

Alberta Weekly Review

Thursday, February 15, 2018

Session Schedule & Activities

- Legislative session is scheduled to resume Thursday, March 8, 2018.
- Alberta Party Leadership vote will be held on February 27, 2018.

Government News and Announcements

Standoff Between BC and Alberta Continues

In further response to the ongoing dispute with British Columbia, Alberta Premier Rachel Notley announced the creation of a Market Access Task Force. The Task Force's mandate is to consider options for economic and trade responses to BC's proposed restrictions as well as provide advice to government for encouraging and promoting market access to get pipelines to tidewater. They will work with business, labour and community leaders to enable timely access of information, test potential policies and prioritize engagement. Members of the Task Force include, former New Brunswick Premier Frank McKenna, Former Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan, and former Syncrude Canada President Jim Carter.

The Alberta government also released online tools to encourage Canadians and Albertan's to share their views on the pipeline disagreement, including signing a petition asking the BC government to "stop acting outside the rule of law". Premier Notley has said any further responses to BC are on hold pending the outcome of ongoing discussions between Federal and BC officials.

UCP Leader Jason Kenney responded to the controversy by sharing an open letter to Premier Notley asking for the legislature to reconvene as soon as possible for an all-party emergency debate on the issue. The Premier's office rebuffed the request by responding that as all-parties agree on the need for urgent action there is no need to reconvene early.

Federally, Environment Minister Catherine McKenna announced that she has spoken to the Environment Ministers in both provinces to make it clear that the Federal Government has the authority to approve the Trans Mountain pipeline and will exercise authority to ensure it is built.

Complementing this announcement, Minister McKenna tabled Bill C-69, *An Act to enact the Impact Assessment Act and the Canadian Energy Regulator Act, to amend the Navigation Protection Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts* in the House of Common, last Thursday. The aim of the bill is to overhaul the environmental assessment tools for pipeline approvals in addition to providing clarity and improve certainty in the process moving forward.

Political News

Alberta Party Leadership Race Heats Up

With less than two weeks until the new Leader of the Alberta Party is chosen, there have been several developments in the race between lawyer Kara Levis, MLA Rick Fraser and former Edmonton Mayor and PC MLA Stephen Mandel. The eligibility window to purchase a membership and cast a ballot in the race closed on February 12th, two weeks prior to the vote on February 27th.

The party released that a total of 6,543 members are eligible to participate. Of those memberships 2,000 were sold in the last 48 hours before the deadline. The total number of sales translates to a 500% increase in members from a year ago when Alberta Party members totaled 1024.

This week also saw Alberta Party MLA Karen McPherson endorsed Rick Fraser by saying that “under Rick’s leadership, the Alberta Party will be that option for Albertans who reject the politics of dogma and anger.” And, a fine levied on the Mandel campaign of \$500 by the party for posting his financial donors disclosure document a day after the deadline. The campaign has said adjustments have been made to avoid future issues. The fine will be deducted from the \$5000 refundable bond that all candidates posted as part of the entry fee.

Notley Not Attending Federal NDP Convention

Premier Notley's office announced that she will not attend the Federal NDP Convention in Ottawa this week. The last NDP convention was held in Edmonton in 2016 and featured Notley delivering a keynote address on Alberta's need to get pipelines to tidewater.

The Convention will be the first for the new Federal NDP leader Jagmeet Singh. Singh has tried to remain neutral in the disagreement between the Alberta and BC NDP Premiers. However, during his leadership race he did take a position against the Trans Mountain expansion which Premier Notley criticized.

BC Throne Speech

On Tuesday, the BC Throne Speech was delivered by Lieutenant-Governor Judith Guichon. In it, Premier John Horgan's government prioritized making life more affordable, increasing investment in affordable housing and increasing childcare subsidies. Of note, the Throne Speech omitted two prominent NDP elections promises, the introduction of a yearly rebate for renters and \$10 per day daycare.

The Throne Speech highlighted:

- The introduction of measures to address real estate speculation, tax fraud, tax evasion and money laundering in BC real estate;
- A minimum wage increase in June on path to \$15 per hour minimum wage by June 2021;

- A review of the labour code; and
- The development of new climate plan and update of environmental assessment process.