

Ric Dolphin's

Insight into Government

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INSIDE THIS WEEK

Pg. 3: Databank: the other nine suicide centres

Pg. 4: The new MGA is tabled then taken on a road trip

Pg. 5: Appointments include a new AHS head & an NDP labour pal

Pg. 6: Jimbo Dinning is prop for the NDP; PCs to choose leader

D-DAY, 2016

THE PROVINCE HURRIES TO ACCOMMODATE DEATH

With the June 6 Supreme Court deadline for the decriminalization of assisted suicide upon us, Alberta stumbles into the murky world of euthanasia—sorry, physician-assisted dying—while the federal gov't just stumbles. Can it end well?

“Well at least now when someone is terribly ill, they’re not allowed to suffer. That’s a blessing.” - *Helen Smith consoles her husband Obergruppenführer John Smith, who is reminiscing about his handicapped brother; in the acclaimed Amazon TV series The Man in the High Castle, an adaptation of the Philip K. Dick novel that imagines an Axis victory in WWII and the eastern United States under Nazi rule, with involuntary euthanasia enforced.*

The Nazis, of course, were history's nastiest practitioners of euthanasia, and theirs was a far less merciful form of the procedure than that which has been normalized in Canada by our forward-thinking Supreme Court—a procedure that kicks in on Monday, June 6 (D-Day, for you historians—and in this instance, also for you who aren't).

The Nazis practiced what is referred to in the literature as “involuntary euthanasia,” meaning consent of the victim was not necessary. Hundreds of thousands of mentally and physically handicapped Germans were apprehended and gassed or otherwise dispatched at the pleasure of the state.

This grotesque outgrowth of eugenics, fairly killed the movement in England and North America. Through the first three decades of the 20th Century, eugenics had been embraced by many in the intelligentsia, especially those on the left—**Emily Murphy** and **Tommy Douglas** included—and it was admired as a modern and scientific system of perfecting society by weeding out the undesirable from the gene pool through sterilization and other non-fatal means—a sort of assisted Darwinism.

Assisted suicide is a kinder and gentler form of euthanasia than

Continued on next page...

POLITICAL PULSE

THE FILDY RESTORATION!

AN EMBARRASSING END TO A VERY BRIEF SUSPENSION

Strathmore-Brooks Wildrose MLA Derek Fildebrandt's time in the sin-bin was short-lived, but the “Wynnegate” incident may have opened wounds within the party and shortened the career of its leader.

Insight readers will recall that leader Brian Jean (Fort McMurray-Conklin) suspended young Derek, 30, two Fridays ago. The finance critic's offense was a response to a Facebook message from a constituent who had complimented the MLA's controversial attacks the previous day on visiting Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne's economic policies as she sat above him in the Legislature's Speaker's Gallery.

Unfortunately, the constituent had referred to the lesbian premier as “Mr. Wynne or whatever the hell she identifies as,” and Fildebrandt, even more unfortunately had responded, “Proud of having constituents like you!”

Jean was at the federal Conservative Party Convention in Vancouver making the hospitality suite rounds with long-time Wildrose henchingy Vitor Marciano when he learned of Fildebrandt's boo-boo. Jean had signed off on the Wynne attack in the Legislature, scripted by Wildrose flacks, but the Mr. Wynne thing carried the whiff of political brimstone.

Marciano, Jean's senior advisor, is constantly warning MLAs to avoid “Bozo Eruptions.” The landmark case, of course, came towards the end of in 2012 election campaign when Danielle Smith's Wildrose was poised to beat the Tories. But PC researchers dredged up a three-year-old blog by WR candidate Alan Hunsperger, an evangelical pastor, who warned that homosexuals would burn eternally in a “lake of fire.” This rather wrecked the party's chances of forming gov't.

To Marciano, Fildebrandt's endorsement of the constituent's remarks smacked of a bozo eruption, and he urged Jean to act. A telephone conference was held at 9:30 pm (MST) with all but four members of the 23-member caucus on the line.

Jean asked if anyone opposed his plan to suspend Derek's suspension. No one did. At 11:30 pm Jean sent out a press release stating, “This evening, Mr. Fildebrandt made an unacceptable comment on social media that does not represent the values of the Wildrose Caucus. He has been suspended from our Caucus effective immediately.”

