



AB Today – Daily Report May 23, 2019

Quotation of the day

“It is our duty and our destiny to renew Alberta’s role as an economic and political leader within Canada.”

*Lieutenant Governor **Lois Mitchell** delivers the UCP government’s speech from the throne in the legislature Wednesday.*

Today in AB

On the schedule

The House is scheduled to meet again today at 9 a.m..

Opposition Leader **Rachel Notley** will be given a chance to respond to the throne speech in the House. **Bill 1** could also be called for debate.

The government is expected to introduce the following pieces of legislation over the coming sitting days:

- **Bill 2**, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business;
- **Bill 3**, Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act; and
- **Bill 4**, Red Tape Reduction Act.

Per a motion on the order paper, the government wants to authorize MLAs to sit during the evenings on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays for the duration of the summer session, unless otherwise noted.

Wednesday's debates and proceedings

Lieutenant Governor **Lois Mitchell** delivered the government's throne speech in the chamber on Wednesday afternoon.

After the LG concluded the 18-minute speech, Premier **Jason Kenney** introduced **Bill 1**, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax. The bill was granted first reading.

Premier Watch

Premier **Jason Kenney** [held his first official meeting with](#) Edmonton Mayor **Don Iveson** in his office Wednesday to discuss the city's priorities.

Kenney is scheduled to head to Toronto today for private meetings with Bay Street investors.

'Renewal' is animating theme of new UCP government

"Spring is the season of renewal ... spring arrives with an explosion of nature's irrepressible energy. Every spring we experience the breathtaking vitality of nature's rush to renewal and are invigorated by it. So it is with our democracy."

So opened Premier **Jason Kenney's** first throne speech, which outlined the UCP's plans for the next four years and took a softer tone than his campaign rhetoric.

In the 18-minute speech, Kenney pledged to "protect" Albertans and find "unity" with the province's other political parties.

On the campaign trail, Kenney said his new government would not be "bogged down" by consultation, but the throne speech opened the door to "widespread public consultations on how best to end deficit spending while protecting front-line public services." (Although in a Wednesday morning news conference, the premier sang a different tune, saying he "hopes" to reduce public sector spending through job attrition.)

He promised to work with unions, promote "equality of opportunity," fuel economic mobility and fulfill the province's "yet-untapped potential" in order to renew Alberta's "destiny" as a political leader within Canada.

Kenney indulged in some Alberta nostalgia, capping off the speech with lines from the province's first throne speech from 1906, which ended, aptly, with the anglicized version of the province's motto and the UCP's current political slogan, "strong and free."

Looking ahead to the summer, fall (and beyond)

On top of Kenney's previously outlined legislative plans for the summer session, the speech hinted at the UCP government's agenda for the next 12 months.

Items include repealing the NDP's farm safety laws; emphasizing "parental rights" in the education system; establishing the TIER fund, the government's large-emitter carbon levy; renewing investor confidence in the oil and gas sector by setting up a royalty guarantee program; and introducing the Saving the Girl Next Door Act, which would aim to combat human trafficking.

In 2020, Kenney said he plans to keep campaign promises related to democratic reform, economic growth, environmental protection, public infrastructure, charitable giving, municipal governance, economic rights of artists, conservation and outdoor recreation, and family law.

NDP says UCP lacks social agenda

Opposition Leader **Rachel Notley** took issue with the speech's failure to mention protections for minorities, LGBTQ Albertans and people with disabilities and its minimal nods to education and health care. (Education was only mentioned once aside from references to planned changes to gay-straight alliance protections. The words "health care" only appeared once.)

"The speech spends as much time talking about desk thumping as it does on education and health care overall, which together accounts for 70 per cent of the provincial budget," Notley said.

She said Kenney's use of the words "effectiveness" and "efficiency" is code for funding cuts.

"For a speech that was supposed to be about renewal, it's clear that this government has gotten down to work diligently turning every dial at their disposal and thinking very hard about how to prepare Alberta for two decades ago," Notley said. "It's backwards and it won't work."

The ex-premier also slammed the government's plan to roll back NDP labour laws.

"The road to 'job creation' is paved with abandoned workers' rights," Notley said.

For his part, Kenney is not deterred by the Opposition or groups opposed to his agenda.

"There will be protests outside and all the usual interest groups will say the usual things," he told reporters Thursday.

Kenney fulfills campaign promise, introduces scrap-the-carbon-tax act

Carbon tax time of death? May 30 at 12:01 a.m.

If the government's **Bill 1**, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, passes that is when NDP's carbon pricing plan will go out the window.

