



## AB Today – Daily Report November 26, 2019

### Quotation of the day

“I’m here to find common ground.”

*Deputy Prime Minister and Canada’s Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs **Chrystia Freeland** set up her meeting with Premier **Jason Kenney** before heading into his office.*

### Today in AB

#### On the schedule

The house is scheduled to convene at 10 a.m. The government could call any of the following pieces of business for morning and afternoon debate:

- **Bill 21**, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act;
- **Bill 25**, Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act;
- **Bill 26**, Farm Freedom and Safety Act;
- **Bill 27**, Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act;  
and
- **Bill 28**, Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act.

#### Monday’s debates and proceedings

UCP MLA **Mark Smith’s Bill 204**, Election Recall Act, was granted second reading during the morning’s private members’ business.

**Roger Reid’s Bill 206**, Workers’ Compensation (Enforcement of Decisions) Amendment Act, also cleared second reading and was debated at committee of the whole.

The private members' business committee has not yet finalized its report on UCP MLA **Dan Williams'** controversial **Bill 207**, Conscience Rights Protection Act, so it was not called in the house. Ditto for UCP MLA **Matt Jones'** organ donation bill.

Later in the day, a number of government bills were debated and voted on, including:

- **Bill 24**, Appropriation Act, which passed third reading;
- **Bill 27**, Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, which passed second reading; and
- **Bill 28**, Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, which also cleared second reading stage.

### **In the legislature**

Former Ukrainian president **Petro Poroshenko** [visited the legislature](#) during a trip to Edmonton on Monday, where he admired a monument to Ukrainian settlers on the grounds. Poroshekno was in town to address the Ukrainian Canadian Congress.

Conservative MP for Lethbridge **Rachael Harder** was in the Speaker's gallery.

Consul general of the Netherlands in Vancouver, **Henk Snoeken**, and honorary consul general of the Netherlands in Edmonton, **Jerry Bouma**, met with the Speaker.

### **Premier watch**

Premier **Jason Kenney** attended the Premier's Christian [prayer breakfast](#), with a keynote speech from **Pat Nixon**, who founded the Mustard Seed ministry and is the father of UCP MLAs **Jason Nixon** and **Jeremy Nixon**.

Pat Nixon was named co-chair of the province's Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council earlier this month.

In the afternoon, Kenney met with Deputy Prime Minister **Chrystia Freeland** in the legislature for a closed-door meeting

Boo or boo-urns? The *Star* [tackled](#) the social media debate on whether the premier was booed at the Grey Cup coin toss.

## **New Deputy PM touches down in Edmonton for inaugural meeting with Kenney**

Premier **Jason Kenney** held a closed-door meeting with Canada's new deputy prime minister, **Chrystia Freeland**, to lay the groundwork for the relationship between their governments, as the federal Liberals prepare to head back to parliament with a reduced minority.

Neither leader took questions from the media, but they issued brief statements ahead of Monday afternoon's meeting.

Freeland, who in her dual role as minister of intergovernmental affairs will act as Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**'s lead on federal-provincial relations, said Kenney was right to note there are challenges in Ottawa's relationship with Alberta, but that she looks forward to finding common ground.

"Certainly our government heard from Alberta a strong message in the election and that means we have to listen really hard," she added. "That's what I'm here today to do."

In recent months, Kenney has been strongly critical of the federal **Bills C-48** and **C-69**, which he says introduce regulatory hurdles that could stymie natural resource development. He has also floated the idea of establishing a provincial public pension plan, which would mean opting out of the Canada Pension Plan.

Kenney said Freeland may represent an Ontario riding now, but she was originally an Alberta girl from a farm in Peace River.

"Albertans are looking for a fair deal, and I certainly hope that we could get down to some positive conversations about how we could do that," he added.

No details were issued on what specific topics the two discussed.

Freeland also met with Edmonton Mayor **Don Iveson**.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister **Travis Toews** [wrote a letter](#) to his federal counterpart **Bill Morneau** with a series of requests, including funding to pay for abandoned oil well reclamation.

Toews spoke with Morneau on Monday, asking for a revamping of the equalization formula, an end to the mortgage stress test, co-operation on Alberta pulling out of the Canadian Pension Plan, and an opt-out provision for any potential national pharmacare plan.

"We discussed the frustration Albertans are feeling over federal policies that are failing our province and the urgent need for action to support the Alberta economy," Toews said in a news release.

## **Today's events**

**November 26 at 8:30 a.m. — Edmonton**

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

**November 26 at 12:30 p.m. — Edmonton**

Economic Development, Trade and Tourism Minister **Tanya Fir** will speak at the fall board meeting of the Alberta Chamber of Commerce at the Chateau Lacombe Hotel.

**November 26 at 12:30 p.m. — Edmonton**

Transportation Minister **Ric McIver** and Minister of Justice and Solicitor General **Doug Schweitzer** will provide an update on photo radar in the legislature media room.

**November 26 at 5:15 p.m. — Edmonton**

Agriculture and Forestry Minister **Devin Dreeshen** will speak at the Fertilizer Canada legislative forum reception in the Federal Building's Capital View room.

**November 26 at 6:30 p.m. — Edmonton**

Agriculture and Forestry Minister **Devin Dreeshen** will speak at the EQUUS Rural Electrification Association MLA reception at the Matrix Hotel.

**November 26 at 5:30 p.m. — Calgary**

New Alberta Liberal Party president **Pete Helfrich** will host an event at Hudsons Canada's Pub.

