

Ric Dolphin's

Insight

into Government

Alberta's independent newsletter on government & politics

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Volume 31 Number 26

Week ending Apr. 14, 2017

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MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION

O CANNABIS: MUCH HEAVY LIFTING AHEAD FOR ALBERTA

The feds tabled their pot legalization legislation Thursday. Between now and Canada Day 2018, Alberta and the other provinces face the onerous task of creating regulations for the distribution, consumption, sale, and policing of the intoxicant.

With this week's roll-out of federal cannabis legislation, calling for legalization and regulation by July 1, 2018, the hard work now begins for the provinces.

"It will be a challenge," admitted Premier **Rachel Notley** at a presser on Thursday, before jetting off with Economic Development Minister **Deron Bilous** on a 10-day trade mission to the Orient. "I think if we get it right, it can work. I also know that there is a lot of heavy lifting to be done to get there."

Bill C-45, *An Act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code, and other Acts*, was introduced Thursday afternoon by Justice Minister **Jody Wilson-Raybould**, along with Bill C-46 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (offences relating to conveyances)*, which strengthens the impaired driving laws. Both acts passed first reading the day before Canada's MPs left for their two-week spring break when, between beverages, they'll be able to ponder their positions for the debate that will begin when they return to the Hill on May 1.

When Bill C-45 is proclaimed, 13 months from now, Canada will join 13 American states but only one actual country (Uruguay) to completely legalize the recreational use, possession, and cultivation of cannabis.

Adults 18 years of age or older (the provinces can set high limits) will be allowed to carry up to 30 gm (1 oz.) on their person, and grow up to four plants (no taller than 100 cm or 40 in.) in their home or garden.

Federally approved facilities, much like those currently pro-

Continued on next page...

POLITICAL PULSE

LIBERAL LEADERSHIP

THE RED COCKROACH OF HOPE RISES YET AGAIN

 Like the ancient and resilient insect that, it is said, will inherit a nuclear devastated earth, the Alberta Liberal Party has survived all manner of ignominy and near extinction in its century and a quarter of its existence. But, like our friend it stubbornly refuses to die.

The party has been excluded from gov't for 96 years, won not a single seat for more than a decade in the '70s and early '80s, and, after attaining a modern-era peak of 32 seats in 1993, has dwindled down to today's single MLA—interim leader **Dr. David Swann** (Calgary-Mountain View).

Yet we find the party, if not well nourished or corpulent, still skittering about with purpose and still able to raise its antennae in optimistic salute to those future political fortunes that, as always, lie just around the corner.

Last weekend two quite respectable candidates for the party's leadership contest squared off—in the phrase can be applied to what amounted to a hugfest—in a debate held in Calgary.

David Khan, 42, and **Kerry Cundal**, 42, both Calgary lawyers and also good friends, had officially announced their candidacies just days earlier—and barely 24 hours after **St. Albert Mayor Nolan Crouse**, 63, the sole candidate since January, dropped out at the last minute, forfeiting his \$5K entry fee, and citing personal reasons that "will remain private."

Pestered by email, Nolan assured us that his departure wasn't health-related, but he remained cryptic. "I am better to not enter the contest when I had various reasons that I could not reconcile and resolve," he teased, leaving us to speculate. Had he shot a man in Reno just to watch him die?

Khan, an openly gay attorney specializing in Aboriginal law and, until last week, a party executive VP, had been contemplating a run for some time. Dave had run for provincial office twice before, most recently in the 2015 general election where he'd placed third in the central Calgary-Buffalo riding, earning 24% of the vote, behind **Tory Terry Rock** (28%) and winner **Kathleen Ganley**, now Justice Minister (35%). (BTW, Ganley's campaign expenditures were all of \$3K, while Rock spent \$92K, and Khan \$54K.)

Cundal, an immigration lawyer who was most recently an adviser to the federal immigration minister, ran federally in 2015 in Calgary-Signal Hill, placing a distant second (31%) to Conservative **Ron Liepert**, the former provincial Tory cabinet minister (61%).

