



AB Today – Daily Report September 12, 2019

Quotation of the day

“The floor is clean, the bodies will be in body bags and the families do not need to be informed of the storage procedures.”

*Alberta’s chief medical examiner **Dr. Elizabeth Brooks-Lim** in an email to staff about concerns dead bodies were being stored on the floor of a rented refrigerated trailer.*

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.

Premier watch

Premier **Jason Kenney** had a busy Wednesday. The premier delivered a speech at the Recovery Capital Conference of Canada in Calgary, where he announced funding for 4,000 addiction treatment beds over the next four years. He also hinted a mental health and addictions advisory panel will be forthcoming.

Later in the day, Kenney [opened](#) a special art exhibition at the McDougall Centre featuring reproductions of paintings by the western artist **Charlie Russell**.

Kenney spoke to a crowd of roughly 500 about the UCP’s Alberta Advantage Immigration Strategy and cut the ribbon at a new hotel in Red Deer.

He also did a spot on CBC's *Power and Politics* to [defend](#) the province's "fight back strategy" a day after Amnesty International warned it risks violating human rights.

Alberta Justice investigating after medical examiner stored bodies in refrigerated truck, funeral home employee moved body in public view

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) in Edmonton is under investigation over its storage and handling of bodies, after a video shot by CBC News [showed](#) a funeral home employee and an OCME attendant dragging a body by the feet out of a refrigerator truck.

The OCME said the office rented the refrigerator trucks due to a lack of storage capacity caused by an influx of deaths.

Justice Minister **Doug Schweitzer** says the video shows OCME guidelines on respecting the dignity of bodies were not followed and Alberta Justice is investigating.

"I have directed my department to investigate the matter and have been assured by the Chief Medical Examiner that additional steps are being taken to ensure that the deceased are treated with the respect they deserve," Schweitzer told *AB Today* in a statement, adding that, like other Albertans, he was "disturbed" by the video.

Schweitzer's spokesperson committed to adding a ramp and a collapsible gurney to aid in the transport of bodies and to work with the Alberta Funeral Homes Association to "reiterate proper standards."

The CBC got its hands on an email exchange where an OCME staff member raises concerns about the storage of bodies on the trailer floor, questioning whether families would find it acceptable.

In response, chief medical examiner **Dr. Elizabeth Brooks-Lim** told the staff member she is looking into long-term storage solutions, but ruled out purchasing more morgue tables.

"The floor is clean, the bodies will be in body bags and the families do not need to be informed of the storage procedures," Brooks-Lim wrote in the email.

NDP Health critic **David Shepherd** said the government owes Albertans an apology and an explanation. He also called on the government to give proper funding to the OCME to ensure the situation doesn't happen again, noting the medical examiner's office is often overburdened.

"I was incredibly shocked," Shepherd said. "It's horrible. It's undignified. It's inappropriate."

In 2017, the province announced \$1 million in funding to hire additional medical examiners to help with the increased caseload.

Today's events

September 12 at 8 a.m. — Calgary

Status of Women Minister **Leela Aheer** will speak at the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters' Women in Manufacturing panel at the Calgary Hyatt Regency.

September 12 at noon — Edmonton

Transportation Minister **Ric McIver** is scheduled to make an announcement at the Alberta Motor Association to cut back on wait times for driver testing.

September 12 at 1 p.m. — Edmonton

The UCP's legislative review committee will meet in the cabinet room of the legislature.

September 12 at 4 p.m. — Edmonton

The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce is [hosting](#) a federal election forum and candidate meet-and-greet at the Telus World of Science. *AB Today* reporter **Catherine Griwkowsky** will participate in a panel discussion alongside pollster **Janet Brown** and economist **Trevor Tombe** on how the federal election campaign could impact Alberta's business community.

September 12 at 6 p.m. — Calgary

Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions **Jason Luan** will speak at the Canadian Mental Health Association peer graduation at Folk Festival Hall.

Topics of conversation

- It's official. Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** met with Governor General **Julie Payette** at Rideau Hall on Wednesday asking for parliament to be dissolved, kicking off the federal election campaign.
 - Alberta Premier **Jason Kenney** is [encouraging](#) members of his caucus to stump for federal Conservative candidates, and will himself be campaigning inside and outside of the province for the party's leader **Andrew Scheer**. "The re-election of a Trudeau Liberal government would be devastating for this province," Kenney said Wednesday.
 - Mount Royal University political scientist **Duane Bratt** [told](#) CBC the Liberals were unlikely to repeat their 2015 electoral success in Alberta, when they won four seats.
 - The Liberals claimed two seats in both Calgary and Edmonton, but later lost a seat when Calgary Skyview MP **Darshan Kang** was kicked out of caucus for sexual harassment allegations.
 - Poll aggregator and seat projector 388Canada [predicts](#) the province will be solid blue aside from the riding of Edmonton—Strathcona, long held by retiring NDP MP **Linda Duncan**, which could be a toss-up.

