

Ric Dolphin's

Insight

into Government

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BANDAIDS & SALVES FOR A HEMORRHAGING ECONOMY

As Deron doles out small injections of job-creation and investment-encouraging, the worry and anger, especially in Calgary, increases. But what could any gov't, strapped for cash, do in such circumstances? Hold off on the carbon tax perhaps?

As the economy creaks, groans, and threatens to fall in on itself, this unlucky Alberta gov'ts does what it can to salve the growing unrest and unhappiness with brave talk and small but sweet tokens of assistance.

Chief among the front-line soothers of late has been our doughty Economic Development & Trade Minister **Deron Bilous** whose mitigation efforts might be compared to those of a battlefield medic administering morphine and comforting words to a wounded soldier while over the ridge a whole platoon lies dying. This week his mercy visits took in Calgary.

As is now well-known, this is the worst recession since 1986, and barring a miracle of supra-biblical proportions—think: parting of the Red Sea with Moses skipping atop the wave walls turning the brine into wine—we will have the first back-to-back years of GDP decline since 1982 and 1983, and an even worse cumulative drop: 6.5% in '15 and '16 (or so the TD bank predicts), compared with about 3% in '82 and '83. And we all know about the 110,000 jobs lost since 2014.

Perhaps less well-known is that the 1980s recession hit Edmonton hardest, with the northern city suffering an 11% unemployment rate versus Calgary's 9% and experiencing a far more precipitous plunge in real estate prices and a virtual stoppage in development, while Calgary, helped by big projects like the C-Train expansion and the development of facilities for the 1988 Olympics, continued to build, albeit at a slower rate.

This time around, Calgary seems to be taking the brunt: 9.5% unemployment in August versus Edmonton's 8.3%. And in the

Continued on next page...

POLITICAL PULSE

KILL KENNEY

TORY RACE BULKS UP WITH THREE ANTI-JASONS

The official announcements this week by two reddish Calgary Tories and a centrist from east-central Alberta of their intentions to run for the PC Leadership on March 18 marked the beginnings of the inevitable "anyone-but-Kenney" (ABK) movement.

The east-centralist was no surprise: sitting MLA Dr. **Richard Starke**, 56, (Vermilion-Lloydminster), a veterinarian who was Tourism minister in **Alison Redford's** gov't, had been musing about running for months. On Thursday at an Edmonton community hall he made it official and voiced his opposition to candidate and former MP **Jason Kenney's** "five point plan." The plan culminates in the dissolving of the PC and Wildrose parties and the creation of a new party consisting of conservatives from both.

"They're two different parties; they're two different cultures," said Starke. "A pursuit of a merger with the Wildrose is putting power ahead of principle. It is solely a mechanism to try to seek and gain political power."

The same day, outside the Euphoria Cafe, a hipster-ridden Calgary coffee shop in her former riding of Varsity, **Donna Kennedy-Glans**, 56, announced her leadership bid and expressed similar opposition to Kenney's plans.

A lawyer, former Nexen executive, and another former Redford cabinet minister, but one who quit the party to protest the premier's leadership, Ms. KG announced her own alternate "five-point plan."

This somewhat obvious list of goals included "1. Win the PC Nomination with a leader who is a Progressive Conservative, who knows Albertans, understands ethics and governance, and can do the job." and "3. Be an effective opposition that clearly demonstrates to Albertans that the PC Party is the only choice in the next election."

The other Calgarian who announced this week is a relative unknown outside of PC party circles: lawyer **Byron Nelson**, 45, who has made two unsuccessful bids at elected office.

He lost the PC nomination in Calgary-Glenmore in 2012 to **Linda Johnson**, the one-term MLA (she lost on a recount to NDPer **Annam Kazim** in 2015), who is now backing KG.

