-over-year increase, an acceleration from the 8.5% jump in 2013-14.

Income from investments increased by 17.8% in 2014-15, compared with a 19% increase the previous year. Investment income was \$330 million in 2014-15; \$281 million in 2013-14; and \$257 million in 2012-13.

Contributions from the 39,997 active teachers (up by 812

or 2.1% over 2014) increased from \$421.5 million to \$429.5 million and the provincial gov't's contributions rose from \$388.7 million to \$399.5 million while benefits paid out rose 15.8% from \$291 million to \$337 million.

Improved returns also meant improved compensation for the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund executive. Total CEO compensation rose from \$1.71 million in 2014 to \$1.81 million in 2014, the chief investment officer's from \$1.07 million to \$1.28 million.

The average age at which teachers retire has been slowly increasing from 57.8 years in 2000 to 60 years in 2015 when 1,080 teachers retired — down from 1,214 in 2014 and 1,131 in 2013.

About 71% of the retirees are women, a proportion that increases slightly each year, and will continue to rise for several decades. Among teachers under 30 in 2015, 81% were female, up from 80% in 2014. The average age of active teachers has held steady at 42 years.

People ...

Appointments...

This week the Alberta gov't appointed a three-member "expert panel"—experts in the areas of jobs & training, economic development, industry, local governance & aboriginal relations—to meet with community, labour, and industry leaders in regions affected by the impending closures of coal-fired electricity plants as part of **Rachel Notley's** Climate Leadership Plan to reduce carbon emissions and produce 30% of the province's energy with solar, wind, or hydro-electric turbine by 3030.

The Panel on Coal Communities will begin discussions with workers most affected by the retirements of coal-fired generation plants and associated mining operations, including those in and around Parkland and Leduc Counties, Forestburg and Hanna. Transitioning plans will be foremost among the discussions. (We hear McDonald's is desperate for help in its Yellowknife outlets.) The panel will report back the gov't early next year. The tribunal's NDP-appointed members are as follows:

- **Ritu Khullar, Q.C.**, an Edmonton labour lawyer for unions, who has acted for the Canadian Human Rights Commission, and is an instructor in labour and constitutional law at UofA.

- **Ken Devaney**, Executive Director of the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress. He also serves as industry liaison & special advisor in the faculty of Social Science at McMaster University in Hamilton.

- **Kerry Jothan**, Vancouver-based CEO of Human Capital Strategies (HCS), a head hunting agency and "a recognized BC leader in global talent mobility." "Mobility" being the key word, one supposes, for those poor schmucks who are sacrificing life-long jobs to the goddess of climate change and are being asked, at age 57: "How would you like to move to High Level and install solar panels this winter?"

POLITICAL PULSE ... from from Pg. 1

princess of the red-Tory cabal (Jansen is queen.) And besides all else, the progressive wing of the party needs all the pink bodies it can get in the field to bolster an effective "anyone-but-Kenney" campaign at the convention, should it come to that.

So why Doug's sudden cold feet? A couple of theories are making the rounds in Calgary:



Schweitzer (left) is a Calgary partner with Dentons, the big multinational law firm—50 countries, 7,300 lawyers. And last week the firm hired former Conservative Prime Minister **Stephen Harper** at he same office as a rainmaker.

Harper is a supporter of Kenney's leadership campaign; he gave his former Ottawa lieutenant a ringing endorsement at his Stampede barbecue in early July.

Might Harper possibly have leaned on Mr. Schweitzer?

Hey, Dougie, if you run against Jason, you run the risk of splitting the vote and allowing one of the non-unity establishment candidates to run up the middle. So hold off. Once Jason has created a new party, you can throw your hat in the ring for the leadership of the new party and if you lose, well how does 'Attorney General' sound? Ours will be a big tent. So run along and keep in touch.

On the other hand, perhaps Schweitzer, who has a wife and two grade school kids at home in Calgary, may have suddenly realized that the leadership race, and the two years of cross-provincial politicking following a win, might not be terribly conducive to family harmony.

So it is entirely possible that his wife also had a strong opinion on the subject. Put her foot down.

Time, however, is on his side.

'Dysfunction,' from p. 3...

ing point: "We need to get big money out of politics" —that and the "nays" they voiced in defeating opposition motions.

