



## AB Today – Daily Report September 6, 2019

### Quotation of the day

“The worst possible career move I could make is trying to pre-empt our budget announcement on budget day. I choose not to do that. I hope you will forgive me.”

*Transportation Minister **Ric McIver** responds to a reporter’s question about which government infrastructure projects will move ahead.*

### Today in AB

#### On the schedule

The House is adjourned for the summer recess. MLAs will return to the legislature for the fall session on October 22. Regular committee meetings are set to resume next week.

#### Government mum on list of capital projects, municipal funding

Transportation Minister **Ric McIver** and Municipal Affairs Minister **Kaycee Madu** announced Thursday that construction on the \$100-million expansion of Edmonton’s Anthony Henday Drive will begin this fall.

While the project — which will widen an 18 kilometre segment of the freeway from four lanes to six — is expected to be completed in fall 2022, officials were tight-lipped about funding plans for other previously announced projects.

The contract for the congestion relief project, which was first announced by former NDP Transport minister **Brian Mason** last summer, was awarded to Edmonton-based Carmacks Enterprises on Thursday.

The southwest leg of the freeway was designed for 40,000 vehicles per day, but is already fielding a daily average of 80,000 rides per day. The expansion is expected to accommodate 120,000 vehicles per day.

Design work on the expansion began in 2017 and cost \$6 million, while the next three years of construction work will see the rest of the \$100 million spent on construction work.

Madu, who is the Edmonton—South West UCP MLA, said the project shows Edmonton is a priority for the United Conservative government, which only holds one seat within the city limits.

The fates of individual infrastructure projects were frequently raised in question period during the summer session. McIver would not reveal additional details on which capital projects would get the green light, saying only that they are all up for consideration and that the blue ribbon panel's report would factor into the decision-making process. (The only other major transportation infrastructure project the UCP has committed to pursuing is the twinning of Highway 15 near Fort Saskatchewan.)

"The worst possible career move I could make is trying to pre-empt our budget announcement on budget day," McIver said. "I choose not to do that. I hope you will forgive me."

"We will be considering amongst all the other information we have had the advice that we've gotten from the MacKinnon panel," McIver said. "That will be part of our decision-making process."

In a speech to the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce last fall, then-Opposition Leader **Jason Kenney** suggested he could be open to building "user-pay" infrastructure, such as toll roads and bridges, "where necessary."

### **Minister vague on future of municipal funding formula**

Reporters questioned Madu about what the MacKinnon report's recommendations — which include legislating a funding framework with municipalities, which would require them to cover a bigger portion of spending — will mean for municipalities.

Madu said the report speaks for itself, but added no final decisions have been made.

"It would be premature for me to speculate on the contents of a budget that we have not yet finalized, but I've always committed to making sure we work with our municipal partners," Madu said.

The New Democrats pointed out the UCP's platform promises to maintain the province's capital plan through to 2022-23, including keeping in place key infrastructure commitments such as the Edmonton and Calgary LRT plans, and pledges to maintain the funding levels previously promised to municipalities for 2019-20.

"Premier Kenney can either honour his campaign promises or listen to this secretive panel," NDP Finance critic **Shannon Phillips** said. "If he listens to the panel, he's lied to Albertans. The choice is his."

## Today's events

### September 6 at 10 a.m. – *Sherwood Park*

Seniors and Housing Minister **Josephine Pon** will speak at the grand opening of Silver Birch Haven.

### September 6 at 10 a.m. – *Edmonton/Calgary*

The province will host two flag-raising ceremonies for Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day. Transportation Minister **Ric McIver** will be in Edmonton at the Federal Building, and Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women Minister **Leela Aheer** will attend the ceremony at the McDougall Centre in Calgary.

### September 6 at 6:30 p.m. – *Edmonton*

Sherwood Park MLA **Jordan Walker** will speak at the Metro Cinema season launch at the Garneau Theatre.

