



ALBERTA COUNSEL

Senior Editor: Tim Gerwing
Publisher: Alberta Counsel

ALBERTA COUNSEL

Legal and Lobby Professionals
Management Consultants
Trade-mark Agents

LEDGEVIEW BUILDING
800, 9707-110 Street NW
Edmonton AB T5K 2L9
P: 780-652-1311
F: 780-652-1312
E: info@albertacounsel.com
www.AlbertaCounsel.com

The News from Alberta Counsel is Alberta's premier review of provincial politics and government vitality. As an original source of political news and commentary, The News will provide a fresh look at legislation, policy, committee debates, the civil service, along with party updates and events.

Alberta Counsel

We work with organizations to navigate their way through the confusing network that is associated with government. We help our clients connect with those who are important in shaping public policy and ensure your messaging is effectively communicated to decision makers.

To subscribe to *The News from Alberta Counsel*, please visit
www.albertacounsel.com/news

HOW DAYCARE FUNDING BECAME ONE OF THE BIGGEST ISSUES IN THE PROVINCE

Tim Gerwing

One of the major issues that propelled the Ontario NDP to the forefront of Ontario politics was its promise of free daycare for families earning less than \$40,000 a year and \$12-a-day daycare for most others. In a province where the exorbitant costs of child care can reach as high as \$20,000 a year, this policy immediately resonated with the highly-sought after middle-class voter demographic and forced the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives to come to the table with strong daycare proposals of their own. While the policy wasn't enough to secure a victory for the NDP in the Ontario election, it played a strong role in elevating the long-time third party to Official Opposition status, and proved voters are watching when it comes to provincial child care policy.

Three provinces away, Alberta is experiencing its own daycare funding issue, and while the United Conservative Party has yet to come to the table with a fleshed-out child care policy (they should probably get on that), a new group of private daycare operators has risen to sound the alarm over the Alberta NDP's \$25-a-day policy which it believes the NDP will run on in an expanded, universal capacity, in the 2019 election.

The Alberta Association of Child Care Operators (AACCO) has cause to be concerned. In 2017, the NDP announced the \$25-a-day program as a pilot project that would include 22 centres. In 2018, before announcing results from the pilot, the NDP expanded the project to include another 100 centres across the province. The AACCO and political insiders will tell you it is likely the NDP will run on a universal \$25-a-day system in the 2019 election, in an effort to win support from those same middle-class voters who, like in Ontario, are sick and tired of the high costs of child care.

The AACCO says it understands that there's an affordability problem in child care funding, but that instead of finding practical solutions, the government is using this problem to impose a universal system founded in ideology that only non-profits will be able to benefit from. The end result, they say, could be less spaces and higher prices.

"We aren't entirely opposed to the \$25-a-day program, we just want to be included in it," said Leon Comer, a private daycare owner and spokesperson for the AACCO, in an interview with Alberta Counsel. "Right now, every daycare in operation under this program is a non-profit. While the government hasn't said so outright, it is becoming more and more apparent that only non-profits will be allowed to benefit from the \$25-a-day program, putting accredited private operators like myself in the precarious position of needing to either turn over all our assets and become a non-profit or close up shop."

The AACCO isn't wrong to allege the government is only planning to include non-profits in whatever the \$25-a-day-program ultimately becomes. In a Global News interview, Children and Family Services Minister Danielle Larrivee said the government would assist concerned private operators like Comer in becoming non-profits. But Comer said private operators aren't satisfied with that choice. He says the government should do something it hasn't done since 2008 if it doesn't want to include private daycares in the \$25-a-day-program – raise subsidies.

"We aren't entirely opposed to the \$25-a-day program, we just want to be included in it. Right now, every daycare in operation under this program is a non-profit. While the government hasn't said so outright, it is becoming more and more apparent that only non-profits will be allowed to benefit from the \$25-a-day program, putting accredited private operators like myself in the precarious position of needing to either turn over all our assets and become a non-profit or close up shop."

Leon Comer,
Private daycare owner and spokesperson for the AACCO



TIM GERWING
Feature Writer

Tim Gerwing is a former journalist and communications officer. He's a graduate of the University of Saskatchewan and Grant MacEwan University. His experiences span Calgary City Hall, the Alberta Legislature and Young Diplomats of Canada.



