



## AB Today – Daily Report June 27, 2019

### Quotation of the day

“Albertans are very friendly people and I’m sure they’re going to look to [B.C. Premier **John Horgan**] and smile and say ‘get that pipeline built.’ That’s what I hear every time I walk through the airport.”

*Premier **Jason Kenney** anticipates Albertans will give B.C. Premier **John Horgan** a warm welcome — and a pipeline request — during his visit to Edmonton.*

### Today in AB

#### On the schedule

The House is scheduled to reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

MLAs will break for the long-weekend Thursday afternoon, but will be back at work right after the long-weekend. The House sits Tuesday, July 2.

Through long nights, the House has made short work of the once stacked order paper. Six government bills have already passed third reading this week — leaving just four pieces of government legislation on the roster.

The two most contentious remaining bills are still at committee stage. The NDP continues to introduce amendments to stall **Bill 8**, Education Amendment Act, and **Bill 2**, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business.

**Bill 12**, Royalty Guarantee Act, which would freeze Alberta's oil well royalty regime for 10 years, is also at committee stage, but is moving through the legislative steps much faster.

Newly-introduced **Bill 13** could be debated at second-reading stage.

### **Wednesday's votes and proceedings**

Justice Minister **Doug Schweitzer** introduced **Bill 13**, Alberta Senate Election Act. The bill was granted first reading. (More on the legislation below.)

**Bill 11**, Fair Registration Practices Act, which aims to tackle systemic lag at recognizing the professional credentials of newcomers to Alberta, passed third reading stage Wednesday, after flying through second-reading debate and committee stage.

Progress was made on **Bill 12**, Royalty Guarantee Act, which passed second reading and was debated at committee of the whole.

**Bill 2** and **Bill 8** (and the NDP's proposed amendments) continued to be debated at committee stage.

The House adjourned just after 11 p.m.

### **In the Legislature**

Former NDP agriculture minister **Oneil Carlier** was in the Speaker's gallery.

MLAs from both the NDP and UCP and volunteers assembled care packages for wildfire evacuees in the legislature in the morning.

### **Oops!**

In Wednesday's issue *AB Today* incorrectly reported the bill numbers for the interim supply bills that passed third reading on Tuesday — they were **Bill 5** and **Bill 6**, not **Bill 11** and **Bill 12**.

### **Bill to elect senators brought to the House**

Premier **Jason Kenney** is expediting legislation to bring back Alberta Senate elections as part of a feud with the federal government over the oil and gas sector.

Kenney's United Conservative government tabled **Bill 13**, Alberta Senate Election Act, on Wednesday, which would reinstate Senate nominee elections in the province. Alberta held four Senate elections when the previous Senatorial Selection Act was in effect, between 1989 to 2012.

Ex-premier **Rachel Notley**'s NDP let the legislation lapse in 2016, which won't happen again should the UCP's bill pass — it does not have a sunset clause.

While the UCP's election platform pledged to bring back Senate elections, legislation was not expected until the fall. However, Kenney decided to supercharge the bill after Alberta senators voted in favour of two contentious federal government bills, **C-69** and **C-48**, which Kenney says will do harm to Alberta's energy sector and set back pipeline projects.

The province and industry groups put months of pressure on the Senate committees studying the bills in hopes of getting radically amended versions through the House of Commons or blocking their passage all together. The lobbying was moderately effective and led to some amendments to **Bill C-69**, but Parliament eventually turfed the most pro-oil and gas sector clauses.

Kenney blames the Senate — and Alberta senators **Grant Mitchell**, **Patti LaBoucane-Benson** and **Paula Simons** in particular, all of whom were appointed by a Liberal prime minister — for giving the bills their final sign-off before receiving royal assent.

Simons sat on both the Standing Senate Committee on Transportation and Communications — which recommended against **Bill C-48** — and the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, Environment and Natural Resources, which brought forward 188 amendments to **Bill C-69**.

Simons ended up supporting an amended version of **Bill C-69** but ultimately voted against **Bill C-48** (as did LaBoucane-Benson).

“Is it perfect? No,” Simons [said](#) of **C-69**, and further noted that amendments to the bill were agreed to by Conservatives, Liberals and Independents. “Does it make every stakeholder happy? No. Both environmentalists and industry have found fault with the bill as amended. But I believe we struck a necessary and pragmatic balance. One that will work for Alberta, too.”

The proposed law would give Albertans more power to determine the senators that represent them by tacking a Senate nominee ballot onto a provincial or municipal election or by holding a senate-focused referendum.

If **Bill 13** passes, the first Senate elections will likely be held during the next municipal election, which is scheduled for October 2021. A maximum of three senators could be elected per election; the number of signatures required to get a senator on the ballot will be just 500 (down from 1,500 under the old law).

While the prime minister retains the right to solely advise the governor general of Canada on appointments to the upper chamber, Kenney said submitting the list of senators chosen by Albertans will “basically challenge the prime minister to ignore democracy.”

Since Alberta began electing senators in 1989, five of the 10 senators-in-waiting that were elected were eventually appointed to the Senate.

**Bill 13** aligns spending and fundraising for senate elections with the province's new election finance law. It caps spending for individual candidates at \$500,000, maxes out previously uncapped contributions from provincial political parties at \$100,000, and applies the *Election Finance and Contribution Disclosure Act's* rules on third-party advertisers.

### **Opposition reaction**

For her part, Notley opposes the proposed legislation — almost as much as she opposes the Senate.

“Anything that would cost millions of dollars in order to legitimize a body, within which Albertans are incredibly under-represented, makes no sense,” Notley told reporters Wednesday.