At the Saturday leadership debate, held before about 100 people at the Glenbow Museum, the two candidates were in accord on the familiar centrist positions—fiscally prudent, socially progressive, gay friendly, etc.—and on the need to forge a strong Liberal party able to attract progressive Tories jumping ship following **Jason Kenney's** election as leader.

They diverged only on the time-frame for "uniting of the centre." Cundal is the brassier, blonder, and more confident of the two speakers, with the vestiges of twang and drawl from a Mennonite upbringing in Grande Prairie. She wants the centrists to coalesce in time for the next election.

Turn to Political Pulse on pg. 5...

ducing medical marijuana, will be licensed to grow and wholesale cannabis to retail outlets. The feds will be responsible for the licensing and inspection of these facilities, and will also regulate the packaging and labelling of cannabis products, and set limitations on the types of pot products that can be marketed (edibles such as chocolates and ice cream are currently disallowed) and on types of promotion and advertising allowed (similar to that of tobacco products). The federal government will also remain responsible for the criminal prosecution of illicit sellers and of those distributing or selling cannabis to minors (an offense that will be punishable by 14 years in jail.)

The provinces will be responsible for regulations governing where cannabis can be sold and where it can be consumed and it is up to the provinces to develop a regulatory system governing distribution and sales.

The provinces will also be responsible for enforcement, policing, and prosecution—as is currently the case for alcohol.

The levels of taxation to be charged provincially and federally on cannabis are among the many details that will have to be worked out between now and Cannabis Day 2018. With alcohol, both levels of gov't apply taxes, and the provinces derive further revenue from the markup on alcoholic beverages charged by the provincial distribution system (in Alberta's case, the Alberta Gaming & Liquor Commission's warehouse..)

Different provinces have different ideas on how cannabis will be sold. Provinces like Ontario and Manitoba, with gov't-run liquor stores, may choose a similar system for pot, albeit in separate facilities. (The Task Force on Cannabis Legalization and Regulation, whose report and recommendations, released last December, inform much of the federal regulations, warns against selling booze and pot in the same location.)

The Alberta NDP opposed **Ralph Klein's** deregulation of retail liquor sales in the 1990s, which eliminated the gov't-run Alberta Liquor Control Board (ALCB) stores and its unionized employees. Might the NDP gov't, now busily "updating" Alberta's labour laws to make them more union friendly, use this opportunity to set up gov't-run ACCB stores and score points with its base? (Organized labour may need stroking if the gov't gets too stingy during its current negotiations with the public sector unions).

We'd suspect, however, that the cost of building stores and setting up a new administrative branch in these straitened financial times, would dissuade the Dippers from going that route.

It is more likely that the gov't will follow the lead of Colorado—the first state to legalize cannabis, and a one visited both by the cannabis task force and Alberta Attorney General **Kathleen Ganley**. Colorado, along with Washington state and Oregon, allow privately run, free-standing retail outlets, where the stock is kept behind the

counter or in glass cases, and entry is barred to minors.

At a press conference on Thursday, Ganley would not be drawn into any speculation on what the provincial side of cannabis regulation might look like. She said that after the gov't has had a chance to "thoroughly review" the federal legislation, an "engagement process" will take place over the summer. This will include meeting with municipalities to discuss the zoning and locating of cannabis related facilities (stores, lounges, distribution and cultivation operations), and seeking input from the general public on such matters as setting a minimum age for marijuana consumption—a task that presents lawmakers with a dilemma.

Cynics may argue that **Justin Trudeau**, who's admitted he smoked marijuana as an MP, made legalization a plank in his election campaign as a calculated strategy to capture the Millennial vote—and it worked.

But like so much of the "messaging" (aka bullshitting) in modern politics—"child poverty," comes to mind—cannabis legalization is now being sold not for its libertarian virtues or the increased happiness it will bring to hipsters, snowboarders, and other aficionados of the herb. Rather, legalization is being done "for the children." Well, more specifically for the health and safety of "youth and young adults."

