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## Alberta Political Stories

- Health Minister Adriana LaGrange has indicated the province will review the list of social agencies available to patients following the news of a patient being sent to a Travelodge instead of a care home.
- Federal employee minimum wage is set to increase to \$17.30 on April 1, 2024.
- Edmonton City Hall will reopen to the public on March 25 following the terrorist attack on January 23.
- The City of Edmonton has decided to not continue the temporary gap funding to Bissell Centre. Mayor Amarjeet Sohi said that “this is clearly within provincial jurisdiction. They should be doing their job, not double-dipping on taxes from Edmontonians to pay for one job twice. It makes no sense.”

## Auditor General Report 2024

“The department has not improved its processes to measure and report on the program’s performance in achieving the intermediate and long-term outcomes of Albertans having an increased ability to meet their basic needs and experience financial resiliency.”

These words were reflected in the repeated recommendation of Alberta’s Auditor General report released earlier this week on the subject of income support performance management.

While the report says Albertans should have confidence the Income Support program has the processes required to effectively administer the Income Support program, it also found that the province has not made meaningful improvements on the 2019 recommendations.

“Without improved processes, management will not have enough information to evaluate program performance, make necessary improvements to ensure program outcomes are being achieved, and report to Albertans that the program is working as intended.”

However, the Auditor General was complimentary on a number of items related to Income Support.

“Seniors, Community and Social Services has implemented strong procedures to assess applicants’ needs and develop action plans to improve their long-term independence, resilience and employability.”

The main concern identified by the opposition critic, Marie Renaud, was that “Albertans have no idea of whether matters are getting better or worse,

because the ministry still does not have performance measures in place that measure these outcomes.”

Another key element of this most recent report was the subject of post-secondary institutions, including financial statement audits of 20 institutions (except one).

“At the time of writing this report, our audit of Olds College is ongoing as management has not completed their financial reporting for 2023. We will repeat our recommendation for the college to improve its financial reporting processes at the completion of the audit.” On the whole, most of the institutions fared well.



Source: Auditor General of Alberta

## Updates from the NDP Leadership Race

March 15th marked the final day for applicants to enter the Alberta NDP leadership race (as well as the first large payment of entry fees). All six of the announced candidates met the due date thresholds required to be on the ballot, so there have been no exits from the race at this time.

If things remain the same, the ballot will include:

- Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse
- Kathleen Ganley
- Sarah Hoffman
- Gil McGowan
- Naheed Nenshi
- Rakhi Pancholi

After making arguably the largest splash of the race so far, the Nenshi camp has been very quiet. This is to be expected as this is only week two of his official time as a candidate. He has built a strong campaign team around him, including his former campaign manager Zain Velji from his 2017 mayoral race.

Sarah Hoffman finally made her first major announcement since launching her campaign on

Super Bowl Sunday. While specific details have yet to be released, Hoffman shared her climate vision, which includes:

- Recommit to a net-zero electricity grid by 2035
- Ban coal mines, build wind turbines.
- Clean up abandoned wells, and build EV charging stations.
- Reduce our carbon emissions by 35 per cent below current levels by 2035
- Establishing a youth climate corps

Finally, political strategist and Chief Communications Officer for the University of Calgary Office of Advancement shared an opinion briefing he shared with Rakhi Pancholi’s campaign team. He stressed the need for the Alberta NDP to broaden its base, put forward a more positive vision, and expand their influence beyond Edmonton and Calgary.

“It’s clear you are meaningfully trying to make the Alberta NDP a better, more optimistic, more inclusive party. I’m of the opinion it is absolutely what the Alberta NDP needs to increase its chances at government.”

# MLA Promoted to Parliamentary Secretary

Rookie MLA Chelsae Petrovic was bestowed a new responsibility in the Government of Alberta as the Parliamentary Secretary for Health Workforce Engagement.

Her bio indicates that “prior to serving as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, Mrs. Petrovic served as the Mayor of Claresholm and a licensed practical nurse for over 13 years in acute care, emergency, and on Piikani First Nation. She is an active volunteer for many non-profit organizations in her community.”

Her appointment to the role is likely in relation to the restructuring of Alberta Health Services; however, the move is somewhat surprising given comments that came to light during the last election. On a podcast, she was recorded saying “maybe the reason you had a heart attack was because you haven’t taken care of yourself.”

“You’re extremely overweight, you haven’t managed your congestive heart failure, you haven’t managed your diabetes and there’s no personal accountability. But they come into the hospital and all of a sudden it’s everyone else’s problem but their own.”

During the press conference announcing her promotion when questioned, she said “I addressed that over a year ago, and I stand by that statement.”



Source: Alberta.ca

## Province Leads Nation-Wide Inflation Rates

This week, ATB released their most recent Alberta Economic Outlook which paints an optimistic future for Alberta’s economic path.

“Alberta is expected to remain near the top of the national leader board in 2024. We now see real GDP growing 2.3% this year, a mild slowdown from 2023’s estimated pace of 2.5%. It is forecast to pick up to 2.7% in 2025.”

Despite this good news, they explicitly explain that the province is not quite free and clear yet.