ALBERTA COUNSEL

Right now, only families making less than a household income of \$50,000 qualify for child care subsidy. Most reasonable people would agree that a household earning \$60,000, \$70,000 or \$80,000 is living far from a lavish lifestyle and should be entitled to some form of child care support. According to ATB, Alberta's median household income is \$93,835, meaning the average Alberta household is not entitled to subsidy and will have to pay out of pocket for child care costs that can frequently stretch to more than \$1,000 per month, per child. At the same time, however, under a universal system, taxpayers would be expected to subsidize child care costs for households earning large amount of money as there would be no cut-off. This is also seen as unfair by most. Comer said raising subsidies is a strong solution to the problem, but that it is unlikely to happen given the lack of fanfare around it.

"It's frankly beyond me that subsidies haven't increased in more than a decade," Comer said. "The government knows that increasing subsidies is the right thing to do, but this doesn't come with the flashy headlines or anything. It's just simple, good management, so nobody wants to do it."

Other than when it is making major announcements around the pilot project, the NDP has remained relatively quiet on the issue of \$25-a-day daycare. Before the AACCO formed, there was virtually no pushback against any of these announcements, but that has now changed. At present, the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) has been taking the lead on the issue of universal day care through its Fair Start campaign. The AFL has gone so far as to call for the phasing out of subsidies entirely for parents attending private daycares. They believe the government should not be subsidizing the bottom-lines of private businesses.

According to AFL's point person on the file, Siobhan Vipond, universal child care would have social benefits like affording more women the opportunity to get back into the workforce after giving birth, which in turn would lead to economic benefits, like more tax revenue for the province. She says right now, parents of a certain income don't have a choice.

"It is not a choice if you can't afford child care, so you can't work and you can't participate in the workforce at the level you want," Vipond said to the Star Edmonton. "That means the cycle of poverty just doesn't end."

The NDP government feels like it has turned a corner with voters after sealing a deal on the Trans Mountain expansion. But Rachel Notley's policy minds know the party will need a few more homeruns if it is going to win re-election. To that end, promising to deliver cheaper childcare for young families is a moonshot.

While a universal, \$25-a-day system makes for good headlines, there is room for the United Conservative Party to come to the table with a policy alternative that raises subsidies and guarantees choice. Ignoring the problem of daycare funding won't be good enough when the writ drops. Even in Ontario, Doug Ford's sparse policy platform contained a robust child care policy.

The NDP knows it has an imperfect proposal with \$25-a-day daycare, but it also knows the policy may be enough to win over a critical demographic of swing voters, giving the party the boost it needs to hold onto power.

“It's frankly beyond me that subsidies haven't increased in more than a decade,” Comer said. “The government knows that increasing subsidies is the right thing to do, but this doesn't come with the flashy headlines or anything. It's just simple, good management, so nobody wants to do it.”

Leon Comer,
Private daycare owner and spokesperson for the AACCO

“It is not a choice if you can't afford child care, so you can't work and you can't participate in the workforce at the level you want,” Vipond said. “That means the cycle of poverty just doesn't end.”

Siobhan Vipond
AFL's point person on the file



ALBERTA COUNSEL

Photo Credit: Brendan Brown

POLITICAL EVENTS

NDP – Westerner Days BBQ

Tuesday, July 17th @ 5pm

Location: Eastview Estates Community Hall, Red Deer

- Red Deer MLAs Kim Schreiner and Barb Miller host this summer BBQ that will likely have a fair amount of NDP Ministers and MLAs attend.
- Tix: free (rsvp at www.albertandp.ca)

NDP – Leduc-Beaumont Nomination Meeting

Wednesday, July 18th @ 7pm

Location: Blue's Custom Restaurant, Leduc

- Join Minister of Municipal Affairs Shaye Anderson and his team for a nomination celebration. All are welcome, including non-members
- Tix: free

Premier's Office – K-Days Breakfast

Thursday, July 19th @ 7-9pm

Location: Legislature Grounds (south side of the building)

- This is a great event to mingle with MLAs and Ministers, plus you get a free breakfast and live music!
- Tix: free... just show up and line up for food

UCP – K-Days Breakfast

Friday, July 20th @ 7-8:30am

Location: Michael Phair Park (10124-104 Street)

- Join UCP Leader Jason Kenney and his caucus for breakfast
- Tix: free (please rsvp at www.unitedconservative.ca)

Alberta Party – Edmonton Strathcona Pints and Politics

Thursday, July 19th @ 7pm

Location: Hudson's Pub (10307-82 Avenue, Edmonton)

- Find out more about the Alberta Party and meet people who care about politics
- Tix: free (rsvp at www.albertaparty.ca)

NDP – Joe Ceci's Birthday

Tuesday, July 31st @ 5:30pm

Location: Calgary Opera Centre

- Join the Minister of Finance and his team at this free event in downtown Calgary. Live music, dancing and open bar.
- Tix: free (please rsvp at www.albertandp.ca)

THE NEWS
from ALBERTA COUNSEL



KEITH PRIDGEN
Associate

Keith joined Alberta Counsel as a Law Researcher and Analyst following several years as a political staffer at the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, working for the official opposition. He received his Juris Doctor (Cum Laude) from the Florida State University College of Law in 2017. He is a member of the Federalist Society and a Blackstone Fellow.