The NDP amendment, if passed by the Legislature, would reimburse candidates and parties up to 50% of their campaign expenses to a maximum of \$2.2M providing they received more than 10% of the popular vote. Bad news for the Liberals and Alberta parties.

Meanwhile in May, Alberta Party Leader **Greg Clark** (Calgary-Elbow), had tabled a seemingly reasonable motion to extend the service of the committee to next March so that the remaining four acts could be properly researched and debated. All eight opposition members voted in favour; all eight Dippers said "nay." Chairwoman Littlewood cast the tie-breaking "nay" and the disgusted opposition members (with the exception of Liberal Leader **David Swann** [Calgary-Mountain View]) left the meeting early.

Following an acrimonious session in the Legislature the next day (*Insight*, May 13), the committee eventually went back to work, with the NDP members continuing to push through the Topp agenda and "get big money out of politics."

One of the few amendments that met with general agreement was the reduced limit on political contributions from \$15K per party by an individual (\$30K in an election year) to an aggregate limit of \$4,000 that an individual could divide among parties, constituency associations, and candidates.

However, when the NDP tried to further include leadership nominations and contests in that aggregate list—something no other province does—the opposition balked. PC members **Dr. Richard Starke** (Vermilion-Lloyminster) and **Sandra Jansen** (Calgary North West), both of whom are contemplating runs for the PC leadership were especially taken aback. It would be very difficult to raise the minimum \$300K required for a leadership race from supporters who may have already exhausted their \$4,000 limit by the time the race was called.

Things took another strange turn this past week. Starke received a phone call at home from Chairman Littlewood, asking him how his colleagues might be voting on an amendment that would limit spending for third-party election advertisers (unions and other special interest groups).

Standing up in committee on Monday, Starke declared himself "shocked" at what he claimed was a "breach of parliamentary privilege" in that a committee chairwoman, the speaker's proxy, is expected to remain neutral, and that any out-of-meeting conversation between the her and member should only concern the scheduling of meetings.

Starke and other opposition members made such a fuss about this, that Littlewood stepped down for the day and MLA **Lois Sweet** took over the chair.

On Wednesday, NDP House Leader **Brian Mason**—who as an opposition member used to rail against the Tory influence in committees—called a press conference to rail again the latest opposition.

"I have to say I'm pretty disgusted with the tactics of the opposition parties since this committee began a year ago. It's due to report close to the end of this month and they filibustered that committee from start to finish."

Mason threatened not to renew the mandate of the committee, which has yet to complete its deliberations on the two elections acts, and hasn't begun debate on the Conflicts of Interest act.

But Clark, Starke, and Wildrose member **Jason Nixon** (Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills), are all convinced, based on the robotic performances of the NDP members, that the committee meeting is little more than window dressing and that Topp and Mason already have legislation drawn up and ready go for when the Legislature resumes on Oct. 31.

Talk in the Corridors

A doubling of diapers...

● When the Legislature resumes on Halloween, another babe in arms will perfume the chambers. **Cassidy Eleanor Payne** came into the world at 8:01 a.m. on July 23 (7 lbs. 9 oz.), born in Calgary to Associate Health Minister **Brandy Payne**, 37, and husband **Scott Payne**—their second child and sister to Zoe, 5.

Cassidy is also the second baby ever born to a sitting Alberta cabinet minister (or indeed any Alberta MLA). She joins **Patrick Bostock-McLean**, delivered to Service Alberta & Status of Women Minister **Stephanie McLean**, 29, and hubby **Shane Bostock** in February.

One imagines a Pebbles and Bam-Bam dynamic developing in the legislative corridors in the coming years.

Like Patrick, Cassidy made several official appearances while still wet behind the ears (almost literally), including at a caucus meeting in Lethbridge on Aug. 22, the opening of a new pediatric operating suite at Edmonton's Stollery Children's Hospital a few days later, and at the announcement of new dementia beds in a Calgary continuing care centre two weeks ago.

Cribs have been installed for both infants in rooms adjoining the ministers' offices, and childcare help is available.

Meanwhile the Standing Committee on Members' Services has struck the Subcommittee on Family Friendly Workplace Practices & Policies to explore ways of making the Legislature more amenable to parents with youngsters with suggested improvements such as diaper tables in the washrooms, quiet rooms for mothers and babies, and an on-site daycare centre.

