

Ric Dolphin's

# Insight

into Government

Alberta's independent newsletter on government & politics

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## INSIDE THIS WEEK

Pg. 3: New bills: a vegetable strike force; bubble zone for abortuaries

Pg. 4: A 2020 election makes sense, but would break Notley's vow

Pg. 5: Innovates' new chair; an old friend returns to Elections Alta.

Pg. 6: Jason's long maiden: a speech to last, and last, and last

## AN OPENING FOR STATE CONTROL?

# KINDER MORGAN'S THREAT: TAKE YOUR PIPE 'N' SHOVE IT!

The Houston-based mega-corp, which has patiently—and expensively—jumped through all of Canada's regulatory hoops, & received federal approval 18 months ago, is now stymied by the BC gov't and its environmentalist allies. If things don't change, by May 31, says KM the project will be abandoned..

Last month Premier Rachel Notley invoked the blessed memory of Peter Lougheed in announcing a relatively modest program using gov't funds to encourage the manufacture of more refined petroleum products (*Insight* Mar. 3).

Late Sunday afternoon, she took the Peter principle a might further. After restating earlier threats to restrict oil and gasoline shipments to BC—threats that she claims will be acted on in the coming week—Rachel said that if Kinder Morgan abandoned the Trans Mountain expansion—as it was now threatening— Alberta would consider buying a stake in the project.

CEO Steve Kean announced on Sunday that his Houston-based multinational—the fifth biggest pipeline company in the world (80K miles of pipe, 17K employees)— would be immediately suspending all non-essential work, if the delaying tactics employed by BC Premier John Horgan's NDP government (propped up by Andrew Weaver's three Greens) did not cease in eight weeks, the \$7.5B, 590M-bbl-day project would be shelved.

"If we cannot reach agreement by May 31st, it is difficult to conceive of any scenario in which we would proceed with the project," Kean said in a news release.

So once again Rachel to donned her six guns and shit-kickers—we speak metaphorically—and assumed the role of Alberta Defender—a role she has taken to with relish since she fired her first volley westward: i.e. the short-lived wine ban (*Insight* Feb. 10).

"Let me be clear," said Rachel, dressed in the black she favours for these trade war pressers. "They [BC] cannot mess with Alberta."

Having cancelled this week's planned trip to New York—where she was to spread the gospel on the laying down of pipe— she claims she will be introducing legislation this week that will authorize the turning down of the oil and gas taps to BC.

Continued on next page...

## POLITICAL PULSE

1st DIPPER TO BAIL

# MATERNAL TRAILBLAZER HEADS HOME TO THE FAM

Associate Health Minister Brandy Payne, 39, was the cinderella yoga teacher who, with a war chest of \$240, blew away former PC Justice Minister Jonathan (Jono) Denis and his \$79K stash to win Calgary-Acadia in the 2015 election. This week she became the first NDP MLA to announce she'll not run in the next election. The ostensible reason was the standard one, which she posted on Facebook, vis: "...to spend more time with my family."

Payne's impending retirement came as a bit of a surprise in Dipper circles. For she, along with Status of Women and Service Alberta Minister Stephanie McLean, 32, was part of the genderific duo in the service of the crusade by Premier Rachel Notley to stack the Legislature with women of all ages, sizes, sexes, and lactational capabilities. Payne & McLean were of the latter category: both pregnant when appointed to cabinet in early 2016, and both subsequently trotted into the Legislative Chamber, their newborns held proudly to their breasts—Patrick and Cassidy Eleanor respectively. Much cooing ensued while Rachel, social-engineer-in-chief, rubbed her hands together and was heard to hiss: *Exxss-ellent!*

And Payne, a Journalism major prior to her downward dog days, and wife of NDP political operative Scott Payne, did a fairly good job as Health Minister Sarah Hoffman's junior counterpart. As associate minister lead on various Health ministry initiatives: combatting the opioid crisis, regulating assisted suicide, and rolling out mental health programs. She performed her duties with little flair, but with a reasonable competence, and without gaffes—which is more than can be said for certain full ministers. A cabinet promotion could well have been in her future.

Perhaps it actually was the strain of raising two young daughters in Calgary while attending to her ministerial duties that prompted her decision. "While I think it is important to have women from all stages of life in the Legislature," she carefully wrote on Facebook, "continuing for another term of office is not the right choice for myself and my family."