## Topics of conversation

- A [new poll](#) from the Angus Reid Institute shows the majority of Canadians see climate change as a top issue in the upcoming federal issue, while a majority also feel oil and gas development should be a top priority.
  - Of those surveyed, 69 per cent say climate change should be a top priority while 58 per cent say oil and gas development should be a major ballot box issue.
  - The survey showed most Canadians do not see the two as an either/or dichotomy. Of those who believe that climate change should be a priority, 75 per cent also want to see some level of investment in the oil and gas sector. Eighty per cent of respondents who said the energy industry should be a priority also want to see investment in climate change.
- Finance Minister **Travis Toews** spoke at back-to-back events hosted by the Calgary and Edmonton Chambers of Commerce on Wednesday and Thursday about the report from the blue ribbon panel on finances.

- He echoed the report's findings, saying Alberta has a spending problem and repeated the UCP's pledge not to raise taxes.
  - "We can no longer spend like we're the rich kid on the block because, quite frankly, we're not anymore," Toews said [in Calgary on Wednesday](#).
  - While the panel recommends cutting \$600 million in operational spending in order to balance the budget by 2022-23, Toews said he suspects the cuts will go deeper.
- In a letter [penned](#) to the Alberta Medical Association membership, AMA president **Dr. Alison Clarke** said she is unsurprised by the recommendations in the blue ribbon panel report.
    - The report took particular aim at Alberta's physician compensation model, recommending doctors move towards Alternative Payment Plans, rather than stick with the AMA's existing physician services agreement with the province.
    - "The AMA Agreement itself is characterized as a barrier to government's ability to manage costs," Clarke wrote. "While there is always room for improvement, I do not agree with this view."
    - The report also recommended greater use of private or non-profit service delivery outside of hospitals, and the use of fewer physicians in favour of more nurse practitioners.
    - In the letter, Clarke said physicians are in talks with the province about holding an "representative forum," likely next month.
- The Alberta School Councils' Association has been operating off contingency funds since July, ASCA president **Allison Pike** [told](#) the *Edmonton Journal*.
    - As a result, the organization says it will begin to lay off employees and charge for professional development workshops covered by grants.
    - **Colin Aitchison**, spokesperson for Education Minister **Adriana LaGrange**, said the government is currently reviewing the council's application, which it only received on August 20, despite the application process opening in May.
- A government-appointed review panel on supervised consumption sites (SCS) held its first Lethbridge [public meeting](#) on Wednesday. Lethbridge is home to the busiest SCS in North America.
    - Hundreds of people showed up to the first public meeting sharing emotional stories from both sides of the debate on the harm reduction service.
    - The eight-member panel was struck last month with the mandate of looking at the social and economic impacts of SCS on the surrounding community, but would not evaluate the merits of the sites.
    - Additional public consultations are planned for Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Medicine Hat and Lethbridge over the next three weeks.

- A [survey](#) from Trends Research conducted on behalf of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce found the city’s red tape and regulatory burdens are forcing businesses to move to other municipalities in the region.
  - “Those businesses surveyed have sent a strong message: the City needs to do more to help businesses remain competitive, grow and thrive,” said **Janet Riopel**, president and CEO of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, in a news release.
  - The survey found a growing sense of economic optimism amongst the 250 businesses surveyed; however that the optimism didn’t necessarily translate to plans to invest in jobs or capital.
  - One in seven business owners said business conditions have been better over the past year and 25 per cent are hopeful they will improve next year — but only three in 10 businesses say they will hire more staff over the next 12 months and only 20 per cent said now is a good time to make large capital investments.
  
- In an op-ed shared by Premier **Jason Kenney**, economist **Jack Mintz** praises the blue ribbon panel’s report on the province’s finances.
  - “Alberta’s current fiscal position is simply not sustainable,” said Mintz, who co-authored a 2017 report on the province’s budgetary problems with panel chair **Janice MacKinnon**.
  - Meanwhile, *Financial Post* columnist **Terence Corcoran** questioned the wisdom of the panel’s recommendation to [shift Alberta’s health-care spending to an Ontario model](#), noting the eastern province’s “far-from-perfect” spending record.
  - “In the end, Alberta’s new mission is to adopt the best of the Ontario model but avoid following its recent fiscal history,” Corcoran said.

