



AB Today – Daily Report October 15, 2019

Quotation of the day

“Heading north again.”

*Environmental activist **Greta Thunberg** [announces](#) she will travel to Alberta in the near future.*

Today in AB

On the schedule

The house reconvenes at 10 a.m.

The government is expected to put forward a motion to authorize evening debates on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays throughout the fall session.

MLAs could debate the following bills at committee of the whole:

- **Bill 14**, Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, or
- **Bill 15**, Real Estate Amendment Act.

Environment and Parks Minister **Jason Nixon** is expected to introduce **Bill 16**, Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Leases and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act.

Per the order paper, Community and Social Services Minister **Rajan Sawhney** could also introduce **Bill 17**, Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare’s Law) Act, and Energy Minister **Sonya Savage** could introduce **Bill 18**, Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act.

Premier watch

Premier **Jason Kenney** spoke at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers' RISE Awards ceremony on Thursday night, where he told attendees about his government's Fairness For Newcomers Action Plan.

In [an interview with CBC's *The Current*](#), Kenney signalled he would not hold a provincial referendum on the equalization formula if Conservative Party of Canada Leader **Andrew Scheer** ends up in the prime minister's office. Kenney has previously said a 2021 referendum on the issue would remain in play unless a coastal pipeline is built, **Bill C-69** and **Bill C-48** are repealed, and "a fair deal" on equalization is achieved through Ottawa. Scheer is not campaigning on updating the formula, which Kenney told the CBC is unsurprising because "this is not a top-of-mind issue for 80 per cent of the country."

Committees this week

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet Wednesday morning to [discuss](#) the Ministry of Energy's 2018-19 annual report, and outstanding recommendations from past auditor general reports. The committee will also discuss the Energy Ministry, Alberta Energy Regulator and the [Alberta Petroleum Marketing Corporation](#).

The Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will meet on Wednesday evening to [continue](#) its review of the *Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act*.

Environmental activist Greta Thunberg to visit Alberta

Greta Thunberg, the 16-year-old Swedish environmental activist who has gained international recognition for her climate change campaigns, will travel to Alberta in the near future.

Thunberg [tweeted](#) on Saturday — a day after she spoke at a rally in Colorado — that she is taking time to rest and enjoy the "spectacular nature of Wyoming, Idaho and Montana," before heading to the Wildrose province.

The exact timing of her visit and who, if anyone, she might meet with is to be determined.

Thunberg's rise to prominence began in August 2018, when she organized a "school strike for climate" outside the Swedish parliament, which evolved into "Fridays for Future" school strikes around the world, including in [Edmonton](#) and [Calgary](#) last month.

The Edmonton rally was part of a series of marches across Canada, including one led by Thunberg in Montreal. She met with federal Liberal Leader **Justin Trudeau** the day of the rally and told him Canada's actions on climate change were insufficient.

In response to news of her visit, some members of the Alberta government issued preemptive praise of the province's energy industry.

"We trust that Ms. Thunberg will recognize Alberta's leading human rights and environmental standards, especially in comparison to oil-producing dictatorships such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia, and Venezuela — which she will presumably visit next — as well as major growing emitters like China," said **Christine Myatt**, press secretary to Premier **Jason Kenney**, in a statement to media.

Energy Minister **Sonya Savage** echoed the sentiment on Twitter.

"An opportunity for Greta to come here with an open mind, see our beautiful province and learn how Albertans are proud to produce energy the world needs with the highest environmental, social, and governance standards," Savage [said](#). "Then she should visit other energy producing countries."

"The world needs more [Canada]," Environment and Parks Minister **Jason Nixon** [wrote](#) on Twitter. "Hoping Ms. Thunberg appreciates the beautiful AB landscape and our leading human rights and environmental standards."

In a [statement to CBC News](#), NDP caucus spokesperson **Lee Todd** said his party is disappointed with the current state of climate policy in the province.

"It's profoundly disappointing that just one year ago, Greta could have seen a nation-leading climate plan that cut emissions by 50 megatonnes and supported working people producing responsible oil and gas," Todd said. "Today, she will see a government in denial, funding a \$30-million attack machine to shut down the voices of the next generation demanding a cleaner future."

Meanwhile, Tsuut'ina Nation Chief **Lee Crowchild** [invited](#) Thunberg to visit the nation.

"You are my guest and we will do what we need to do to have you speak to the province with the voices of the Alberta Nations," Crowchild said.

Retired Alberta NDP leader **Brian Mason** also piped up on Twitter to respond to Thunberg's announcement.

"Uh-oh. [Kenney], turn out all the lights," Mason wrote. "Pretend nobody's home. Don't answer the door."

Today's events

October 15 at 8:30 a.m. — Edmonton

The UCP caucus will meet in the Windsor room of the Federal Building.

October 15 at 9 a.m. — Calgary

Justice Minister **Doug Schweitzer**, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions **Jason Luan** and Health Minister **Tyler Shandro** will make an announcement about recovering the costs of opioid addiction at the McDougall Centre. British Columbia has a pending class action lawsuit against more than 40 opioid manufacturers, wholesalers and distributors. Ontario has said it will join the suit.

October 15 at 10 a.m. — Edmonton

The UCP Communities and Families committee will meet in the cabinet room of the legislature.

October 15 at 5:30 p.m. — Leduc

Justice Minister **Doug Schweitzer** and Leduc—Beaumont UCP MLA **Brad Rutherford** will host a rural crime town hall at the Leduc Civic Centre.

October 15 at 7 p.m. — Edmonton

Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women Minister **Leela Aheer** will speak at a Girl Guides event at the Ottewell United Church.

October 15 at 7 p.m. — Wetaskiwin

The Freedom Conservative Party will hold an urban crime consultation at the Wetaskiwin Legion.