Another possible reason for bailing out—or perhaps an auxiliary one—is that Payne, like Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill MLA Karen McPherson, who crossed from the NDP to the Alberta Party (*Insight* Oct. 7), saw no future for the NDP gov't in general or for her NDP seat in Calgary-Acadia in particular.

Her defeat of Denis in 2015 was a fluke, resulting partly from the scandal around Jono's ugly court battle with his estranged wife during the campaign, and partly from the conservative vote split (Denis: 29%; Wildroser Linda Carlson: 31%; Payne: 35%).

With the NDP far less popular in Calgary than they were in 2015 and the conservatives united into the UCP, a Dipper win in this largely suburban riding—unless the polls reverse themselves in the next year—is unlikely.

But Brandy can leave politics knowing that she has done her part in blazing the maternal trail—one that is becoming well-trodden.

At this week's meetings of the standing committee reviewing the budget estimates for the ministry of Justice, the latest new mom—Attorney-General Kathleen Ganley, 39, who delivered her first child, Wren, in November, fielded probing questions from MLAs on subjects that included the rural crime epidemic and the shortage of crown prosecutors and judges, over a period of six hours, spread over two days.

At the beginning of Tuesday's meeting, commit-

Turn to Political Pulse on pg. 5...

How this will actually work isn't yet clear. Much of what travels through the TM pipe is refined product: gasoline, diesel, jet fuel. The gov't owns only the raw crude (aka feedstock). Does this mean the gov't will hold back the crude from the refineries and wait for the stockpiles of refined product to be depleted? Or will there be an agreement with the oil companies to immediately reduce the amount of refined product they ship? (Lougheed held back 15% of the conventional crude shipped to eastern refineries during his National Energy Policy gambit.) If so, how long will the companies put up with the reduced revenue?

Also, how happy is Kinder Morgan at having its transportation fees reduced? And for how long will it accept this reduction.

All questions that will no doubt be answered as the week progresses.

Lougheed, it might be remembered, invested a sizeable portion of public funds through the crown corporation Alberta Energy Company (AEC), which became a 25% partner in the nascent oilsands consortium Syncrude. AEC also owned 50% of the pipeline that brought the bitumen from the Syncrude plant to Edmonton.

And what about Rachel's idea of buying into TMX if Kinder Morgan walks away? Is this just bluster, or is another strategy taken from **Peter Lougheed's** little blue book on state capitalism?

Lougheed used gov't money to buy into oil diversification projects like the then nascent Syncrude and the pipeline that eventually brought the bitumen south. Syncrude proved to be the great catalyst for the oilsands boom ahead.

Lougheed was not the first premier to invest public funds in pipelines either. Premier **Ernest Manning's** even more conservative gov't built and operated the Alberta Gas Trunk Line in the 1950s until it was privatized into Nova Corp. in the 1960s (it was later acquired by TransCanada Pipelines Ltd.)

Of course, both Manning and Lougheed were capitalists at heart. Their investments were designed to jumpstart budding industries and were sold off—usually at a handsome profit, thought not always—when those industries' engines were capable of firing on all cylinders without assistance.

Rachel Notley, however, is a socialist (which she doesn't advertise, but will admit to when pressed). And when a socialist premier suggests buying into an industrial project like the TMX pipeline, it brings to mind **Tommy Douglas's** campaign in the 1950s to put every major utility or mining company under state ownership.

Certain past actions by the our Dippers suggest they might have similar inclinations. Health Minister **Sarah Hoffman's** creation of a new, hugely expensive, publicly run, unionized medical lab services facility in Edmonton, replacing what had been a smoothly running private service, comes to mind. As does Hoffman's decision to turn over the privately run hospital linen services to a more expensive and unionized public service.

Could Rachel's suggestion of buying into the TMX be the first domino in series of state takeovers a-la-Tommy?

Probably not. As Attorney General Kathleen Ganley pointed out during budget estimate meetings this week when someone suggested Alberta consider the reestablishment of provincial police force to replace the problem-plagued RCMP: there just isn't the money available for the considerable set-up charges, training, and infrastructure.

Moreover, guess who supported Rachel's suggested buy-in to TMX? Why, it was none other than UCP Leader

and fiscal velociraptor **Jason Kenney**.