Nelson, who campaigned for **Jim Prentice** in the 2014 leadership contest, was nominated in Calgary-Bow in 2015, but narrowly lost the election to **Deborah Drever**, the 26-year-old NDP sociology student who, soon afterwards, was kicked out of caucus for eight months when impolitic pictures of her that she'd posted on social media surfaced. (*Insight* May 22, 2015).

(Incidentally, the former four-term PC MLA

Turn to Political Pulse on pg. 4...

first two quarters of 2016, Edmonton experienced modest increases in non-residential construction over the previous year (1.2% & 0.9%) while Calgary saw declines (-2.3% and -0.6%).

Edmonton's greater apparent resilience this time around is partly because of the NDP's protection of unionized gov't and public service jobs, of which the Capital has the lion's share. The Getty gov't was cutting public employees even before Klein stepped things up in the 1990s. It may also have something to do with the major public and private capital projects that were well along prior to 2014 (the Arena District, the Museum, major LRT expansion).

Whatever the reason—and it surely can't be as simple as gov't bias towards its strongest political base—Calgary's suffering is greater and there is a growing antipathy in the city towards a gov't whose progressive agenda (the minimum wage hike, the increased corporate taxes, and especially the carbon tax) it blames for exacerbating its economic woes.

On Tuesday, Bilous announced a grant of \$2M over two years to Calgary Economic Development towards a \$3M initiative to attract more head offices (the other \$1M is being provided by the federal gov't's Western Economic Diversification Canada).

Since the oil prices went into free fall two years ago, the number of larger head offices in the city has dropped from 150 to 134 and the vacancy rate in the 8M sq. ft. of downtown office space has gone from near zero to more than 21% in August. This includes the 3M sq ft of office space currently under construction but not the 2M sq ft of "ghost vacancies"—abandoned office space that is still being leased. But, hey, when life hands you lemons...

"For both domestic and international companies our message is simple: Alberta is the best place to do business," said Bilous. "Calgary is home to the highest concentration of international headquarters in Canada. It also has the country's youngest, most skilled workforce. Working together to build on those strengths helps create and maintain jobs, while continuing to diversify our economy."

Calgary Economic Development CEO **Mary Moran** says the money will be used to market the city's advantages: lower rents, available workers, international flight connections, lower taxes... She claims downturns are when "we see headquarter growth" and "we have a lot of people kicking tires." We'd like to see some statistics on that.

On Thursday Bilous made another stop in Calgary, this time at District Ventures, a boutique venture capital company started by former Dragon's Den member **Arlene Dickinson**, to announce a 30% tax credit for those investing in certain types of small business—a credit that will be legislated in the fall session but will be retroactive from April 14, 2016, and will apply to investments made until Dec. 31, 2019. It will be capped at \$90M over the three years.

This gov't has handed out a number of tidbits to small businesses lately, partly perhaps for ideological reasons (the NDP has traditionally been hostile to large corporations, corporate greed, etc), but more likely to compensate for

economic hardships that many small enterprises are experiencing and blame partly the gov't's progressive initiatives such as the minimum wage hike.

The sops have included a reduction in the small business tax from 3% to 2% (ostensibly to help allay the effect of the carbon tax that takes effect on Jan. 1), a \$1.9M entrepreneur training program announced last week and designed to teach people how to start small businesses, \$20K grants to help Fort McMurray small businesses recover from fire damage, and \$9M over three years to help small businesses export their products.

At Thursday's announcement, Bilous trotted out some statistics to justify this focus.

"Small businesses in Alberta have a bigger economic impact than anywhere else in Canada. They make up 35% of all jobs in Alberta and help hundreds of thousands of people across the province earn a good living for themselves and their families. In the last year their contribution to our GDP increased by 28% to \$97.8 billion."

But Alberta has not had an Investor Tax Credit like other provinces, he said, and this "made in Alberta" program will remedy the deficiency. It will also target businesses in the type of sectors that the gov't, in consultation "with some incredible investors and business owners including Arlene Dickinson," has deemed worthy.

