

Alberta Weekly Review

Friday, May 25, 2018

Session Schedule & Activities

- 12 months until expected provincial election
- Constituency break was this week May 21-25, 2018.
- Spring session of the Legislature is scheduled to conclude Thursday June 7, 2018.

Government News and Announcements

Trans Mountain Overshadows Western Premiers Conference

The Western Premier's Conference in Yellowknife became part of the ongoing Trans Mountain Pipeline dispute as Premier Rachel Notley announced she would not attend to focus on securing a deal for the expansion with only 8 days remaining before the Kinder Morgan deadline. Notley sent Deputy Premier Sarah Hoffman in her place. When the final communique from the Western Premiers to Ottawa did not include support for the Trans Mountain Pipeline project Hoffman and by extension Alberta, declined to sign. The document included support for shared priorities on pharmacare, legalized cannabis, justice, US-Canada trade and infrastructure.

Additionally, this week BC launched legal action challenging the constitutionality of Alberta's recently passed Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act. The Act gives the government, the power to restrict and redirect flows of oil, gasoline and natural gas. BC's Attorney General said they believe it is unconstitutional because it specifically is intended to discriminate against BC and cause economic harm and injure human health in remote communities. BC also has numerous court cases against the project including its constitutional reference case on jurisdiction. On Thursday, BC's Supreme Court dismissed two legal challenges the pipeline expansion project from the City of Vancouver and Squamish Nation.

Moody's Credit rating agency released a statement this week warning that the Trans Mountain Pipeline is deemed a credit risk for Alberta given the current circumstances and should it not proceed it would result in a potentially significant loss in revenues which are needed to reduce the provincial deficit.

Federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau is now scheduled to deliver a speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce on May 30th, the day before the deadline. On the day of the deadline he will speak at a gathering of G7 finance and development Ministers in Whistler, BC.

New Office Focused on Digital Innovation

The Premier's Office announced this week the creation of a Digital Innovation Office under Executive Council that will focus on "delivering simpler, efficient and better services for citizens of Alberta in the digital age" as well as driving "digital innovation across government." The funds for the office come from a reallocation of current resources in Executive Council and Service Alberta.

Political News

Don Iveson Delivers Annual State of the City Address

Yesterday, Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson delivered his annual State of the City address. The 30-minute speech focused on support for Trans Mountain and appealing to investors to refocus their investment locally. The speech was centered around four crucial "pipelines" the city needs to establish, "export", "investment", "talent" and "innovation".

The first is an "export" pipeline which not only includes getting pipelines to tidewater but encouraging local companies to adopt an export mindset. To help achieve this Iveson wants to double the number of companies assisted through Startup Edmonton. The importance of the new Edmonton-San Francisco direct flight to help Edmonton businesses expand outside of the country and the free trade zone at the airport were also highlighted in this context.

The importance of local re-investment in the local innovation system was discussed as an "investment" pipeline. Iveson announced he will be asking council to set up a privately-operated investment fund. He also encouraged investors to invest in artificial intelligence research chairs at the University of Alberta.

The third piece is a "talent" pipeline, whereby the city needs to ensure they are both developing and recruiting talent to fill any gaps that may exist. To start that process Iveson announced a new partnership between the City of Edmonton, Edmonton Economic Development Corporation and LinkedIn to start that identification process.

Finally, there is an "innovation" pipeline. Iveson announced he will be pursuing an opportunity for Edmonton to be the first Canadian partner in the "Startup in Residence" program that launch in San Francisco and connects star-ups with local government. They work together over a 16-week period to develop technology solutions for identified city challenges.