According to several reports from those at the CPC convention, Marciano was jubilant, moving through the revellers and boasting to certain Alberta MPs that he had “neutered” Fildebrandt.

There isn't much love between Marciano and Fildebrandt, a pair of alpha pooches in the same pen—the former believing himself, with some justification, to be the brains and power of the party; the latter hoping to become its next leader. (Many Rosers, while grateful to Jean for

Turn to Political Pulse on pg. 5...

that favoured by the Führer. And it is entirely voluntary, dependent on the consent of the wretched individual who craves the blessing of relief from intolerable pain. The concept of perfectionism, however, isn't entirely absent.

In the case of Physician Assisted Dying (PAD), as it will exist in Alberta and the rest of Canada on Monday morning, an adult patient, confirmed by two independent doctors to be of sound mind but suffering great pain from an "irremediable" condition, will, if he doesn't change his mind during the ten-day cooling-off period, be prescribed a lethal cocktail.

This admixture contains the anti-anxiety drug Ativan, an anti-nausea drug to prevent vomiting, and a mix of chloral hydrate, phenobarbital and morphine. After taking these pills—likely in a hospital ward or at home in bed surrounded by family and pets—the patient falls quietly to sleep and, after about 20 minutes, dies.

It is about as perfect a painless death as those many of us who wish to die in our sleep could hope for. You've heard the joke: "I want to die peacefully in my sleep like Grandpa, not screaming and clawing like the passengers in his car."

We are all aware of the screaming and clawing that can accompany the pain of a bad death from cancer, or ALS, or any one of those horrors dished out in the grim lottery.

It is therefore hardly a surprise to read the polls and surveys conducted for the various federal and provincial agencies since the Supreme Court overturned the Criminal Code prohibition on assisted suicide two Februarys ago. Fully 60% to 80% of respondents favour the legalization of this gentle final solution for terminal patients in extreme pain.

And yet this solution is available in just four European countries, four American states, and, since December, the province of Québec.

And there's the rub. There are roughly 200 countries in the world and God knows how many "jurisdictions." Why is it that euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide or—to use the latest euphemism attached to the federal legislation—*medical assistance in dying* (MAD) are legal in only eight jurisdictions?

What about those other 195 countries and 46 states? They can't all be full of Catholics, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Methodists, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jews, or any of the many other religious groups that oppose physician-assisted suicide, be it on the grounds of desecrating God's creation or bad Karma.

In fact in many of the European countries that maintain a prohibition on euthanasia far fewer people say they believe in God than do Canadians. An Angus Reid poll conducted in 2015 found that 73% Canadians said they believed in God. According to a 2010 European survey, only 37% of Britons, 27% of Frenchmen, and 18% of Swedes believed in the Big Fella. And all three of those countries continue to prohibit physician-assisted suicide despite having strong lobbying and activism from the civil liberties groups and right-to-die advocates that we see in North America.

(It was largely because the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association became a plaintiff in the "Carter" lawsuit that it reached the Supreme Court and made PAD legal; See sidebar below.)

Great Britain has an almost identical *Criminal Code* prohibition to the one Canada had, and last September right-to-die advocates launched a campaign to have it rescinded in order to establish an Oregon-style PAD system—similar to Canada's, but only available to the terminally ill. Public support for the change was running around 80%.

Unlike in Canada and the United States, however, there

CARTER V. CANADA

The case that legalized assisted dying

The Supreme Court of Canada delivered the Carter decision on Feb. 6, 2015. It was the final ruling on a lawsuit launched against the Attorney General of Canada in 2011 by the families of Kay Carter, an 89-year-old BC woman suffering from spinal stenosis forced to travel to a Swiss clinic for physician assisted suicide (PAS) in 2010, and Gloria Taylor, a 62-year-old Kelowna woman with ALS who sought PAS in BC (she later died from her symptoms).

They were joined in the suit by the BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA), and the case was heard by Madame Justice Lynn Smith of the BC Supreme Court (the equivalent of Alberta's Court of Queen's Bench) in 2011.

