



AB Today – Daily Report June 25, 2019

Quotation of the day

"I think working people in Alberta were viscerally destabilized by what happened within the economy. And when it didn't pick up again within that 12-month cycle, which it had done the previous couple of times, they started getting really, really worried."

*In a candid interview with the National Post, NDP Leader **Rachel Notley** said the federal government's response to Albertans' needs during the oil crisis [has been](#) subpar.*

Today in AB

On the schedule

The House is scheduled to reconvene at 1:30 p.m. The government could table a new piece of legislation today that would bring back Senate elections to the province. Government House Leader **Jason Nixon** provided oral notice Monday for the forthcoming introduction of **Bill 13**, Alberta Senate Election Act, which will be sponsored by Justice Minister **Doug Schweitzer**.

MLAs are likely to sit into the evening or early morning tonight and tomorrow night.

The following bills could be debated at second reading:

- **Bill 8**, Education Amendment Act;
- **Bill 11**, Fair Registration Practices Act; or
- **Bill 12**, Royalty Guarantee Act.

Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, could be debated at committee of the whole.

The following bills could be debated at third reading:

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

The following bills have passed third reading and are awaiting royal assent:

- **Bill 3**, Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act;
- **Bill 4**, Red Tape Reduction Act;
- **Bill 7**, Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act;
- **Bill 9**, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act;
- **Bill 10**, Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act. and
- **Bill 201**, Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act.

Monday's votes and proceedings

The government's two supply bills, **Bill 5** and **Bill 6**, were debated at committee of the whole and passed.

Two bills passed third reading stage on Monday:

- **Bill 7**, Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act; and
- **Bill 10**, Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act.

The contentious **Bill 8**, Education Amendment Act, was debated at second reading into the evening. Debate stalled as the NDP introduced an amendment requesting the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities. The amendment was debated until around 11:30 p.m.

Earlier in the afternoon, NDP House Leader **Deron Bilous** raised a point of privilege with the Speaker over contradictory remarks made by Government House Leader **Jason Nixon** and Premier **Jason Kenney** about last week's earplug stunt.

Bilous contends Nixon wilfully misled the House when he claimed that no government caucus member actually put in the earplugs during late night debate on **Bill 9**. (Kenney told *Power and Politics* the earplugs were for a member with tinnitus.)

Nixon countered Bilous by referring to a Hansard transcript where he said no "government" members were wearing earplugs — claiming, instead, that the member with tinnitus was UCP backbencher **Shane Getson**. Because Getson is a private member, Nixon argued he is not considered a member of the government.

Speaker **Nathan Cooper** said he will reserve his ruling until Tuesday. It is rare for the Speaker to rule against the government on points of privilege.

MLAs also debated two private members' bills. **Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk's Bill 201**, Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act, was debated at committee of the whole and passed third reading unanimously.

Mike Ellis's Bill 202, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, passed second reading unanimously. MLAs debated the bill at committee of the whole.

In the Legislature

The Alberta Teachers' Association visited the legislature to raise concerns about the Calgary Board of Education's plan to freeze hiring in public schools despite the expected increase of 1,800 students.

Pro-choice protestors gathered outside the legislature on Monday evening.

Union files court case against province for Bill 9 in a bid to stop it before royal assent

The Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE) is seeking an injunction against the provincial government that would keep a wage arbitration hearing in June, rather than push it back to October 31.

The province's largest public sector union filed a statement of claim in the Court of Queen's Bench on Monday, challenging the United Conservative government's **Bill 9**, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, on constitutional grounds. The legislation, which passed in the legislature but has yet to receive royal assent, pushed back wage arbitration talks for 180,000 public sector employees including teachers and nurses.

In its statement of claim, AUPE, which represents 95,000 members, argues the legislation should not be proclaimed.

"We had no choice but to file our statement of claim this morning, and we are preparing additional legal action to fight for AUPE members across the province," said AUPE president **Guy Smith** in a news release.

Finance Minister **Travis Toews** maintained the intent of the bill is to delay arbitration until the province's blue ribbon panel on finances can submit its report next month, ensuring the government has a comprehensive picture of the province's finances before it negotiates any contracts.

Union leaders — including Alberta Federation of Labour president **Gil McGowan** — accused the government of operating in bad faith by using the law to push back arbitration until October,

which is two-and-a-half months after the blue ribbon panel report is due — and after the federal election — when conservative governments nationwide will be hoping to avoid protests.

Wage arbitration between the province and AUPE had previously been scheduled for June 30.

According to the AUPE, the UCP's legal counsel informed the union that Bill 9 would become law last Friday morning — but as of Monday it had not received royal assent.

“We were lied to,” Smith said. “Bill 9 is not yet law. We could have gone ahead as scheduled but instead, we lost key arbitration meetings because the government gave us false information.”

The United Nurses of Alberta signalled last week that it has also directed its legal team to prepare a case against the government over the bill.

Toews said government lawyers have assured him the province is on strong legal footing with the bill.

Today's events

June 25 at 8:30 a.m. – Edmonton

The UCP cabinet will meet in the cabinet room of the legislature.