"When there is a major market failure," he said, "and a question that is seriously in the national economic interest, there is, I believe, a compelling case for the state to come forward using its credit and financial leverage to ensure economic progress. And I believe this is such an instance."

PetroAlberta, here we come.,

## JUSTIN VISITS TWO SOLITUDES

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau touched down in two potentially hostile locales this week: Vancouver where the environmentalists hate him for approving the Trans Mountain pipeline, and Fort McMurray where everybody hates him for not doing enough to overcome the BC gov't's delaying tactics.

At the Sheraton Wall Centre hotel where he attended a \$1,000-a-head party fundraiser, a couple of hundred damp protestors waited on the sidewalk, waving the usual signs, chanting the familiar slogans, but in a half-hearted manner compared with the 160 or so firebrands who'd been arrested for infringing on Kinder Morgan's Burnaby site the week before. Perhaps it was the pouring rain.

However a young man from the Burrard Inlet tribe (now called the Tsleil Waututh First Nation and involved in condo development across from the Kinder Morgan terminal) had bought a \$250 youth ticket.

While Trudeau was making his standard speech about balancing a strong economy (pipelines, etc.) with the environment (the carbon tax, the tanker ban, etc.), the man stood up at started yelling.

"That's a lie. Justin Trudeau, you are a weak leader," he shouted, while the PM attempted to ignore him by continuing with his speech. "This pipeline is not happening. The youth will stand up and stop you." Security escorted him from the room.

In Fort McMurray Trudeau was flown in for a tour of Suncor's new Fort Hills facility with CEO **Steve Williams**. There were no protestors, but the workers in a break room with whom Trudeau has his picture taken, seemed less than delighted to be in the company of their celebrity prime minister.

One man said he was worried about the number of foreign oil companies that had left the oilsands in the last few years.

"We do need to do a better job on getting international investment," said Trudeau. "We're going to be able to do that as we move forward on NAFTA, as we create better trade deals and as we demonstrate our capacity to get big projects, like the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion, built."

The man seemed less than reassured.

## Insight into Government

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## LATE ELECTION POSITED THE 2020 OPTION: CAN THE END JUSTIFY A BROKEN VOW?

*Subject to subsection (1), a general election shall be held within the 3-month period beginning on March 1, 2012 and ending on May 31, 2012, and afterwards, general elections shall be held within the 3-month period beginning on March 1 and ending on May 31 in the 4th calendar year following polling day in the most recent general election. —Election Amendment Act, 2011.*

**F**or several weeks now, we've been hearing persistent speculation from a handful of opposition members—not all of them Unicons—that the Notley gov't could postpone the general election by a year and hold it in the spring of 2020 instead of May 2019.

The political reasons for such a move are obvious: an extra year would buy the NDP more time for oil prices to rise, for the economy to improve, for the pipeline to be built, and—ipso facto—for polling numbers to improve.

And, even if the extra year failed to deliver salvation, the Dippers would still have gained an extra 12 months to realize their full agenda—for instance: nationalizing the electricity, insurance, and petroleum industries; abolishing Catholic schools and turning their administrative buildings into sexual assault shelters, increasing the carbon tax ten-fold so it actually meets the Paris requirements, and, of course, realizing “full diversity” in the agencies, boards, commissions, university faculties, and courts by flinging the few remaining white straight Tory men into the dustbin of history and replacing them with denizens of the Dipper pantheon: transsexuals, the homeless, mentally challenged lesbians of colour, and... Okay, we're kidding—at least we think we are. If they did half of those things in the fifth year, the Dippers would have no hope of reëlection.. There just aren't enough urban millennials, union members, liberal arts professors, and social workers to carry the vote.

Nevertheless, an extra year's reprieve has to appeal to a party that has languished 20 points behind the conservatives in the polls for most of their mandate.

And although the *Election Amendment Act*, passed by **Alison Redford's** gov't in November of 2011, fixes an election “period” of 90 days in the spring that falls four years after the previous election, there is the escape clause—one used by Premier **Jim Prentice** in 2015 to call his early election—specifically: “Nothing in this section affects the powers of the Lieutenant Governor, including the power to dissolve the Legislature, in Her Majesty's name, when the Lieutenant Governor sees fit.”