The plaintiffs challenged Section 241 (b) of the *Criminal Code* (prohibiting the aiding and abetting of a suicide)—a section that had been upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1993 in the case of the Sue Rodriguez. She was the BC woman with ALS who had fought and lost the right to assisted suicide. (An anonymous doctor later helped her die while Burnaby NDP MP Svend Robinson sat vigil at her bedside. Svend later fell from public favour after stealing a \$50K ring for his Cuban boyfriend. But we digress.)

Justice Smith upheld the BCCLA's claim that the prohibition violated sections 7 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms* (the right to "life, liberty, and security of the person") on the paradoxical grounds that one's liberty included the right to choose the time of one's death, and one's security included the right to free oneself of pain and suffering through suicide.

The federal gov't appealed the ruling to the BC Court of Appeal, which overturned Smith's ruling. The Appeal Court cited the Supreme Court's Rodriguez decision as constitutional precedent, and invoked Section 1 of the *Charter* that allows a gov't to limit an individual's rights in order to prevent "objectionable conduct" (in this case criminal act of assisting a suicide).

The BCCLA et al appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, which in its February 2015 ruling stated that the "matrix of legislative and social facts" had changed since the Rodriguez case. And in the opinion of the court, any previous SCC decision (i.e. the Rodriguez decision) should not be taken as "a strait jacket that condemns the law to stasis."

The Supremes allowed that the blanket prohibition on "physician-assisted dying" under the Criminal Code was "rationally connected to protecting the vulnerable from taking their life in times of weakness, because prohibiting an activity that poses certain risks is a rational method of curtailing the risks."

But the justices agreed with the ruling by Lynn—who had heard expert testimony concerning several of jurisdictions in the world that allow PAD—that "a permissive regime with properly designed and administered safeguards was capable of protecting vulnerable people from abuse and error" and that "vulnerability can be assessed on an individual basis, using the procedures that physicians apply in their assessment of informed consent and decisional capacity in the context of medical decision-making more generally."

The court deferred its invalidation of the *Criminal Code* prohibition for 12 months —later extended by a further four months to June 6—to give the federal gov't time to draft concordant legislation, and for the provinces to prepare corresponding regulations.

is no tradition of “judge-made law” in Blighty and the courts are bound by parliamentary legislation. Changes to laws and statutes occur the old-fashioned way with bills tabled in the House of Commons. And in this case it was a bill tabled by a Labour backbencher to allow terminally ill patients a lethal dose of drugs.

There were four hours of passionate debate without any observance of party lines. Some gov’t Conservatives supported the bill, and some opposition Labourites opposed it. But what swayed the house were the warnings from several physician MPs that a change in the law would drastically change the relationship between doctor and patient. Several gave moving accounts of their final hours with dying patients. A former nurse spoke of the thousands of people with no close relatives who count on the state as their next of kin “and would find themselves in an unenviable position if the law sanctioned assisted dying.”

Concern was also expressed that approval of PAD would make the elderly and vulnerable prey to grasping and coniving heirs or personal companions. Such trickery and coercion could result in situation where euthanasia once more verges on involuntary.

Other MPs feared that once the door to terminal adults had been opened, minors, and those with non-terminal conditions would be next in line for cocktail hour.

In the end the vote was 336 to 118 against the bill.

In the Canadian Commons last Wednesday, after weeks of debate: a different result. Bill C14, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other Acts (medical assistance in dying)*—the legislation designed to accord with the Supreme Court ruling—passed

third reading with a vote of 186 to 137.

It was sent to the Senate, whose members will continue to debate C-14 on Tuesday, a day after the Supreme court deadline for having legislation in place. In the meantime the Supremes’ Court ruling will serve as the legislative framework on which provinces much base their regulations until C-14 is enacted—if it is enacted.

Last Wednesday when it was becoming clear there would be no federal legislation by Monday, Associate Health Minister **Brandy Payne**, the heavily-pregnant former yoga teacher, presented the regulations at a hastily called press conference.

The Supreme Court’s recommendations are more lax than Bill C-14, meaning, for example, that one does not have to be terminally ill to receive one’s final cocktail, but merely have an “irremediable medical condition.”

