

Ric Dolphin's

# Insight

into Government

Alberta's independent newsletter on government & politics

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### PC OPERATIVE BOOTED

## THE RED TORIES' FIGHT TO FEND OFF THE KENNOSAUR

The suspension of campaigner Hallman from the party highlights the rift between reds and blues and is the latest act of resistance to leadership frontrunner Jason Kenney's plan to euthanize the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta.

**T**he week of intrigue & tumult in the affairs of the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta began last Saturday with the decision by the party executive to suspend leadership candidate **Jason Kenney's** campaign worker **Alan Hallman**, a veteran Calgary operative whose febrile "ground game" organizing skills have contributed greatly in establishing Kenney's commanding lead in the delegate selection process.

The ostensible reason for Hallman's one-year suspension from the party was his sending of a couple of rude-ish late night tweets directed at Kenney opponents. This, apparently, contravened the party's new "zero-tolerance" policy regarding rudeness or insulting behavior—a policy adopted following an investigation into the vicious name-calling and implicit threats directed at former PC leadership candidate **Sandra Jansen** at the PC policy convention in November—portions of which Jansen quoted verbatim from her new seat in the NDP benches during the fall sitting of the Legislature (*Insight*, Nov. 25).

There is much suspicion, however, that Hallman's comparatively mild tweets merely provided an excuse for the PCAA's powers-that-be to thwart the Kenney campaign.

In a November tweet Hallman had called **Shawn Picket**, a member of a competing candidate's campaign, an "asshole." More recently he had referred to **Mike Morrison**, a Calgary gay rights advocate, PC member, and Kenney critic as "mikedickeydick" (a play on his Twitter handle #mikesbloggity) and twitted him for being unable to bring more than a single anti-Kenney member to the Calgary-Mountain View delegate selection meeting.

Hallman, 55, a PCAA member for 35 years, says that he received no prior warning of his suspension, was given no opportunity to defend himself, and is being granted no right of appeal.

"It's beyond the pale that we're in a democracy and we're work-

Continued on next page...

## POLITICAL PULSE

### LIBERAL LEADERSHIP

## HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL FOR THE LOSINGEST PARTY

**G**od love those Alberta Liberals. Few others seem to. At least not for the past decade, as their legislative seat count slid from 16 to 1; and not for a large portion of the last century when, in the 25 elections since losing gov't to the United Farmers of Alberta in 1921, their elected MLAs have numbered in the single digits 19 times out of 25. On five of those occasions the single digit was 0 (see graph on p. 4).

But hope infects the Liberals like a virus. And once more the party hopes to reverse its trajectory by choosing a permanent replacement for interim leader and sole MLA **Dr. David Swann**, 67 (Calgary-Mountainview)—a new leader who will inspire and reinvigorate in ways that the good doctor, a decent but rather colourless chap, was never able.

Swann had a three-year stint as permanent leader between 2008 and 2001. His reign was marked by an unsuccessful bid to merge with the NDP (the Dippers didn't want 'em) and the departure of a disillusioned portion of the membership, including an MLA, to form the newly created Alberta Party.

Swann resigned as leader before the 2012 election and was replaced by Tory floor-crosser **Dr. Raj Sherman**, a dynamic but erratic Punjabi-Canadian who presided over the party's further decline from eight seats to five on polling day.

Sherman resigned in January of 2015, a few months before the surprise election call, and MLA Swann stepped in as interim leader of a ragged party devoid of three incumbents—**Kent Hehr** and **Darshan Kang** left to run federally—and lacking the money and organization necessary to run a decent campaign.

Able to nominate candidates in only 56 of the 87 ridings, the Liberals earned just 4.2% of the popular vote—down from 10% in 2012—and Swann was the lone survivor.

A side-effect of there being no Liberal candidates in 31 ridings meant no leftist alternatives to dilute the NDP vote. Had there been Liberals running, nine of those ridings would likely have gone to the Wildrose or the Tories and the NDP would have a minority gov't today.