ALBERTA COUNSEL



Photo credit: Twitter

MARK MILKE

Key Influencer Profile

Keith Pridgen

Some of the most influential players in Alberta politics aren't politicians. Mark Milke is a prime example.

Mark is a regular contributor to national news media. He produces reports on highly technical subjects but writes in a very accessible way. He has academic and conservative bona fides like few others. He was Alberta and British Columbia director for the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, Research Director at the Frontier Centre, and Senior Fellow at the

Fraser Institute. He also has a PhD in International Relations and Political Philosophy from the Calgary School, and was President of the notably secretive conservative organization Civitas Society.

Now, Mark has been hand-picked by Jason Kenney to write the UCP's campaign policy for the 2019 election.

Of course, he will be working with a small team, but the final product will be his creation.

Reviewing Milke's long history of published work reveals some insights as to what we might expect to see in the final platform (aside from the promises Kenney has already made like repealing the carbon tax). Milke has regularly written about the need to control government spending, the dangers of high taxation, and his unabashed belief in free speech.

Kenney and Milke haven't always seen eye-to-eye. As recently as 2014, Milke and Kenney (then-federal Minister of Employment and Social Development) had a Twitter spat over the Temporary Foreign Workers Program.

By choosing Milke, Kenney has signalled that the UCP platform will be robust, well-researched, and defensible. Faced with a weapon like Milke, Notley and the NDP will need to step up their game.



BRONTE VALK
Senior Associate

After graduating from the University of Alberta with a Political Science degree, Bronte pursued her passion for politics by working on the campaigns of numerous progressive political candidates. This experience combined with her in-depth knowledge of Alberta's political affairs, drew her into advocacy work. Bronte has worked as a case worker in the Honourable Sarah Hoffman's constituency office as well as the MLA for Edmonton-Ellerslie's. Her connections with government caucus and strong advocacy skills make her a great asset to our team.



ALBERTA COUNSEL



THE NDP WANTS A WIN IN FORT MCMURRAY - CONKLIN, BUT IS IT REALISTIC?

Bronte Valk

It was no accident that the NDP called the Fort McMurray - Conklin byelection for the middle of summer, a time when the majority of Fort McMurrayites are either away on vacation or trying to reconstruct their vacant homes. Low voter turnout is expected and Laila Goodridge, the UCP candidate, told the CBC, "I believe the United Conservative Party's chances would be really good if everybody showed up to vote. However, if the NDP ended up activating their small, special interest groups and (getting) their well-organized lobby groups out, they could decide this and it could be won with as few as 12 or 15 hundred votes."

On July 12, Goodridge will face-off against the NDP's candidate, Jane Stroud, an eight-year veteran of Wood Buffalo's Regional Municipal Council. Stroud has been working to brand Goodridge as a "fly in, fly out" candidate. "She [Goodridge] has worked most of her life as a political staffer in Edmonton and Ottawa and called Grande Prairie her 'home base' when she ran there in 2015," Stroud said in an interview with Fort McMurray Today. While there are three other candidates running in the byelection: Sid Fayad of the Alberta Party, Brian Deheer of the Green Party and Robin Le Fevre of the Alberta Liberals, this will be a showdown between the NDP and UCP.

Goodridge has an advantage in that she served as the director of field operations for former Fort McMurray-Conklin MLA Brian

Jean's campaign for the leadership of the UCP in 2017. Sources say she has benefited greatly from money provided by Jean's PAC, as well as on-ground support. Jean is still well-liked in Fort McMurray and having him as an ally will undoubtedly help. But there have been multiple reports of conservatives in the area planning to abstain from voting out of loyalty to Jean. A vote for Goodridge is, after all, a vote for Jason Kenney, the man who some believe pushed Jean out of the UCP.

This "close election" is shocking given Fort McMurray is known to be a conservative stronghold. With the exception of Liberal Adam Germain who held a provincial Fort McMurray seat for four years until he was unseated by Progressive Conservative, now Alberta Counsel Senior Advisor, Guy Boutilier, Fort McMurray has consistently elected conservatives over the last 50 years. This begs the questions: why is the NDP threatening to steal this seat from the UCP now?