Accordingly at Thursday's federal press conference announcing Bill-45, Trudeau was not present. Instead the media were presented with wall of sober faces on a panel that included Public Safety Minister **Ralph Goodale**, Health Minister **Jane Philpott**, and Justice Minister Wilson-Raybould, the bill's sponsor, whose parliamentary secretary

and point man on the pot file, Scarborough Southwest MP **Bill Blair**, 63,

was front and centre..

Blair is the former Toronto Police chief whose areas of speciality were organized crime and drug enforcement, but is best remembered for the controversial detention of nearly 1,000 people during the 2010 G-20 Toronto summit protests.

"Protecting the health and safety of Canadians is a priority of this gov't," said Blair, in the grey tones of a cop delivering an accident report. That cannabis is grown and sold illegally, profiting criminals and organized crime, with no regard for its potency, purity, or providence. The proposed legislation introduced today seeks to legalize, strictly regulate, and restrict access to cannabis, and it will make Canada safer."

While the experience in other jurisdictions does suggest a gradual reduction in the illicit trafficking of cannabis following legalization, the statistics also show an increase in the use of marijuana, especially among the young. Following legalization in Colorado, where sales are limited to those 21 and older, teen drug-related school expulsions increased, as did the number of teenagers admitted to emergency rooms suffering from THC overdoses (never fatal, but sometimes

'DESPITE DECADES OF PROHIBITION, CANADIANS CONTINUE TO USE CANNABIS AT AMONG THE HIGHEST RATES IN THE WORLD.'

triggering psychiatric disorders.) Presumably the teens were obtaining pot from older siblings or friends.

Moreover the science suggests that brain development continues to age 25, and that regular cannabis use during that period impairs development. One study showed an eight-point reduction in IQ in subjects who had smoked marijuana on a weekly basis between ages 18 and 25.

But here's the dilemma: if you raise the age limit of 25, those between the ages of 18 and 21—by far the largest cohort of cannabis use—will continue to support the illicit sellers of weed, thus keeping the criminal element alive, and also putting themselves at risk from an impure or hyper-potent.

The task force recommended the minimum age of 18, while urging gov'ts to “do all that they can to discourage and delay cannabis use” through “robust preventive measures, including advertising restrictions and public education.” Good luck with that.

A looming headache for the provinces will be obtaining convictions for “drugged driving” charges. The feds have upped impaired penalties, but such are the vicissitudes of THC (pot's psychotropic ingredient) that, according to top Calgary impaired driving lawyer **Ian Savage**, his trade is anticipating a “bonanza.”

Federal legislation prescribes the use of roadside saliva testers by police officers—the most promising of these devices being a “potalyzer” device developed at California's Stanford University. Applying magnetic nanotechnology, previously used as a cancer screen, the Stanford device not only detects just the presence of THC in the saliva as its predecessors are limited to doing, but also measures the concentration of the drug.

This advance means that cops who detect THC in a driver's saliva no longer have to take that driver back to the station for a blood test to determine the concentration.

But, says Savage, the effects of a specific blood-THC level, unlike alcohol, differ widely among individuals, making it impossible to determine a corresponding level of intoxication.

To further muddy the prosecutorial waters, THC remains in the blood for weeks, long after any impairment has worn off.

Give this imperfect science, the Criminal Code does not specify any blood-THC level as being evidence of impairment.

All of this boils down to the reality that prosecutors have to rely on circumstantial evidence and the observations of police officers and witnesses to prove their case.

Accordingly, some members of Alberta's police forces are currently being trained in the US as Drug Recognition Experts (DREs). These are officers versed in what are reputed to be more sophisticated impairment detection techniques. They can be called upon to come out and administer roadside sobriety tests that supposedly carry more weight in court.

Savage, however, predicts “very low success rates.”

DATA Bank ...