But one shouldn't dwell on the past, and last Sunday at Edmonton's Royal Glenora Club, about 50 hopeful Liberals gathered for the official launch of the leadership campaign which will run to May 27 when members will spend a week voting on-line for a candidate to be announced on June 4 (the anniversary of the 1940 Dunkirk evacuation, for all you military buffs).

"It is a very good time to be an Alberta Liberal," party president **Karen Sevcik**, 50, an Edmonton housewife and 30-year Liberal

Turn to Political Pulse on pg. 4...

ing for a party that's the essence of democracy—a *political* party,” he complains. “And these guys are so autocratic that they think they can take away my membership without giving me any opportunity to protect myself or speak for myself. It's unbelievable!”

Hallman is convinced that PC President **Katherine O'Neill** and most of the 48 members of the PCAA board of directors who oppose Kenney's plan to kill the party and start another, are just trying to hobble the Unity campaign.

He and O'Neill locked horns at the first leadership delegate selection meeting (DSM) in Edmonton-Ellerslie. The Kenney campaign had broken the party rules by hosting a hospitality suite in the same building as the DSM and by having Kenney on site greeting members. O'Neill reprimanded Hallman at the time and ordered an investigation by the PCAA's chief returning officer who, in a 10-page report, recommended the Kenney team be fined \$5K and the DSM be restaged. They paid up (*Insight*, Nov. 25) and won the restaged DSM with the same 15-delegate sweep they'd got the first time.

O'Neill was unavailable for comment this week—she was attending to a hospitalized child—but PCAA executive director **Troy Wason** said senior members of all four leadership campaigns had signed onto the zero-tolerance rule and Hallman should not think himself an exception.

“When they said zero tolerance they meant it,” says Wason, 51, himself a 30-year-plus PCAA member who is proud to call himself a red Tory and proved it by working on **Alison Redford's** leadership campaign.

Most members of the PC board of directors, along with the three other leadership candidates—Vermilion-Lloydminster MLA Dr. **Richard Starke**, former St. Albert MLA **Stephen Kahn**, and Calgary lawyer **Byron Nelson**—are also of the red or “socially progressive” stripe that dominated debate at last May's PC AGM.

Back then, Kenney, a federal MP and former cabinet minister in the Harper gov't, had yet to declare his intentions to run for the provincial leadership. But several groups had formed to push for a unification of PC and Wildrose conservatives, arguing that their splitting of the vote on May 5, 2015 (WR: 24%; PC: 28%) enabled the NDP (40.5%) to win gov't. And yet most of the executives elected at the AGM spoke out against such a move and not a single resolution was proposed in support of unification.

When Kenney announced his intentions in July, there were those in the party, Jansen being the most vocal, who felt his candidacy should be rejected as it contravened a provision in the PCAA constitution stipulating that members refrain from activities that could cause harm to the party. Kenney, after all, proposed to hold a referendum of the membership to dissolve the PCAA and create a new party. How much more harmful could one get?

In the end, likely because blocking him would have caused a nasty rift among the grassroots, the directors voted to accept Kenney's candidacy on Oct. 1. Perhaps they underestimated his organizational abilities and the degree of support for uniting the right among the membership—support that Kenney, at his recent rallies, claims is running at “75 to 80%.”

Hallman, a seasoned political operative, whose resumé includes running successful campaigns for former premier **Ralph Klein** and former multi-term federal MP **Lee Richardson**, was a major force in Kenney's organizational success. Bearing a physical though definitely not a political resemblance to former *Daily Show* host **Jon Stewart**, Hall-

man, a sardonic, tightly-wound, often captious blue Tory, has a wealth of conservative contacts across the province. He worked 16 hours a day on the phone, lining up slates of Kenney supporters in every riding to run as delegates to the March 18 leadership convention. He also hustled in PC members to vote for those slates at the delegate selection meetings.

