



ALBERTA today; COVID-19
Notes for David Kilgour - Breakfast (virtual)
Westminster Presbyterian Church (Pastor Chris Clarke)
470 Roosevelt, Ottawa (www.mywestminster.ca)
25 April 2020

Thanks first to our new pastor, Chris Clarke, who arrived from Vancouver Island as the Covid-19 lockdown began and has since become an expert on virtual events on Zoom. The Guardian reports today that Zoom is now used globally by an estimated 300 million persons daily.

Twenty years ago, in a chapter on Alberta in the *New Millennium Series* book, I concluded optimistically:

In the 1990's, improved oil prices and the growth of new industries helped make Alberta's economy one of the strongest in Canada...in 1998, (it) accounted for 69% of all the energy produced in Canada. Alberta's oil sands reserves contain an estimated 1.7 trillion barrels of bitumen in place.

Here are some other notes from the chapter, albeit with some updates and changes:

- Albertans are of origin in virtually every member state of the United Nations;
- The province has a half dozen modern cities;
- First Nations peoples probably arrived thousands of years ago and succeed in establishing rich cultural and family lives... In the late nineteenth century, when an estimated sixty million buffalo in Prairie Canada were slaughtered mostly by outsiders, painful decades of

adjustment began. Harsh treatment since by “settlers” and governments have left a legacy of tragedy;

- In the first decades of the twentieth century, pioneer families from almost everywhere arrived in the ‘last, best West’ to break land for crops and to build local churches of many faith and communities. In 1947, things changed quickly when oil was discovered near Edmonton. The population of each prairie province in 1947 was about 750,000; in 2020 Alberta has 4.4 m. vs. 1.1 m. in Saskatchewan, 1.3 m in Manitoba and 5.1 m in BC.
- In 2000 and today, many Albertans work directly in the oil and gas sector, but more earn livelihoods in related fields such as pipeline construction and software design.

The unique cultural mosaic is a consequence partly of the reality that no cultural group is numerically dominant. Members of every community, including the larger ones (English, Scottish, Irish, First Nations, East Europeans, Chinese and French Canadian), believe that all persons should have the freedom to choose their own dreams...

In recent years, when Alberta prospered so did all of Canada, by the participation of businesses based in other provinces in the energy industry and through equalization payments. For example, in 2017-18, Albertans paid 4.4 per cent of all provincial revenues to other provinces in equalization payments. According to the Fraser Institute, the net outflow from the province to elsewhere between 2007 and 2015 was \$221.4 billion more than received in federal services (about \$20 billion yearly). That meant about \$5,000 per Albertan each year; it hasn’t changed much since 2015 despite the economic problems.

Keep in mind that unemployment across Alberta in March this year had already jumped to 8.7 per cent, the highest provincial level in Canada I understand. Edmonton had the highest level of any major city at 8.7 per cent and Calgary, 7.1%.

The plight of the energy sector was compounded by the recent oil price crash caused by a Saudi-Russian fight over pricing. C-19 has depressed oil demand because travel mostly ground to a halt. Prices are now well below what producers in Alberta need to break even. Further downsizing in that sector will put more pressure on tourism and overall economic growth. All of that will place significant strain on the province’s budget, which is already projecting multibillion-dollar deficits. Premier Kenney has

mentioned the horrifying possibility of 25 per cent unemployment in the province if things are not turned around.

C-19 Pandemic



Here are the best figures I could access yesterday:

Alberta

Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
3,720	1,357	68



Canada

Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
43,552	15,469	2,294

Worldwide

Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
2.76M	760K	194K

I should note that in two weeks the total number of cases in the province rose by 148%. The Cargill meat packing plant near High River has had 480; The JBS one at Brooks had 124 employees infected. There have fortunately been no confirmed cases in provincial or federal prisons in the province. Testing by the provincial health laboratory reached 3000 daily by March 26 and as of April 24 fully 122, 447 tests have been conducted.

Permit me to close with some points on general testing /masks I received recently from a respected but unnamed for now bio-medical research scientist in a major Canadian university. She wrote:

In Korea, they were the first to do extensive, drive through testing. The result? Only 10,000 cases and 236 deaths in 60 million population...

In Canada (we) do not test asymptomatic people, not yet. ... public health labs do not have the capacity to test asymptomatics... Unless everybody gets tested and the positives are separated out, we older ones cannot get

outside, let alone go back to the building where you can bet some are positive and walking around...

Even scarier than that is the mis-information that many times comes from experts too. For example, the story on masks from the Toronto Star, by Samir Gupta a respirologist...

Gupta put it so right. Trust is a huge issue at times of crisis where scientists are the key. About masks and about the need for testing. We must test asymptomatic people... At least with the antibody test that is cheaper and faster, to see how many have been infected. The antibody test does not say if you shed the virus or not, it could be that you were infected and now you are well thanks to your antibodies, you can even donate plasma to help very sick ones get better, but if you have antibodies you have been infected.

Same with testing. We heard on the 'National' early on that 'if you have not traveled and you don't have symptoms then you don't need the test'... Destroying the trust is dangerous... The other day in the news, when the question was asked 'is it true that someone can be infected and have no symptoms?' we heard the answer 'yes, 2-3 days before you get sick, it is possible that you are infectious'. No word on the fact that the 2-3 days can be two weeks or more and lots of people never show any symptoms at all, although they shed virus. I don't believe they do not know. Most likely they do not want to say that they cannot offer testing to everybody, although this is the only way to 'open the country for business' again.

Thank you.

***Comments most welcome.
Keep safe and well, all.***