“Inflation storm clouds are slowly parting and the much-anticipated interest rate pivot is expected soon. We see the Bank of Canada commencing rate cuts in June. But the economy is not out of the woods. Interest rate impacts are in full force as loans are renewed at higher rates. Insolvencies continue to trend higher. Faced with financial pressures, we see

a slowdown in consumer spending and business investment this year.”

Statistics Canada’s Consumer Price Index report confirms this.

According to the report, Alberta led the country with the highest rate of inflation last month at 4.2 per cent. That is nearly a full percentage point increase from January. Calgary and Edmonton led municipal inflation rates at 5.1 and 4.2 per cent respectively.

Natural gas prices have been identified as a driver of inflation in the province, increasing year-over-year by 15.1 per cent.

We will be curious to see what April’s inflation data looks like as both the federal carbon tax and provincial gas tax increases take effect.

# 10 Year Anniversary of Redford's Resignation

Where were you on March 19, 2014? That was the day, ten years ago, when former Premier Alison Redford announced that she would not be continuing on as PC leader and premier.

“Quite simply, I am not prepared to allow party and caucus in-fighting to get in the way of building a better future for our province and for all Albertans. And that is why I am announcing today that with a profound optimism for Alberta's future I am resigning as premier of Alberta effective this Sunday evening.”

The moment in time is one that Alberta politicians frequently reflect on as a major turning point in our political landscape. While many look at the infamous floor crossing of the Wildrose to the Prentice-led Progressive Conservatives as the beginning of the

end, we would argue that the Redford term set the stage for everything that was to follow.

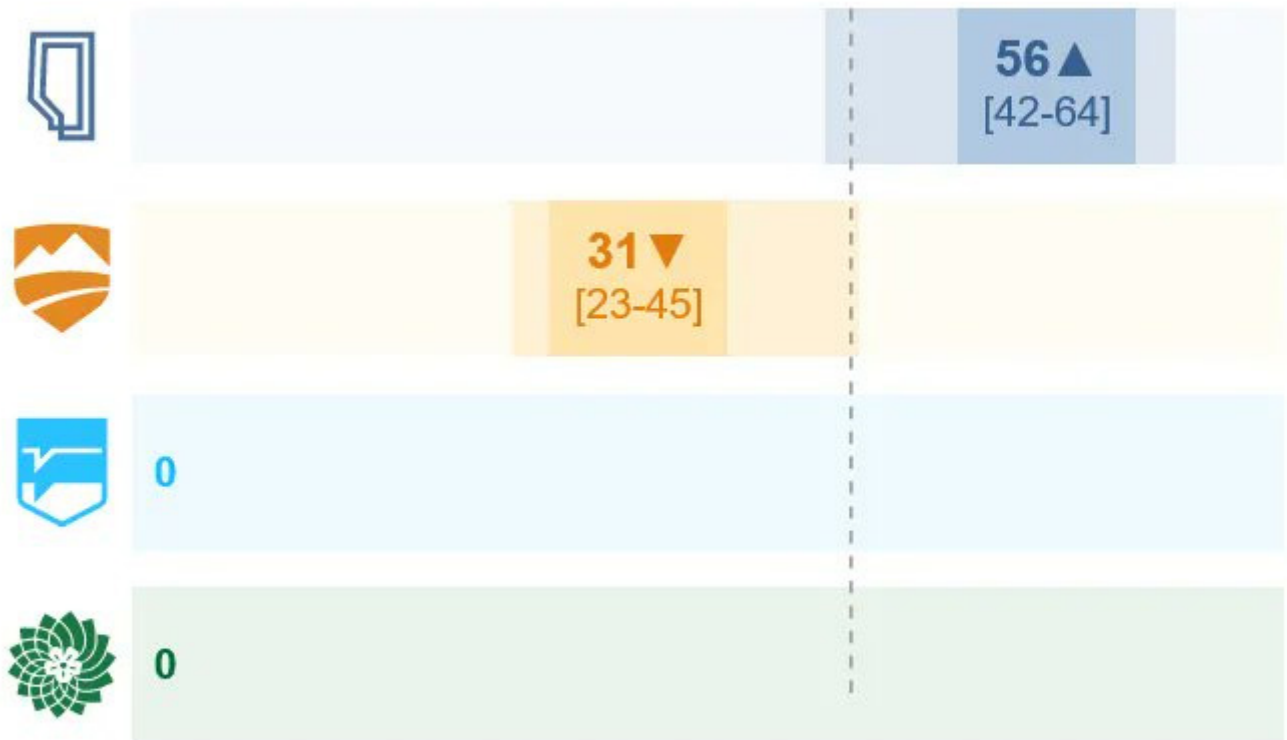
Had Redford refused to step down, we could very well have witnessed a Wildrose victory in the following election and, potentially, no united right as we know it to exist today.

But we will save that revisionist history for another day.

It was certainly a significant moment in Alberta's political history - the consequences of which can still be felt to this day.

If you don't believe me, let's grab a drink at the Sky Palace and talk it over.

## 338Canada seat projection | 44 seats for a majority



## 338Canada Alberta | March 19, 2024

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