Thus if there is a reasonable excuse—in Prentice's case, a new premier seeking public approbation for an austerity budget—he or she can ask the LG to dissolve the Leg, making way for an election. Similarly, the Premier can simply *not* ask the LG for dissolution and, assuming there wasn't a majority vote of non-confidence in the House—not likely without a Redford-type party mutiny—could simply opt for another year (five years is the maximum allowed under Canada's *Constitution Act, 1867*).

There's nothing in Alberta's *Election Amendment Act* to prevent this from happening. No penalties are prescribed. It has always been assumed that no party wants to go five years. It telegraphs desperation, and desperate parties tend not to inspire voter confidence. It also allows for no wiggle room for a party whose political fortunes suddenly take a dive in the months leading up to the five-year limit.

Alberta's fixed three-month window at least provides a degree of flexibility. But, as already discussed, defenestration is easily accomplished any way.

Politically, though, Rachel would need a good excuse to ignore the election law so as to avoid relentless opposition attacks and negative press. Poor polling numbers don't quite cut it.

What might work, would be a genuine lack of election readiness on the part of Elections Alberta.

With new riding boundaries having only been set late in the fall, new political contribution rules having recently come into effect, and the new office of the Elections Commissioner (see p. 5), and his coterie of investigative staff, having yet to be approved in the Legislature, Chief Electoral Officer **Glen Resler** has an onerous year ahead. But perhaps his biggest challenge will be the creation of a new voters' list. The law specifies that the list must be compiled through door-to-door enumeration of Alberta's two million or so residences.

This is not a quick process, at the best of times. But with each successive election it becomes more difficult, as fewer and fewer people are willing to knock on strangers' doors for low wages.

So it's not unreasonable to suppose that by the end of 2018, Elections Alberta might well find itself in a such a position of unpreparedness that it will be forced to entreat the gov't to put off the election beyond May, perhaps to the fall.

Ah, but the fall is when the federal election—which does have a set *day* (the third Monday in October, four years after the previous election)—will be held.

And it is political gospel that you can't conduct both a provincial and a federal election in the same season. The publicly mumble-jumbled reason for this shibboleth is that the benighted voter—yes, that's the very same resourceful, well-educated, and industrious Albertan that our pols are always holding up as paragons—will be confused about which NDP candidate (or Tory, or Liberal) is federal and which one is provincial and would also be disinclined to make two trips to the polling station within a month of each other. There's also the problem of voter apathy.

The actual political reason for avoiding concomitant elections is that there only so many political operatives—campaign managers, door knockers, phonecallers—to go around and those human resources are stretched too thin if two elections occur in close proximity.

So. A spring 2020 election? We decided to put it to the premier last week at presser. There are rumours among the opposition that you are considering a year's delay to better accommodate Elections Alberta preparedness. What say you, Premier?

“I suppose it's not entirely surprising that opposition parties that are made up of former members of the previous governing party which quite historically failed to call elections in alignment with the law would therefore expect that we would do the same,” she said, managing the obligatory dig at the opposition.

“That being said, I said from the very outset when we got elected and have said very consistently ever since that there is a law around the timing of elections in Alberta and just for the sake of a lark we should try following that law and being respectful to the, er, communities and citizens who want to participate in our democratic process on a somewhat predictable basis. So our election will be within the period that is prescribed by the law that is in place right now.”

That sounded unequivocal enough. It's not unheard of, however, for a politicians' promises to be derailed by “unforeseen circumstances.”

# BILLS CURRENTLY BEFORE THE HOUSE

(For more details go to: <http://www.assembly.ab.ca/net/index.aspx?p=bill&section=doc&legl=29&session=4>)