Later in the afternoon in the Legislature, with just a couple of hours of debate on the motion, opposition MLAs complained about the rushing through of such important regulations and some gave quite heartfelt speeches, including PC MLA **Dave Rodney** (Calgary-Lougheed),

“We are,” said the two-time Everest conqueror, “about to embark on a social, scientific, and ethical experiment that redefines power relations between patients, doctors, and the law. It’s a tectonic cultural shift that may change, forever, the way we define self-determination, personal liberty, and quality of life. Yet legally and politically we are not ready.”

There are things in that quote that provide clues about why most of the civilized world isn’t leaping aboard the euthanasia bandwagon. And why—and we haven’t mentioned this yet—a majority of Alberta doctors are not willing to hand out poison. More on all this as events unfold...

DATA bank ...

Jurisdictions with Legal Euthanasia or Physician-Assisted Suicide (PAS)

UNITED STATES*	SINCE	PROTOCOLS
Oregon	1997	PAS for terminal, mentally competent adults; two physicians must sign off
Washington State	2009	PAS for terminal, mentally competent adults; two physicians must sign off
Vermont	2013	PAS for terminal, mentally competent adults; two physicians must sign off
California	2015	PAS for terminal, mentally competent adults; two physicians must off
EUROPE:	SINCE	PROTOCOLS
The Netherlands	1984	PAS & euthanasia for terminal & “unbearably suffering” persons over 16; prior directives permitted for dementia patients; two physicians must sign off
Belgium	2002	Euthanasia & PAS for terminal & unbearably suffering adults; children eligible with parental consent; two docs must sign off, along with a psychologist if the patients competency in doubt.
Switzerland	1942	PAS only; patients must administer lethal meds themselves; euthanasia banned and lethal injection banned.
Luxembourg	2009	PAS & euthanasia for terminal & “unbearably suffering” persons over 16; prior directives permitted for dementia patients; two physicians must sign off

*Even in states where it is legal, there isn’t much demand for PAS. In 2013, 77 people in Oregon died by PAS, accounting for 0.21 percent of all deaths in the state. Similarly, in Washington in 2014 there were 170 deaths due to PAS, accounting for 0.33 percent of all deaths. (If PAS was legal in all 50 states and accounted for 0.25 percent of deaths in 2014 (2,596,993), there would have been 6,492 physician assisted suicides.) Assuming similar attitudes in Canada, we can expect 650 PAS’s p.a.

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MUNICIPAL REFORM

A BEHEMOTHIC MGA SURFACES, BUT HAS SOME SWIMMING AHEAD

A rural MLA observed that “the goddamned thing is the size of small town phone book and not near as exciting.” And 120 pages, filled with a gov’t-lawyer- issue legalize so turbid and jangled up with repealed and amended sections, subsections and clauses that one’s eyes tell one’s brain go to sleep and stay there... well, our rural friend wasn’t far off.

Given its great weight and density, Bill 21, the *Modernized Municipal Government Act* (MGA), must certainly be an important and monumental piece of legislation. And that was certainly the impression a brisk and tightly-scripted Municipal Affairs Minister **Danielle Larivee**, fresh off the Fort Mac disaster beat, wished to convey at her Tuesday press conference announcing the bill.

The MGA, she told us, was the second longest bill in the legislative arsenal (the *Insurance Act*, clocking in at a coma-inducing 475 pages wins the cigar). This “modernization”—i.e. a whole lot of amendments to the existing act—was long overdue because its last major revamping had been in 1995 and the old bill “does not reflect new economic realities, changes in technology or evolving municipal roles.”

The new one, as best we could determine from the Larivee and the two ADMs who’d provided a technical briefing beforehand, isn’t quite there yet either, despite the welter of meetings, focus groups, and electronic feedback that has been occurring since revision of the bill was first announced four years and five ministers ago. There is much to add by way regulation and there is opportunity for still more amendment following yet another round of “consultation with stakeholders.”

For after first reading in the House, which occurred Tuesday afternoon, Larivee and her boffins will take the bill on the road over the summer to get more feedback at sessions in 20 Alberta centres. In the fall, the legislation will return to the chamber for debate and likely more amendments, with the revisions being posted on-line in January to enable yet more feedback. Bill 21 will then return to the Legislature the spring sitting and, goes the plan, will be passed and proclaimed in time for the next municipal elections in October of 2017.

(No doubt this orgy of consultation is designed to preempt the sorts of angry protests and ministerial death threats spurred by the lack of consultation on Bill 6 last December.)

