



AB Today – Daily Report November 15, 2019

Quotation of the day

“Premier [**Jason**] **Kenney** likes to compare himself to premier [**Peter**] **Lougheed** or [**Ralph**] **Klein**. Based on his spending habits and level of entitlement, he’s shaping up to be more like [**Alison**] **Redford**.”

*NDP Finance critic **Shannon Phillips** slams the premier for his office’s travel expenses at a time of fiscal restraint.*

Today in AB

On the schedule

The legislative assembly is on break for a constituency week. The house will return on Monday, November 18.

Premier watch

Premier **Jason Kenney** was in Chestermere for the opening of the Country Hills Egg Farm on Thursday. On Friday, he will address the Rural Municipalities Association conference in Edmonton.

Government distances itself from \$900K contract between public inquiry commissioner and his son’s law firm

NDP Democracy and Ethics critic **Heather Sweet** said Alberta's ethics commissioner should investigate whether the man leading a provincial inquiry broke ethics rules when he awarded a \$905,000 contract to a Calgary law firm where his son is a partner.

Sweet said Thursday that she will ask Ethics Commissioner **Marguerite Trussler** to examine the potential conflict of interest faced by **Steve Allan**, who was appointed to lead a public inquiry into alleged foreign-funded attacks on Alberta's oil and gas sector in July.

Within days of his appointment, Allan had authorized a \$905,000 sole-source contract with international firm Dentons to provide legal advice during the inquiry.

Allan's son, corporate lawyer **Toby Allan**, is a partner at Dentons' Calgary office, a familial connection Sweet says constitutes a conflict of interest.

"This is a direct relationship with the head of the inquiry and his son," Sweet said, adding that even if Toby isn't directly related to the case, he stands to personally benefit as a partner.

The inquiry was instigated by Energy Minister **Sonya Savage** and is funded by her ministry, but Savage's office distanced itself from the deal.

Savage's spokesperson provided *AB Today* with a copy of the contract Allan signed when he took over as commissioner of the public inquiry, and highlighted a clause outlining the commissioner's "sole discretion" when it comes to procuring resources and services.

According to the contract, Minister Savage only serves as an "administrator" when it comes to the commissioner's expenses, part of an effort to ensure Allan's independence.

"The Minister's role under these contracts shall be limited to payment only," the contract states.

However, the contract with Dentons was signed off on by the Justice Ministry, headed up by Minister **Doug Schweitzer**. Schweitzer previously worked as a lawyer at the firm's Calgary office but severed ties ahead of the spring election campaign.

Schweitzer's spokesperson said the lucrative deal was signed off on by bureaucrats and the minister had nothing to do with it.

"Dentons is a large global law firm with approximately ten thousand lawyers and billions of dollars in annual revenue," Schweitzer's press secretary said in an emailed statement. "It is our understanding that Mr. Toby Allan, a lawyer in a different department, is not involved in any way with work being done for the Inquiry."

“Large law firms are regularly required to construct ethical walls between clients in order to ensure no conflicts of interest,” he added.

The inquiry, launched on July 4, has a total budget of \$2.5 million. The final report from the inquiry is due back to government on July 2, 2020.

Allan will earn a base salary of \$291,876 for his one-year term as commissioner, according to his contract. Should he be required to participate in legal proceedings after his term is complete, Allan will also be paid up to \$800 per day to provide testimony. Ecojustice has already threatened a legal challenge against the inquiry, calling its mandate to investigate environmentalists unconstitutional.

The *Edmonton Journal* [reports](#) \$108,123 of the inquiry’s budget has been allocated to a part-time executive director and another \$905,000 is being used to contract out forensic accountants and other experts.

Allan [told](#) the *Globe and Mail* his son has no role in the contract, nor will he work on the file. He added he also hired another law firm, Rose LLP to provide legal work for the inquiry.

NDP requests audit into premier’s office spending

Members of Alberta’s Opposition NDP said their party will request an audit of the expenses of **David Knight-Legg**, the principal adviser to Premier **Jason Kenney** who stands accused of spending \$45,000 in taxpayer money in the last six months.