Topics of conversation

- The Western Premiers' Conference [begins](#) in Edmonton tomorrow. The annual gathering will see the leaders of the four western provinces and all three territories get together to “work collaboratively, form closer ties, [and] foster constructive relationships among governments.” Premier **John Horgan** will be the odd man out as head of the only left-leaning government at the conference. Since Horgan's NDP government came to power in 2017, tensions have been running high between B.C. and Alberta of late over the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. B.C. has filed two lawsuits against Alberta's “turn-off-the-taps” law (one in the Alberta Court of Queen's bench and one in federal court). Both Horgan and Alberta Premier **Jason Kenney** have pledged to take a diplomatic approach to resolving their province's differences — this week's meeting will serve as a test of each premier's commitment to that approach.
 - Former Alberta premier **Rachel Notley** boycotted last year's meeting of the western premiers over B.C.'s opposition to the Trans Mountain expansion. Her deputy premier, **Sarah Hoffman**, refused to sign the joint communiqué produced at the meeting because other premiers were not on board to sign a pro-pipeline declaration.

- In the latest installment of Speaker **Nathan Cooper**'s peek behind the scenes at the Alberta legislature, he took a [video in the palm room](#).
 - The origin of the palm trees remains a mystery. While they were initially believed to be a gift from the governor of California during a visit in the 1930s, records show he never travelled to Alberta during that time.
- With the regulation lowering student minimum wage from the general \$15 to \$13 coming into effect on Wednesday, the number of businesses in Alberta voluntarily paying \$15 or more to youth has grown to more than 110, the *Edmonton Journal* [reports](#).
 - The list of self-reported businesses is available at [Alberta15.ca](#).
- “The fact of the matter is that the farther away you are from Ottawa, the less attention you get.” Current opposition Leader and former Alberta premier **Rachel Notley** gave a [candid interview](#) to the *National Post*, in which she argued that **Justin Trudeau**'s federal Liberal government has been ineffective in its response to Albertans, despite the purchase of the Trans Mountain pipeline.
 - “We wanted more support through employment insurance, we wanted more support for reclamation, we wanted more support for adaptation, we wanted support for crude by rail,” she said. “We wanted them to seriously reconsider some problematic areas of C-69. You know, C-48 is almost a symbolic bill — why in God’s name do they have to do it?”
- St. Albert MP **Michael Cooper** retained former Alberta justice minister **Jonathan Denis** as legal counsel as he threatens to sue the *Hills Times* for an opinion column that states he read parts of the Christchurch shooter’s manifesto during a House Justice Committee meeting, the *Hill Times* [reports](#).

News briefs — Governmental

Government launches red tape website that lists regulation repeals, takes suggestions

Alberta is crowdsourcing tips on how to cut back red tape, with the launch of a new “[Cut Red Tape](#)” website on Monday.

The site lists several efforts the government has already taken to increase public sector efficiencies, and also asks Albertans to share — anonymously if they choose — suggestions they have about problems they’ve had while accessing government services.

“The regulatory burden in our province is simply unnecessary. Albertans know this, job creators know this, and our government knows this,” said Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction **Grant Hunter** in a news release. “I encourage every Albertan to follow our progress online as we work together to cut red tape.”

Meanwhile, **Bill 4**, Red Tape Reduction Act — which the government tabled in an effort to cut regulations that negatively impact businesses — passed third reading on June 10, but has not yet received royal assent.

The legislation requires the government to reduce red tape by one-third and requires any new regulations to be free of red tape.

News briefs — Non-governmental

NDP, Alberta Teachers' Association sound the alarm on teaching cuts

The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) held a joint news conference with the NDP yesterday to express concerns over upcoming cuts to teaching positions.

The news conference came after the Calgary Board of Education [reported](#) it plans to increase class sizes by one student per class, which the ATA says will create extra labour equivalent to the workload of 200 teachers.

Education Minister **Adriana LaGrange** has repeatedly promised to maintain or increase education spending, but said she would leave it to individual boards of education to decide what cuts to make.

Speaking to reporters on Monday, LaGrange reaffirmed that the government will fund for enrollment growth in the fall budget.

NDP Education critic **Sarah Hoffman** said the province's largest school board is planning for \$22 million in cuts without budget certainty.

"How exactly are you going to cut \$22 million, teach more students and not impact learning? It doesn't add up," Hoffman said.

Question period

NDP lead-off

Ear plugs during the Bill 9 debate

- Opposition Leader **Rachel Notley** started question period by asking for an apology for the premier's handing out of earplugs during debate on Bill 9 and for contradictory statements it made afterwards.
 - "Thirty-six hours, three statements, three different stories. Albertans don't deserve pivots. They deserve honesty. Why won't you give it to them? Why won't you apologize?" Notley asked.

- Premier **Jason Kenney** said, “the only apology in this place should be coming from the NDP for their constant vicious harassment of ministers verbally, their bullying tactics, their name calling, and their disrespect for comportsment in this place.”

Other NDP questions

NDP MLAs also asked about the court challenge against Bill 9, education funding, mental health supports in schools, how many barrels of oil will ship per day starting July 1 when the crude-by-rail contracts were supposed to kick in, cuts to programs assisting parents of children with disabilities, the youth minimum wage, flood mitigation on the Bow River, and the implementation of the Chicago free speech principles at post-secondary schools.

UCP friendly questions

UCP MLAs asked about independent post-secondary institutions, improvements to Highway 19, the dementia strategy, an update on the wildfire evacuations, and how recognizing a newcomer’s credentials will be made a priority.