Mom-and-pop coal mines, presumably, need not apply.

"Tax credit," said Bilous, "would be available for investments in companies that are substantially engaged in proprietary technology research, development, or commercialization" in the fields of interactive digital media development, video post-production, digital animation, or tourism (including resorts and ski hills).

Which would seem to kind of limit things. But one supposes Dickinson et al have thought this out.

Applications won't be accepted until January, so we will have to wait and see whether this particular initiative has a chance of bearing the kind of fruit that Bilous is promising: i.e. 4,400 new jobs over three year, \$500M added to the GDP, and, of course, the holy grail of every premier for the last 50 years: "diversification of the economy."

Actually the economy has diversified considerably since that last bad recession in 1986, which is perhaps one of the reasons why Calgary's unemployment is 9.6% and not 11%. And while investment has fallen from \$98B in 2014 to a predicted \$66B this year, our per-capita rate—\$15,541—remains the highest in the country, twice the Canadian average, and three times that of both BC and Ontario. Trouble is, that investment is mostly in the completion of oil facilities that were already in the works when oil crashed, and the drop off represents the cancellation or mothballing of facilities, which caused all those layoffs, and which is likely to continue despite this week's announcement by OPEC that it will cap production—a cap that might push the WTI price up to \$50, but not much further, and is unlikely to spur the de-mothballing of oilsands projects.

Meaning that oil patch investments will continue to plummet, and that initiatives like the Alberta Investment Tax Cred-

it, which is designed to take up some of the slack by bringing investment back to the province for other kinds of industry is not such a bad idea. But the limitations on what sectors are eligible, and the relatively small scale of the projects, will not fill the void left by the departing energy investors.

And the regular small businesses in Calgary—retail, food services, transportation, etc.—will continue to languish in the void and sometimes fail. Insufficiently soothed.

Speaking of other premiers, job creation, and economic diversification, Premier **Rachel Notley** had the honor this week of cutting the ribbon on a new Edmonton biotech plant—Ceapro—that uses a UofA-developed technology to turn oats into refined oils used in skin care products and cosmetics.

And while Rachel, chipper as always, basked in the glory of the made-in-Alberta, value added, non-petroleum product that will be exported to Germany and will create up to 60 new local jobs—“a model of diversification,” she called it—no mention was made of the man who devised the model: Tory Premier **Ed Stelmach**.

For the patented process for creating these precious oils—oat avenanthramides and oat Beta Glucan to be specific—was shepherded and subsidized by Alberta Innovates-Bio Solutions, one of the four Alberta Innovates corporations created by the Stelmach gov't in 2010 to develop, in conjunction with the universities and industry, a diversity of products using Alberta's natural resources, both mineral and agricultural.

Through the years, these corporations have been doing what **Deron Bilous'** Alberta Investor Tax Credit is hoping to do: creating new products and businesses, albeit in the applied scientific sphere: biological (Bio Solutions), medical (Health Solutions), technological (Technology Futures), and natural resources (Energy & Environment).

The Notley gov't, as part of its streamlining of agencies, boards, and commissions, is folding the four corporations into a single entity under one chairman and administration. But with luck, this should not curtail the useful work that they have been doing, merely reduce administration costs. Which would be a good thing and something that might be applied to gov't departments.

DATA Bank ...

THE HERITAGE SAVINGS TRUST FUND: AN UPTICK?

The preamble to the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act describes the mission of the Fund as follows: “To provide prudent stewardship of the savings from Alberta's non-renewable resources by providing the greatest financial returns on those savings for current and future generations of Albertans.”

And through the 40 years of its existence, the fund, whether under the management of the Finance Ministry, as was case for the first three decades, or under the Alberta Investment Management Corporation (AIMCo), which took over in 2007, has produced financial returns that have varied according to the economic climate of the time, and which have, since the mid-1980s, and with the exception of a couple of years in the mid '00s when resource revenue was actually put back into the fund, been funneled into the gov't's general revenue pot.