Upcoming events

October 29 at 11 a.m. — Edmonton

Premier **Jason Kenney** will deliver his first-ever state of the province address at an Edmonton Chamber of Commerce luncheon.

Topics of conversation

- The government issued a statement late last week, clarifying Minister **Sonya Savage**'s description of transparency measures for the province's energy war room, recently incorporated as the Canadian Energy Centre (CEC).
 - The CEC's incorporation status means its internal operations will not be subject to freedom of information law, but information, advice and communications shared between the government and the CEC will be subject to FOIP, according to **Christine Myatt**, a spokesperson for the premier.
 - "The CEC's internal operations are not subject to FOIP, as this would provide a tactical and/or strategic advantage to the very foreign-funded special interests the

CEC is looking to counter,” Myatt said. “For example, we would not let those foreign-funded special interests seeking to attack our province see our detailed defence plans.”

- The CEC is also subject to the *Personal Information Protection Act*, the *Whistleblower Protection Act* and reviews by the auditor general, according to the premier’s office.
- Election Commissioner **Lorne Gibson** issued a series of new fines against Energize Alberta in connection with the so-called “kamikazee” campaign.
 - The commissioner levied six fines totalling \$18,373 against Energize Alberta for contributions to former UCP leadership candidate **Jeff Callaway** that are considered prohibited corporate donations.
 - The fines are the latest from Gibson’s office in connection to the 2017 leadership race related to money funneled to Callaway’s campaign. Callaway was alleged to be running a campaign to sabotage **Brian Jean**, who was **Jason Kenney**’s main rival in the race.
- The latest Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey shows the province’s unemployment rate dropped by 0.6 per cent to 6.6 per cent in September. But the drop wasn’t due to new job creation — it stems from approximately 11,600 workers who decided to quit looking for work, according to the federal agency.
 - There were 4,900 new jobs created in September, 49 per cent full-time and 51 per cent part-time.
 - Calgary’s unemployment rate was 7.1 per cent in September, down by 0.2 per cent from August. Edmonton’s unemployment rate was down 0.1 per cent to 7.3 per cent.
- The Western Indigenous Pipeline Group is in talks to acquire a 51 per cent ownership in the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion project, the *Globe and Mail* [reports](#).
 - The group, one of a handful of First Nations-led groups looking for a stake in the pipeline, is in talks with two banks and is hoping to secure loan guarantees from the federal government.
 - That news follows the announcement of the forthcoming Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, outlined in the UCP’s **Bill 14**, which would offer financing for Indigenous energy projects.
- Conservative Party of Canada Leader **Andrew Scheer** [told](#) the *Vancouver Sun* and *Vancouver Province* editorial board a CPC government would re-open discussions on the Northern Gateway oil pipeline project as part of his strategy for an “energy corridor.”
 - In 2016, the federal Liberal government cancelled the proposed \$7.9-billion Northern Gateway project, citing failures to meaningfully consult with Indigenous people.

- Federal NDP Leader **Jagmeet Singh** says, if elected prime minister, he would end subsidies to the oil and gas sector and would invest tax money in transitioning Alberta oilsands workers to new jobs, the *Canadian Press* [reports](#).
 - “So no matter how hard people work in resource sectors, through no fault of their own — because of international, global markets, as commodities go up and down — people go through busts and booms,” Singh said at a campaign stop in Ontario on Saturday. “People deserve better than that. The good people of Alberta deserve better than that.”
 - “So my commitment is this: I want to invest into programs and an economy that’s more sustainable, that’s more long-lasting.”
- **Franco Terrazzano**, Alberta director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, told Premier **Jason Kenney** to look in the mirror when it comes to corporate welfare.
 - Terrazzano [pleaded](#) for Kenney, who headed up the CTF in the 1990s, to scrap the province’s \$10 billion in annual corporate handouts, in a guest column in the *Edmonton Sun*.

New briefs — Governmental

Ministry of Health

Health Minister **Tyler Shandro** rolled up his sleeves to get the influenza vaccine. The province has ordered vaccines for 35 per cent of the population at a cost of \$12.5 million.

“Getting your flu shot is one of the best things you can do to protect your own health and that of your community; and it’s never been easier,” Shandro said. “I encourage all Albertans to join me in getting immunized this season by visiting their local pharmacy or doctor’s office, or an AHS public clinic.”

Last year, the immunization rate was 31 per cent, up from 29 per cent in 2017-18, and roughly 55 per cent of flu shots were delivered at Alberta pharmacies.

There were 7,698 lab-confirmed cases of influenza last year compared to 9,609 in the 2017-18 season. Deaths were also down to 52 last year compared with 92 the year prior.

New briefs — Non-governmental

NDP sounds alarm over lab funding cuts

Funding earmarked for a stop-gap measure to fund lab equipment until the provincial superlab is built is on the chopping block.

That’s according to NDP Health critic **David Shepherd**, who joined **Dr. Cheryl Mather**, an assistant clinical professor in the University of Alberta’s Laboratory Medicine and Pathology department, to sound the alarm over a \$3-million cut to laboratory equipment funding.

The NDP says Alberta Health sent a letter to Alberta Health Services telling Alberta Public Laboratories it could no longer use the \$3 million to replace dysfunctional lab equipment.

Dr. Mather said lab equipment that was set to be replaced includes histology processors, which are used to analyze tissue samples.

“Having only one functional processor is a risk to patients,” Mather said in a news release. “If the processor fails, or if it is interrupted for critical specimens, such as organ transplant tissues, as many as 300 samples representing 50 patients can be lost or delayed. We are currently doing everything we can to prevent this risk from becoming a reality, but we are in desperate straits.”