However, given the time already expended, the never-ending squabble between cities and rural municipalities over the sharing of industrial property taxes, the constant push by the cities and towns for more taxing powers, and the eternal clamour for more local autonomy, further protraction might be anticipated.

Moreover the “Big City Charters,” the separate deals that have been promised Edmonton and Calgary for years, and which, if they ever happen, will further muddy already turbid municipal waters, are still only under preliminary discussion.

Meanwhile on Tuesday morning we were walked through what were said to be the salient features of Bill 21 by the two ADMs, who pointed out that there was a lot of less salient stuff in the legislation, but no time to discuss it. (Officials in Alberta’s 344 municipalities would be wise to have their legalists scrutinize the small print.)

There were five main changes to the legislation with which the ministry felt we should be familiar:

- **Off-Site Levies:** Currently municipalities can charge off-site levies (one-time fees) to developers to offset the costs of building supporting roads, sanitary sewers, storm sewers, and water systems. This will be expanded to include com-

munity recreation facilities, fire halls, police stations, and libraries, provided at least 30% of those living in the new development will benefit from the facility. The fee will be proportional to the percentage of benefit. The levies, which will ultimately be reflected in higher building prices, are optional, meaning developers may be attracted to areas where the levies are not charged or where the land prices are cheaper, further contributing to urban sprawl.

- **Inclusionary Housing:** This gives municipalities the option of adjusting their land-use bylaws to require developers to include a certain number of affordable rental units (rents 10%-20% below market price). This will apply to larger apartment complexes. But details, including the threshold at which the requirement kicks in and the sorts of compensation a municipality might offer the developer (e.g. increased allowable density, or fewer required parking spaces) are yet to be determined.

- **Mandatory Growth Management Boards for Edmonton & Calgary:** Edmonton has had one of these (The Capital Region Board) since 2008 and it will remain mandatory; Calgary, with direction from the province, will be required to establish one. These boards jointly develop regional plans for land use and the delivery and cost sharing of services like roads, sewers, and public transportation, avoiding duplication. The Calgary Regional Partnership, formed in 1999, was supposed to serve this function, but was voluntary, and through the years lost the counties of Rocky View, Foothills, and Wheatland. Growth management boards will remain optional for the smaller cities and surrounding areas.

- **Mandatory Inter-municipal Collaboration Frameworks (ICF):** This is an alternative to forcing rural municipalities with high linear assessment taxes (ie taxes from things like oil wells, pipelines, and electrical transmission lines) to give a portion to the nearby towns and cities whose facilities and services they use. Some towns and MDs have voluntarily adopted such sharing arrangements, but others haven’t. Bill 21 requires that all municipalities outside the Edmonton and Calgary growth management areas will create these collaboration frameworks within three years. Similar to the Growth Management Boards, the ICFs are designed to ensure that neighbouring municipalities collaborate in the planning of land use and regional services and share the costs of those services. The frameworks will accommodate those voluntary agreements already in place. If municipalities cannot reach agreements, a dispute resolution mechanism will be available. Details to follow.

- **Residential & Non-Residential Taxing Changes:** The province is putting the brakes on increases to non-residential taxes (industrial, commercial, etc.) that are getting out of hand in some areas (in Wood Buffalo, for example, the non-residential taxes are more than nine times higher than residential taxes.) The ratio of non-residential to residential will be capped at 5:1, with a grandfathering provision for existing properties over that amount. Municipalities will also be allowed to split their non-residential tax rates into a variety of subclasses (currently there are only two classes: “improved” and “vacant.”). This means that small businesses can be charged a lower rate than a large corporation, with variations in between. The gov’t believes this will encourage more small-business start-ups.

As mentioned, we are still a long way from seeing any of this happen. Creatures of the gov’t they may be, but municipalities have a tendency to thwart their masters’ best intentions and sometimes even devour ministers.

POLITICAL PULSE ... from Page 1

taking the helm at a difficult time and bringing them back from the brink of annihilation with more seats than before, do not think he has the necessary qualities to lead the party to power.)

