

= William Henry Cushing =

William Henry Cushing (August 21 , 1852 ? January 25 , 1934) was a Canadian politician . Born in Ontario , he migrated west as a young adult where he started a successful lumber company and later became Alberta 's first Minister of Public Works and the 11th mayor of Calgary . As Minister of Public Works in the government of Alexander Cameron Rutherford , he oversaw the creation of Alberta Government Telephones .

Cushing 's resignation in 1910 precipitated the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway scandal , which forced Rutherford 's resignation . Though Cushing had hopes of being asked to replace Rutherford , that role fell instead to Arthur Sifton , the province 's chief judge . Left out of Sifton 's cabinet , Cushing did not seek re @-@ election in the 1913 election , and did not re @-@ enter politics thereafter . He was the chairman of Mount Royal College 's board of governors for sixteen years . He died in 1934 .

= = Early life = =

Cushing was born August 21 , 1852 in Kenilworth , Ontario to William Cusing and Sarah Thomson . His father was a farmer who had immigrated from Norwich , England in 1840 . In 1879 , Cushing indentured as a carpenter . He moved to Calgary in 1883 , where in partnership with Stephen Jarett , he engaged in carpentry , building houses and stores . In 1877 Cushing married Elizabeth Rinn , who died three years later . In 1883 he married Mary Jane Waters , with whom he had two children . In 1885 he opened a sash and door factory , which made him wealthy . His business flourished and expanded ; by 1900 , it occupied 42 city lots and employed more than one hundred workers ; by 1911 , this number had reached two hundred . He was also active in the local Methodist church and the Bowness golf club , and served eight years as a school trustee with the Calgary Board of Education . He was a supporter of the Temperance Movement .

= = Municipal politics = =

Cushing was elected Calgary town councillor for a term beginning on January 20 , 1890 . He remained in that capacity until January 16 , 1893 . Two years later he became an alderman on the council of Calgary , which was now a city . He served as alderman from January 7 , 1895 until January 4 , 1897 , and again from May 1899 until January 2 , 1900 . During his last term he was elected the thirteenth mayor of Calgary , a position he held from January 2 , 1900 until January 7 , 1901 . He subsequently served another term as alderman from January 6 , 1902 until January 2 , 1905 .

He also served as the president of Calgary 's Board of Trade in 1906 .

= = Provincial politics = =

After Alexander Cameron Rutherford was asked to form Alberta 's first government in 1905 , he appointed Cushing as his Minister of Public Works . Historian L. G. Thomas notes that this was an important portfolio , given the rapid development of infrastructure expected in the new province . In keeping with custom for cabinet ministers in Westminster parliamentary systems , Cushing ran for the first Legislative Assembly of Alberta in the district of Calgary in the 1905 election . Cushing , a Liberal , was opposed by Conservative leader R. B. Bennett . The campaign was acrimonious ; at one meeting , Bennett accused Cushing of giving his fellow Liberal candidates road @-@ building money with which they could bribe their districts . On election day , Cushing defeated Bennett , who attributed his defeat to " Roman Catholic influence " .

Once elected , he was Calgary 's primary supporter in the legislature 's debate over Alberta 's capital city , claiming that it was the new province 's economic centre , that Alberta 's status as a province was the result of a political movement that had begun in Calgary , and that it would be cheaper to build a legislature there than in Edmonton , site of the interim capital . His motion to

name Calgary as the capital was defeated 16 votes to eight , and permanent capital was located at Edmonton . Though it was not to be at his preferred location , as Public Works Minister Cushing did choose the design for the new Alberta Legislature Building , which was based on the Minnesota State Capitol .

As Calgary 's representative , Cushing was further dismayed when Rutherford elected to locate the University of Alberta in his own hometown of Strathcona , immediately across the North Saskatchewan River from Edmonton . Calgarians felt that , having been denied the capital , they should be first in line for the university .