The results were impressive. At the time of his suspension from the party, Hallman had successfully stacked most of the 33 DSMs held to last weekend, resulting in a total of 398 “Unity” (Kenney) delegates, compared to 91 for all three of the other candidates, who are jointly running under the “Renewal” banner. Hallman believes that it was this success that caused his suspension.

“Desperate people do desperate things,” he says. “As you know I'm a pretty effective political organizer. I've got contacts across this entire province in every constituency. And I was kicking their ass with the best candidate in the field. They've been moving the goal posts every step of the way in this process, hoping it would make a more un-level playing field than it already was, and they've just been failing. And so now they're doing this. It wasn't about two tweets.”

“I don't believe Alan would've been suspended in this way if he had been supporting a candidate other than **Jason Kenney**,” interim PC Leader **Ric McIver** (Calgary-Hays) said in an interview with Edmonton radio host **Ryan Jesperson**. “... This is not about two rude tweets, it's about the leadership contest.”

McIver has not officially backed any of the leadership candidates, though it's an open secret that he supports Kenney. He is a pal of Hallman's, and on the day after the suspension, he tweeted out a picture of the two of them in McIver's basement watching the Edmonton leadership debate on TV.

His support of Hallman, however, sounded a bit off, coming after what the PC executive reported to be a unanimous vote for suspension by the 30 members in the room and several on the phone. Executive director Wason says he was sitting right behind McIver and saw his hand go up when the vote was called. “Ric definitely voted for suspension.”

Questioned on this by Jesperson, McIver said he was distracted by his phone while trying to connect with Calgary MLAs **Dave Rodney** and **Richard Gottfried**—MLAs who, by the way, announced their support of Kenney this week. McIver said if he raised his hand, it was inadvertent. But PCAA director **Kim Krushnell**, who appeared later on Jesperson's show, said McIver was perfectly aware of his voting intentions, although he had earlier argued for a six-month suspension instead of one-year ban.

At press time, Hallman was talking to lawyers about possible legal recourse. He had sent a letter to the PC board calling for O'Neill's resignation on grounds of bias, and was demanding his reinstatement as a member. Neither seems very likely.

In another twist to the tale, the executive of the PC Youth Association voted on Thursday to install Hallman as its honorary chairman. This wasn't altogether surprising as nine of the 15 members of the PCYA executive, including president **Sonia Kont**, are Kenney supporters. They were elected at the November policy conference to which the Kenney campaign had brought in several busloads of supporters—many of them youth from the Dutch Reformed church—to vote for Unity candidates.

Hallman declared himself “honoured” by the appoint-

ment, although the six dissenting PCYA executive members—Renewal supporters—argued that since he is no longer a PC member he is ineligible for the position. The parent PCAA board could overturn the appointment, though Watson says it has no immediate plans to do so. The position, after all, is merely a symbolic one.

Meanwhile, there was some speculation in the press that the PCAA, faced with the seeming inevitability of a Kenney win and thus its own extinction, might belatedly kick him out of the leadership race.

This also seems unlikely. For one thing, no meetings of the PCAA board are scheduled until after the March 18 vote at the Calgary convention. For another, Kenney's disqualification would precipitate a civil war in the party and likely the departure of most of those members supporting Unity—maybe even the 75-80% Kenney claims—to the Wildrose or to a new party that Kenney might decide to create on his own.

Such an exodus could well include the five of the eight Tory caucus members who currently support Kenney (we include McIver), leaving the PCs with one fewer than the four members required for official party status. At that point, the remaining members might just as well join the Liberals and/or the Alberta Party in a consolidation of progressives.

The lesser of two evils is to let things play out and hope that, without Hallman, Kenney's delegate count drops off and the Renewal candidates begin to make gains; or, alternatively, Kenney wins but fails to get the mandate from the grassroots to dissolve the party. Neither of those scenarios seems very likely at present, but then what other straws do the PCAA progressives have left to grasp?