Fildebrandt, meanwhile, worked quickly on repairs. He issued an explanation and apology, saying, "I receive on average of 800 comments on my public Facebook page daily and I do my best to respond personally. I did not read a comment posted to my page by a constituent as carefully as I should have. If anyone felt that I shared those sentiments, I do not, and I apologize. My colleagues know that those views do not reflect my own opinion and they recognize that I made an honest mistake. ..."

He was soon getting support from unlikely sources, including Environment Minister and legislative sparring partner **Shannon Phillips** (her tweet: Good on @Dfildebrandt for quickly acknowledging this), and even from several gays including a tentative absolution from the UofA's sexual minorities professor **Kris Wells**, who tweeted "hopefully an important lesson learned and we can count on your full support for LGBTQ community in Alberta."

Before long many of the party's constituency associations were throwing their support behind the personable and forthright fiscal hawk whom many consider a more effective politician than Jean. Right-wing blogger **Ezra Levant's Rebel Media** started an online "Save Derek" petition that gathered more than 20,000 signatures.

On Monday all the Wildrose MLAs gathered in their caucus room at the Legislature for the official ballot vote on the suspension required by the party constitution. Having by now processed what MLA **Rick Strankman** (Dremheller-Stettler) calls "The groundswell of public opinion," the majority voted to re-instate Fildebrandt.

Thus was an embarrassed **Brian Jean** forced to rescind his Friday night statement, and restore Derek to caucus. He had no choice. But the reversal brought into question his judgment and threw doubts on his leadership abilities.

"It's not something I'm proud of," Jean told the *Calgary Herald*. "Not at all. I will make mistakes and I just hope Albertans can forgive that and we move on."

As a face-saving measure he made Fildebrandt's reinstatement contingent on the MLA's adherence to certain conditions, all of them "secret," except for a commitment to hire "a social media manager to handle public interactions." (We under that was the only condition.)

In a press release on Tuesday, Jean said, "Derek is an important member of our Wildrose team and we all expect him to have a bright future within our organization. Along with our entire Wildrose team and the broader conservative family, we look forward to Derek joining us once again to work on building a united conservative alternative..." (United conservative alternative? Those words have a familiar ring.)

Jean then debarked for friendlier shores of Fort McMurray, where residents were beginning their rehabilitation of the fire-damaged city. He reopened his constituency office, and, with fellow MLA **Tany Lau** (Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo), distributed food and clean-up materials from a tractor-trailer truck as the cameras whirred soothingly.

Those recent missteps were superceded by the uplifting TV tropes about an empathetic MLA—again the tears were flowing—supporting his constituents in the city where his own house had been destroyed. Jean told reporters he intended to "strap on a tool belt" and help rebuild.

On Thursday, Fildebrandt quietly returned to his front-bench opposition seat in the Legislature. But throughout the day's proceeding, not a word was heard from the normally voluble finance critter. It was eerie, but one doubts the silence will endure.

People ...

Appointments...

● **Dr. Verna Yiu**, a pediatric nephrologist, as President and CEO of the Alberta Health Services. Yiu had been the acting CEO of AHS since January, following predecessor **Vicki Kiminski's** premature departure. Yiu, 55, joined AHS as VP of Quality and Chief Medical Officer in 2012, having previously been a professor and vice dean of Medicine & Dentistry at the UofA. As CEO of the 108K-employee, \$14B-p.a. agency, her annual salary will be \$557K. She was among 70 candidates for the job, was chosen with the unanimous approval of the AHS board, and has signed a five-year contract.

● **Gwen Gray, QC**, as Essential Services Commissioner (max. salary: \$170K), a position created by Bill 4, *An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services*, for a five-year term. As commissioner she will also be vice-chairwoman of the Labour Relations Board. Gray, a veteran labour and human rights lawyer in her late sixties, retired from active practice at an Edmonton law firm 2012 and has maintained a consultancy in labour law. During the 1990s she served on the Saskatchewan Labour Relations board under the then NDP gov't.

Wildrose labour critic **Grant Hunter** (Cardston-Taber-Warner) was critical of the appointment, noting that Gray had donated more than \$20K to the NDP, including \$5K to **Rachel Notley's** leadership campaign, and was unlikely to be impartial in her job as an adjudicator in the process of deciding which members of which AUPE locals can and can't be designated as essential.