As Public Works Minister , Cushing was a primary advocate of government intervention in the labour disputes plaguing Alberta 's coal industry in 1907 ; Rutherford eventually appointed a commission to examine the problem . Cushing also presided over the government 's entry into the telephone business : in 1906 , most telephone lines in Alberta were privately owned , and the largest of these private owners was the Bell Telephone Company . Bell controlled all telephone service in Calgary , and refused to extend its operations into less densely populated , and therefore less profitable , regions of the province . In response , Cushing attacked Bell as " the most pernicious and iniquitous monopoly that had ever been foisted upon a people claiming to be free " and sponsored legislation creating Alberta Government Telephones to service areas that Bell would not . This new company later purchased Bell 's lines , financing the venture by issuing debentures , in contrast to the government 's usual policy of " pay as you go " . Cushing 's zeal for government involvement was such that member of the Canadian House of Commons Peter Talbot in 1908 warned Rutherford that his Public Works Minister was " going crazy " with public ownership and that Rutherford would " someday find a lot of trouble through him " . Thomas has argued that it was strange for a successful businessman like Cushing to be so aggressive rhetorically against a successful corporation , but Mount Royal College historian Patricia Roome has suggested that Cushing was soured by his own experience as a Calgarian living under the monopoly , hostile to what he saw as a symbol of " eastern capitalism " , and hopeful that bringing telephone service to rural areas would guarantee continued Liberal success .

= = = Railway scandal = = =

By the 1909 election , Calgary 's growth had earned it a second seat in the legislature . Cushing finished first in a five candidate field , and was elected to fill one of these seats ; Bennett , finishing second , was elected to the other .

Though Cushing , as Minister of Public Works , was initially responsible for railway policy , on November 1 , 1909 Rutherford created a new ministry of Railways , which he appointed himself to head . In February 1910 , Cushing resigned as Minister of Public Works , expressing disagreement with Rutherford 's policy of offering loan guarantees to private railway builders , including the Alberta and Great Waterways (A & GW) Railway . He stated in his letter of resignation that this policy had been adopted without his knowledge or consent . Rutherford accepted the resignation with regret , but publicly disagreed with Cushing 's claim that he had been kept unaware of government railway policy . On February 25 , Cushing gave his account of the events leading to his resignation in the legislature : after responsibility for railways was removed from his department , Rutherford had offered the A & GW guarantees of \$ 20 @, @ 000 per mile of railway constructed . In making this guarantee , Rutherford had not consulted government engineers in the department of Public Works about construction costs , relying instead on the A & GW 's engineer . Cushing felt that guaranteeing \$ 20 @, @ 000 per mile , regardless of actual construction costs , was unwise , and further believed that the government 's reliance on the A & GW 's engineer could let the company get away with building a sub @-@ standard railway .

There followed a dramatic series of legislative debates and votes , in which many Liberals , including Cushing , frequently voted against their own government , even on motions of non @-@ confidence . In March , Rutherford invited Cushing to rejoin the cabinet ; according to Cushing , he was assured that if he did so his rival , Attorney General Charles Wilson Cross , would resign . He declined Rutherford 's offer , both because he considered that he was no longer able to work with

the premier and because his allies among the anti @-@ Rutherford Liberals urged him to fight on . Rumours began to circulate that Rutherford would resign , to be replaced by Cushing . Lieutenant Governor of Alberta George Bulyea was indeed convinced that Rutherford would have to resign in order to save the Liberals , but he and other powerful Liberals did not view Cushing as capable of leading the government . Bulyea instead invited provincial Chief Justice Arthur Sifton to form a government , though Cushing was reputed to have been " sitting in his hotel room , his ear glued to the telephone , waiting for the summons from the Lieutenant @-@ Governor to assume the robes of Rutherford " .

Sifton left Cushing , along with all other major figures of the A & GW dispute , out of his first cabinet ; Ezra Riley , a staunch Cushing ally , resigned his seat in protest . Cushing did not do the same , but did not seek re @-@ election in the 1913 election .

= = Later life and legacy = =

Cushing was the first chairman of the Mount Royal College Board of Governors , holding the post from 1910 until 1926 , when he was designated Honorary Chairman . He died in Calgary January 25 , 1934 of a heart attack . Calgary 's W. H. Cushing Workplace School is named in his honour .

Cushing is primarily remembered for his role in the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway Scandal . In assessing his role in that episode , Thomas has suggested that his actions were motivated by something other than " revulsion against what appeared to be an unwise contract with a railway company " . Instead , he believes that Cushing had concluded that he , rather than Rutherford , should be premier , and began to conduct himself publicly in such a way as to undermine Rutherford 's authority . Whatever his motivations , Cushing 's resignation precipitated a scandal that ended Alexander Rutherford 's political career , and in so doing had a profound effect on Alberta 's political history . In evaluating his legacy , Roome also considers his role in establishing the government telephone system , which in her opinion " produced serious financial difficulties " for the province in the years ahead .

= = Electoral record = =