The returns in the last fiscal year — presented to the public at the Heritage Fund Committee's annual general meeting on Thursday night—were not so good. As Finance Minister **Joe Ceci** wrote in his preamble to the annual report: “Coming off six strong years of investment performance, the Heritage Fund posted a more modest return in 2015-16 as most developed economies had moderate growth and equity markets became more volatile as a result of low oil prices.

Below we compare the latest available quarterly report for 2016-17 with previous Q1s, which suggests a light improvement in offing for this year. We also compare the 2015-16 annual report with the previous two.

	Q1 2016-17	Q1 2015-16	Q1 2014-15	2015-16	2014-15	2013-14	FIVE YEAR
RATE OF RETURN	1.6%	0.2%	2.1%	4.7%	12.5%	16%	10.7%
FAIR VALUE OF ASSETS	\$18.025B	\$17.7B	\$17.5B	\$17.7B	\$17.95B	\$17.5B	
NET INCOME	\$638M	\$453M	\$440M	\$1.24B	\$1.68B	\$2.11B**	
TRANSFER TO GENERAL REVENUE FUND	\$570M	\$412M	\$350M	\$1.03B	\$1.47B	\$1.92B	
INVESTMENT EXPENSES*	\$68M	\$41M	\$38M	\$150M	\$147M	\$163M	
ASSET CLASS (% OF HOLDINGS) AND % RATE OF RETURN							
Money Markets & Fixed Income	(18.6%) 3.1%	(18.6%) 0.9%	(18.6%) 2.3%	(18.7%) 3%	(17.3%) 10.1%	(20%) 3.2%	6.8%
Inflation Sensitive & Alternatives	(33.9%) 0.6%	(30.1%) 0.3%	(27.3%) 1.4%	(33.4%) 11.9%	(29.7) 11.6%	(30%) 10.2%	11.0%
Equities	(46.6%) 2.0%	(50%) 0.3%	(54.1%) 2.5%	(46.8%) 0.3%	(51.4%) 16%	(50%) 24.3%	11.8%

* Mostly AIMCo's costs, including management fees, employee salaries, and incentive benefits. **All time record income

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En passant ...

● Alberta Health Services reports that the

demand for assisted suicide (euphemistically: “medical aid in dying”) has been higher than expected since the beginning of the year, especially since the feds legalized the practice in June. Thirty one suicides have been processed, and although the numbers were expected to tail off after the initial pent up demand was dealt with, there are still two to four individuals a week being administered the lethal cocktail. AHS has also discovered that far fewer than the 150 doctors who had originally volunteered to do the deed have come forward. Nonetheless, authorities expect that about 200 assisted suicides per year will be performed, based on the experience in Oregon, a death-dispensing jurisdiction with a similar population to Alberta. Meanwhile the Catholic Bishops of Alberta and the NWT are instructing priests to refuse to officiate at funerals for those who choose this final solution, calling it a “grave sin.”

● A ThinkHQ poll released this week

shows that 63% of Albertans disapprove of the Notley gov’t carbon tax, effective Jan. 1, compared to 32% who approve. As for Notley’s overall climate change strategy, which puts a cap on oilsands emissions and accelerates the closure of coal-generated power plants, 53% of respondents disapprove, while 37% approve—a marked change from last December when there was a 44-44% split. The gov’t blames the loud and persistent criticism from opposition parties and groups for the increased disapproval, and argue that it is better for the province to impose a “made in Alberta” plan than to have one imposed by the federal government (which begins its deliberations on a national carbon strategy on Monday.) ThinkHQ proprietor **Marc Henry** says the poll should be seen by the gov’t as a political warning. “They need to be very conscious Alberta is in a very fragile state economically... You certainly don’t want to be put in a position where three years hence you get blamed for somehow delaying a bounce back in the economy.”