BILL #	TITLE (Sponsor)/Status	PURPOSE	REACTION
1	<b>Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)/2nd reading debate adjourned</b>	<b>A</b> miniature emulation of Peter Lougheed's investment in the oilsands, this bill directs public resources at energy diversification projects. There are three parts to this bill: The Petrochemicals Diversification Plan offering a total of \$500M in royalty credits over four years for petrochemical startups that turn ethane into plastics; The Petrochemicals Feedstock Infrastructure Program offering \$500M in loan guarantees over three years for processing facilities to extract liquids from natural gas for use in the petrochemical plants; and the previously announced Partial Upgrading Program ( <i>Insight</i> Mar. 4) offering \$800M in loan guarantees & \$200M in grants over eight years for plants that will upgrade bitumen so it can be piped without the need for diluent.	<b>R</b> eaction from the opposition members has been largely sceptical. They are doubtful that the incentives are enough to overcome the province's investment premium (20% higher than comparative American destinations) and the regulatory uncertainty in Canada. There were also doubts expressed about partial upgrading, which is still in the experimental stage, and unlikely to become commercial any time soon. The UCP, as is often the case, attempted an amendment that would have sent the bill to committee for further discussion with industry and the Energy Diversity Advisory Committee, whose recommendations formed the basis of this bill. As usual, however, the NDP majority voted down the amendment.
2	<b>Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)/2nd reading debate adjourned</b>	<b>T</b> he bill provides tax credits amounting to a 25% discount on wages paid by "interactive digital media" companies (i.e. video game developers) and subsidizes 3,000 technology spaces in post-secondaries, provides scholarships, and sets up a talent advisory council to advise the gov't on the creations of these new spaces. There will be a special emphasis put on the development of drones for the Transportation ministry. This represents an expansion of the Alberta Investor Tax Credit (AIRC) and the Capital Investment Tax Credit (CITC), which the gov't claims has already stimulated over \$1B in capital projects.	<b>A</b> nother bill that the UCP attempted to refer to committee—but again in vain. Opposition members wanted a chance to talk to experts and review similar programs in other provinces to better determine whether these initiatives would in fact invigorate the tech sectors it is aiming at. Fears were expressed that the tax credits might be directed at sectors that don't need them, might create a tax-break-dependent industry, and that the AIRC and CITC initiatives to date have not been the success the gov't claimed they would be. UCP MLA <b>Richard Gotfried</b> (Calgary-Fish Creek) also pooh-poohed the NDP's claim that the previous gov't had done nothing to diversify the economy: "From 1986 to 2016 Alberta's GDP grew from \$59.6B to \$314.9B and during those 30 years oil and gas and mining decreased as a percentage of total GDP from 23.2% to 17% and that without oil and gas Alberta still represents the third-largest economy by GDP in Canada, ahead of British Columbia."
5	<b>An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)/2nd reading debate adjourned</b>	<b>T</b> his amendment to the <i>Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) Act</i> allows relatives or friends of the 60,000 disabled adults on AISH to set up trust funds for the recipients without affecting their eligibility for the benefits they receive, such as free dental, optical, prescription, and child-care services. The act ensures trusts are exempt as an asset when determining eligibility for the AISH program. And if someone receives a large payment such as an inheritance, they will have a one-year grace period to put it in an exempt trust.	<b>L</b> ong gone are the days when the Klein gov't cracked down on those who were abusing the system (and in fact removed the trust allowance that the NDP is reinstating). Today any suggestion that an AISH recipient—part of the "most vulnerable" caste—is less than deserving would brand one as a monster. Thus the opposition was generally happy with the bill. "This piece of legislation is long overdue," said UCP MLA <b>Nathan Cooper</b> (Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills).
7	<b>Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act (Carrier)/passed 1st reading</b>	<b>L</b> ocavores rejoice! This bill purports to encourage the sale of locally grown food through the establishment of a Local Food Council that will recommend measures, projects, and initiatives to assist in such areas as distribution and marketing. The third week of August will be proclaimed "Alberta Local Food Week". More Orwellianly, the bill contains provisions for the policing of local food sold as "organic," with the appointment of inspectors with search and seizure powers who will target those advertising their product as organic without proper certification. Fines of up to \$20K. <i>Throw down your vegetables and exit the van slowly with your hands up.</i> No debate yet, but one anticipates the opposition will have great sport with this most Dipperesque of bills.	
8	<b>Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018 (S. Anderson)/passed 1st reading</b>	<b>I</b> nspired by the confusion over lines of command during the Fort McMurray wildfire, and the lack of proper emergency preparedness strategies in an estimated 20% of Alberta municipalities, this inchoate bill—which will be toured around the province during the summer for feedback and presented in more complete form in the fall—contains provisions for regular disaster training, cooperation between neighbouring municipalities, clearer lines of command, and mandatory evacuation (or face up to a \$10K fine). No debate expected until the fall sitting.	
9	<b>Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act (Hoffman)/passed 1st reading</b>	<b>H</b> ere's a bill that looks like Jason Kenney bait: the imposition of a 50-metre "bubble zone" around Alberta's two non-hospital abortion clinics, to keep those awful Christians (and worse) from staging their pro-life vigils and displaying pictures of aborted babies near the entrances. The NDP are framing the legislation in terms of protecting "vulnerable women" from bullying and shaming, and in their press release attached a video made by Calgary's Kensington clinic in which its director complained of how the protesters made women feel "ashamed" about what they were about to do. We suspect this bill is more about drawing out Catholic Kenney's pro-life sympathies and giving the Dippers another opportunity to brand him and the UCP as retrograde troglodytes—forgetting, perhaps, that Jason dutifully served in a Harper gov't where abortion was a verboten topic. If the Unicorns do attack and/or vote against this bill, it will be framed as a defence of freedom of expression.	

