



AB Today – Daily Report November 5, 2019

Quotation of the day

“I fully understand the West.”

*Ontario Premier **Doug Ford** says he believes Ontario “has a big role to play” in mediating discord between Ottawa, Quebec and the Prairie provinces Alberta and Saskatchewan.*

Today in AB

On the schedule

The legislative assembly will reconvene at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

Two bills could be debated at committee stage:

- **Bill 19**, Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act; and
- **Bill 20**, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act.

Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, could continue to be debated at second reading.

All-party committees will [continue to discuss](#) the main estimates of various ministries.

Monday’s debates and proceedings

The Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills met on Monday morning to discuss UCP MLA **Mark Smith**'s private member's **Bill 204**, Election Recall Act.

The committee voted to instruct the legislature's research services team to issue a draft report on the testimony the committee heard — from Chief Electoral Officer **Glen Resler**, former Wildrose Party leader **Paul Hinman** and Alberta director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation **Franco Terrazzano** — and its members' recommendations for the house by Wednesday.

MLAs unanimously passed UCP MLA **Laila Goodridge's** Motion 508, which asks the government to immediately demand the federal government recognize the benefits of Alberta's oilsands and other fossil fuels. Goodridge was not present for the vote.

Two bills passed second reading on Monday evening:

- **Bill 19**, Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act; and
- **Bill 20**, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act.

Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, also faced second reading debate.

In the legislature

Former Alberta Party leader **Greg Clark** was in the Speaker's Gallery during question period, as was Manitoba's Agriculture and Resource Development Minister **Blaine Pedersen**.

A meeting of the Alberta Teachers Institute on parliamentary democracy was held at the legislature.

Premier watch

Premier **Jason Kenney** wrapped up his business trip to Mexico City where he met with reps from TC Energy and ATCO, Alberta companies that are building pipelines in Mexico.

In a social media video, Kenney [said](#) he told the commission about Alberta's leadership when it comes to the environmental, social and governance issues related to the oil industry. He went on to lament efforts by the "foreign-funded green left" and "special interests" to defame the sector and claimed the province is on the cusp of technology that will make Alberta a world leader on the environment.

NDP cries foul over cuts to former kids in care, UCP accuses

Opposition of stoking fear on Twitter

The NDP took aim Monday at "cruel" cuts to a provincial program to support young people who have been involved with Child Intervention Services.

In its recent budget, the United Conservative Party government lowered the eligibility age for the Support Financial Assistance Agreement program (SFAA) from 24 to 22, a move that will impact about 500 Albertans as they transition out of foster care.

Speaking to reporters ahead of question period, Children's Services Minister **Rebecca Schulz** said the government is working with case workers to help young adults with the transition and claimed there was a natural decline in the use of the program when recipients turned 22.

"Our government is focused on supporting the most vulnerable children and families across our province," Schulz said, pointing to child care subsidies that help former children in care who have children themselves.

When asked why those currently using the support — and expecting the program's funding to last until they turn 24 — will not be grandfathered in, Schulz accused the NDP of fear mongering.

"Some of the uncertainty has come from members of the Opposition trying to create fear and uncertainty," Schulz said.

NDP Leader **Rachel Notley** said the UCP promised Albertans that front-line services would not be cut. Instead, Premier **Jason Kenney** is making the most vulnerable pay for his corporate handout, according to Notley.

"I just don't know who does that," Notley told reporters.

She said she spoke with child care workers and people impacted who were in tears over the change and who expect to live on the street as a result. Other income support programs will only provide roughly one-third of what recipients of the Support Financial Assistance Agreement currently receive.

Notley said she directed her caucus to utilize committee-based estimates debates to suss out where the cuts are coming from. The program change was revealed during estimates deliberations last week.

Wallis Kendal, outreach worker, co-founder of the iHuman Youth Society and founder of the Moving the Mountains initiative, said youth in care need more time to reach benchmarks and the lowering of the eligibility age will hurt youth.

A former child-in-care, 21-year-old **Shyannah Sinclair**, said she learned last week she will be phased out of the program in 10 months, rather than having support available until she is 24.