## Topics of conversation

- **Alan Hallman** — Premier Kenney's friend and former campaign manager — received a \$1,500 fine from the now-dissolved Office of the Election Commissioner and tried to appeal it earlier this month, the *Western Standard* [reports](#).
- Trans Mountain has been gathering "activity reports" on Indigenous environmental activists, particularly the Tiny House Warriors, according to documents [obtained](#) by CBC.
  - Activists are raising concerns that data collection and surveillance extends beyond social media posts and that the information is being passed along to law enforcement.
  - It is unclear how Trans Mountain — purchased last year by the federal government, therefore making it a Crown corporation — collects the information and uses it.
- Two political scientists are saying Premier **Jason Kenney** has a case of "Quebec envy" in a piece [published](#) in *Policy Options*.
  - The piece by McGill University professor **Daniel Béland** and University of Calgary associate professor **Melanee Thomas** analyzed Kenney's "Fair Deal" strategy, specifically its calls to change the equalization formula.
  - "From our perspective, Kenney's political weaponization of equalization is both a symptom of Quebec envy and a deliberate strategic tool meant to tap

into regional and partisan resentment,” the authors wrote. “It is working, at least with the #Wexit crowd, who rail against ‘liberal supremacy’ but also claim that ‘We’re going to build our pipeline and Quebec is going to pay for it.’ Both sentiments, in our view, highlight the consequences of partisan and regional polarization deployed in Kenney’s political strategy.”

- Alberta-based Pembina Pipeline Corp. is [shipping propane](#) to Quebec to alleviate the shortage caused by the CN Rail strike.
  - "At Pembina, we believe the provinces can work together in the spirit of unity to secure a safe, reliable and long-term supply of energy from each other, rather than from foreign countries who do not share Canadian values," said **Mick Dilger**, Pembina president and CEO. "The best question is: why would we not?"
- Residential construction is up for the fifth straight month in Alberta with seasonally adjusted spending in September at \$1.1 billion, an increase of 2.5 per cent from August.
  - Overall spending is still down nine per cent from September 2018 and 13.4 per cent compared to September 2017. The September 2019 levels are far below the pre-downturn numbers in September 2014, with a 29.4 per cent drop.

## News briefs — Governmental

### Ministry of Justice

#### Province to double Crown articling students

Justice Minister and Solicitor General **Doug Schweitzer** announced the government is more than doubling the number of law students to work articling jobs for the Crown. The positions will be held specifically for students in rural Alberta and smaller districts.

Currently, the province hires eight students to help with the duties of a Crown prosecutor under supervision. As of the announcement, the government will hire eight more, which will increase to 20 by 2021.

“Our government wants to ensure that we are the highest employer of articling students in Alberta so our law students do not leave for other provinces,” Schweitzer said in a news release. “We want to ensure that Alberta’s legal talent stays in Alberta and skilled Albertans have the opportunities to live, work and raise families here.”

NDP Justice critic **Kathleen Ganley** approves of the plan.

“One of the most challenging things for the Government of Alberta is to retain Crown prosecutors, especially in the rural area,” Ganley said.

Her one concern is the change is being made at a time when the overall court budget is being reduced by 20 per cent.

## News briefs — Governmental

### Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

Child and Youth Advocate **Del Graff** issued a special report after six youth who were receiving Support and Financial Assistance Agreements died over a nine-month period.

The report, [\*A Critical Time: A Special Report on Emerging Adults Leaving Children's Services Care\*](#), recommends improving the delivery of the grants for former foster children — however, it was written before the UCP began to pare down the program.

The grant covers living expenses, accommodations, training, education, medical coverage and other services for youth up to the age of 22 who are transitioning out of provincial care — down from the previous age of 24.

Graff said his office received 102 complaints about the difficulty in receiving the Support and Financial Assistance Agreement grants and provided three recommendations, including beefing up supports for adequate housing.

### Question period

Monday was NDP Leader **Rachel Notley**'s first day back in question period since being ejected last Tuesday during a heated exchange on **Bill 22**. She withdrew remarks of unparliamentary language, but did not apologize.

"In the face of the contradiction that appeared between the statement of the house leader and the words within the act, I used unparliamentary language when I said that the house leader was misleading the house," Notley said.

"While I retain my position that the house leader was incorrect when he suggested that **Bill 22** did not fire anyone, I respect the rules and traditions of this chamber, and as such, I withdraw my comment."

Monday also marked Premier **Jason Kenney**'s return to the house post-Texas mission — and the first time the Opposition could question him on the controversial legislation passed last week.

- Notley kicked off question period by bringing up **Bill 22** and the ouster of Election Commissioner **Lorne Gibson**.

- “If you believe you did the right thing, will you at least correct the record and admit that as of today Lorne Gibson is no longer the election commissioner,” Notley asked. “Please tell the truth.”
- Premier **Jason Kenney** responded with the UCP line that the election commissioner's work will continue under the chief electoral officer.
  - “**Bill 22** received more hours of debate than any other bill before the legislature in this fall session,” Kenney said.
  - The bill received about ten hours of debate, thanks to three time-allocation motions.

### **Other NDP questions**

NDP Finance critic **Shannon Phillips** asked about a \$73,500 sole-source contract for video and photography services for the government's communication and public engagement office that went to Calgary-based company Vek Labs. Vek Labs previously made several campaign videos for the United Conservative Party during the election.

NDP MLAs also asked about public sector pension changes, layoffs in both the private and public sector, deaths of former foster children, the consolidation of the seniors advocate into the health advocate, and UCP members' position on reproductive rights.

### **UCP friendly questions**

UCP backbench MLAs asked about gender-based violence protection, tow truck driver safety, improving the justice system and post-secondary institution funding.