MINISTRY SPENDING 2017-18

For the past couple of weeks and until next Tuesday, various gov't committees have been reviewing the budget estimates for individual ministries prior to the overall budget being approved in the Legislature, likely by the end of next week. The chart below shows the individual expenses estimated for each ministry in fiscal 2017-18 compared with the 2016-17 forecasts, which although made in early February, will be close to the final Mar. 31, fiscal year-end actuals. The complete estimates can be found at <http://finance.alberta.ca/publications/budget/estimates/est2017-18-Government-Estimates-Complete.pdf>

MINISTRY	EXPENSES		
	Budget 2017-18	2016-17 forecast	% Chg
Advanced Education	\$2.76B	\$2.70B	2.22%
Agriculture & Forestry	\$743.9M	\$1.05B	-29.15%*
Children's Services	\$1.21B	\$1.17B	3.42%
Community & Social Services	\$3.33B	\$3.26B	2.15%
Culture & Tourism	\$335.1M	\$313.02M	7.05%
Economic Development & Trade	\$354.2M	\$329.92M	7.36%
Education	\$4.70B	\$4.47B	5.15%
Energy	\$208.90M	\$175.59M	18.97%
Environment & Parks	\$950.48M	\$594.45M	59.89%**
Executive Council	\$26.81M	\$26.40M	1.55%
Health	\$20.36B	\$19.49B	4.46%
Indigenous Relations	\$192.81M	\$202.45M	-4.76%
Infrastructure	\$589.03M	\$526.5M	11.88%
Justice & Sol. General	\$1.34B	\$1.33B	0.75%
Labour	\$204.14M	\$201.65M	1.23%
Municipal Affairs	\$1.69B	\$2.46B	-31.30%‡
Seniors & Housing	\$532.73M	\$540.21M	-1.38%
Service Alberta	\$333.19M	\$349.55M	-4.68%
Status of Women	\$7.33M	\$7.16M	2.37%
Transportation	\$1.77B	\$855.04M	107.02%‡‡
Treasury Brd. & Finance	\$165.1M	\$151.85M	8.73%
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$41.795B	\$40.202B	3.96%
CAPITAL INVESTMENT (ALL MINISTRIES)	\$4.53B	\$4.01B	13%

*The big drop in A&F expenses is mainly due to an anticipated reduction in wildfire management costs of more than \$200M over the previous year in which the Fort McMurray fire was a major cost.

** Much of the rise here is attributable to the implementation of Climate Leadership Plan initiatives such as Energy Efficiency programs (\$186M) & “emerging projects” (\$139M).

‡ The absence of Fort McMurray fire response & recovery costs (totalling \$740M last year) accounts for the drop.

‡‡ Much of the increase is accounted for by a jump of about \$450M for transit grants to municipalities, due to a concomitant increase in federal grants that the province is obligated to match.

NEW BILLS BEFORE THE HOUSE

Legislation introduced in the last two weeks. The status, wording, & Hansard references for all of this session's bills are found at: http://www.assembly.ab.ca/net/index.aspx?p=bills_statusreport&legl=29&session=3

BILL 6: *NORTHLAND SCHOOL DIVISION ACT.* SPONSOR: DAVID EGGEN. STATUS: PASSED 2ND READING.

Almost seven years ago, then Education Minister **Dave Hancock** fired the Northland school board overseeing this 2,700-student, 95% Aboriginal & Métis division with its 23 schools in non-incorporated, off-reserve communities sprawled across all of the province north of the Yellowhead Highway, an area the size of Germany. The three-year high-school completion rate was 19.6% (the provincial average was 70.7%) and the average score on provincial achievement tests was 40.4% (provincial average: 76.8%)—dismal results that Hancock blamed on a dysfunctional 23-member board (one per school) hobbled by internecine rivalries, schools unable to retain staff, and chronic student absenteeism. Since then a single ministry-appointed trustee has overseen the division. He, along with several members of a community study team, were faced with two main options: giving the schools to existing boards in the nearest municipality, or establishing a new, more effective elected board. Following three months of consultation with community leaders, Education Minister **Dave Eggen** chose the latter option. Bill 6 allows for a smaller, seven-to-eleven-member board (the final number to be chosen in June), with school councils advising the trustee representing several schools in a “ward.” The legislation will allow for the election of trustees in this October's municipal election.

