

No money in a boom, no money in a bust

If you're keeping score, Premier Jason Kenney says the province can't spend when oil prices are down because "Alberta is broke," and it can't spend when oil prices soar because, "who knows? This may be our last energy boom."

When provincial revenue suffered thanks to a commodity crash (and massive needless corporate tax cuts), the government had no choice but to download expenses onto municipalities. When provincial revenue spikes thanks to a commodity explosion (minus what could have been with proper taxation), the government must apparently show restraint.

Budget estimates peg Alberta's surplus in 2022 at \$511 million, but even as the UCP gives up a few hundred million to a gasoline tax break and a one-time utility rebate, with oil prices where they stand, even a scale-back will still result in a much higher surplus than expected.

According to its own data, Alberta gains \$500 million for every dollar added to the North American crude price. The budget estimates a 2022 average of \$70 a barrel, but the current price is over \$100 with no signs of slowing. For every \$10 over the average, Alberta rakes in \$5 billion, so even if prices do slow as the year goes on, the 2022 surplus could be immense.

Now, Kenney wasn't wrong Thursday when he told the Alberta Municipalities spring conference we don't have the money yet, and if running a province was anything like running a household (it isn't), waiting until we know for sure might make some sense.

First of all, if Alberta was a



Scott Schmidt
Laying it Out

household our situation would be more akin to having worn down appliances, a leaky roof and a pack of kids who aren't properly clothed or fed. And instead of addressing the home's most basic needs, our priority has been subsidizing outside forces who dig up our flowers and crap on our lawn.

Remember this when Kenney says our debt is our biggest issue, because as the UCP slashed public services while still running increased deficits right out of the gate, it was abundantly clear Alberta's mounting debt was not being spent on Albertans. Case in point being corporate tax cuts that paid for share buybacks, a gift to CEOs and minus-50,000 jobs before COVID arrived.

So now that we might actually bring in some money for our bend-over-and-take-it troubles, the premier is already hinting out loud that surplus cash needs to be used to pay off debt. But if we take revenue from the oil industry to pay off debts from helping the oil industry, where does that leave the rest of us?

Just as it did when Ralph Klein did the same, it will leave us decades behind.

And with the premier already calling the needs of municipali-



ties a "shopping list," his views on how provincial cash should be spent is obvious. Kenney clearly believes shaving a few billion off the provincial debt will save his job, but he also seems to know doing so at the expense of pressing expenditures like infrastructure or public services could be an issue for him. In order for Albertans to buy into his debt payoff plan, they need to believe "needs" are more like "wants."

But surely Albertans have seen enough of the rising costs of living, or the growing strain on cities and towns, to know spending requests at the municipal level are a lot less "shiny new toy" and a lot more "unpaid oil taxes and expensive police." And if the provincial government isn't prepared to help, it will either cost them more later or you more now — either way, Kenney gets his fiscal wish and Alberta pays the price.

This isn't to say every red cent of surplus will automatically go toward the debt, as we can already see token moves

from the UCP will be used to entice extra votes next spring — remember Ralph bucks? But keep tabs on how often Kenney brings up the nearly \$100-billion debt over the next year, because it's a front for what he really believes — austerity is a way of life, not a stop-gap for when the economy slows.

When he was first elected, we couldn't spend on Albertans because Alberta was "broke." Low energy revenues were an easy way to sell his ideology, which from day one has been to break down public services and ready them for privatization. He didn't worry a lick about deficits when he arrived, because deficits matter not in regards to his plans.

In fact, that lack of revenues made his goals easier — one of the obvious reasons behind his immediate move to gut taxation revenue in the lowest tax jurisdiction in the country. And also why he was able to spend two years leading up to 2019 saying debt was ruining Alberta

only to add record amounts of it and not bat an eyelash.

But an unexpected boom hasn't changed his tune, just the arrangement of it. If we couldn't spend because we had no money, how do you sell restraint when revenues ramp up? In Alberta, historically, all you need to do is revert to the same nonsense that sold people for decades: provincial debt is bad and we must avoid it at all cost.

But if deficits are no object when we're aiding the corporate rich, why do they all of a sudden cripple the province when used to better life for Albertans? The answer, of course, is they don't.

Money isn't a barrier between Alberta and a better future. But the people we put in charge of spending it sure are.