## News briefs — Governmental

### Economic Development, Trade and Tourism

Premier **Jason Kenney** has signed on to an amendment to the 2017 Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) that will make it easier for provinces to independently remove restrictions to interprovincial trade.

“By signing Alberta’s support for this change, we are keeping our promise to not only reduce job-killing red tape, but also demonstrating leadership in the federation. We hope that other provinces join us in this common-sense move that will make life better for folks across the country,” Kenney said in a statement.

Ontario and Saskatchewan have committed to following suit by also signing on to the modification.

The move follows the Council of the Federation meeting where Kenney led the free trade charge by slashing 13 of Alberta's 27 CFTA exceptions — including all of those related to procurement.

### **Alberta Health**

Alberta Health has awarded a \$688,000 contract to Ernst & Young LLP to review the province's three health information systems — Alberta Netcare, MyHealth Records and the yet-to-launch Connect Care platform. A report on the review is expected by January 2020.

MyHealth Records is a service that allows patients to access the results of lab tests, immunization records and prescription history, while Alberta Netcare is used by health-care providers.

Currently under development, Connect Care will allow health professionals and patients to access Alberta Health Services information received from MyHealth Records.

Ernst & Young is also conducting an overall audit of Alberta Health Services. The \$2-million review of the overall health system will look for efficiencies, compare best practices from other provinces and examine the structure of the province's superboard. That report is due back on December 31.

## **Lobbyist registrations**

If you are looking for further information on any lobbying registry, it is all public and easily searchable [here](#).

### **Consultants who registered as lobbyists from August 30, 2019 – September 5, 2019**

- **Elan MacDonald, Brian Senio**, Global Public Affairs
  - **Clients:** Break Point Creative
- **Jordan Pinkster, John Allen, Elan Macdonald**, Global Public Affairs
  - **Clients:** Future of Infrastructure Group
- **Elan MacDonald, Yonathan Sumamo, Brian Senio**, Global Public Affairs
  - **Clients:** Brazeau County; Minhas Brewery and Distillery
- **Jason Ennis, Brian Senio**, Global Public Affairs
  - **Clients:** Rundle College Society

- **Mike Peters, Pierre Alvarez, Elan Macdonald, Jason Ennis**, Global Public Affairs
  - **Clients:** Teck Resources Limited
- **Yonathan Sumamo, Jordan Pinkster**, Global Public Affairs
  - **Clients:** Book Publishers Association of Alberta
- **Mike Peters, Jordan Pinkster**, Global Public Affairs
  - **Clients:** Amazon.com, Inc.
- **Pierre Alvarez, Jordan Pinkster**, Global Public Affairs
  - **Clients:** Calgary Arts Academy
- **Elan MacDonald, Jason Ennis**, Global Public Affairs
  - **Clients:** Direct Energy; Benga Mining
- **Elan MacDonald, Yonathan Sumamo**, Global Public Affairs  
**Clients:** LeafLink Inc.
- **Nick Koolsbergen, Trisha Rinneard**, Wellington Advocacy Inc.
  - **Clients:** Gateway Casinos & Entertainment Limited
- **Heather Jones**, HLJ Consulting Services
  - **Clients:** Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
- **Christopher Ghazouly**, Alberta North Projects Ltd.
  - **Clients:** Keyera Corp.
- **Jeff Sterzuk**, Prairie Sky Enterprises Ltd. (Prairie Sky Consulting)
  - **Clients:** AMGAS Services Inc.
- **Rose Carter, Q.C.**, Bennett Jones LLP
  - **Clients:** Edmonton Endoscopy Centre

**Organizations that registered in-house lobbyists from August 30, 2019 – September 5, 2019**

- Canadian Bankers Association
- Canada's Oil Sands Innovation Alliance
- Fig Leaf Promotions (Canada) Limited (operating as Maths- No Problem!)
- TappCar Inc.
- The Coal Association of Canada
- Oil Sands Community Alliance
- Takeda Canada Inc