**CABINET TWEAKS**

**NOTLEY'S SHUFFLETTE ADDS A BEARD & CURTAILS SABIR**

**W**e were expecting something more from the "cabinet changes" announced in a press release Thursday afternoon. Would some of the under-performing members such as Energy Minister **Marg McCuaig** or Seniors & Housing's **Lori Sigurdson** be getting the hook? Would some of the more promising backbenchers like **Marie Renaud** (St. Albert) or **Lorne Dach** (Edmonton-McClung) be promoted? Would prized catch **Sandra Jansen** (Calgary-North West) be given charge of a hived-off piece of the huge and unwieldy Human Services ministry as a reward for her celebrated defection from the Tories?

But upon entering the Edwardian elegance of Government House and seeing just three members sitting in the chairs where those about to be promoted or shuffled always sit prior to the swearing-in, we realized that this would be more shufflette than full-blown shuffle. The three were:

- Leduc-Beaumont MLA **Shaye Anderson**, 42, a former Telus maintenance technician notable mostly for his über-hipster affectation: a massive, mouth-obscuring, chimney brush of a black beard set off by a shaved-to-the-quick haircut.
- Municipal Affairs Minister **Danielle Larivee**, 42, who has equipped herself well in shepherding new *Municipal*

Continued on next page...

**DATA bank ... POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR Q4 & CALENDAR 2016**

The final political contribution tallies are in for 2016, the first full year in which legislation prohibiting corporate and union donations was in effect. This did not seem to affect the NDP, Wildrose, & Liberals, although it was no doubt a secondary factor for PCs, whose YoY decline was likely primarily due to their having been the party in power during the first four months of 2015, but being a third party for all of 2016. This year will see drops in revenue for all parties due to the enactment of the *Fair Elections Financing Act* which limits an individual's total annual political donations to \$4,000.

	Alberta New Democrats	Wildrose Party	Progressive Conservative Association	Alberta Liberal Party	Alberta Party	Green Party of Alberta
2016 Contributions*	\$1.99M	\$2.1M	\$514.6K	\$225.5K	\$85.6K	\$32.3K
2015 Contributions*	\$882.8K	\$536K	\$1.55M	\$378.7K	\$144K	\$29.6K
Fourth quarter '16	\$798.2K	\$511.7K	\$218.8K	\$85.9K	\$15.3K	\$7.3K
Fourth Quarter '15	\$552.6K	\$589K	\$222K	\$59.6K	\$27.7K	\$14.1K
Byelection '16	\$38K	\$185.4K	\$86.2K	\$24.3K	No candidate	\$4.2K
Largest donors in 2016 (No corporate or unions donations allowed.)	Harinder Rai: \$15K; Charles Nabors: \$6.9K; MLA Trevor Horne: \$6.6K; Barrie Chivers: \$6.1K; Adrienne King: \$5.5K	Gordon Arnell: \$29.6K; Robin Cole: \$15K; Jaspaul (Rick) Doman: \$15K; Chris Fenn: \$15K; Tom Goodchild: \$15K	Marcel Van Hecke: \$16K; Dave Bissett: \$15K; Scott Burns: \$15K; Stan Milner: \$15K; Bradley Shaw: \$15K	Grant Dunlop: \$6.2K; Ian Cartwright: \$6K; Karen Sevcik: \$5.4K; Erika Norheim: \$4K; Peter Poole: \$4K	Pat Cochrane: \$3.2K; Adam Smith: \$2.3K; Francis Saville: \$2K; Christopher Simard: \$2K; Jessica Simon: \$1.5K	Jill Browne: \$6.8K; Richard Wiltott: \$3.1K; John Miller: \$2.3K; Olus-eyi Oladele: \$2.1K.

\* Combined contributions to party & constituency associations, save for the NDP, whose donations are solely to the party.

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*Government Act* through the consultation and legislative processes, and shone brightly as the point gal during the Fort McMurray fire.

