



AB Today – Daily Report June 5, 2019

Quotation of the day

“It’s only the bottom that gets soaked.”

*NDP MLA Sarah Hoffman argues against “trickle down economics” during debate on **Bill 2**, the Open For Business Act.*

Today in AB

On the schedule

The House voted to cancel today’s morning session and reconvene instead at 1:30 p.m. following a late night of debate Tuesday.

The following pieces of government business could be called for debate at second reading:

- **Bill 2**, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business;
- **Bill 4**, Red Tape Reduction Act; or
- **Bill 7**, Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act.

Bill 2 could face a second-reading vote and be referred to the committee of the whole.

The NDP adamantly opposes the proposed law, which would institute a new youth minimum wage of \$13 per hour (a clawback from the current \$15/hour), repeal NDP-era holiday pay and banked overtime rules, and bring back mandatory secret ballots for union certifications, and will certainly vote against it.

Bill 3, Job Creation Tax Cut Act, which lowers the corporate tax rate from 12 per cent to eight per cent, has passed second reading stage and been referred to the committee of the whole, where it could be called.

The throne speech could also be called for debate.

The following items could be introduced:

- **Bill 5**, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act;
- **Bill 6**, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act; or
- **Bill 8**, Education Amendment Act.

Tuesday's debates and proceedings

In the morning, MLAs continued debate on the throne speech.

Premier **Jason Kenney** and Finance Minister **Travis Toews** [watched on](#) as Lieutenant Governor **Lois Mitchell** granted royal assent to **Bill 1**, Carbon Tax Repeal Act. "Promise made, promise kept," Kenney tweeted.

Municipal Affairs Minister **Kaycee Madu** introduced **Bill 7**, Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act. It was granted first reading.

In the afternoon, MLAs debated two government motions: Motion 9, which recognizes the rights of MLAs to vote freely on all matters of conscience, and Motion 10, which bars floor crossing by forcing MLAs who exit a political party to either sit as Independents or run in a byelection if they wish to join a new party.

Bill 2, An Act To Make Alberta Open for Business, was debated at second-reading stage into the evening.

In the Legislature

Demonstrators gathered on the steps of the legislature to raise awareness of the [military crackdown](#) on civilians in Sudan.

In the gallery, Speaker **Nathan Cooper** introduced members of the conversion therapy working group, despite the status of the group being in limbo. The government has said it was disbanded but could still operate on its own accord. Health Minister **Tyler Shandro** agreed to meet with group members in the afternoon.

Premier watch

Premier **Jason Kenney** visited the Edmonton Chinatown Care Centre and greeted Conservative Party of Canada Leader **Andrew Scheer** who was in Edmonton for a speech.

On Tuesday evening, Kenney hopped a plane to Saskatchewan for a meeting today with Saskatchewan Premier **Scott Moe** and his government. He and Moe will also participate in a panel discussion at the Saskatchewan Oil and Gas Show.

Kenney has an official trip to Québec planned for next week. He first promised to visit the province and convince Premier **François Legault** to change his mind about the pipeline during his victory speech on election night.

Meanwhile, the premier personally covered the hotel bill for the extra two days he spent kicking around Toronto last month to campaign for a federal Conservative candidate, the *Edmonton Journal* [reports](#).

Kenney took a taxpayer-funded trip to Ontario to tell Bay Street investors that Alberta was “open for business,” but stayed in town another two nights to campaign for Brampton—North CPC candidate **Arpan Khanna**.

In addition to the extra hotel costs, Kenney also coughed up the \$100 fee for changing his flight, per the *Journal*.

Municipalities to be given more leverage to create tax incentives

The province is expanding municipalities’ powers to incentivize businesses to relocate within their borders.

If passed, **Bill 7**, the Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, will allow municipalities to create tax exemptions, reductions and deferrals for non-residential properties. These can be applied to either specific industries, specific zones, or broadly.

Under the proposed law, non-residential property taxes could be deferred up to 15 years — longer than in neighbouring British Columbia and Saskatchewan, which have 10-year and five-year deferral periods, respectively.

Currently, Alberta municipalities can only offer tax forgiveness for single years, and only in cases of “hardship.” Some multi-year incentives are also offered to businesses that redevelop of brownfield properties.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses called for these changes in a report it released on February 26.

Today’s events

June 3 at 9:30 a.m. — Edmonton

Seniors and Housing Minister **Josephine Pon** will speak at the grand opening of Pine Creek Manor.

June 3 at 11:15 a.m. — Edmonton

Seniors and Housing Minister **Josephine Pon** will speak at an open house at Central Lions Seniors Association.

June 3 at 2 p.m. — Calgary

Children's Services Minister **Rebecca Schulz** will speak at a University of Calgary convocation ceremony for the faculties of arts, social work and graduate studies.

Topics of conversation

- Federal Conservative Leader **Andrew Scheer** was in Edmonton Tuesday to [deliver](#) a pre-election lunch address at the Royal Glenora Club.
 - Scheer accused Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** of sowing division in the country by turning its back on the west.
 - "It's clear that every time there's a Trudeau in the prime minister's office, our union begins to crack," Scheer said.
 - Scheer took particular umbrage with the federal carbon levy.
- Enbridge Energy's \$2.6 billion Line 3 pipeline replacement project has been shot in the foot by the Minnesota Court of Appeal, which [ruled](#) the project's environmental impact statement was insufficient because it failed to address the possibility of a spill on the Lake Superior watershed.
 - A three-judge panel voted 2-1 to send the case back to Minnesota's Public Utilities Commission, which had previously signed off on the project last year.
 - This is the latest delay for the pipeline revamp, which carries crude from the oilsands to Wisconsin. The aged pipeline was previously expected to be in full service in the second half of 2020.
- The province's \$30-million energy war room will be based out of Calgary and will launch "very soon," Environment Minister **Sonya Savage** [told](#) the *Edmonton Journal*.
 - "It's got to be integrated in with the larger fight-back strategy. That includes things like the litigation fund, the public inquiry," Savage said. "We're trying to knit all those pieces together to make sure we get it right."
 - Savage said the war room will be located in Calgary because the city is home to energy sector head offices and the province's top communications professionals.
- The lasting impacts of the 2016 Fort McMurray wildfires and Alberta's new reality of intense wildfire seasons are examined in the *Star's* new [climate change series](#),

“Undeniable.”