● **j'Amey Holyrood**, a journeyman boilermaker, as chairwoman of the Alberta Apprenticeship & Industry Training Board, for a three-year term. She is the first woman to hold this position in the organization's 71-year history, reflecting an affirmative action policy by the NDP gov't, evidenced by the majority of appointments on this page, to feminize Alberta's Agencies, Boards & Commissions.

● **Dr. Cynthia Baxter**, a Calgary forensic psychologist, and **Dr. Vijay Singh**, an Edmonton psychiatrist, as members of the Alberta Review Board for three-year terms. The 11-member board makes or reviews dispositions concerning any accused person for whom a verdict of "not criminally responsible because of mental disorder" or "unfit to stand trial" is rendered, according to the provisions of the Criminal Code.

● **Jan Max Thomas Kruger**, a Calgary crown council, as public member of the council of the College and Association of Respiratory Therapists of Alberta for an 18-month term.

● **Georgina Altman**, a VP of Advancement at Lakeland College in Lloydminster, **Deborah Apps**, a former VP of communications for the Calgary Health Region, **Ms. Toby Jenkins**, an executive fellow in the UofC's school of public policy, and **Marie Owen**, of Edmonton, a senior director of the Canadian Patient Safety Institute, as members of the board of directors of the Health Quality Council for 18-month terms.

● **Blaine Boutin**, an Edmonton mechanic, as a member of the Alberta Apprenticeship & Industry Training Board for 18-month terms.

● **Anita Heuver**, owner of Eagle Lake Nurseries in Strathmore, and **Leah Jones**, a community relations supervisor with the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation in Lamcombe, to the board of Olds College for three-year terms.

Talk in the Corridors

Jimbo the Slasher provides NDP ammo...

● It was a little through-the-looking-glass to hear the name of former Finance Minister **Jim Dinning**, architect of the **Ralph Klein** era of debt-busting austerity and cuts to public service union jobs, admirably evoked this week in the Legislature, not by the Rosers or the PCs, who often reflect wistfully about the man, but rather by those paragons of debt accumulation and union largesse who once demonized him. Yes, we speak of the NDP.

Dinning, 63, who in his pre-dotage sits on various boards, was the co-author of a piece in the *Edmonton Journal* this week in support of carbon taxes—a position he reiterated in an interview with the *Calgary Herald*.

For what seems like forever, the opposition has been attacking the gov't's carbon levy, so it was with a deal of satisfaction that several NDP members cited the article, written by Dinning and a couple of other members of Ecofiscal Commission (a nonpartisan collection of economists including the Tories' go-to economist **Jack Mintz**).

"Carbon pricing is cost effective—meaning that it achieves emissions reductions at the lowest possible cost to the economy," read the article. "The Alberta gov't could have chosen to regulate emitters to use specific low-carbon technologies or to achieve a given level of emissions performance. But in fact, regulations cost more than a carbon price, because they reduce the flexibility emitters have to find the cheapest way to reduce emissions.

"A carbon price encourages emitters to find innovative ways to avoid paying the tax, because the gain goes straight to their bottom line. In addition, a carbon price provides an ongoing incentive to find ways to reduce emissions, and this can be a powerful force for driving long-run innovation."

In Question Period on Thursday Wildrose MLA **Don McIntyre** (Innisfail-Sylvan Lake) put the usual question on the carbon tax to Deputy Premier **Sarah Hoffman**, who was standing in for the absent Premier Notley: Why is this government making everyday Alberta families foot the bill for this tax on everything at the time when we can least afford it?"

Assuming her standard linebacker's defensive stance and speaking in the familiar tone of mildly pissed-off head-mistress, Hoffman, said, "Mr. Speaker, certainly, more and more conservatives are coming out in support of having a price on carbon, and they're urging others to join them as well. For example, in an interview with the *Calgary Herald* former Ralph Klein era Finance minister **Jim Dinning** said: "We as conservatives... should stop dragging our knuckles on this issue. I'd encourage the members opposite to do the same."

Tories pick the season to pick a savior...

● The Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta, still experiencing periodic *frissons* of pleasure when recalling the surprising number of delegates (1,000+) who attended its AGM last month (we'd call it a dead-cat bounce), have announced their leadership vote will be on... well they haven't picked an actual day, but according to the press release rushed out on the weekend, it "will be held next Spring, before April 30."