• And Human Services Minister **Irfan Sabir**, a Kashmiri immigrant and former aboriginal affairs lawyer who, like virtually every social services minister before him, had taken the brunt of the blame for an Indian child's death. In his case it was a girl called Serenity whose death more than two years ago was the apparent result of mistreatment in a gov't approved kinship care foster home. A good portion of the Question Periods in the fall sitting were taken up with opposition members lambasting Sabir.

As the swearing-in, overseen by Lieutenant Governor **Lois Watson**, proceeded, we learned that, yes, Human Services, the monstrous amalgam of departments created by the **Alison Redford** gov't, was being split back into two ministries: Children's Services and Community & Social Services.

And since a lot of NDP caucus noses would have been out of joint were Jansen to have been put into cabinet,

Larivee was given Children's Services in a sort of lateral move, while Sabir got Community & Social services, in a sort of demotion, and The Beard got Municipal Affairs, in what is definitely a promotion.

It had been *Edmonton Journal* columnist **Paula Simons** who wrote the piece graphically describing Serenity's death that created the furor in the House, resulted in the striking of a special committee (see. p. 5), and had now resulted in the splitting of Human Services and this shufflette.

Simons took to the front page Friday to remind us of her influential involvement and to deliver a couple of more kicks to Sabir.

"He couldn't deal with questions in Question Period," Simons fulminated. "He couldn't explain himself in media interviews. And worst of all, he couldn't seem to bring himself to look or sound concerned about all the cascading errors—errors that stymied the proper enquiries into Serenity's fate. He had to go. The wonder is that it took so long—and that he's still in cabinet."

## POLITICAL PULSE ... from Page 1

While she spoke, 600 people had packed a gaudy Sikh banquet hall on the other side of town for a Tory leadership forum. The loudest applause was for **Jason Kenney**, who plans to dissolve Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta and merge with the Wildrose to create a united conservative party. His sweeping of more than a third of the delegate selection meetings to date, portends almost certain victory. And that likelihood is what makes Sevcik think it's such a good time to be a Liberal.

For if the staunchly Catholic Kenney, characterized as a social conservative, takes over the PCs and proceeds with his plan to dissolve the party, the Liberals are hoping there'll be boatloads of Tory "progressives" looking for a safe harbour. And what better port in a storm than the Alberta Liberal Party, whose "fiscally conservative, socially progressive" policies virtually match those of the Redford Tories who comprise the PC's progressive bloc?

And while it's true that the Alberta Party's sole MLA, **Greg Clark** (Calgary-Elbow), shares the same fiscon-soprog policy and is an articulate and hard-working MLA, wouldn't the red Tories prefer to join a party with an 111-year history?

But a suitable flame will be necessary to attract those Tory

moths. "We need visionary leadership to show Albertans what we have to offer and what we can do to make our province an even better place to live," said Sevcik.

But who? Who out there might be willing to pony up \$7K to run for a position with no prospects of a salary for the 28 months between now and the 2019 election when the first chance to win a \$127K-p.a. MLA's seat occurs (with an extra \$28.7K for the leader if the party wins the four seats required for official opposition status)?

No one announced on Sunday, but three potential candidates are seriously considering:

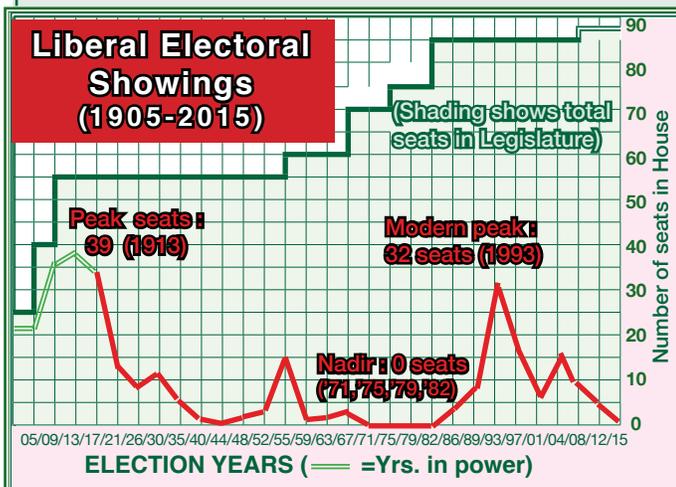
Three-term St. Albert Mayor **Nolan Crouse**, 63, whose bitterly polarized council discouraged him from considering a fourth term; former Global Calgary TV presenter **Nirmala Naido**, 52, an East Indian who emigrated from South Africa as a child, and, running as a federal Liberal, placed second in Calgary Rocky Ridge the 2015 federal election; and the openly gay Calgary lawyer & Liberal Party vice-president **David Khan**, 42, the Calgary-born son of Pakistani immigrants. He ran provincially in 2015 in the Calgary-Buffalo riding vacated by **Kent Hehr** (NDP gov't Attorney General **Kathleen Ganley** won the seat for the NDP with 35%; Kahn came third with 24.6%).

As of Friday, only Crouse had taken the first step: paying \$1K for the paperwork that allows him to apply to the party and to Elections Alberta, both of whom must approve his eligibility (residency in Alberta, no criminal record, full financial disclosure, etc.). Once the okay is given, the candidate must pay a further \$6K and collect 100 signatures of endorsement before being eligible for nomination.

Having seen the three potential contestants speak at the Liberal policy convention in November, I'd give Kahn the edge. He's articulate, confident, relatively young, attractive, and in no way resembles the effeminate archetype.

As one member of the Liberal executive observed, "You wouldn't even know he's gay."

But whether Kahn has the lumens to bring any of those red Tory moths flying to this historical flame-out of party, or indeed whether he could even beat an experienced campaigner like Crouse or a media face like Naido, still remains to be seen.



## People ...

### Recent appointments by cabinet and highlights of recent cabinet orders

#### Appointments...

● A Texas woman has been appointed CEO of the Alberta Innovates Corporation, the recent amalgamation of the four gov't-supported research and development agencies. **Laura**



**Kilcrease**, MBA, founder of Triton Ventures in Austin, TX, a venture capital firm specializing in technology start-ups in the renewable energy field, and founding executive director of the Austin Technology Incubator, a University of Texas-based developer of relationships between

budding tech companies and private and public sources of capital—a function similar to that of Alberta Innovates.

Kilcrease will report to the recently appointed board of directors, also chaired by a woman: **Judy Fairburn**, VP of Business Innovation with Cenovus Energy. In a press release announcing Kilcrease's appointment, Fairburn said, "Laura will be Alberta Innovates' chief relationship developer, working in concert with business, academic institutions, regional innovation networks and other governments to ensure Alberta's promising innovators have the best chance at accelerating their ideas into *impactful* application and job growth." (Emphasis added. We cringe at such Franken-jargon, but grammarians seem split.)



● **Darlene Bouwsema**, previously DM of Culture & Tourism, as deputy minister of the ministry of Children's Services, just extracted from Human Services in which it had been incorporated since 2012.

● **David Morhart** as deputy minister of Community & Social Services, the ministry that remains following the extraction of Children's Services from Human Services where Morhart had served as DM since 2013. His previous DM postings were in Enterprise & Advanced Education, and Infrastructure.