"I was really scared and upset and I don't really know what I'm going to do," she said in a news release issued by the NDP. "My goal is to be finished school by the time I'm 24. This really impacts my future."

Speaker **Nathan Cooper** ruled against a motion for an emergency debate on the issue, stating the Opposition would have a chance to bring it up in question period, during debate of budget-related bills and during discussion of main estimates.

Today's events

November 5 at 8:30 a.m. — *Edmonton*

The UCP's cabinet will meet in the cabinet room of the Alberta legislature.

November 5 at 11 a.m. — *Edmonton*

Premier **Jason Kenney** will hold a media availability in the legislature to discuss his trade mission to Mexico.

November 5 at 11:30 a.m. — *Calgary*

Alberta Union of Provincial Employees members will hold a picket at Calgary's South Health Campus.

Topics of conversation

- In a Monday morning fundraising email, Ontario Premier **Doug Ford** touted himself as a unifying force in the wake of last month's federal election that he says left the country more divided than ever. "Some really big problems are going to get a whole lot worse" if Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** doesn't "get this right," Ford warned.
 - The Ontario leader called himself a friend of western premiers, as well as the premier of Quebec, saying people in the West "feel like they're being ignored" and lamenting the \$20 billion Alberta pays into the equalization system every year.
 - During a separate news conference, Ford suggested he instigated last Friday's conference call with Canada's premiers that earlier reports had said was initiated by Alberta Premier **Jason Kenney**. Ford said he offered to host a meeting of premiers in Toronto.
 - The premiers plan to meet after Trudeau strikes his cabinet on November 20 and before a scheduled meeting with the PM next year.
 - Premier **Jason Kenney**'s office [told the *Globe and Mail*](#) he is open to attending a meeting of the Council of the Federation in Toronto — or anywhere.
 - Saskatchewan Premier **Scott Moe** is the current chair of the Council of the Federation, and it will be up to him to call the meeting and determine its location.
- Alberta's Election Commissioner **Lorne Gibson** [issued four new fines](#) against Calgary businessman **Robyn Lore** and his company Agropyron Enterprises Ltd. for making illegal corporate donations to the so-called "kamikaze" candidate **Jeff Callaway** during the UCP's leadership race.

- Lore was given two fines of \$4,000 and a fine of \$9,000, while his company, was fined \$8,000 for contributions from a prohibited entity.
- Edmonton Mayor **Don Iveson** and Calgary Mayor **Naheed Nenshi** [sent a letter](#), also signed by the presidents of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, to the UCP government outlining concerns with **Bill 20**, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act.
 - The municipal leaders are taking issue with the UCP's new Local Government Fiscal Framework, which will grow at just half the rate of general provincial revenue each year. The letter calls for an amendment to **Bill 20** that would support a one-to-one growth ratio.
 - "Just as the premier has repeatedly called on the federal government to issue Albertans a 'fair deal' to drive Canada's prosperity, municipalities are asking for their 'fair deal' to be full partners in supporting economic recovery and growth," Iveson said. "We share the same ambition with the provincial government for a strong and prosperous Alberta, which is why municipalities need to be treated as respected and equal partners."
- Saskatchewan has been [granted intervener status](#) in the latest legal challenge to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. The province will back Ottawa's bid to defeat the cases brought by six First Nations groups that allege the federal government's second round of consultations with Indigenous peoples on the controversial project were inadequate. "Saskatchewan will make submissions to the Federal Court of Appeal on the need to fairly balance the duty to consult with other matters of public interest, such as transportation infrastructure," Saskatchewan Attorney General **Don Morgan** said in a statement. "Projects like Trans Mountain create a stronger economy that allow the federal and provincial governments to invest in programs and initiatives like health and education."
 - In September, the Federal Court of Appeal [granted permission](#) for the First Nations groups to proceed with their challenges and dismissed six submissions arguing the federal government's re-approval of TMX should be overturned on environmental grounds. The court is set to hear arguments on the approved challenges next month.
- Average weekly earnings in Alberta [were up](#) year-over-year in August from \$1,148 in August 2018 to \$1,163 in August 2019, a 1.3 per cent increase.
- [Oil production jumped](#) by 2.1 per cent year over year in September.
 - Non-conventional production, which accounts for 83.8 per cent of oil production in the province, drove the rise, with a 3.9 per cent year-over-year increase, while conventional oil was down 6.2 per cent from September 2018 to September 2019.