"Promise made, promise kept," Kenney told reporters during a news conference Wednesday — once again stealing a favourite catchphrase from his fellow first minister, **Doug Ford**.

According to Kenney, ending the carbon levy will result in \$1.4 billion in tax relief and the creation of 6,000 jobs.

But the NDP contends those figures fail to account for jobs that will be lost by scrapping solar energy projects and other green jobs spurred by the reinvestment of carbon tax dollars.

Opposition Leader **Rachel Notley** told reporters on Wednesday while it's fair to repeal the carbon tax since that is what the UCP campaigned on, voters did not choose inaction on climate change.

"Albertans voted for jobs — they did not vote for a government to pretend that climate change isn't real," Notley said.

According to the NDP, its Climate Leadership Plan had created 5,000 new jobs in 2017-2018 and was on track to create 20,000.

Moving forward, any unspent carbon tax revenue will no longer be restricted to climate action programming and will flow into general revenues.

Government officials were unable to provide the amount of unspent carbon levy revenues when asked by reporters on Wednesday.

Once the bill is passed, gas stations will no longer be able to charge the carbon tax on their product. It includes a transition program that will allow fuel re-sellers, such as gas stations, to apply for a refund on the tax they paid on their current inventory.

Bill 1 also ends the NDP's carbon tax rebates for consumers; the last cheques were sent out April 1.

What is not clear is the fate of the programs paid for through the carbon tax. The bill does not axe the Energy Efficiency Alberta agency, but it eliminates the purpose of its programming.

Today's events

May 23 at 7:30 a.m. — Sherwood Park

Service Alberta Minister **Nate Glubish** will speak at the 2019 Student Skills Portfolio Breakfast hosted by the Sherwood Park and District Chamber of Commerce.

Upcoming events

May 24 at 10:35 a.m. — Vancouver

The B.C. Court of Appeal will release its decision on the provincial government's reference case to determine whether B.C. has the jurisdiction to restrict heavy oil shipments across its borders under the auspices of environmental protection. The legal trial balloon is widely seen as the NDP government's last hope for blocking the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion.

Topics of conversation

- The legislature's [new seating chart](#) is now online. There are five women on the UCP's 16-seat front bench.
- In an [interview](#) with *Calgary Sun* columnist **Rick Bell**, Finance Minister **Travis Toews** said nothing is off the table when it comes to balancing the budget.
 - "I'm not going to sugarcoat it. As we go forward, there will be difficult decisions, there's no doubt about that," Toews told Bell. "There will be some sacrifice, let's face it. Albertans will be affected."
- Premier **Jason Kenney** confirmed Alberta will launch a court challenge at the Alberta Court of Appeal if Ottawa imposes its carbon backstop on the province.
 - Kenney said one of the legal defences will be the UCP government's Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction (TIER) Fund program, which is expected to be introduced through legislation in the fall and taxes heavy emitters. It's unclear whether this will meet the carbon taxation requirements Ottawa has imposed on the provinces.

Appointments and employments

The government has designated the [membership](#) of the legislature's five standing committees, three legislative policy committees and one special standing committee:

- UCP MLA **Richard Gotfried** (Calgary—Fish Creek) will chair the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund;
- UCP MLA **Mike Ellis** (Calgary—West) will chair the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and the Standing Committee on Private Bills;
- UCP MLA **Mark Smith** (Drayton Valley—Devon) will chair the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing;

- NDP MLA **Shannon Phillips** (Lethbridge—West) will chair the Standing Committee on Public Accounts;
- Speaker **Nathan Cooper** will chair the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services;
- UCP MLA **Glenn van Dijken** (Athabasca—Barrhead—Westlock) will chair the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future;
- UCP MLA **Laila Goodridge** (Fort McMurray—Lac La Biche) will chair the Standing Committee on Families and Communities; and
- UCP MLA **Dave Hanson** (Bonnyville—Cold Lake—St. Paul) will chair the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship.

Committee chairs are paid \$200 per meeting. Unlike on Parliament Hill and in many other provincial legislatures, other committee members do not receive compensation for their committee work.

However, **Mark Smith**, who caused a “bozo eruption” during the recent election campaign after audio of his homophobic sermon leaked, may not be receiving much of a pay bump in his role.

Smith has been tasked with chairing the legislature's least used committee. The Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing is known as the “no-meet committee.” In 2012, MLAs who sat on the committee had to [pay back the money](#) they earned for their service when it was revealed the committee had not sat for 39 months.

Soon after, pay increases for committee service ended.

AB Today is written by Catherine Griwkowsky, reporting from Alberta's legislative press gallery.

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