BILL 7: *AN ACT TO ENHANCE POST-SECONDARY ACADEMIC BARGAINING.* SPONSOR: MARLIN SCHMIDT. STATUS: PASSED 1ST READING.

Following on the January 2015 Supreme Court decision requiring free collective bargaining for public employees hitherto all categorized as “essential” and prohibited from striking, this legislation will give academic faculty associations, graduate students, and (uniquely to Alberta) post-doctoral fellows at colleges and universities the same bargaining rights, including the right to strike, that were given to most of Alberta's public service unions—with the exception of police and firefighters—in last year's *Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services* (*Insight* Apr. 9, 2016). Post-secondary institutions will now be required to negotiate essential service agreements with these academic associations, determining the select members be required to remain on the job during a strike. The act also gives the schools the right to lock out academic employees.

BILL 8: *AN ACT TO STRENGTHEN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT.* SPONSOR: SHAYE ANDERSON. STATUS: PASSED 1ST READING

An adjunct to the massive *Modernized Municipal Government Act*, which was passed in December (*Insight* Dec. 16), Bill 8 continues the tweaking process which, according to Muni Affairs Minister Anderson, is the result of all the input the ministry is getting from municipalities, industry, the general public, Indian bands, et al along the way—all of which purports to fine tune the MMGA that will come into effect sometime prior to the fall municipal elections. This being said, Bill 8 does little more than make suggestions or provide clarifications of what is already in the main act. For example, the bill will “allow municipalities to invite First Nation Reserves or Métis settlements to collaborate on future regional service delivery”—something some municipalities already do. As part of the NDP's advocacy to get more women involved in gov't (23% of cities and towns have no female representation), the bill will “enable municipalities to create a councillor parental leave bylaw.” But, as with the native consultation, this is “allowed” not “required” and no length of time for the parental leave is even suggested. On the tax front: “municipalities are required to provide a receipt when taxes are paid, if requested by the assessed person.” Ground-breaking stuff. In short, this bill seems little more than busywork for a new minister and sop to those groups who have been so heavily “consulted.”

BILL 9: *MARKETING OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AMENDMENT ACT, 2017.* SPONSOR: ONEIL CARLIER. STATUS: PASSED 1ST READING

This bill goes part way to undoing a free-market-minded initiative enacted by the previous Conservative gov't. Tory amendments to the 1965 *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act* (MAPA) gave farmers in nine commodity groups the right to demand refunds of the fees (known as “check-offs”) levied by the producer-run agricultural commission representing their particular commodity. For example if a wheat grower was dissatisfied with the marketing, promotion, and research services provided by the Alberta Wheat Commission, he could request a refund of his per-acre levy and the Commission was bound by law to send him a cheque. According to former PC MLA **Doug Griffiths**, who spoke in favour of the last amendment to MAPA in 2009, the refund requirement gave producers “the right and the ability to choose, to have a voice if they do not feel the organization has delivered value or met their needs.” Opposition parties on the left opposed the initiative, arguing that it threatened the existence of the commissions and favoured large producers to the detriment of the smaller ones—that is, the large producers had the most to gain financially from having their levies refunded and the loss of those larger levies could force the commissions out of business. Although this has not occurred, NDP Agriculture Minister **Oneil Carlier's** Bill 9 removes the producers' mandated right to refunds, and gives each of the now 13 commissions the power to determine whether or not their check-offs should be refundable. Upon proclamation of the legislation, producers with each commission will vote on whether to keep the refunds.