- Alberta’s abandoned and decommissioned oil wells could take 2,800 years to clean up, according to a [report](#) from the *National Observer*.
 - The 93-generation land reclamation process was outlined in a private presentation the Alberta Energy Regulator delivered to energy insiders, which was obtained by the news outlet via a Freedom of Information request.
 - As previously reported by the *Star*, the same presentation also said the cost of oil well cleanup could range as high as \$260 billion.
- The *Edmonton Journal* nabbed the [first official interview](#) with the province’s new Associate Minister of Natural Gas **Dale Nally**, who is tasked with overseeing the struggling industry as it deals with lagging prices and poor market access.
 - “They absolutely have felt like the second cousins to Big Oil,” Nally said of the natural gas sector. “And here’s the reality, if we can get natural gas to global markets, it’s a game changer for Alberta.”
 - One of the most pressing concerns for the industry, according to Nally, is a dispute between producers and TC Energy Corp. (formerly TransCanada). Producers say a 2017 change to how TC Energy operates its Nova gas transmission network, which moves Alberta natural gas to the west coast, causes natural gas prices to collapse each time the pipeline undergoes maintenance, shaking investor confidence.

News briefs — Governmental

Minister announces Asian agricultural trade mission

Economic Development, Trade and Tourism Minister **Tanya Fir** and Canada’s International Trade Diversification Minister **Jim Carr** are heading to Tokyo and Seoul to promote Alberta’s agriculture industry.

During the week-long mission, which begins today, Fir will amp Alberta canola, wheat, beef, pork and other food products to the large Asian markets.

Alberta has been hard hit by Canada’s diplomatic tensions with China, which resulted in canola exports being denied entry at Chinese ports and two large producers having their canola seed export licences suspended.

“This mission shows private and public-sector actors in Japan and Korea that Alberta is open for business,” Fir said in a news release on Tuesday. “Market access and diversification is a critical issue for Alberta’s farmers, ranchers and food and forestry manufacturers,” adding that she expects the mission will “open more doors for Alberta producers and processors.”

The trip's price tag is expected to be \$32,331. Japan fully lifted a 16-year ban on Alberta beef last week.

Question period

NDP lead-off

Line 3 pipeline delay

- Opposition Leader **Rachel Notley** led question period by asking whether the UCP government would reverse its planned cancellation of the NDP government's crude-by-rail leases in light of another delay to the Enbridge Line 3 pipeline project.
 - "With further Line 3 delays why won't you reverse course and keep the oil by rail strategy on track?" the ex-premier asked.
- Premier **Jason Kenney** said all members of the House can agree there needs to be an increase in the amount of crude that is moved by rail, but "disagree fundamentally" on how it should happen.
 - Kenney accused the ex-NDP government of making "the single largest expenditure of tax dollars in Alberta history to do something that the private sector was perfectly capable and willing to do."

Education funding

- Notley question the premier about the Calgary school that asked parents in a letter whether it should drop its music teacher or lay off a general teacher, thus increasing class sizes, and about an 18-year-old special needs student whose parents were told she could not attend another year of high school, due to a lack of resources.
 - "The minister of education claimed it was a 'board procedural issue.' That is not true. The provincial government holds all the funding cards," Notley said.
- Kenney promised his new government would provide the highest level of education funding in Alberta history and the highest per-pupil funding in the country.

Ambulance services

- Notley asked about ambulance services in Calgary, saying there are currently 40 to 60 full-time paramedic positions unfilled in the city due to uncertain funding.
 - "Will you direct your minister of health to commit to the \$29 million investment, or are you content to literally keep ambulances off Calgary streets?"
- Kenney told the House that Alberta Health Services is operating on the budget and funding levels the NDP allocated. He said AHS has confirmed there is no service gap as

a result of the vacancies, calling them “normal turnover” and saying they will be “filled within a few weeks.”

Premier’s office staffing

- NDP MLA for Edmonton—Highlands—Norwood **Janis Irwin** asked about the premier’s principal secretary **Howard Anglin**, who Irwin claims has a record of defending hateful policies.
 - Irwin referenced comments Anglin made about the Supreme Court’s 2018 decision on Trinity Western University’s law school. The court ruled the institution’s requirement that students sign a covenant banning same-sex marriage disqualified it from operating a law school.
 - Anglin, then the executive director of the Canadian Constitution Foundation, [called the blow to religious freedoms](#) “one of the worst SCC decisions in recent memory.”

- Kenney said he is proud to have Anglin on his staff. Anglin was Kenney’s chief of staff when he was federal minister of immigration and also served as a deputy chief of staff in **Stephen Harper’s** PMO.

NDP MLAs also asked about conversion therapy, post-secondary tuition caps and non-instruction fees, and the freeze on safe consumption sites.

UCP friendly questions

UCP MLAs asked about the newly created associate minister of natural gas position, the twinning of Highway 40 south of Grande Prairie, getting the foreign credentials of newcomers recognized, and actions being taken to prevent forest fires.