On Thursday, NDP Democracy and Ethics critic **Heather Sweet** sent a letter to provincial Auditor General **Doug Wylie**, asking his office to investigate Knight-Legg’s expenses, which allegedly include \$18,000 spent on four trips to London, U.K. The letter was cosigned by Finance critic **Shannon Phillips** and Energy critic **Irfan Sabir**.

The letter asks for proof of the value-for-money on the four trips taken to London and also requests the AG to review whether the province’s \$30-million energy war room, a.k.a the Canadian Energy Centre (CEC), complies with the province’s public disclosure law.

Premier **Jason Kenney**’s office dismissed the NDP’s request as a “stunt” and said the premier “make[s] no apologies for fighting to bring investment back to Alberta and forcibly fighting this foreign-funded campaign of defamation against our province.”

Today’s events

November 15 at 8 a.m. — Edmonton

Infrastructure Minister **Prasad Panda** and Municipal Affairs Minister **Kaycee Madu** will make an announcement on capital projects in the Edmonton area at the Edmonton Law Courts Building.

November 15 at 8:40 a.m. — Edmonton

Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction **Grant Hunter** will speak at the Rural Municipalities of Alberta fall convention at the Edmonton Convention Centre. Hunter's speech will be followed up by an onstage cabinet ministers' forum and an address by Premier **Jason Kenney**.

November 15 at 1 p.m. — Edmonton

The United Conservative Party cabinet will meet in the cabinet room of the legislature.

November 15 at 2 p.m. — Calgary

Seniors and Housing Minister **Josephine Pon** will speak at the 45th anniversary of the Oi Kwan Foundation.

November 15 at 6 p.m. — Banff

Transportation Minister **Ric McIver** will speak at the Alberta Roadbuilders and Heavy Construction Association annual conference at the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel.

November 15 at 7 p.m. — Edmonton

Advanced Education Minister **Demetrios Nicolaidis** will speak at the CAREERS: The Next Generation High School Apprenticeship Scholarship awards night at the Edmonton Expo Centre.

November 15-16 at 9 a.m. — Edmonton

The Alberta Liberal Party will hold its annual general meeting and convention at the Chateau Nova Yellowhead on Friday and Saturday.

Upcoming events

November 16 at 1:30 p.m. — Edmonton

Friends of Medicare is hosting a protest at the legislature against **Bill 207**, Conscience Rights (Health Care Providers) Protection Act, introduced by UCP MLA **Dan Williams**.

November 16 at 8:15 p.m. — Calgary

Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women Minister **Leela Aheer** will speak at the celebration of 100 years of volunteering by the Ismaili community at the Empire Banquet Hall.

November 17 at 12:15 p.m. — Edmonton

Aheer will speak at the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada at the Fantasyland Hotel in West Edmonton Mall.

Topics of conversation

- The Swedish central bank has sold off bonds from Alberta and Australia because of their greenhouse gas emission records, *Reuters reports*.
 - “Australia and Canada are countries that are not known for good climate work. Greenhouse gas emissions per capita are among the highest in the world,” Riksbank Deputy Governor **Martin Floden** said in a speech at Orebro University in Sweden. “As a result of the new investment policy, we sold our holdings of bonds issued by Alberta in the spring.”

- Conservative Party of Canada Leader **Andrew Scheer** responded on Thursday to Bloc **Québécois** Leader **Yves-François Blanchet**’s assertion that the West is manufacturing a national unity crisis, calling his remarks “both insulting and completely disingenuous.”
 - “Insulting because he accused westerners of faking a unity crisis when the frustration and anxiety out west is all too real. Disingenuous because he refuses to acknowledge how much his province has benefitted from the West’s economic success. His hypocrisy and double-standard are astounding.”
 - Scheer accused Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** of sowing the seeds of disunity.

- After the expiration of an NDP-era grant, wait times for MRIs and CTs are once again surpassing the province’s targets, an Edmonton-area physician [told](#) the *Edmonton Journal*.
 - The target wait for urgent MRIs is seven days, while semi-urgent scans should be conducted within 30 days, according to the province’s guidelines. But **Dr. Ernie Schuster** says patients are waiting more than 30 days for MRIs and CTs and up to 200 days for semi-urgent scans.