Perhaps the still heavily indebted party needs temporal flexibility in negotiating the cheapest possible banquet room in Metro Red Deer (We hear they have a nice big tent at the Westerner Centre that leaks only when it rains.)

Anyway, we should soon see some serious tire-kicking by potentials. **Richard Starke**, 55 (Vermilion-Lloyminster), **Sandra Jansen**, 53, (Calgary-North West), and interim Leader **Ric McIver**, 57 (Calgary-Hays), are all said to be considering a run. And we wouldn't be surprised to see former cabinet ministers **Tommy Lukasuk**, 47, and **Doug Griffiths**, 43,

emerge from their respective caves to try the waters.

There are also those in the party who'd like to draft current federal interim Conservative leader **Rona Ambrose**, 47 (Sturgeon River-Parkland) who rejected outright a bid by federal fans to have her run for the permanent position

Speaking of Rona...

● As *Insight* was going to press, the 150th annual Parliamentary Press Gallery dinner in Ottawa, a night of sketches, jibes, and uncensored comedy from politicians and journalists.

Conservative leader **Rona Ambrose** (Sturgeon River-Parkland) was one of the more quoted quipsters. "I can't complain about my job," she deadpanned. "I collect a gov't paycheque and live in public housing. It's the conservative dream."

On the subject of her live-in boyfriend J.P. Veitch, a stockbroker and former pro bull rider: "What more can a girl want that guy who can stay on for eight seconds?"

And she took a couple of semi-good natured shots at her predecessor **Stephen Harper**, who never attended a press dinner: "He said to tell you all to go to hell." Musing on a possible new slogan for the CPC, Ambrose offered: "It's OK, the bad man has gone away."

The week ahead ...

June 6—The Supreme Court of Canada's striking down of section 241 (b), which made aiding or abetting a person to commit suicide a criminal offence, takes effect, meaning that even though the federal assisted dying bill has yet to pass Senate, it is now legal in Alberta and the rest of Canada for an adult suffering an "irremediable" condition to obtain a lethal cocktail of drugs prescribed by a physician so long as two doctors sign off. Prost!

June 6—Having failed to complete the spring session on schedule (June 2), the Legislature returns for a few more days, to take care of a couple of outstanding bills, notably Bill 20 (*The Climate Leadership Implementation Act*), currently stalled in Committee of the Whole. The Opposition will sully several more perfectly good hours castigating the bill's carbon tax, presenting new amendments that the NDP majority will summarily defeat. Ah, democracy! We expect the session will die with collective sigh on Tuesday night. The House is scheduled to return on Halloween.

June 6-10—Municipal Affairs Minister **Danielle Larivee** embarks on her summer tour to promote and get feedback on the amended Municipal Government Act: Monday, 1 pm at the Lou Soppit Community Centre in Rocky Mountain House; Tuesday, 1:30 pm at Camp Chestermere in Chestermere; Wednesday, 2 pm at the Carriage House Inn in Calgary; Thursday, 1:30 pm at the RancheHouse in Cochrane; and Friday, 8:30 am at the Grand Rockies Resort in Canmore.

June 7-9—Calgary's Global Petroleum Show, the annual trade exposition for the oil patch, takes place at Stampede Park and the Hyatt Regency. Energy Minister **Marg McCuaig-Boyd** speaks at the Energy Leaders' Breakfast, 8 a.m. Wed. morning; for more info go to:

<https://globalpetroleumshow.com/register/>

June 10-12—NDP AGM at the Hyatt Regency hotel in Calgary. Their first conclave since the election win should be a rollicking time—at least by NDP standards. Registration is \$200, plus \$25 for the Friday night social, and \$200 for the Saturday night banquet. For info and registration: <http://www.albertandp.ca/convention2016>

June 11—The NDP's "LGBTQ+ caucus"—i.e. **Estefania Cortes Vargas** (Strathcona-Sherwood Park), **Michael Connolly** (Calgary-Hawkwood), & Culture & Tourism Minister **Ricardo Miranda** (Calgary-Currie)—host a "LCBTQ+ Extravaganza" fundraiser at Calgary's Backlot gay bar (209 10 Ave. SW), complete with drag show; 9 p.m. - 2 a.m., tickets \$20 at door.