● More than 50 North American Indian

groups, many affiliated with and sponsored by environmental groups, signed a treaty last week to work together to fight future oilsands developments and block all of the proposed Canadian pipelines. The treaty states that Canadian First Nations and the US tribes will “collectively challenge and resist the use of our respective territories and coasts in connection with the expansion of the production of the Alberta Tar Sands.” Meanwhile, the buzz in the Calgary oilpatch is that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, on his recent visit to China, was berated by gov’t officials for delays in getting bitumen to tidewater. The Chinese are invested in the oilsands and are anxious to get their product home. The speculation in Calgary is that Trudeau and his cabinet will give final approval to the Kinder Morgan pipeline by December.

POLITICAL PULSE ... from Page 1

for Calgary-Bow, **Alana DeLong**, who retired in 2015 and returned to her native BC, was recently nominated as the provincial Liberal candidate in Nanaimo-North Cowichan where she will challenge the incumbent NDP candidate in the May 9 election.)

But back to Byron—who, by the way, is an ex boyfriend of another former Redford Tourism minister, **Christine Cusanelli** (Calgary-Currie), defeated by NDPer **Brian Malkinson** in 2015. At his leadership candidacy announcement at a garden centre on Macleod Trail Tuesday, the divorced father of two teenagers, said the predictable things about defeating the NDP and returning Alberta to being the “land of opportunity.”

Rejecting Kenney’s plan to unite the right, Nelson said, “The day after this campaign is concluded, we have to focus, campaign, and plan for the next election and beyond, not spend two years debating and arguing—and that’s what a unite-the-right process looks like.”

Questioned by reporters about his lack of name recognition, he said he did not believe it to be a problem.

“We have a lot of work to do. I’ve got a lot of time. But this is a delegate process in the Progressive Conservative party and I’ve been a member for 25 years, primarily a volunteer for 25 years, so I’ve met a lot of people.”

Jason Kenney, resented by a sizeable number of PC members as a carpetbagger who largely ignored Alberta during his time in Ottawa and now believes he can waltz in and take over, has been touring the province since early summer trying to remedy that perception.

He and a small entourage continue to tour, holding speaking events, selling memberships, and attempting wherever possible to stack the boards with Kenney supporters at the few PC constituency associations that have not yet held their AGMs. (The PC rules for the delegated convention stipulate that five of the 15 voted delegates in each riding must be board members.)

We heard that Kenney recently went to the Calgary-Bow AGM with 20 supporters and took over that board, while **Byron Nelson** showed up with only two people.

But, as mentioned, most of the AGMs have already occurred, and Kenney’s people believe their five elected delegates will support candidates who favour retention of the PC brand and rejection of a coalition with the Wildrose.

And these delegates will be joined by the various “automatic” delegates, including the party executive, the constituency presidents, and all sitting and past PC MLAs, the majority of whom are also believed by the Kenney camp to favour the status quo.

So even if Jason is able to capture the majority of the 10 “free-voting” members from each CA, he is unlikely to be able to win the 50%-plus of delegates that would give him a win on the first ballot at the convention.

And it would therefore be in a second or subsequent ballot that the “anyone-but-Kenney” movement would kick in, with the other candidates throwing their support—and their delegates—behind a favoured front-runner in order to defeat the unite-the-right interloper. And while at this writing there are three probable ABK candidates, several more, including MLA **Sandra Jansen** (Calgary-North West) and Edmonton City Councillor **Michael Oshry**, are expected to pay their \$30K deposits to enter the race before nominations, which officially open on Saturday, and close on Nov. 9.

People ...

Recent appointments by cabinet and highlights of recent cabinet orders

Appointments...

● NDP MLA **Debbie Jabbour** (Peace River) as a member and the chairwoman of the Northern Alberta Development Council for a one-year term.

● **Ivan M. L. Ladouceur**, a divorce & family lawyer in High Prairie for 24 years, as a judge of The Provincial Court of Alberta.