- The *Globe and Mail* digs into another element of Premier **Jason Kenney**’s Fair Deal plan — a request that Ottawa [increase the \\$60 per person cap on its Fiscal Stabilization Program](#), which would allow Alberta to receive more federal relief when its economy slows.

- A new climate change study [found the rate](#) of Canadians being exposed to and displaced by wildfires has grown radically in the last decade.
 - The Lancet Countdown, an annual survey of research on how climate change impacts human health, found the number of Canadians exposed directly to wildfires averaged 35,300 between 2001 and 2004, but grew to 54,100 between 2015 and 2018.
 - Meanwhile, more than half of the 448,444 Canadians who were forced to leave their homes because of wildfires since 1980 had to do so in the last decade.

- The Ministry of Labour and Immigration is seeking public feedback on labour rights. A new survey asks Albertans to weigh in on vacation time rules, holiday pay, youth employment laws, group termination and more.
 - Alberta Federation of Labour president **Gil McGowan** called the survey a precursor to benefit reductions and the elimination of workers' rights.
 - “No worker, for example, would ask as they’re getting fired, ‘Are there any regulatory burdens related to group termination that could be removed to save time, money and resources?’” McGowan said. “An online survey available for two weeks is not consultation. This government is not sincerely trying to get the views of ordinary working Albertans because it’s already made up its mind.”
- Economic Development Minister **Tanya Fir** issued a statement celebrating Alberta being [ranked first place](#) in the Montreal Economic Institute’s rankings on interprovincial trade.
 - “Since forming government, we have removed 21 exceptions under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement,” Fir said. “Our government has moved Alberta from having the third highest number of exceptions to having the fewest — and today’s first-place ranking is a testament to our bold action to establish a freer economy.”

News briefs — Governmental

Dale Nally headed on trade mission to promote natural gas in Asia

Associate Minister for Natural Gas **Dale Nally** will head to Japan and South Korea today for an eight-day mission to promote the province’s natural gas sector.

“As part of our plan to revitalize Alberta’s natural gas sector, I’m meeting with investors and government officials to share with them that Alberta is open for business,” Nally said. “We are a place they can turn to as a source of clean, secure and ethically produced natural gas.”

Nally will attend the GZERO Summit in Tokyo and tour the Kogas LNG Terminal in Korea.

The cost of the trip is \$31,000 and will include economy airfare, meals and ground transportation for the associate minister, his chief of staff and the associate deputy minister.

Lobbyist registrations

If you are looking for further information on any lobbying registry, it is all public and easily searchable [here](#).

Consultants who registered as lobbyists from November 8 2019 – November 14, 2019

- **Philip Dewan**, Counsel Public Affairs Inc.
 - **Clients:** The Alberta Paramedic Association, Adapt Pharma Canada Ltd.
- **Jeff Sterzuk**, Prairie Sky Enterprises Ltd. (Prairie Sky Strategy)
 - **Clients:** Greenwave Innovations Inc.
- **Gordon Olsen**, Gordon Olsen Associates Inc. (GOA Inc.)
 - **Clients:** McKesson Canada, Alberta Civil Trial Lawyers Association, NOTARIUS Inc.
- **Randy Pettipas**, Global Public Affairs
 - **Clients:** PETRONAS Energy Canada Ltd.
- **Sheila Wisniewski**, Hill+Knowlton Strategies
 - **Clients:** H&R Block Canada, Calgary Downtown Association
- **Monte Solberg**, New West Public Affairs
 - **Clients:** Alberta Group
- **Truman Severson**, Content Consulting, Inc.
 - **Clients:** Chinatown Multi-Level Care Foundation
- **Dimitri Pantazopoulos**, Maple Leaf Strategies
 - **Clients:** NBCUniversal Media LLC

Organizations that registered in-house lobbyists from November 8, 2019 – November 14, 2019

- Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta
- Syngenta Canada Inc.
- Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council
- Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council
- Imperial Oil Ltd.
- Alberta Motor Association
- Alberta Society of Radiologists
- TransCanada PipeLines Limited
- International Union of Operating Engineers, Local Union No. 955
- Alberta Cannabis Council Ltd.
- ARC Resources Ltd.

- International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Shipbuilders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers, Lodge 146
- Motorcycle & Moped Industry Council