

Alberta Weekly Review

Thursday, September 21, 2017

Session Schedule & Activities

- Fall legislative session is scheduled to begin October 30.
- United Conservative Party (UCP) leadership vote on will be held on October 28.
- Alberta municipal elections will be held on Monday, October 16.

Government News and Announcements

Alberta Climate Leadership Showcased in NYC

Environment and Parks Minister Shannon Phillips travelled to New York City this week to represent Alberta and showcase the government's Climate Leadership Plan at Climate Week NYC 2017. The summit takes place annually to gather business leaders, government and civil society to discuss environmental concerns and issues.

GOA Invests in Edmonton LRT

Last week Infrastructure and Transportation Minister Brian Mason along with Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson announced an additional \$176 million grant to the City of Edmonton to aid in the construction of the southeast leg of the Valley Line LRT. The funding was originally provided to Edmonton in 2014 as an interest free loan. The province has now converted the loan to a grant with funds from the Climate Leadership Plan's revenue. The province's total contribution to the Southeast Valley Line LRT has reached \$600 million, a third of the total project cost. The construction phase will support 17,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Renewable Electricity Program Generates Investor Interest

The Renewable Electricity Program which will support the development of 5,000 megawatts of renewable electricity capacity by 2030 and at least \$10.5 billion in investment has attracted significant investor interest. 29 projects have qualified in the first phase of the bidding process and have advanced to the request for proposal stage. Successful bidders will provide a target of 400 megawatts of renewable electricity at the lowest cost to consumers, and be expected to be operational by the end of 2019. The Renewable Electricity Program aims to move the province closer to its target of 30 percent renewable energy by 2030 as outlined in the Climate Leadership Plan. It is also expected the projects supported by the program will create approximately 1700 jobs in Alberta.

Province Asks for Feedback on Growth Management Board Regulations

Draft regulations for growth management boards are now posted on the *Municipal Government Act (MGA) Review* website, feedback on these regulations is requested until October 2.

Growth management boards were announced in the fall of 2015. They represent rural and urban municipalities around major cities that have more than 5,000 residents. In Edmonton, the board will replace the current Capital Region Board and have 10 members: Edmonton, Leduc County, City of Leduc, Beaumont, Fort Saskatchewan, Parkland, St. Albert, Sturgeon, Spruce Grove, Strathcona, Stony Plain, Devon and Morinville. The Calgary board will also have 10 members: Calgary, Chestermere, Airdrie, Rocky View, Okotoks, Cochrane, Foothills, Strathmore, High River and a portion of Wheatland County. The Edmonton and Calgary growth management boards will be effective by the end of 2017 or start of 2018.

Alberta Time Change Issue Unresolved

The five-member sub-committee from the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future unanimously rejected the proposed bill, spearheaded by NDP backbencher Thomas Dang, to eliminate daylight savings time. The committee said that while the bill had merits the economic impact on business would be too significant. When the house resumes next month all legislature members will have to accept the committee's recommendation in order for the bill to officially die.

However, Premier Rachel Notley has said the issue is still on the table and that good comments and considerations were raised and it is therefore important that more work and research be done around the proposal.

For reference, online submissions received 75% support for the change, and recent in person hearings had 69 out of 113 opposing submissions.

Political News

First UCP Leadership Debate Held in Calgary

The first of five UCP Leadership debates was held on Wednesday evening in Calgary. It featured all four candidates, Jeff Callaway, Brian Jean, Jason Kenney and Doug Schweitzer. Other debates will be held in Edmonton (next Thursday), Red Deer, Fort McMurray and Lethbridge leading up to the leadership vote at the end of October.

More than 700 attended the Calgary event which was also streamed online. The debate primarily focused three key themes; the economy, the resource sector, and what it means to be a conservative. Issues addressed included pipeline approval, the New West Partnership, and the federal equalization formula.

Kenney Receives Additional Endorsements

Jason Kenney received endorsements from three more MLAs this week, former PC MLAs Dave Rodney and Prab Gill and former Wildrose MLA Prasad Panda, raising his total MLA endorsements to nine. In comparison, Brian Jean has received support from eleven MLAs and Doug Schweitzer has received support from one, Wayne Drysdale of Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

UCP MLA Leaves Caucus to Sit Independently

Former PC MLA Rick Fraser has left the UCP caucus to sit as an independent. Fraser is the MLA for Calgary South-East and was first elected in 2011. He claimed that over the last few years there has been too much focus on politics in Alberta and not enough on the people of the province. Fraser joins Dr. Richard Starke, former leadership candidate, as the second PC MLA to opt out of joining the UCP caucus.

Municipal News

Flames Reveal Arena Financing Pitch

After publicly stating that they would no longer seek a new arena agreement in Calgary, the Calgary Flames' ownership publically released their detailed funding proposal. In the proposal the Flames parent company, the Calgary Sports and Entertainment Corporation (CSEC) would have paid \$275 million up front to build a new city owned arena. According to CSEC this would be equivalent to pre-payment on rent for 35 years. The city would have borrowed money to pay for the construction of the arena and use revenues generated by the new project and property tax revenue to cover the loans.

The release, via newspaper advertisement also stated the cities proposal for a three-way cost split is equal to the flames paying \$613 million or 123% of the cost of the new arena. The Flames maintain there is currently no basis to reach an agreement with the city.

Nomination Deadline in Municipal Elections

The nomination deadline for the October 16 municipal election passed this Monday September 18. In both Edmonton and Calgary there was a high number of individuals who let their names stand for the positions of mayor, council, and school board trustee.

In Edmonton, the number was a record setting 131. The previous record in Edmonton was set in 1986 when 120 candidates ran for office. Incumbent Mayor Don Iveson faces 12 challengers and within the races for council, four wards have no incumbent candidate. In Calgary, 86 people are running with Incumbent Mayor Nenshi facing nine challengers and four wards having no incumbent. No Mayoral or Council positions will be acclaimed.

Federal News

A by-election has been called for the federal riding of Sturgeon River-Parkland. Set for October 23 to fill the seat left vacant by former MP and interim Conservative Leader Rona Ambrose. Ambrose had served as MP for the area since her election in 2004.

Across the country, there will be another by-election held the same day in the riding Lac-Saint-Jean in Quebec to fill the seat that was held by former Conservative Minister Denis Lebel.