

Alberta Weekly Review

Thursday, September 14, 2017

Session Schedule & Activities

- Fall session is scheduled to begin October 30.
- United Conservative Party (UCP) leadership vote on October 28.

Government News and Announcements

MOU Between Alberta-NWT

Premier Rachel Notley and NWT Premier Bob McLeod signed a 5-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Cooperation and Development to guide areas of economic development, environmental stewardship, trade, social and community development. The agreement includes a commitment to cooperate on energy, trade, transportation, health and social services and supports various bilateral agreements and working groups currently in place.

Coal Community Transition Fund

Hon. Deron Bilous, Minister of Economic Development and Trade announced the creation of the Coal Community Transition Fund (CCTF) to support regional economic development in communities impacted by the phase out of coal. The fund will be available for projects that focus on regional partnerships and economic diversification and is the first step in a series of initiatives expected to assist coal communities. The fund is part of a previously announced plan, the Community and Regional Economic Support program (CARES) which has \$30 million to be spent over two years to promote economic growth. Municipalities and First Nations can apply with an application deadline of November 30, 2017.

Federal and Provincial Transit Investment

The Government of Canada and Government of Alberta announced \$1.3 million for new transit projects in Pincher Creek, Black Diamond and Turner Valley. The federal government is providing \$138,000 for these projects through the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund (PTIF) and the province is investing more than \$903,000. The municipalities will be responsible for the remaining costs.

These three projects are in addition to 107 that have been approved since the GOC and GOA signed the Canada-Alberta PTIF and Clean Water and Wastewater Fund Bilateral Agreement in September 2016.

Oil Sands Expansion Project Grand Opening

Premier Rachel Notley and representatives from Japan attended a ribbon cutting for the official opening of the Japanese Canada Oil Sands Ltd (JACOS) Hangingstone Project near

Fort McMurray. The nearly \$2 billion Steam Assisted Drainage (SAGD) project is the largest investment made in Alberta by the company and the largest investment globally by JACOS parent company Japan Petroleum Exploration Company (JAPEX).

The construction phase of the project supported nearly 400 direct and indirect jobs and the facility employs 190 people. Currently the project produces 1000 barrels per day with full production by the middle of next year expected to reach 20,000 barrels per day. Over the last 6 months Premier Notley, Economic Development and Trade Minister, Deron Bilous and Energy Minister Margaret McCuaig Boyd have all travelled to Japan to meet with government and industry leaders in a range of sectors.

Alberta Time Change Consultation Continues

The Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future has been conducting public consultations on the proposed bill to eliminate daylight savings time spearheaded by NDP backbencher Thomas Dang. The proposed change would put Alberta on central standard time year-round like Saskatchewan and it would be called Alberta Standard Time. Consultations were held in Edmonton, Calgary and Lethbridge and the committee will submit a report to the government by October 4.

The committee has also investigated the costs of a referendum on the issue. If the referendum was paired with a provincial election the cost would be \$2-\$6 million versus nearly \$22 million if held alone.

During the summer the Committee met with businesses including WestJet and the Oilers Entertainment Group that raised concerns on the economic cost of the change. Earlier this year the government received 13,000 written submissions from the public with 75% in favor of eliminating daylight savings time.

Political News

MLA Expense Rules Tightened

The Special Standing Committee on Members Services met today for the first time since the Derek Fildebrandt expense scandal broke earlier this summer. Over the past six months, the Member Services committee was working on reviewing and revitalizing MLA expense guidelines including electronic submissions, allowance expectations and how expenditure rules are applied.

Interim UCP Leader Nathan Cooper is a member of the committee and today his motion which proposed tightening rules around short term rental accommodations such as Airbnb was approved. The subcommittee will continue to work on the larger issue of MLA expenses.

UCP Leadership Race Officially Set

The UCP Leadership race officially has four candidates as of Tuesday September 12. Brian Jean, Jason Kenney, Doug Schweitzer and Jeff Callaway all filed the required documents and paid the needed fees ahead of the 5pm deadline. Both the Kenney and Jean campaigns have submitted the full \$95,000 required (\$75,000 fee and \$20,000 good conduct bond), while the Callaway and Schweitzer campaigns have paid half of the fee and the entire bond in the amount of \$57,500. The balance must be paid by October 5 for

Callaway and Schweitzer to remain in the race.