● Members of the all-party ministerial Panel on Child Intervention promised by Human Services Minister **Irfan Sabir** in December following revelations about the death of the aboriginal girl called Serenity have been appointed. The panel, which first meets on Feb. 1, will, according to the gov't announcement, "make recommendations to improve Alberta's child death review process, propose actions to strengthen the child intervention system, and explore the systemic issues that lead to children coming into government care." Chaired by NDP MLA **Debbie Jabour** (Peace River), a psychologist, the other members are: NDP MLAs **Maria Fitzpatrick** (Lethbridge-East), **Nicole Goehring** (Edmonton-Castle Downs), **Graham Sucha** (Calgary Shaw), **Cameron Westhead** (Banff-Cochrane); Wildrose MLA **Jason Nixon** (Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre); PC interim leader **Ric McIver** (Calgary-Hays); Liberal leader **Dr. David Swann** (Calgary-Mountain View); and Alberta Party leader **Greg Clark** (Calgary-Elbow). The panel also includes three

experts: **Dr. Peter Choate**, MSW, PhD of Mount Royal University, **Dr. Patti LaBoucane-Benson**, PhD, of Native Counselling Services of Alberta, and **Dr. Bruce MacLaurin**, MSW, PhD, of the University of Calgary.

#### Orders in Council...

● Proclaims the second session of the 29th Legislature prorogued, with the third session convening on March 2 at 3 pm with a Speech from the Throne..

## Insight into Government

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## Talk ... ... in the Corridors

### Enter the dragon...

● The entry this week by *Dragon's Den* alumnus and *Shark Tank* regular **Kevin O'Leary**, 62, into the federal Conservative leadership race, brought much snide remarking on Alberta's Twittersphere from politicians and pundits who view the brash hectomillionaire (est. net worth \$400M) as an opportunist and a boor in the **Donald Trump** mould. Plus he's said nasty things about our Premier!

On-line political gadfly and red Tory **Kathleen Smith** (aka @KikkiPlanet), fresh from a failed attempt at becoming an anti-Kenney PC Leadership delegate in Edmonton-McClung (she got 14 votes; the winners around 80), gleefully tweeted a still from the celebrity *Jeopardy* tournament of a couple of years ago in which O'Leary finished Double Jeopardy with negative \$2,800 "Never forget this moment, Canada," she wrote.

On Thursday, in an entertaining, over-the-top phone interview with *Calgary Sun* columnist **Rick Bell**, O'Leary, who a year ago offered to give \$1M to the oilpatch if Notley stepped down, returned with gusto to this favoured bugbear.

"Anybody but Notley. The thought she would get a second mandate is a nightmare to me. That makes me wake up sweating at night. I stare at the ceiling thinking about that," said O'Leary, who supports Kenney's plan for a united conservative party. "... I've even suggested we collectively buy her out. That would be safer if would could do it, if she would take a cheque and just go away. She is a walking disaster. Everybody knows that now. Look at all the people who have lost their jobs. I'm ashamed of it and I feel the pain."

KikkiPlanet was quick to respond: "Great platform; elect me & I'll infringe upon democracy in your province. What. A. Bone. Head."

But the most withering attack on O'Leary came from fellow *Dragon's Den* alumnus **Arlene Dickinson**, 60, a Calgary vencap owner, who has lately become Premier **Rachel Notley**'s favourite capitalist. She has hosted gov't economic policy announcements and in November was appointed to the board of the Alberta Innovates Corp.

On *Dragon's Den* she played the kind-hearted benefactress to O'Leary's hard-bitten bottom liner, but Dickinson says it was more than just an act.

"You get a window into somebody's character by the way they treat people, particularly those who are vulnerable and need help or guidance," she wrote. "Kevin's total lack of empathy toward these Canadians who put their heart and soul on the line, I can assure you, was genuine."

"Kevin is funny. I often enjoyed a glass of wine with him. He's also intelligent and a savvy self-promoter. But at his core, he's an opportunist. He doesn't do anything that doesn't offer a path to power, fame or fortune — and that should have us all afraid."

Former dragon **Brett Wilson**, 59, a business partner of O'Leary's and philanthropist rumoured to be pondering a run for the Calgary mayoralty, defended the leadership candidate against Dickinson's attack.

Wilson, Saskatchewan-born and raised entrepreneur who made his millions after co-founding the FirstEnergy Capital Corp. stock brokerage firm in Calgary with **Murray Edwards** and several others, said Dickinson was conflating O'Leary's reality TV persona with the real man.