The subcommittee is chaired by NDPers **Robyn Luff**, 35 (Calgary-East), a former teacher and mother of two young children (Atticus & Vesper, no less), **Colin Piquette**, 56 (Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater), a former insurance agent with two teenaged sons, and **Kim Schreiner**, 53, (Red Deer-North) a former continuing care LPN, with two teenagers; Wildrose **Nathan Cooper**, 36, (Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills), the former chief of staff for his party, whose wife looks after their three pre-teen children in Carstairs; and PC interim leader **Ric McIver**, 57 (Calgary-Hays), the former Calgary City Councillor, who has four children and two grandchildren.

The subcommittee will report on its progress at Monday's meeting of the Members' Services committee.

Tseporah casts her spell on the opposition...

● We can't help it: the name excites visions of pagan stuff: witches, goblins, dark forests, and, well, wild-eyed eco hippies from British Columbia. For that of course is what **Tseporah Berman**, whom Environment Minister **Shannon Phillips** appointed as one of many co-chairs on Alberta's 15-member Oilsands Advisory Group, is. Or what she might seem from a distance.

And certain intemperate remarks Tseporah has made about the "tar sands"—i.e. they resemble Mordor—and a recent call for a pipeline moratorium, have excited the Wildrose opposition, **Ezra Levant's** Rebel Media, and other right-wing planet burners. Not to mention Liberals.

Her celebrated activism and affiliations in BC, most

famously as an organizer of the 1992 mass protest of clearcut logging in Clayoquot Sound—the largest act of civil disobedience in Canada to that time, which resulting in a mass jailing of protesters including Tseporah—and more recently as a celebrity speaker at the 2014 Burnaby Mountain protests against the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion (right), complete the picture (right).



"They say that these pipelines are nation building, and they're right," said Berman to a group of hirsute protesters. "They're building a nation of resistance, and from Northern Quebec where thousands of people are joining town halls against Energy East, from northern Ontario, in Alberta, across British Columbia we are seeing people standing up, people taking a stand for the future to ensure that we can build a Canada that we are proud of again."

Of course the Tzep is hardly the snaggle-haired tree-spike of pagan BC lore; she's a 47 mother of two boys and an articulate, attractive, well-versed, and well-scrubbed crusader for clean energy, who looks good on TV, and is a dynamic public speaker. She speaks to students, consults in the boardrooms of corporations requiring a green rinse, schmoozes Hollywood celebs, and appeared *Leonardo di Caprio's* anti-oil movie *The Eleventh Hour*.

And She writes books, including *This Crazy Time: Living Our Environmental Challenge*, which is part autobiography, part instruction manual for activists, and features the now notorious chapter heading: "Canada's Mordor: Visiting Alberta's Tar Sands".

Despite her mainstream presentability, however, her long history of oilsands demonization and pipeline opposition puts her rather at odds with a gov't which—assuming it is sincere, and we sometimes wonder—wants to build pipelines and sell more bitumen to carbon-spewing parts of the world, albeit under the rather paradoxical cover of "Canada's most advanced climate change plan."

Notley and Phillips are selling the pipelines as a "nation building" enterprise; Tseporah sees them as a catalyst for resistance. Can the twain meet?

Perhaps it doesn't matter in the end. The Oilsands Advisory Group, a 15-member body set up to advise the gov't on how to set a cap on greenhouse emissions for oilsands projects, is almost evenly divided between oil industry supporters (including former CAPP president Dave Collyer) and environmentalists and their aboriginal allies.

Since the gov't has already established a cap of 100Mt. on oilsands emissions by 2030, any friction between the Berman and Collyer camps will likely be of little consequence.

The week ahead ...

Sept. 27— 4:30 pm, **Stephanie McLean**, Minister of Women, in her ongoing crusade for unisex boardrooms and a diaper change table in every loo, speaks at the KNOVO Awards: Celebrating corporate gender diversity, Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, 1415 14 Ave NW, Calgary

Sept. 27—The Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee holds its public AGM in the Rocky Mountain Room on the second floor of the Federal Building between 7 pm and 9 pm. Your chance to grill AIMCo CEO **Peter Uebelein**.

Sept. 28—Happy Birthday to Education Minister **David Eggen**, born 54 years ago in Brazil.