Twitter Thread by Janet French



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A few noteworthy things came out of a legislative committee meeting today.

First, we learned Alberta's chief electoral officer asked the gov't for a four-month extension for a complex investigation during the pandemic. The government said no. #ableg

https://t.co/CJtx0vFGkG

Elections AB won't say what the case is the timelines suggest it could be the investigation into the UCP leadership race. The office has handed out more than $200,000 in fines connected with election financing irregularities in the 2017 race.
https://t.co/wRxDukic4R

Several people have appealed those fines and findings to the court.

You may also recall leaked documents suggested Jason Kenney and Jeff Callaway's leadership campaigns shared strategy and information https://t.co/NX91cdQQsN

And the RCMP are investigating. #ableg

The NDP says the government needs to come clean about whether it turned down the chief electoral officer's application to extend the time to investigate the governing party.
#ableg

Also at today's committee meeting, seven independent officers of the legislature had their budgets up for approval. The committee approved six of them.
MLA Brad Rutherford then moved to delay a decision about the auditor general's budget. He says he wants more information. #ableg

The government members of the committee then voted to delay approval of the proposed $26 million auditor's budget to a later date, not yet set. The office had asked for $2.5 million less than this year. #ableg

A spokesperson for the auditor's office said they were not expecting this and they haven't heard what more info committee members are seeking. She can't remember a time when an independent officer's budget wasn't approved (but possibly approved with amendments). #ableg

NDP ethics and democracy critic Heather Sweet says this is no coincidence. Last month the auditor reported the Alberta government's first year of financial statements included $1.7 billion in accounting errors (which the govt then fixed). https://t.co/9QaTjZTb6R #ableg

The auditor general was also critical of the energy war room, saying it granted a lot of sole-sourced contracts and lacked adequate approvals and controls for expenses. Cdn Energy Centre says it has made improvements since. #ableg

There's more. We also learned from the chief electoral officer that senate elections and referendums planned for 2021 will cost Elections Alberta $1.4 million to co-ordinate. The UCP asked several questions about this - can't you find efficiencies with municipalities? #ableg

Resler said, maybe. But some municipalities lack the infrastructure for handling the ballots, he said. He said there are definite cost savings holding the votes at the same time. Anyhow, the committee approved a 28 per cent budget increase for Elections Alberta. #ableg

We don't quite know what we'll be voting on in the referendums the UCP has envisioned in 2021. Possibilities include sending a signal to Ottawa about Alberta's (possible lack of) support for equalization, daylight savings time or an Alberta Pension Plan. #ableg

Interesting note: the cost estimate from Elections AB does *not* include the potential costs of any recall processes or citizen-led referendums, should the government introduce those options (another committee is exploring them). #ableg