BILL 204: *PROTECTION OF PROPERTY RIGHTS STATUTES AMENDMENT ACT, 2017.* SPONSOR: PAT STIER; STATUS: 2ND READING DEBATE

The Wildrosers return to their roots as property rights crusaders with Stier's private member's bill, which seeks to redress the perceived wrongs done by the Tories' *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* and *Responsible Energy Development Act* which allow limited recourse for landowners when their ownership rights are abrogated by gov't initiatives such as regional plans or the granting of surface rights to energy companies. This bill provides for recourse in the courts. Additionally it calls for repeal of section 74 of the *Land Titles Act* which currently allows for “adverse possession” (aka squatter's rights), allowing an individual to apply to the courts for title and ownership of another's and after he has occupied it for 10 years. Nova Scotia is the only other province with adverse possession still on the books.

BILL 204: *ADVOCATE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT.* SPONSOR: SANDRA JANSEN. STATUS: PASSED 1ST READING

Former Tory **Sandra Jansen's** first private members' bill as an NDP MLA (Calgary-North West) calls for the appointment of an advocate—similar to those for Health, Seniors, and Mental Health—with the power to represent the rights, interests, and viewpoints of the disabled.

POLITICAL PULSE ... from Page 1

Khan, Calgary-born and of partLY Indian heritage, is short, dark, and handsome, but seemed hesitant and less at ease before the microphone than at previous Liberal party events. He thinks the party should concentrate on shoring up Liberal ridings and spend time trying to effect coalitions or mergers until after the next general election.

The successor to Interim Leader Swann, 67, the party's caucus of one, will be decided by electronic vote and declared on June 4. The new leader may then have to wait until the spring 2019 to get a seat (Swan won't retire until the end of this term).

Unless, of course, **Rachel Notley** calls an early election, something several members of different opposition parties see as a possibility.

It would have to wait until after the Electoral Boundaries Commission's recommendations—due Oct. 31—have been debated and passed into Legislation, perhaps by next spring. But at that point, the NDP would have the advantage.

For while all the other parties would have to rearrange their constituency associations in the altered ridings, figuring out how to divvy up their funds, etc., the NDP, which has a centralized donation system and no substantive CAs, could call snap election before the oppositions had pulled their pants on.

Insight

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Insight is published 38-40 times annually by
DOLPHIN MEDIA INC.

PO Box 67012 Meadowlark Park
Edmonton, AB T5R 5Y3

ISSN 0849-567T

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Insight Into Government

Publisher and editor: Ric Dolphin

Editor emeritus: Mark Lisac 2005-2013

Founding publisher: Rich Vivone, 1986-2005

People ...

Appointments...

● **Monica Curtis**, MBA, an energy efficiency specialist who began her career with Edmonton Power (now EP-COR) in 1991 and most recently worked for a non-profit consultancy in Madison, WI, as CEO of Energy Efficiency Alberta. This Calgary-based agency, created last fall, has a mandate to “promote and support energy efficiency and community energy systems (including micro-generation and small-scale generation) for homes, businesses and communities.” This includes overseeing the Climate Change Office's plan to offer incentives to consumers and businesses to buy and install low energy appliances, lighting, and heating.

● **Linda Huebscher**, an Edmonton lawyer who since 1996 has been the legal and legislative representative for the Canadian Union of Public Employees (where Premier **Rachel Notley's** husband **Lou Arab** works as Communications Representative), as an appeals commissioner to the Appeals Commission under the *Workers' Compensation Act* for a three-year term.

● **Parand Meysami**, an environmental & chemical engineer, to the board of governors of Bow Valley College for a three-year term.

● **Tyrone Brass**, an electrical contractor & member of the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Association, **Bradley Calihoo**, CEO of the Fort McMurray First Nation #468 and **Matthew Creighton**, an accountant and treasurer of the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce, to the board of governors of Keyano College for three-year terms.

● **Bill Begemann**, a labour relations representative with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) local 424, **Roland LeFort**, a senior trainer with Suncor and a past president of Unifor Local 707a in Fort

McMurray, and **Kathy Vasko**, a former director of labour relations with the old Alberta Energy and Utilities Board, and later with Alberta Corporate Human Resources, as members of the Labour Relations Board, each for a three-year term.

● Edmonton Provincial Court Judge **Jack Gordon Easton**, admitted to the bar in 1970, as a supernumerary judge for a two-year term.