A deeper look into the issues plaguing Fort McMurray provides insight as to why the NDP may have a shot at winning on July 12. It is well known that a lack of affordable housing is the biggest issue for Fort McMurray residents. Elders can't find housing and have been forced to relocate, and there is no new housing for young people who want to put down roots in the region and raise families of their own.

Aside from housing concerns, an assessment of how the government handled the Fort McMurray wildfire recovery will be key in determining who will win this race. Goodridge believes the government could have been more responsive to the constituents of Fort McMurray's demands to grant an extension to the two-year insurance claim deadline for the wildfires. She has stated that throughout her time canvassing, she has heard many stories about people being forced to settle claims they thought were unfair before the deadline was made. Although the government ultimately extended the deadline, Goodridge believes it was "playing politics" and should have made the move sooner than it did.

The result of the Fort McMurray - Conklin byelection will be critically important. If the UCP doesn't have a strong showing, it will be a wake-up call for Alberta's conservatives. The NDP knows this and is going all-in with a candidate who is as credible as any. A win could establish the NDP as a party on the rise, ready for re-election. A sizable loss, on the other hand, could seal its fate in the minds of many.

“ I believe the United Conservative Party's chances would be really good if everybody showed up to vote. However, if the NDP ended up activating their small, special interest groups and (getting) their well-organized lobby groups out, they could decide this and it could be won with as few as 12 or 15 hundred votes. ”

Laila Goodridge
UCP candidate



PASCAL RYFFEL
Director of Government
Relations

Active with the provincial NDP and a proud party member for over ten years, Pascal's political experience includes stints as both provincial and federal organizer, in addition to running in the Edmonton-Meadowlark constituency in the 2008 provincial election. Pascal spent four years as the NDP Caucus Outreach Coordinator at the Legislature and was a member of the pre-election candidate search committee while the NDP was in opposition. Along with a strong academic background, Pascal adds deep and current knowledge of Alberta's new government to the Alberta Counsel team.



ALBERTA COUNSEL

AT A GLANCE

In the News

Both Premier Rachel Notley and UCP Leader Jason Kenney stopped in Fort McMurray to campaign for their byelection candidates, Jane Stroud and Laila Goodridge, respectively. The NDP is optimistic about Stroud's chances in the July 12 election to replace former Wildrose Leader Brian Jean. Kenney himself has publicly warned about the chances of a UCP loss in the race. Stroud, a city councillor, has labelled Goodridge, a long-time federal and provincial political staffer, as a "fly-in, fly-out" candidate. Goodridge, meanwhile, has attacked the NDP for not support the oil sands.

The UCP appointed retired judge Ted Carruthers to investigate allegations of ballot-stuffing and improper handling of votes at the party's Calgary – North East constituency association meeting this week. A video of the ordeal appeared on Reddit showing party members yelling. The party said it immediately suspended the meeting when the accusations erupted.

In another nasty UCP nomination battle, incumbent Leela Aheer was acclaimed in Chestermere – Strathmore, after her competitor, David Campbell, dropped out. Campbell had previously alleged that the UCP was rigging the nomination in Aheer's favour. Aheer, meanwhile, had taken out a restraining order against Campbell following a physical altercation at a constituency association meeting. Aheer eventually dropped the action.

A new poll suggests Albertans believe Notley is the politician most responsible for getting a deal done on the Trans Mountain pipeline. According to the poll, which was commissioned by CBC News, 42 per cent of Albertans believe Notley is the one who got the job done, followed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at 27 per cent, and Kenney at 13 per cent.

A court action to stop the NDP's gay-straight alliance legislation came to a halt after Court of Queen's Bench Justice Johnna Kubik dismissed the complaints of a group of faith-based organizations. Kubik said, in his final decision, that the group was wrong to suggest that gay-straight alliances caused irreparable harm and exposed children to graphic content.

In the Legislature

The NDP released a long-awaited anti-racism report. Included in the report is news that the province will create a new Anti-Racism Advisory Council to fight the issue. Education Minister David Eggen said the province is now accepting applications for positions on the 25-member council.

Jason Kenney vowed to repeal Bill 6, the NDP's controversial farm safety legislation. But a new coalition of 28 agriculture producer groups said it would be a mistake for the UCP leader to do so. Albert Kamps, chairman of AgCoalition, said the industry has worked closely with government over the past two years to craft the rules so that they work with family farms and ranches.

The UCP released a list of recommendations to combat rural crime. Among the list of recommendations are calls for a response system linking police services, the establishment of units in each judicial district focused on high-risk offenders and a potential ombudsman for victims of crime. The effort was headed up by UCP Justice Critic Angela Pitt and UCP Solicitor General Critic Mike Ellis.