● **Monica Norminton**, an Edmonton member of the federal Department of Natural Resources' Audit Committee, **Stan Boutin**, a UofA biology professor specializing in the generational effects of climate change on squirrels, and **Jack Royal**, president of the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park at the Siksika reserve, to the board of directors of the Alberta Energy Regulator, each for a one-year term. Under the Responsible Energy Development Act (Section 5), salaries for AER board members and the chairman will be reduced by 15%. Board members' pay currently ranges between \$105K and \$114K p.a., while **Gerry Protti**, a former Encana executive who remains as chairman despite **Rachel Notley's** criticism of his appointment three years ago (too closely tied to industry), makes \$269K.

● **Ritu Khullar**, Q.C., an Edmonton litigator specializing in labour relations, human rights, and constitutional law; **Ken Delaney**, a Toronto-based management and public policy consultant formerly with the United Steelworkers union; & **Kerry Jothen**, a Vancouver-based workforce adviser who has worked with industry and gov't, have been appointed as members of the Alberta gov't's Advisory Panel on Coal Communities. The panel will be visiting communities most affected by the closure of coal-fired generating plants and speaking with workers, municipalities, small businesses, and aboriginal groups to gather information about challenges and opportunities, "to share information and resources about current programs and supports and to generate ideas for training and new opportunities."

Orders in Council...

● The approval of the incorporation by Alberta Innovates-Technology Futures of a subsidiary Provincial corporation for the purpose of carrying out applied research (laboratory) services when the four Alberta Innovates corporations are amalgamated into one entity by enabling legislation in the fall session.

Corrections & Clarifications

What were we thinking? Perhaps we weren't. In our story on the Heritage Trust Fund last week we stupidly stated that AIMCo manages the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund. Having printed the salary of the CEO of the ATRF in our review of top salaries a week earlier, we should have realized that ATRF manages itself. As if that wasn't enough, we stated in the same story that part of the reason for Alberta's fund being far less than Norway's was that we had to pass on part of the corporate tax from oil companies to the feds whereas the Norwegians kept it all in their fund. The Norwegian gov't takes the corporate tax and does not add it to their stash. We apologize to any Norwegians who may have been discombobulated.

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Talk in the Corridors

That other leadership contest...

● The single-cylinder vehicle known as the Alberta Liberal Party has announced that the election to replace interim leader and sole MLA **Dr. David Swann**, 67, (Calgary Mountain View) will take place on June 4 of next year, two and a half months after the PC leadership contest—offering a chance for picking up a failed red Tory or two.

We're only half kidding. MLA and presumptive Tory leadership candidate **Sandra Jansen**, 53, (Calgary North West) is notorious among crustier conservatives, not only for having been a pal and airplane companion of former premier **Alison Redford**, but for having campaigned for two Liberals in last fall's federal election.

One was former MLA **Kent Hehr**, who won Calgary Centre and is now minister of Veterans Affairs; the other was **Nirmala Naidoo**, 51, the former Global TV anchor, who ran in Calgary Rocky Ridge and was handily defeated by Conservative **Pat Kelly** (60% to 32%).

Naidoo signed on as the provincial Liberal Party's Calgary co-chair of leadership, but she recently stepped down, and could well be helping pal (and also a former TV anchor) Jansen in the latter's PC leadership campaign.

Should Jansen does not become leader of the PCs, and should **Jason Kenney** (whom she loathes) win, might she be tempted to try for the Libs? One could imagine Naidoo being there to help with the transition.

This, of course, is assuming that anyone will want to run for a party that got less than 5% of the vote in the last provincial election (although there are reports of a recent polls that have them up to 10%)

However, should Kenney win the leadership and amalgamate the right in a new party, as is his plan, there will be an exodus of centrist Progressive Conservatives and red Tories looking for a new home.

Certainly that is the opportunity the Liberal party dreams about. It is a dream also shared by that other one-man brand, **Greg Clark's** Alberta Party.