- An Alberta-based non-profit, which registered as a third-party advertiser for the federal election, says [it will spend](#) the writ period encouraging women to more openly discuss politics.
 - Canada Powered by Women has ties to the oil and gas industry, but says it will be targeting women with differing political views (it has received \$32,500 in contributions from several people based in Calgary, \$25,000 of it from Perpetual Energy Inc. CEO **Susan Riddell Rose**).
 - The organization will formally launch its campaign in Calgary next week.

- One-third of landowners along the Trans Mountain pipeline route have yet to grant construction access to their property, the *Canadian Press* [reports](#).
 - Along the route of the federal government-owned project, 33 per cent of landowners have not signed agreements with Trans Mountain Corp. and roughly half of permits are outstanding.
 - On Wednesday, environmental organization Stand.earth [released a report](#) suggesting the construction troubles for the project are far worse than presented and arguing transparency around the project has slipped since the federal government purchased the pipeline.

- Vision Loss Rehabilitation Alberta is closing offices in Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie and Red Deer due to a lack of funding, CTV Edmonton [reports](#). The group says it is in talks with Community and Social Services Minister **Rajan Sawhney** about getting additional funding via the UCP's first budget.

- The Alberta Court of Appeal will begin hearing applications from wannabe intervenors in the province's constitutional challenge of the carbon tax next week. On September 18, the court will hear from provincial intervenors British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario and New Brunswick, and other stakeholder groups, including First Nations, environmental groups and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.
 - The federal government is not due to submit its factum until October 25 — leaving little time for the court to schedule oral arguments before the Supreme Court of Canada hears Saskatchewan's appeal on January 14, 2020 — which Alberta and Ontario will intervene in.
 - In July, Ontario's Attorney General **Doug Downey** said Alberta, Ontario and Saskatchewan were coordinating their provincial legal challenges in hopes all of the cases could be heard jointly before the Supreme Court.

News briefs — Non-governmental

NDP holds first of shadow budget consultations

Approximately 300 people turned up for the first of the NDP's shadow budget consultations at Escuela Mill Creek School in Edmonton on Tuesday.

The town hall was the first of several consultations being planned by the NDP, as the party prepares a fully costed shadow budget to counter the UCP's fiscal document.

NDP Leader **Rachel Notley** said attendees were concerned about the looming cuts foreshadowed in the report from the government's blue ribbon panel on finances.

"Premier Kenney has not only ignored the Opposition's call to reconvene the legislature to introduce his budget, but he's also downloading the cost of his \$4.5 corporate tax gift to the rich — which hasn't created a single job — on to Albertans through deep cuts to vital public services," Notley said.

Funding announcements

Ministry of Health

- Premier **Jason Kenney** announced his government will fund 4,000 addictions treatment beds with \$80 million as part of the government's pledge to spend \$140 million in funding towards addictions.
 - "Despite this proven success of this proven treatment, it's been crowded out by ineffective addiction management," Kenney told attendees at the Recovery Capital Conference of Canada, noting the announcement fulfills "by far the largest spending commitment in our platform."
 - **Steve Buick**, press secretary to the associate minister of Mental Health and Addictions, told *AB Today* the announcement is a combination of beds and treatment spaces including outpatient services. Buick said there are currently 700 to 800 beds operated by non-profit organizations that are not publicly funded that may be depending on negotiations with treatment providers.
 - Request for proposals will be issued later this year, and the government anticipates the first contracts will be in place by the end of the fiscal year on March 31, 2020, with funding reaching the full amount of \$25 million per year by 2021-22.
 - Kenney acknowledged that safe injection sites, the status of which are currently under review by his government, have a role among treatment options for opioid addiction.
 - NDP Health critic **David Shepherd** told *AB Today* he was pleased to see new funding for addiction treatment beds and said is proud of his former government's move to bring in more stringent requirements for licenced addictions treatment.
 - There were a record 789 opioid overdose deaths in Alberta last year, 673 of which were caused by fentanyl.

Appointments and employments

Ministry of Advanced Education

- The government scrapped the appointment of Red Deer College board chair and member **Francis Morris Flewwelling** and the board appointments of **Dianne Macaulay** and **Karin Melnyk**. In their place, **Guy A. Pelletier** takes over as board chair and **Kristen Korhonen** and **Julie Oliver** becomes board members. The appointments are in place until September 8, 2022.
- The government appointed **Margaret Ziolecki** as a member of the board of governors of Keyano College for a term set to expire on September 8, 2022. The same order-in-council also rescinds **Peter Fortna's** 2017 appointment to the board.