Scott Schmidt is the layout editor for the Medicine Hat News. He can be reached by email at sschmidt@medicinehatnews.com

PUBLIC NOTICES

8AM - 4PM SPECIAL SERVICES

Electric Outages.....	403.529.8260
Gas Emergency.....	403.529.8191
Water & Sewer Emergency.....	403.502.8042
After Hours Special Services.....	403.526.2828

DEVELOPMENT PERMITS APPROVED MARCH 3 TO MARCH 9, 2022 PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

RESIDENTIAL

917 4 STREET SE	(Lots 3, Block B, Plan 23593) PLDP20220078. Duplex
1259 ROSS STREET SE	(Lots 8, Block 14, Plan 481M) PLDP20220166. Single Detached House (Demolition).
1845 19 AVENUE SE	(Lots 10, Block 2, Plan 2662JK) PLDP20220169. Single Detached House (Addition)
669 SPRUCE WAY SE	(Lots 31, Block 3, Plan 9911834) PLDP20220170. Single Detached House (Enclosed Deck).

COMMERCIAL

266 4 STREET SW	(Lots 33-40, Block 11, Plan 833M) PLDP20220162. One Freestanding Sign.
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HOME OCCUPATION

A person claiming to be affected by a decision of the Development Officer or the Municipal Planning Commission may appeal to the Medicine Hat Subdivision and Development Appeal Board by completing and submitting to the City Clerk Department, the required Notice of Appeal form within twenty one (21) days of this publication. Notice of Appeal forms are available from the City Clerk Department, Third Floor, City Hall or on the City's website at www.medicinehat.ca.

All Development Permits listed are subject to conditions. Further information on any Development Permit may be obtained from the Planning & Development Services Department, Second Floor, City Hall during normal business hours (Telephone 403.529.8374).

2022 PROPERTY ASSESSMENT ROLL

Notice is hereby given that the 2022 Assessment Roll for the City of Medicine Hat has been prepared and the Assessment Notices will be mailed on March 16, 2022.

The Assessment Roll is open for inspection as of March 16, 2022. The roll is available to view at www.medicinehat.ca/viewmyassessment. Inquiries may be directed to the Assessment Department, City Hall, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on every day of the week except Saturday, Sunday, and public holidays by calling 403-529-8114. The complaint deadline is May 24, 2022.

Prior to filing a complaint, property owners are encouraged to contact the Assessment Department, Main Floor, City Hall, or phone (403) 529-8114, to resolve any concerns and possibly avoid a formal complaint to the Assessment Review Board.

If you wish to object to the entry or omission of your name, or that of any other person, or to the assessment of your property or any other property upon the said roll, you must complete and submit the Assessment Review Board Complaint form together with the applicable complaint registration fee. An agent may file a complaint on your behalf if you, the assessed owner, complete an Assessment Complaint Agent Authorization form. Submit completed forms to the Clerk of the Assessment Review Board at the following address:

CITY OF MEDICINE HAT
CITY HALL, 580 FIRST STREET SE
MEDICINE HAT, ALBERTA T1A 8E6
ATTENTION: CLERK OF ASSESSMENT REVIEW BOARD

Your complaint must include the following:

- indicate what information shown on an assessment notice or tax notice is incorrect,
- explain in what respect that information is incorrect,
- indicate what the correct information is, and
- identify the requested assessed value, if the complaint relates to an assessment.
- include the appropriate complaint registration fee.

Please ensure your complaint form includes all reasons for appealing. The Assessment Review Board cannot consider matters not included on your form.

Forms are available at the Assessment Department, Main floor, City Hall or at www.medicinehat.ca.

Dated this 12th day of March 2022.

Sue Sterkenburg, AMAA
Manager & City Assessor

PROTECT WATER LINES FROM FREEZING

The following actions should be considered to protect your water lines:

- Repair broken windows and ensure windows/vents are closed during the winter.
- Insulate water pipes in unheated areas, including crawl spaces.
- For sinks located against a non-insulated outside wall:
 - Open the vanity door to allow warm air to reach the water pipes.
 - A light bulb placed near the water pipe may generate enough heat to keep the water flowing.
 - Heat tape wrapped around the pipe may keep the pipe from freezing.
- Residents of mobile homes should check the condition of the heat tape on their water service and water meter.
- Protect unheated indoor water meter with an insulated box and water pipes should be wrapped in insulation using heat tape.

- Outside water taps and underground sprinkler systems should have the water supply shut off inside the house at the isolation valve for the tap.
- Sprinkler lines and taps should be drained/blown out.
- A thin stream of water (as thick as a pen) running continuously from at least one tap will help prevent a frozen water service.
- If you plan to be away from home over the winter period, close the main water isolation valve located next to the water meter in your home. You should leave the heat on in your home and have someone check inside your home daily while you're away.

A frozen water service, or a burst water pipe, is an inconvenience and expense that most people would like to avoid. Please take all possible precautions to prevent this happening in your home or business.

For more information, refer to www.medicinehat.ca or contact City Assets Environmental Utilities at 403.529.8176.

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