



AB Today – Daily Report July 22, 2019

Quotation of the day

“We want to honour the work that's been done thus far, but we want to make sure that if there are any gaps we address those.”

*Education Minister **Adriana LaGrange** [tells the CBC](#) she has “paused” field testing for the new NDP-prompted elementary school curriculum, but leaves the door open for continuing the existing curriculum review, instead of scrapping it like the UCP promised during the campaign.*

Today in AB

On the schedule

The House is adjourned until Tuesday, October 22.

Committees this week

The Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship meets today to review the *Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act*.

The Standing Committee on Alberta’s Economic Future meets tomorrow to discuss the 2017 annual report from the province’s Property Rights Advocate Office. Both meetings are in the Federal Building.

Premier Watch

Premier **Jason Kenney** [rode in a stage coach](#) at the K-Days parade on Friday with Municipal Affairs Minister **Kaycee Madu** and Edmonton Mayor **Don Iveson**. Later in the day he joined federal Conservative Leader **Andrew Scheer** in Sherwood Park.

On Sunday, Kenney — a noted Roman Catholic — was in Lac Ste. Anne for the annual Catholic pilgrimage in celebration of the Feast of Saint Anne. The site, which has also serves as a holy place in several Indigenous religious and spiritual traditions that predate the arrival of European clergy, was blessed by Father Jean-Baptiste Thibault after he established the first Catholic mission there in 1844. Some Indigenous groups have since embraced Saint Anne, Jesus' grandmother, because grandmothers are held in high esteem in their cultures. About 35,000 Indigenous people — as well as many members of Alberta's Eritrean diaspora — are expected to have participated in the pilgrimage.

Construction for Trans Mountain expansion reapproved

There will be no need to rehash decisions or review permits for most sections of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion ahead of construction, [according to](#) the National Energy Board (NEB).

Only areas where “relevant circumstances have materially changed” since last summer, when the Federal Court of Appeal overturned Ottawa's previous approval of the project, will be reviewed.

Prior to the court ruling, the NEB had approved 73 per cent of the pipeline's route and 64 of the 98 pre-construction conditions placed on the project had been met. Construction had already begun at Burnaby's Westridge Marine Terminal.

While most construction orders remain valid, the detailed route for the expansion has not yet been settled. Going forward, Trans Mountain Corp. will be required to issue notices to landowners along the entire route — including those previously notified — and publish notices in local newspapers. The NEB will be responsible for notifying Indigenous groups potentially affected by the detailed route approval process.

The construction approval is the latest step forward in the nearly six-year regulatory process for getting the expansion project built and comes after a period of [public input](#) held from June 21 to July 9.

Landowners and First Nations can still file a [Statement of Opposition](#) with the NEB, which could trigger a new hearing. Earlier this month, Indigenous and environmental groups filed new challenges with the Federal Court of Appeal arguing Ottawa has failed to live up to its promises regarding consultations and marine mammal protection.

'Turn off the taps' challenge stayed

Meanwhile, B.C.'s fight over Alberta's “turn off the taps” law was stayed in the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench.

Justice **R.J. Hall** said B.C. did not have standing to file a constitutional challenge the Alberta court — instead ruling the interprovincial tiff is a matter for the federal courts.

In a 12-page decision, the judge said his ruling does not mean Alberta's law is protected under the constitution, only that *Alberta's Judicature Act* only grants standing to Alberta or Canada attorneys general.

The B.C. government is ahead of the game; it had already filed a challenge to the law in federal court.

Nonetheless, Alberta Energy Minister **Sonya Savage** [said she is pleased](#) with the decision. "We will continue to defend Alberta jobs and economic opportunity and look forward to making our case at the federal court," Savage said, as reported by *Global News*.

On Twitter, Solicitor General **Doug Schweitzer** praised the province's legal team. "It was a technical case but an important one," he said.

The law, previously **Bill 12**, was passed by the former NDP government in January 2018 — at the height of pipeline tensions between B.C. and Alberta — in response to B.C.'s threat to restrict the shipment of bitumen within its borders.