The following Queen's Bench Justices have been appointed by federal Justice Minister **Jody Wilson-Raybould**. The federal gov't has also budgeted for an additional 12 judges to partially fill the 15 QB and one Court of Appeal vacancies that remain:

● **Marilyn Slawinsky** Provincial Court judge since September, 2015, and before that director of Dispute Resolution Services with Alberta Justice, to the QB in Red Deer. She replaces Mr. Justice **Kirk Sisson**, who retired in January.

● **Ritu Khullar**, Q.C., managing partner at Chivers Carpenter Lawyers in Edmonton who has specialized in labour & employment law since beginning her practice in 1998, to the QB in Edmonton. She replaces Madam Justice **Michelle Crighton**, who was elevated to the Court of Appeal of Alberta last October.

● **Michele H. Hollins**, Q.C., a partner at Dunphy Best Blocksom in Calgary, a civil & commercial litigator called to the bar in 1992, and a past president of the Canadian Bar Association, to the QB in Calgary. She replaces Madam Justice **Jo'Anne Streckaf**, who was elevated to the Court of Appeal of Alberta last October.

● **William T. (Willie) deWit**, Q.C., a partner at Wolch deWit Watts & Wilson in Calgary, former professional & Olympic heavyweight boxer (silver, 1984, LA), and a criminal law specialist since being called to the bar in 1994, is appointed to the QB in Calgary. He replaces Madam Justice **Marsha Erb**, who elected supernumerary pasture effective last November.

Talk in the Corridors

Orange synchronicity....

● The last time the Edmonton Oilers and the Calgary Flames were both in the Stanley Cup playoffs was April/May of 2006; **Ralph Klein** was the premier, Liberal **Kevin Taft** the leader of the Loyal Opposition, and the Legislature was debating four-year fixed election dates during the evening sessions then common. A number of MLAs wore team jerseys and the latest scores were periodically announced. (The Flames were eliminated in the first round; the Oilers in the finals.)

Hockey fever returned to the Legislature this week. On Tuesday Premier **Rachel Notley** (Edmonton-Strathcona) raised the Oilers' flag outside the Federal Building, while Finance Minister **Joe Ceci** (Calgary-Fort) hoisted the Flames' banner at the McDougall Centre. They bet that if their team won the other would buy them a case of craft beer (a beverage with which the Dippers seem obsessed).

Either serendipitously, or due to a fiendish political conspiracy, the Oilers' latest home uniform, chosen in June 2015, revisits the team's WHA colours from the 1970s. And the dominant shade is an orange spookily similar to that favoured by the NDP. Moreover, the media are using the phrase "orange crush" to describe the incontinent outpouring of Oiler fever that has gripped the Alberta capital. And that very same cliché was used to describe the NDP's majority win in 2015.

Thus for the several NDP MLAs who wore Oilers jerseys under their jackets to the House, including Health Minister **Sarah Hoffman**, the colour seemed but a variation on the orange accents often sported by Dippers.

Unable to resist, Wildrose House Leader **Jason Cooper** (Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills), tongue in cheek, raised a point of order with Speaker **Bob Wanner**, citing the standard parliamentary source: "*Beauchesne's* is fairly clear about what is appropriate to wear inside the Chamber and what isn't appropriate. I can only imagine that they would have asked permission from you, Mr. Speaker, important place like this. If you could explain why you would allow an Oilers jersey in this place when everyone knows that a Flames jersey would be much more appropriate [laughter]."

"Gosh," said Wanner. "It's nice to hear laughter in this place."

On Thursday, however, the day of Calgary's opener, there was nary an Oilers nor Flames jersey on the floor. No laughter either.

Kate bows out...

● **Katherine O'Neill** has stepped down as president of the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta. A former *Globe and Mail* reporter, who changed her name from Harding after marrying the son of former St. Albert PC MLA **Mary O'Neill**, Katherine beat Calgary lawyer **Tyler Shandro** for the presidency at last year's Tory AGM (*Insight* May 6).