## People ...

### Appointments...

● **Bernette Ho**, a Calgary human rights, employment, and energy lawyer, to the Court of Queen's Bench. Ho, who is of Chinese descent and moved to Canada from the Philippines with her family as an infant, was called to the bar in 1996, and has been a partner with Norton Rose Fulbright Canada LLP in recent years. She represented BP Canada during the National Energy Board hearings on the Trans Mountain Pipeline, and in 2013 represented the energy companies pledged to fund Enbridge's ill-fated Northern Gateway pipeline.

The federal appointment was made under the Liberal gov't's new judicial application process, announced in late 2016, which, according to a press release, "emphasizes transparency, merit, and diversity."

This single appointment was criticized by Alberta Conservative MPs Wednesday for failing to meet the needs of a province where some cases are being dropped because of long wait times due to the Supreme Court's "Jordan" decision that imposes a 30-month limit on the time between charges being laid and resolution in the Court of Queen's Bench (18 months in provincial courts).

Ho is the first judge appointed to the Alberta QB court in 16 months, despite there currently being 14 vacancies.

"The Minister's announcement of a single judge is a bad joke," said St. Albert MP **Michael Cooper**, the party's deputy justice critic, in a press release. "The appointment of a single judge doesn't even begin to address the backlog in our courts, which has reached a crisis point."

Calgary Conservative MP **Michelle Rempel** is also sponsoring a petition, launched by a family in her constituency, related to a woman and her five-year-old daughter who were murdered in 2016. The trial of the accused has been set for Nov. 26, just three weeks prior to the 30-month cut off. The petition calls for federal Justice Minister **Jody Wilson-Raybould** to hurry up and appoint more judges.

● **Brenda Kenny**, of Calgary, as member and chairwoman of the board of directors of Alberta Innovates for a three-year term. She replaces **Judy Fairburn**, the VP of business innovation with Cenovus Energy, who had chaired the agency since it was consolidated from four separate agencies in November 2016, and had previously chaired one of those agencies, Alberta Innovates: Technology Futures.



Kenny, 61 (pictured), who holds a master's degree in metallurgical engineering, was CEO of the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association between 2008 and 2015, lobbying on behalf of pipeline owners including Kinder Morgan and Enbridge. She is a former business unit leader with the National Energy Board, a former member of the PC gov't's Alberta Economic Development Authority (replaced with the Premier's Advisory Committee in 2015), and co-chairs the Nature Canada initiative, Women for Nature. Since 2016, she has been a member and vice-chairwoman of the board of Emissions Reduction Alberta (formerly the Climate Change and Emissions Management Corporation), the provincial agency that directs the carbon taxes paid by large emitters to green projects.

Alberta Innovates funds research—much of it in the health field— and facilitates relationships between academia and

business. The agency received \$216M in gov't grants in 2016-17.

● **Steven Cohen**, a Calgary corporations lawyer and partner at Burnet, Duckworth & Palmer LLP, and **Raymond Crossley** a retired Calgary accountant and former partner with PricewaterhouseCoopers, as members of the Alberta Securities Commission, both for three-year terms.

### Pending appointment...

● **Lorne Gibson**, Alberta's Chief Electoral Officer from 2006 to 2009, is being recommended by the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices to serve as Alberta's first Elections Commissioner.

The position—essentially Elections Alberta's top cop—was created to oversee the Election Finances & Contributions Act, which sets limits on political donations by individuals and third-party advertisers (aka PACs). The commissioner will be responsible for investigating complaints, levying administrative penalties, issuing letters of reprimand, entering into compliance agreements, and recommending prosecutions.