NDP statesman Brian Mason announced this week that he would not be seeking re-election, marking the end to a celebrated, 30-year-career in public life.

GRANDE PRAIRIE CONSTITUENCY SPOTLIGHT

The city of Grande Prairie has a purely urban constituency for the first time. The new electoral district will be known simply as 'Grande Prairie' and will encompass most of the urban areas of the city, although (perhaps strangely) not all of it. Most of the residents east of the CNR line will vote in Grande Prairie Wapiti. According to the electoral commission that redrew the boundaries, the new urban constituency is a response to popular demand by city residents who wanted a focus on urban issues. The re-organization in the area basically means the elimination of the constituency of Grande Prairie Smoky, with GP Wapiti remaining as the rural district.

So far it appears no candidates for any party have officially declared their intention of running in this new constituency.



WHEN IT COMES TO NOMINATING CANDIDATES, PARTIES CAN LEAVE NOTHING TO CHANCE

Keith Pridgen

In Alberta's Westminster-style governance model, the people are represented by members of the Legislative Assembly. These members, or MLAs, are elected every few years from a selection of political parties. In 2019, Albertans will go to the polls and choose their new respective MLAs from the offerings of the NDP and UCP (and, in just a few cases, the Liberal Party, Alberta Party, and Green Party). Some constituencies have consistently selected a representative from the same party in provincial and federal elections for decades, so the real battle may not even lie in the general election, but rather in the nomination.

A nomination contest is conducted by each political party to select a representative for each constituency. The rules governing nomination contests are largely controlled by the individual parties, with some uniform guidelines imposed by law and administered by Elections Alberta (largely relating to registration and financial disclosure).

In 2019, there will be 87 seats up for grabs, and all mainstream parties will present an option for voters. For the UCP, some of these candidates have already been selected.

Here is the current list of candidates representing the UCP in 2019:

- Calgary - Edgemont: Prasad Panda (former Wildrose)
- Calgary - Hays: Ric McIver (former PC)
- Calgary - Lougheed: Jason Kenney (former PC)
- Calgary - West: Mike Ellis (former PC)
- Edmonton - Gold Bar: David Dorward (former PC)
- Airdrie - East: Angela Pitt (former Wildrose)
- Central Peace - Notley: Todd Loewen (former Wildrose)
- Cypress - Medicine Hat: Drew Barnes (former Wildrose)
- Fort Saskatchewan - Vegreville: Jackie Armstrong Homeniuk
- Olds - Didsbury - Three Hills: Nathan Cooper (former Wildrose)
- Rimbey - Rocky Mountain House - Sundre: Jason Nixon (former Wildrose)
- Strathcona - Sherwood Park: Nate Glubish
- Taber - Warner: Grant Hunter (former Wildrose)

For the remaining 74 seats, the UCP will be conducting nomination contests over the next few months.

The process is relatively simple: when the nomination contest opens for a constituency, aspiring candidates have two weeks to submit applications; then, if more than one contestant has been approved, a vote is held two to three weeks later.

Of course, as soon as a person announces an intent to contest a nomination, that person must register with Elections Alberta.

The UCP has set out three main requirements for nomination contestants, aside from the requirement to comply with elections law:

- (1) complete the UCP Nomination Questionnaire;
- (2) provide several financial payments; and
- (3) complete several background checks.

These steps are all part of the overall UCP nomination strategy: figure out which possible candidates either have done something bad or embarrassing in the past or are likely to commit a "bozo eruption" in the future. Sound candidate vetting can provide huge dividends, whereas poor candidate vetting could potentially turf a shot at forming government (see: "Lake of Fire").

The UCP Nomination Questionnaire is extensive. It asks about simple things like a candidate's political background, family composition, and basic biographical data. It also asks more personal questions. Have you ever had a marital dispute? Have you ever sued or been sued? What are your online dating profiles? Have you ever engaged in sexting?

The financial payments include several fees to the local constituency associations and party to help offset costs for the nomination contests. Another financial requirement is a \$1,000 good conduct bond.

The UCP keeps in line with recent trends for political applications by requiring nomination contestants to complete not only an ordinary background check, but also a Vulnerable Sector Search, which can reveal information not ordinarily subject to disclosure but might indicate whether a person has engaged in illicit behaviour.

The next six months will be a busy time for the UCP as it conducts up to 74 nomination contests. The party is hoping to, at best, field a full roster of 87 all-star candidates, or, at the very least, not have any bozo eruptions to distract from their campaign.