An earlier legal challenge to the bill was shut down because the NDP had not proclaimed it.

That changed on April 30 at the UCP's inaugural cabinet meeting, when Premier **Jason Kenney** enacted the law, triggering the provincial and federal legal challenges.

Kenney has said he would only utilize the law, which would involve a hefty amount of red tape for oil and gas companies, if B.C. tried to block the Trans Mountain pipeline. The neighbouring province currently has no pending legal challenges against the project and has been issuing construction and environmental permits.

Upcoming events

July 22 at 9 a.m. — Edmonton

The UCP's treasury board committee will meet in the cabinet room of the legislature.

Topics of conversation

- Two more UCP MLAs have been questioned by the RCMP in connection with allegations of voter fraud in the 2017 UCP leadership race. This brings the total number of United Conservative MLAs questioned by the Mounties to eight, including five cabinet ministers.

- The latest additions are Cardston—Siksika MLA **Joseph Schow** and Sherwood Park MLA **Jordan Walker**. Both members worked with now-Premier **Jason Kenney**'s campaign during the leadership contest. Schow — who did field operations for Team Kenney — confirmed he was interviewed, but [told the CBC](#) he is not under investigation.
 - NDP Justice critic **Kathleen Ganley** questioned why the UCP keeps ducking questions about the RCMP's probe, instead allowing revelations to come out through the media.
 - Moving forward, Ganley said the premier should make a public statement within 24 hours of any of his staff or caucus members being questioned by police about the leadership race.
 - "Premier Kenney's repeated attempts to ignore this expanding criminal investigation are unacceptable," she added.
- The first stage of field testing for Alberta's new kindergarten to Grade 4 curriculum has been "paused," Alberta Education Minister **Adriana LaGrange** [told CBC](#), but the province's curriculum review team will remain in place.
 - The UCP promised to scrap the ongoing curriculum review during the campaign, but LaGrange signalled last week her ministry would instead work with the existing consultants to keep the review, which was launched by the NDP in 2016, process going.
 - The minister also said she is considering setting up an expert panel to review the process.
 - Select schools were scheduled to begin testing the new curriculum in September.
- Municipal Affairs Minister **Kaycee Madu** stands accused of a Stampede snub for only inviting who he dubbed "pro-business" councillors, the *Star Calgary* [reports](#).
 - Mayor **Naheed Nenshi**, and councillors **Druh Farrell** and **Evan Woolley**, were not given an invite to Madu's July 9 meet-and-greet.
- An RCMP report shows a drop in rural crime rates, which Mounties say is a direct result of government funding, the *Calgary Herald* [reports](#).
 - From 2017 to 2018 there were 480 fewer break-ins to homes, 3,5000 fewer thefts and more than 1,200 fewer vehicles thefts. This comes after the previous NDP government spent \$10 million on its seven-point rural crime plan.
 - The UCP ran on a promise to build its own rural crime strategy.

News briefs — Governmental

Ministry of Energy

Energy Minister **Sonya Savage**, along with her counterparts in Ontario and Saskatchewan, released a [joint statement](#) Friday expressing frustration with the Energy and Mines Ministers' Conference, held earlier last week in Cranbrook, B.C.

Savage, Ontario Energy Minister **Greg Rickford** and Saskatchewan Energy and Resources Minister **Bronwyn Eyre** refused to sign on to the federal government's communiqué from the meeting.

The ministers said they were "profoundly disappointed" with the meeting's "superficial" discussions on energy competitiveness, market access and Ottawa's recently passed **Bill C-69** and **C-48**.

"It was clear the federal government did not want any meaningful conversation about its encroachment on provincial jurisdiction," the ministers wrote in a joint statement.

Funding announcements

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada

- Calgary—Centre MP **Kent Hehr** was in Calgary to [announce](#) \$2 million for the MindFuel program, part of the federal CanCode program.