Gibson (pictured), who has been working as an elections consultant in his native Winnipeg for the past nine years, was fired as Alberta's Chief Electoral Officer in 2009 after issuing two damning reports on illegal campaign donations and 187 recommendations on problems with election laws in Alberta.

These were viewed by many as a rebuke of the Progressive Conservative government. All eight PC members on the Legislative Offices Committee voted not to renew his contract, blaming him for the shambling 2008 election—mostly the fault of the flawed elections law of the day and the people in the Conservative cabinet who actually had the power to run things. The three opposition members—including **Rachel Notley**, then a mere NDP MLA—vigourously defended Gibson and voted to renew his contract. Gibson sued the gov't for \$450K.

And now he's been recommended—and will likely be hired—by a committee with an NDP majority and will be in charge of enforcing the kinds of rules that he vainly tried to enact before his untimely departure.



### POLITICAL PULSE ... from Page 1

tee chairwoman **Nicole Goehring** (Edmonton-Castle Downs), in outlining the procedures, said, "At this point, I would generally note that a break would be called at the midpoint of the meeting with the agreement of the committee. However, for today's meeting I've been advised that the members of the government caucus will be ceding their 20-minute time slot in the rotation to accommodate a break for the minister to feed her baby." Smiles all around.

And at the Thursday session, Goehring: "I've been advised that the members of the government caucus will be ceding their 10-minute slot, which is next in the rotation, and that the members of the UCP will be ceding the first five minutes of their next rotation to provide for a 20-minute break for the minister to feed her baby."

You've come a long way, *babies*. You're part of a grand experiment in Rachel's brave new world where barriers are falling and history is being made.

But sometimes it's the older clichés that can offer the kinds of comfort for a mother and a child weary of the culture wars. *There's no place like home, for example. Or Home is where the heart is.*

## Talk ... ... in the Corridors

### Kenney's MEGO maiden speech...

● It's no secret that UCP Leader **Jason Kenney** (Calgary-Lougheed) fancies himself as an orator, and with some justification. His ability to speak extemporaneously and to mix anecdote with statistic-backed polemic whilst throwing in the occasional self-depreciative joke (usually about his weight) are proven crowd-pleasers. Multiple ovations and extended applause are common accompaniments to his speeches at partisan gatherings.

Thus there was a mood of excited anticipation in the Unicon ranks on Thursday when it came time for the Kennosaur to deliver his maiden speech to the Legislature. But like the child who wakes up Christmas morning expecting a shiny new bike only to unwrap *The Compleat Works of William Shakespeare*, the experience was a disappointment.

For one thing the speech was long. Almost all of the maiden speeches made since the 2015 election have lasted between 10 and 20 minutes (Former Wildrose Leader **Brian Jean** was the exception at 34 minutes). Jason, speaking in the mid-afternoon when most people's metabolisms are at their slowest and on the final day of the week's sitting when MLAs are anxious to return to their loved ones and their refrigerators, rattled on for one hour and 16 minutes. It seemed longer.

He began the familiar guff about how grateful he was to all those who had facilitated his rise to the position—electors, caucus mates, former MLA **Dave Rodney** who relinquished his seat—and made special mention of his grandfather **Mart Kenney** (pictured), the saxophonist who with his big band, the Western Gentlemen, was a star on radio and disc from the '30s to the '50s, with hits including 'The West, a Nest and You, Dear' and 'We're Proud of Canada'. Jason called his grandpa, "a passionate Canadian nationalist who really invested in me my own passion for public service."



He moved on to wax pedagogically and reverentially about the history of parliamentary democracy—an institution for which he confessed "profound esteem"—reminding the unlettered among us that "the root word for parliament from the Norman French is *parler*. It is the place in which we speak." Which, after a few more historical allusions, led him to a subject on which he has previously expounded: the need for civility and respect by members as a "practical expression of our collective esteem for this institution and what it represents."

"That is why, upon meeting my colleagues here shortly after becoming elected to this Chamber, I proposed that we try to raise the tone, raise the bar of our comportment in this place. Even if it's not reciprocated, we can control at least our own actions, Mr. Speaker. I hope that in so doing, we have as a caucus decided to suspend the practice of thunderous desk thumping, which I think creates unnecessary disorder in this place and detracts from the quality of debate. As much as possible we have tried to suspend the custom of heckling."

