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New auto insurance legislation tops fall sitting agenda

Edmonton - Legislation to freeze auto insurance rates and eight bills carried over from the spring highlight a full agenda for the fall sitting of the provincial Legislature.

The *Insurance Amendment Act* will be introduced during the fall sitting of the Legislature, which reconvenes on Nov. 18. The proposed amendments will provide the framework for the implementation of an automobile insurance reform package that will include a new rate structure to benefit Alberta consumers. The legislation will also freeze automobile insurance premiums retroactively to Oct. 30 to protect consumers while the government implements the reform package. The freeze applies to mandatory and optional insurance costs for all classes of vehicles, and will not affect scheduled premium discounts for good drivers, or rate increases for drivers with recent bad records.

In addition to the *Insurance Amendment Act*, the initial fall legislative line-up is as follows:

Climate Change and Emissions Management Act, Bill 37

(Environment)-carried over from the spring sitting, this act addresses specified gas emissions responsible for the greenhouse effect as part of the Alberta Action Plan on Climate Change. The act provides for sectoral agreements, emissions trading, programs, reporting and funding of technological approaches to address climate change.

Environmental Protection and Enhancement Amendment Act, Bill 36

(Environment)-carried over from the spring sitting, this bill will accomplish three objectives: streamline the processes that support Alberta's new upstream oil and gas reclamation and remediation program; strengthen Alberta Environment's ability to adopt and enforce codes of practice; and enable electronic reporting of environmental incident information. As a result of further consultation with stakeholders and implementation of the new upstream oil and gas program, house amendments will be introduced during the fall sitting.

Personal Information Protection Act, Bill 44

(Government Services)-this act will help protect the personal information held by all organizations or companies not currently subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. An Alberta act would take the place of the federal *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* scheduled to take effect January 1, 2004 unless provinces enact substantially similar legislation. This bill was carried over from the spring sitting to allow for consultation with industry organizations, businesses and the federal government. As a result, house amendments will be introduced during the fall sitting.

Health Professions Amendment Act

(Health and Wellness)- amends the existing legislation to allow professional colleges to collect and provide information on the qualifications of health professionals to the Minister, and for the Minister to release that information to support health service delivery initiatives including the electronic health record, provider directory and health workforce planning.

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, Bill 38

(Human Resources and Employment)-carried over from the spring sitting, this act amends the current legislation to ensure that dependent children of deceased workers will continue to receive pension benefits. The act applies specifically to cases where a deceased worker's dependent children do not live with the worker's surviving spouse or adult interdependent partner.

Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research Amendment Act

(Innovation and Science)-amends the existing act to clarify the meaning of "real value of the endowment fund over the long term."

Alberta Court of Justice Act

(Justice)-this new act will provide the legislative framework for the creation of a Unified Family Court with jurisdiction over all family law matters in Alberta. The legislation is subsequent to the work done by the Unified Family Court Task Force and the establishment of an implementation committee earlier this year. This act will be introduced for consultation purposes and reintroduced in the spring 2004.

Family Law Act, Bill 45

(Justice)-this act consolidates most provincial family law in one act, addressing areas such as spousal and adult interdependent partner support, child support, guardianship and parenting (formerly custody and access). This bill was carried over from the spring sitting to allow for consultation with the judiciary, legal community and other affected government departments. As a result, amendments will be introduced during the fall sitting.

Justice Statutes Amendment Act, Bill 6

(Justice)-carried over from the spring sitting, this act includes minor amendments to four justice statutes-the *Judicature Act*, *Petty Trespass Act*, *Trespass to Premises Act* and the *Young Offenders Act*. Additional amendments to the *Petty Trespass Act* and *Trespass to Premises Act* will be introduced as a result of consultation with the RCMP, Crown prosecutors and input received from Albertans. As a result of consultation with the judiciary, one of the proposed amendments to the *Judicature Act* will be withdrawn.

Post-secondary Learning Act, Bill 43

(Learning)-this act combines and updates the *Universities Act*, the *Colleges Act*, the *Technical Institutes Act*, and the *Banff Centre Act*. The new act will allow institutions to be more responsive to student needs, enhance access to degree-completion opportunities and regulate tuition fees. This bill was carried over from the spring sitting to allow for consultation with students, post-secondary institutions and faculty associations. As a result, a number of house amendments will be introduced during the fall sitting.

Municipal Government Amendment Act

(Municipal Affairs)-amends the existing act to allow municipalities to collect off site road levies from developers to help pay for construction and upgrade costs to surrounding road systems. Other amendments will provide liability protection for officials of municipal boxing and wrestling commissions and other combat sports, and provide municipalities with more time to prepare for changes to the equalized assessment reporting process.

Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, Bill 41

(Revenue)-in addition to the imposition of corporate income tax, the *Alberta Corporate Tax Act* includes the Insurance Premiums Tax provisions and the Alberta Royalty Tax Credit program for corporations and individuals. Carried over from the spring sitting, this bill introduces the third phase of the business tax plan. The proposed amendments will also include changes to parallel recent federal amendments.

Tobacco Tax Amendment Act

(Revenue)-amends the existing act to reflect a proposed reduction to the cigar tax rate. Other potential

amendments will include strengthening of provisions relating to tobacco tax collected and held by tobacco tax collectors in trust for Alberta to protect Alberta's interest in those funds; harmonization of definitions, provisions and practices among jurisdictions; and amendments to provisions improving controls on tobacco stamping, marking, packaging or other controls

Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) Amendment Act

(Sustainable Resource Development)-amends the existing act to clearly separate the quasi-judicial function of the board from the administrative function as well as to clarify the importance of finance controls, membership of the board and the unbiased nature of appeals.

Wildlife Amendment Act, 2003

(Sustainable Resource Development)-the proposed bill will include increased penalties for poaching, an ability to order the clean-up of areas to prevent wildlife-human conflicts, a variety of measures to improve enforcement and a greater ability to prevent previous offenders from obtaining wildlife licenses.

Public Lands Amendment Act, 2003

(Sustainable Resource Development)-strengthens and clarifies existing legislation dealing with unauthorized use of roads or access points on public lands. Additional amendments will also allow for bison grazing on agricultural dispositions.

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Justice Web Site

: <http://www.gov.ab.ca/just/>

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