- The Alberta Screen Industry Action Committee [held a meeting](#) on Sunday in Calgary attended by more than 500 people to discuss the phaseout of screen-based production grants. Panelists at the meeting [warned](#) the new system will mean millions in lost revenue for the industry.
- During an address at an Economic Club of Canada event in Calgary on Friday, CIBC CEO **Victor Dodig** called the energy sector “Canada’s family business” and said his bank supports the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion.
 - “I know that some financial institutions are turning away from traditional energy markets,” Dodig said. “We know your industry, your business, and will be there to help address the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead.”

News briefs — Governmental

UCP strikes sub-regional groups to assist in caribou recovery plan

The first three of the province’s sub-regional caribou task forces met for the first time in Edmonton on Monday.

The task forces will advise the government on local planning processes to ensure they are incorporated in a forthcoming provincial draft plan on caribou conservation that will replace the NDP’s contentious caribou range plan.

Environment and Parks Minister **Jason Nixon** told reporters there is no timeline in place for when the province will meet the federal government’s requirement for conserving habitat, but he said talks with Ottawa are still in the works.

The three task forces have 42 members, pulled from First Nations, industry and community groups, and are headed up by local UCP MLAs. Another 12 sub-regional task forces are planned but could take “years” before they are ready.

Recommendations from the first three groups are due next year.

Luan offers up new council on mental health, replaces NDP-era opioid response team

Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions **Jason Luan** announced a new [Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council](#) in Calgary on Monday. The council has a broader scope than the NDP’s previous [Opioid Emergency Response Commission](#).

Luan said the council will focus on treatment, recovery and justice programs, as well as home and primary care, and will file recommendations with the government next summer.

“Our government is committed to a recovery-oriented system of care that is fair, firm and compassionate,” Luan said. “We want to eliminate barriers to recovery and give hope to people facing mental health and addiction challenges.”

The 23-member panel will be co-chaired by Mustard Seed founder **Pat Nixon** — father of UCP MLAs **Jason Nixon** and **Jeremy Nixon** — and **Laureen MacNeil**, executive director of the Canadian Mental Health Association’s Calgary chapter.

The panel will also feature ex-officio members, including **Deena Hinshaw**, Alberta’s chief medical officer of health, and previous members of the NDP-appointed panel, **John Cabral**, **Sherri Wilson**, **Bill Sweeney** and **Peter MacKinnon**. UCP MLA **Whitney Issik** (Calgary—Glenmore) is also one of the members.

Question Period

NDP kickoff

- NDP Leader **Rachel Notley** led off question period by asking why the government is removing supports for former children in care, capping the age at 22 instead of 24.
 - “These young people have suffered more than we can imagine. We promised to care for them. Why is a corporate handout more important to you than the young adults for whom we are all responsible?”
- Children’s Services Minister **Rebecca Schulz** said the program was seeing a natural drop-off after 22 years old. She added her ministry has increased its overall funding by 8.5 per cent.
 - “I have to say that it’s unfortunate that this is coming from the members opposite, who seriously underfunded basic supports for children and families in care,” Schulz responded.

Other NDP questions

Notley also asked Justice Minister **Doug Schweitzer** why municipalities are facing cuts to police funding, and asked Education Minister **Adriana LaGrange** why school boards are being forced to choose between laying off teachers or hiking school fees.

Opposition MLAs also asked about the new municipal funding formula, and cuts to post-secondary funding, film industry grant cuts and the Indigenous Relations Ministry.

NDP Opposition members wanted to know why the government is ending joint governance of public sector pensions and closing a shelter in Fort McMurray.

UCP friendly questions

UCP backbench MLAs asked why the Whitecourt Healthcare Centre hasn't seen an upgrade since 1966, and what is being done to protect legal gun owners while cracking down on illegal firearms. They also asked about community grants and responsible funding for infrastructure projects.