Notley said electing people for life doesn't make them more effective than appointed senators.

“It's wasteful, regressive, retreaded politics,” she said.

NDP Democracy and Ethics critic **Heather Sweet** warned the proposed bill could allow Alberta political parties to skirt campaign financing laws by giving them mouth pieces for their political messages outside of the provincial campaign period.

### **Today's events**

#### **June 27 at 9 a.m. – Edmonton**

Premier **Jason Kenney** will give opening remarks at the Western Premiers' Conference hosted at the Glenora Building (formerly the Royal Alberta Museum).

#### **June 27 at 9 a.m. – Edmonton**

The UCP treasury board committee will hold a closed-door meeting in the cabinet room of the legislature.

#### **June 27 at 7 p.m. – Calgary**

Community and Social Services Minister **Rajan Sawhney** will speak at a Multiculturalism Day celebration at the Genesis Centre.

#### **June 27 at 7:30 p.m. – Edmonton**

Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women Minister **Leela Sharon Aheer** will speak at the Edmonton Music Awards at the Winspear Centre.

### **Upcoming events**

#### **June 28 at noon (Eastern) – Ontario**

The Ontario Court of Appeal is scheduled to release its decision on the constitutionality of the federal price on pollution.

## Topics of conversation

- The Western Premiers' Conference meets in Edmonton today for a full day of formal talks. The visiting premiers attended an informal dinner Wednesday evening.
  - The conference is the first time B.C. NDP Premier **John Horgan** will have face-to-face talks with newly elected Alberta Premier **Jason Kenney**.
  - Political analyst **Janet Brown** [told the CBC](#) she will be watching for fireworks between Horgan and the other conservative premiers — who Kenney has already posed with for a [friendly photo](#).
- Alberta Education is bringing back standardized testing for Grade 3 students, the *Edmonton Journal* [reports](#).
  - According to an email from Deputy Minister of Education **Curtis Clarke** to school superintendents, provincial achievement tests (PATs) are returning to the curriculum.
  - The email also states Student Learning Assessments, which are currently optional, will be mandatory by fall 2020, but that schools will not be given any extra money to conduct the assessments.
  - Alberta Teachers' Association president **Greg Jeffery** called on parents to opt students out of writing provincial achievement tests. Non-participation in the tests counts for a zero and in large enough numbers would render provincial data meaningless.
- UBC's chair of natural resources law **Nigel Bankes** [argues](#) in *ABlawg* that **Bill 12**, Royalty Guarantee Act, is not necessary.
  - "I do not believe that Alberta's governments have taken a whimsical approach to adjusting royalty rates," Bankes writes. "Instead, for the most part and to a fault, they have proven to be very responsive to concerns raised by industry."

## Funding announcements

- Seniors and Housing Minister **Josephine Pon** attended a ribbon cutting ceremony for a \$13.95-million affordable housing project in Edmonton, the Parkdale ONE, that was funded jointly by the province and the federal government.

## News briefs — Governmental

### Education Minister meets with troubled school board

Education Minister **Adriana LaGrange** met with members of the Northland School Division after learning about significant staff turnover at Athabasca Delta Community School and Conklin Community School.

“We have already started the process to address the staffing concerns that have been raised,” said acting superintendent of Northland School Division **Nancy Spencer-Poitras**. “We have begun interviews to replace outgoing teachers, and I look forward to having the minister visit and see first-hand the excellent supports we have in place for our students.”

LaGrange said the province and school board need to develop a “comprehensive plan” to address problems with the board, which has reported budget deficits as it struggles to serve 2,000 students dispersed across communities in Northern Alberta and deals with forest fires that led to the closure of seven schools.

“While significant improvements have been made by the school division, high teacher turnover demonstrates that we still need to find solutions to the additional challenges facing the education system in these two communities,” LaGrange said.

The NDP brought in a law to elect a board in the division [for the first time since 2010](#), when the province dissolved the board.

## Question period

### NDP lead-off

#### Naming a special prosecutor to investigate UCP leadership race

- Opposition Leader **Rachel Notley** began question period by asking about the RCMP investigation into voter fraud in the 2017 UCP leadership race — and calling on the UCP to appoint a special prosecutor on the file.
  - “Why haven’t you publicly announced the name or appointment of the special prosecutor yet?” Notley asked Attorney General **Doug Schweitzer**.
- Schweitzer said the government has sought legal advice on the matter from “folks in Ontario.”
  - “It’s my understanding through the department that they’ve reached out to folks in Ontario to handle legal advice that the RCMP may need with respect to this matter,” Schweitzer said.
- “Ontario is not a person,” Notley shot back. “I mean, I hate to break it to the attorney general. A special prosecutor is a person. They are a person who are held accountable. They are a person who Albertans can know is separate and objective and independent from this government. Why won’t the attorney general announce the name? And will he

assure us that it's not the premier of Ontario, heaven forbid?"

- Premier **Jason Kenney** said Panda was never under investigation and that, to his knowledge, no other members of the executive council have been interviewed by the RCMP in connection with the voter fraud investigation.

### **Other NDP questions**

NDP MLAs also asked about school board's having to choose what to cut, the removal of employment protections for LGBTQ teachers and staff at schools, the Chinese suspension of export certificates for pork and beef, "block billing" for health services, the youth employment wage, funding for the school lunch program, tax credits versus grants for the screen industry, and drug coverage for seniors.

### **UCP friendly questions**

UCP MLAs asked about the forthcoming Clare's Law and ankle bracelet monitoring program to protect victims of domestic violence, Cochrane's water consumptive licences, affordable housing for seniors, and increasing enrollment in trades.