She led the party through the often rocky leadership process that included the controversial candidacy of former federal cabinet minister Kenney, whose intention to dissolve the party and unite with the Wildrose was unpopular with many PC directors, but was initially allowed because few expected him to win. After he won with 75% of the vote (*Insight*, Mar. 17), a number of the party's more progressive members quit the party.

"I have had a very good working relationship with Mr. Kenney since he won," O'Neill told reporters. "It has been a very respectful collaborative relationship and, for me, I just felt that this was that perfect time as we are just about to really kick up the unity discussions."

It might be remembered (though he would probably prefer to forget) that Shandro, 36, during his run for president, was dead-set against unity, calling it "insulting to most of our members."

Now, however, he is heading the five-man PC team appointed to negotiate a unity agreement with the Wildrose team struck for the same purpose—a hypocrisy that a number of the now-disenfranchised progressives in the PC party have difficulty stomaching.

They include red Tories like former Executive Director **Troy Wason**, who quit the party immediately following Kenney's election. He considers Shandro a turncoat, but had also been on less than cordial terms with O'Neill since she pushed for Kenney's inclusion in the leadership race in October, citing principles of democracy and transparency.

"The party is an association, a club," argues Wason, a good friend of **Sandra Jansen**, the bright red Tory and former leadership candidate who crossed the floor to the NDP in December in protest to Kenney's candidacy.

"It's not a liberal democracy," adds Wason, no longer bound by the executive director's code of neutrality. "As such, its directors should have the right to choose who can and cannot run for the leadership."

The Kennosaur faces the reds

● Word reaches us that Kenney, in recent visits to PC constituency associations, has not exactly been feeling the love. When he met with Edmonton CA presidents last week, a source tells us, "they tore him a new asshole."

Unlike most of the elected delegates to the leadership convention, many of whom bought memberships just to run in support of Kenney, the majority of CA executive members are of the Stelmach/Redford era and they skew progressive. And after a busy year rebuilding the PC brand, they resent the new leader wants to wind down the party and mate with members of the Wildrose party.

The week ahead ...

Apr. 17-27—Premier **Rachel Notley** and Economic Development & Trade Minister **Deron Bilous** lead a trade mission to China and Japan—Alberta's second and third biggest export markets respectively—with stops in Beijing, Guangzhou, & Tokyo. Highlights include the signing of a research & collaboration agreement with China based on energy and climate change, a keynote speech at a Canada China Business Council luncheon, and a barbecue reception in Japan featuring Alberta-sourced food. Doesn't sound particularly promising, but one never knows. ... Cost for the ministers, several aides, & Rachel's bodyguards: \$140K.

Apr. 17—Many happy returns to **Rachel Notley**, born 53 years ago in Edmonton. Perhaps there'll be a cake on the plane.

Apr. 17—Alberta Party Leader **Greg Clark** and candidate **Omar Masood** host a "Charter of Rights & Freedoms 35th Anniversary Celebration" fundraiser for the Calgary-Buffalo constituency—arguably the city's most liberal riding—at the Mill Street Brewery, 219 17 Ave SW, 5-7:30 pm. Tickets \$50 at: http://www.albertaparty.ca/calgary_buffalo_charter

Apr. 17-30—Federal MPs take their spring fortnight break to ponder the newly introduced marijuana legislation (see. p.1) and the federal budget, refreshed and primed for debate upon their return from the white strands & turquoise waters on May 1.

Apr. 19 & 20—The Child Intervention Panel continues its deliberations with the aim of coming up with recommendations including how to strengthen the child death review process and identify which agency should have primary authority for conducting these reviews. Good luck disentangling the egos of the senior functionaries, for we've seen this movie before. (*Insight* Jan 21 & 31, 2014). The meetings are open to the public and will take place in the Federal Building on Wednesday 5-6:30 pm and Thursday 7-8:30 pm. Livestreaming & more info at: <https://www.alberta.ca/child-intervention-panel.aspx#toc-2>