Former Wildrose leader Paul Hinman had announced on Friday last week he would enter the race but was unable to raise the needed funds by Tuesday.

Callaway and Schweitzer Release Additional Policy Statements

Both Jeff Callaway and Doug Schweitzer released policy platform pieces this week. Doug Schweitzer announced that if he were to lead the UCP to the next election and win the new government would roll back the minimum wage from \$15 which it will be as of 2018 to \$12.20.

Callaway announced his third policy platform the creation of a new investment security for Alberta companies to issues to help provide incentive for financing capital projects, research and development.

Kenney Receives Additional Endorsements

Jason Kenney rolled out additional endorsements this week from former Interim leader of the PCAA, Ric McIver, MLA Calgary-Hays as well as Jason Nixon, former Wildrose MLA from Rimbey-Ricky Mountain House- Sundre. Nixon endorsed Jean in the 2015 Wildrose leadership race.

To date Kenney has received endorsement from a total of six UCP MLAs (including McIver and Nixon) while Jean has received support from eleven MLAs and Doug Schweitzer has one, Wayne Drysdale of Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

[Municipal News](#)

Edmonton Blocks Beaumont Planned Development

The Capital Region board met today and through a vote Beaumont's plan to develop new neighborhoods and business on disputed lands north of the town has been blocked. All municipal growth plans must be approved by the Capital Region Board or its administration before construction. Spruce Grove, the City of Leduc, Morinville, Sturgeon County and Leduc County all sided with Edmonton. Edmonton alone has two-thirds of the population so it was easily able to block Beaumont's motion.

Eighteen others sided with Beaumont, but the Capital Region Board has a system of double majority. A motion needs two-thirds of the votes, and two-thirds of the regional population, to win. Edmonton and Beaumont have been at odds since last year when Beaumont annexed land from Leduc County and Edmonton then launched a counter annexation bid.

Edmonton City Council Finalizes Decision on Northlands

At its final council meeting this term Edmonton City council unanimously approved a plan for Northlands that will see the city take back and then close Northlands Coliseum. The city will gain control of the Expo Centre and the Coliseum on Jan 1, 2018 and race track control will follow later that year.

Part of the deal allows the city to stop paying \$2 million per year to Oilers Entertainment Group. City officials plan to redevelop the Northlands campus site and present a plan in late 2017 or early 2018 to council on that development. As previously announced the Expo Centre will be run by Edmonton Economic Development Corp, which already runs the Shaw Conference Centre.

Northlands Coliseum will be permanently closed, after renovation plans proved to be more expensive than estimated.

Calgary Arena Talks Take Centre Stage

This week the future of the Saddledome and the proposed new arena came to the forefront. Mayor Nenshi announced on Monday his vision for a new arena, expanded convention centre and Entertainment and Cultural District in Victoria Park. Nenshi said talks with Flames ownership was ongoing and will likely continue after the Oct. 16 election and no price tag was provided for the large-scale project.

In February, the city funded Calgary Municipal Land Corp announced the development of a master plan for the Victoria Park area.

The day after Mayor Nenshi's announcement the Flames owners and NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman announced that talks were not ongoing and had in fact broken down completely.

Nenshi is seeking his third term as Mayor of Calgary and is facing two challengers, Bill Smith, Calgary Businessman and former PCAA President and current Calgary Councillor Andre Chabot.

Edmonton Photo Radar Balance is Down

City Council heard this week that the photo radar fund is \$3 million under budget this year as Edmontonian's are speeding less than expected. The fund year-end balance is projected to be \$8.9 million, and if the trend continues by the end of 2018 the fund will hit negative of \$200,000 as Council has committed \$9.1 million to other projects.

The cities Chief Financial Officer said to balance the budget they will focus on finding other funding for traffic safety projects rather than increasing revenue. Traffic accidents causing injuries are also down.

The city will now focus photo radar on the new 30 km per hour playground zones the city has put in place for elementary schools and junior high schools.