Indeed, Kenney's performance was received eerily by his silent benchers. They didn't even applaud (clapping has replaced desk thumping in the House of Commons)—even when Kenney eventually reached the end of his speech with a declaration of the Alberta motto: "Strong and Free." It wasn't clear, however, whether this silence was due to their leader's edict or a symptom of catalepsy. We suspect the latter.

Around the half hour mark, after touching on his forebears' emigration to Canada during the Irish Potato Famine, he patted his ample belly, saying, "By the way, as members can see, I'm pleased to report that the Kenney family has since recovered from the famine." Not a titter, not a smile.

Given Kenney's long stint as federal Immigration minister and his fruitful electoral relationship with immigrant groups, there was lots of stuff on Canada's history of newcomers, tied

to the description of Canada by the historian **Desmond Morton** as "the losers of history." Thus we were afforded historical vignettes on these various defeated groups—from the Jacobites of Scotland, though the United Empire Loyalists, to the Syrian refugees. The point being made was that Canada is special and Alberta the most special of the provinces. And here came the anecdote with which anyone who has been to a Kenney rally has heard: his trip to an Irish job fair as Immigration minister to recruit workers for Alberta's then booming economy.

Shaking hands with the "10,000" job seekers in the queue, he was gratified to discover that half of them wanted to come to Canada:

"That was pretty cool. And then for those who said Canada, I went a little deeper. I said: now, do you know which part of Canada you might be interested in? Mr. Speaker, it sends a shiver up my spine to think of it every time. Again and again and again that morning I heard from those young Irish and others the same word: Alberta, Alberta, Alberta.

"They said this, people who had no relatives here, had never visited here, had no friends. It would be a hard place to find on a map, but the word "Alberta" represented for these young people hope, opportunity, and a new beginning."

There ensued a long-winded panegyric to Alberta's exceptionalism which segued into politics, the shortcomings of the NDP gov't, and the reason he decided to enter provincial politics and save the province from misguided policies that were transforming Alberta from a hopeful province to a defeatist one.

Next came a long account of the unite-the-right movement and the rise of United Conservative Party—a story everyone in the Unicon benches had heard umpteen times.

And finally came the political pitch.

"So, Mr. Speaker, it will fall to us in the year ahead to present a compelling alternative to the economic disaster and the fiscal train wreck of this ill-prepared government, and we will do so deliberately and democratically..."

"We will demonstrate that commitment to fiscal responsibility. We will demonstrate an immediate commitment to lifting off of the wealth creators in our society the enormous accretion of job-killing regulations. We will eliminate that huge, massive new tax burden of the carbon tax, and we will do everything to send a message all across Canada and around the world that Alberta is open for business again and that this, once again, is that land of opportunity."

## The week ahead...

**Apr. 12**—Premier **Rachel Notley** will travel to Toronto to meet with economists and business people and give a keynote address at the Scotiabank/Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) conference, doubtlessly drumming up some moral support for her pipeline war with BC.

**Apr. 12**—One of the pricier NDP fundraisers, described as a "chic evening," featuring Energy Minister **Marg McCuaig-Boyd**, "with food, drinks, and engaging conversation" will be held at Calgary's AVEC Bistro, 105 550 11 Ave SW, starting at 5 PM. Tickets \$350 at <https://act.albertandp.ca/evening-with-marg>

**Apr. 12**—Ground zero of the NDP dynasty, Premier Notley's Edmonton-Strathcona constituency, holds its AGM, featuring Transportation Minister and former leader **Brian Mason**, starting at 6:30 pm at the Hazeldean Community League, 9630 66 Ave. RSVP at: <https://act.albertandp.ca/edmonton-strathcona-agm>

**Apr. 14**—The first NDP nomination meeting, in Calgary-Mountain View, into which Justice Minister **Kathleen Ganley** (relinquishing her Calgary-Bufferlo riding to make way for Finance Minister **Joe Ceci**) has parachuted, takes place at the Hillhurst Sunnyside Church, 1227 Kensington Close NW, starting at 5:30 pm. RSVP at <https://act.albertandp.ca/calgarymountainviewnominationmeeting>