"The thought that Kevin has no heart — Kevin was the only

dragon who stepped up to help me on one of the donations that I made," he said in a CBC interview. "Kevin's was the first cheque I asked for when we supported Breast Friends... Kevin said some provocative, controversial things. I'm going to let those go in the context of where are we today, and where are we going.... he is maybe a little politically incorrect, but he's willing to take on the tough issues without kowtowing to the vocal minority. I love Kevin's approach."

While Dickinson urged Conservatives not to vote for O'Leary, Wilson supports the candidate—to a point.

"Today I would endorse **Kevin O'Leary**, absolutely, because I want to see him in the process. Remember, we're talking about the leadership of the Conservative Party. We're not talking about the prime minister of Canada. That's going

## The week ahead ...

**Jan 21-28**—Assuming the PC party doesn't smitheren in the meantime (see pp. 1-2), leadership delegate selection meetings will continue at their frenetic pace in Calgary-Varsity (21st, 9 am); Grande Prairie-Smoky (21st, 9 am); Edmonton-Whitemud (23rd, 7:30 pm); Edmonton-Strathcona (24th, 6:30 pm); Calgary-North West (25th, 7:15 pm); Strathcona-Sherwood Park (25th, 7 pm); Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (25th 7:30 pm); Wetaskiwin-Camrose (26th, 7 pm); Calgary-Fish Creek (26th, 7pm); Lethbridge-West (27th, 7 pm); Calgary-East (28th, 2 pm). For venues and other info: <http://leadership.pcalberta.com/delegate-selection-meetings/>

**Jan 23-26**—The five-member Electoral Boundary Commission—two members chosen by the Wildrose opposition; three, including chairwoman Madame Justice **Myra Bielby**, a Court of Appeal judge, by the gov't—continues the first phase (Jan/Feb) of its public hearings (the second and final phase is in July/Aug). On Monday hearings take place at 1 pm at the Canalta Hotel in St. Paul and at 7 pm at the Ramada in Wainwright; on Tuesday at 1 pm at the Canalta (Jurassic) in Drumheller; on Wednesday at 1 pm at the Ramada in Olds and at 7pm at the Coast in Lethbridge; and on Thursday at 1 pm at the Medicine Hat Lodge. To send submissions or for further info go to: <http://abebc.ca/submissions/>

**Jan 23-24**—Federal Liberal caucus retreat in Calgary. When he appears in public on Tuesday (one of his cross-country town halls is scheduled for 6 pm at the OofC's McEwan Hall), Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** will face some hostility over the "phase out" the oilsands comment he made in Peterborough, ON, last week. (*Insight* Jan 13).

**Jan 25**—PC Leadership forum put on by the West Yellowhead & Whitecourt-Ste. Anne Constituency Association. 7 pm at the Edson Friendship Centre, 5023 3 Ave, Edson.

**Jan 25-27**—**Rachel Notley**'s newly tweaked cabinet journeys to the sublimity of Banff for a three-day retreat at the Juniper Hotel.

**Jan 25**—Wildrose MLA **Derek Fildebrandt** (Strathmore-Brooks), his party's most public proponent of PC Leadership candidate **Jason Kenney**'s unite-the-right plan, holds a \$100-a-plate fundraiser at the Calgary Petroleum Club. Title of his speech: "Alberta's Conservative Future." 5 pm.

**Jan 27**—The two PC Grande Prairie CA's host a leadership forum at 7 pm, Pomeroy Hotel, 11633 100 St.

**Jan 27**—Advanced Education Minister **Marlin Schmidt**, noted accordionist & Highlander (Bavaria, we're thinking), will host a **Robbie Burns** dinner, replete with haggis & "neeps & tatties" as a \$125-plate fundraiser in his Edmonton-Goldbar constituency. 7 pm, Bonnie Doon Hall, 9240 93 St. Tickets at: <http://www.albertandp.ca/robbieburns2017>

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