But unless the two parties do the sensible thing and merge, the Liberals would seem to have the advantage.

Clark, 45, has performed admirably as a lone MLA hitting well above his weight class. But Swann, who projects a sort of diogenic statesmanship, has also done well in the House. And the Liberals have the added benefit of their association with **Justin Trudeau's** resurgent feds—who ended their electoral drought in Alberta last year with four MPs—as well as a deeper and more enduring brand loyalty, reflected in their fund-raising results.

Third-quarter party donation results won't be released for a couple of weeks, but the Q1 and Q2 totals, while unimpressive by Wildrose, NDP, or even diminished PC standards (see chart), give the Swannists a decided edge over the Clarkies: \$87K v. \$34K.

However, the Liberals are going to have to up their fund-raising game if they hope to attract leadership candidates. After all, the party will need to pay its new leader a salary until such time as he or she has won a seat. Sitting MLA Jansen, of course, would merely have to cross the floor.

● A new resource for Leg. geeks...

In years since Alberta's Centennial, the worthy folk at the Legislature Library have been diligently compiling a monumental resource for the Legislative Assembly website: biographical and political profiles of every MLA who has served since the province's founding in 1905. On Monday the Members' Services Committee was given a taste of what to expect when the data goes live in time for the opening of the fall legislative session on Oct. 31.

Currently the Legislative Assembly's website only has bios of the 87 sitting MLAs (at http://www.assembly.ab.ca/net/index.aspx?p=mla_home). The addition of the historical data will bring the total to 905.

Librarian **Val Footz**, who gave a power point presentation to the committee, said that in researching the information, various inconsistencies and inaccuracies contained in the *Canadian Parliamentary Guide* were corrected—the exact date a minister took office, the proper spellings of names, etc.

The research uncovered some legislative quirks. For example, in the early decades, candidates could run in more than one constituency and in 1913 **Charles Cross**, the former Liberal attorney-general demoted to backbencher for his part in the Waterways Railway Scandal, became the only member to serve as MLA for two ridings: Edmonton and Edson.

In going over birth records, the librarians were also able to provide demographic snapshots of the various legislatures. Despite the youth of a number of current NDP members, the 29th Legislature is only the seventh youngest (average age 45.8).

"What was the youngest?" asked Wildrose MLA **Nathan Cooper**, 36 (Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills).

"The youngest? I happen to have that," said Footz. "The youngest was the Second Legislature, which was from 1909 to 1913, and they were at 42. We won't talk about the most senior." (She later told us that the 14th Legislature—1959-63—was the oldest with an average age of 52. And five of the original 61 Social Credit MLAs elected—of 65 total members—died in office.)

The week ahead ...

Oct. 1—The Progressive Conservatives mark the opening of nominations for their leadership contest with a kickoff event Saturday night (7 pm-midnight) at the Coast Lethbridge Hotel where PC members can meet the four (so far) declared candidates (see p.1) and learn about the process.

Oct. 3 & 4—Municipal Affairs holds the first of its information sessions on the Big City Charters in Edmonton. These long-lobbied-for initiatives, which will be developed alongside changes to the Municipal Government Act (MGA), are designed to give the two largest cities more local decision-making powers and develop a "new-fiscal framework" which the opposition fears may include new municipal taxing powers. The sessions will be held between 5:30 and 8:30 pm both evenings in the Maple Leaf Room of the UofA's Lister Centre, 11613 87 Ave. The Calgary sessions will be held the following week. For more info: <http://www.alberta.ca/city-charters.aspx>

Oct. 6—Liberal Leader **Dr. David Swann** (Calgary-Mountain View) hosts an open house in his Calgary riding on the subject of fentanyl abuse. Several addiction specialists will participate in the live-streamed event (www.asquared.tv/yyc-mountainview.html) which takes place at the Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Association, 1320 5th Ave NW, between 6 and 9 pm.

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