



[Get A Newsletter](#)

OPINION

NDP MP McPherson out-classes Alberta Conservatives every day in Commons

By DOUGLAS ROCHE JUNE 17, 2021

Alberta's lone NDP MP Heather McPherson has become a chief nemesis of Alberta Premier Jason Kenney and also has a federal minister dancing to her tune.



You might think that Alberta's 33 Conservative MPs would overwhelm the NDP's Heather McPherson, pictured, the only non-Conservative Alberta MP, but it's quite the other way around, writes Doug Roche. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

EDMONTON—You might think that Alberta's 33 Conservative MPs would overwhelm the NDP's Heather McPherson, the only non-Conservative Alberta MP, but it's quite the other way around. McPherson not only out-classes the Conservatives every day in the Commons, but has become a chief nemesis of Alberta Premier Jason Kenney and also has a federal minister dancing to her tune.

McPherson was only elected in 2019, but already she's a star parliamentarian, and it's little wonder the other parties have virtually conceded her the Edmonton-Strathcona seat in the coming election. In the 2019 election, she collected 47 per cent of the vote, 10 points ahead of her Conservative opponent.

I take a particular interest in Edmonton-Strathcona because that's the seat I was first elected to 49 years ago—1972, the year McPherson was born. However, no one should think this is a just piece about a friend of mine. I've met McPherson a few times, but do not belong to her party nor do I live in her constituency. But I know a political stand-out when I see one.

Get The Weekend Point of View Newsletter

Top Canadian political and policy opinion and analysis. Saturdays and Sundays.

You are already subscribed!

By entering your email address you consent to receive email from The Hill Times containing news, analysis, updates and offers. You may unsubscribe at any time. See our [privacy policy](#).

On June 16, Environment Minister and Climate Change Minister Jonathan Wilkinson announced that all new coal mines and mine expansion projects will have to undergo a federal environmental impact assessment. Hitherto, they could escape such environmental reviews by limiting the output of coal mines. Wilkinson's action was a direct response to McPherson's tabling of a private member's bill (Bill C-308) targeted at reining in coal companies.

Even though the bill's chief aim has been accomplished, McPherson will push the measure forward to ensure the policy change is embedded in law. "We can't trust Jason Kenney to protect the Rocky Mountains and Eastern Slopes," she says. "Albertans need federal oversight."

Kenney is a target of McPherson's wrath, as she eloquently displayed in a May 6 emergency debate that she called for in the Commons on Alberta's then soaring number of COVID-19 cases. "If you want to know why it is so bad in Alberta, why other provinces have withstood the third wave better than my province, the answer is clear: it is Jason Kenney," McPherson said. She accused the premier of ignoring the evidence of science and the pleas of doctors, downplaying the seriousness of COVID-19, belittling efforts to control the spread and, even as the crisis deepened, taking only "half measures" to impose public health restrictions while blaming everyone but himself for the problem. "Jason Kenney has been an unmitigated disaster for Alberta."

When their turn came to speak, some of the Alberta Conservative MPs merely harrumphed over the role of their premier, but none dared lay a glove on Kenney. Nor do they on other aspects of Kenney's erratic leadership, which has resulted in the tanking of Kenney's poll numbers and resurrected prospects of Rachel Notley's NDP regaining the provincial government in the next election.

There's much more to McPherson than fire and fury. On Aug. 12, 2020, she obtained unanimous consent of the House for a motion calling on the federal government to provide an additional \$2-billion in funding for affordable childcare programs and back-to-school safety measures. In addition to the \$2-billion in new funding for accessible childcare, the motion also committed the government to increasing transfers to provinces and territories to support a safe return to school and to ensuring that the federal funds provided are dedicated to the health and safety of children across the country and not diverted for other needs.

Albertans are facing a crisis in affordable childcare and this is impacting our economic recovery and the ability of women in particular to rejoin the workforce" McPherson said.

As a mother of two students in Edmonton public schools, I share the same concerns as other parents with Alberta's school reopening plan," she added. Jason Kenney's government has failed to offer support to schools and teachers, and many parents, like me, are rightfully worried about our children's safety. Now, we have a commitment that the federal government will step up to help."

It is an incredible achievement for a private Member of Parliament to get the government to commit any money—let alone \$2-billion—for any purpose no matter how worthy. McPherson moves easily from domestic to international issues. She has teamed up with Senator Marilou McPhedran to advance understanding among all Parliamentarians of the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

McPherson has a fair amount of international experience. She came to Parliament from her job as executive director of the Alberta Council on Global Co-operation. She has a master of education from the University of Alberta and has taught around the world.

McPherson has a natural leadership ability, a quality that seems to have been discerned early by her own party, which named her deputy House leader. Her boss, Peter Julian, the NDP House leader, hails McPherson's "passion with which she defends her constituents and her home province. I think all Albertans and all Canadians thank her."

Those 33 other Alberta MPs are in the shade.

Former Senator Douglas Roche served as an Edmonton MP from 1972 to 1984. His latest book is Recovery: Peace prospects in the Biden Era.

The Hill Times

To read more great stories like this one and stay ahead of the political curve, subscribe to The Hill Times.



RELATED STORIES

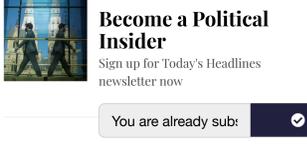
APR 14, 2021
Lone wolf MPs break down what it's like to be a region's solitary party voice

APR 7, 2021
'It's about time we started to push back': Conservative Alberta MPs support beleaguered energy war room

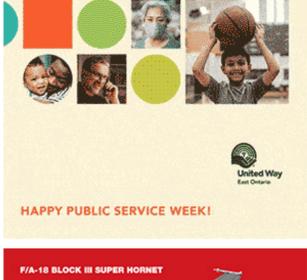
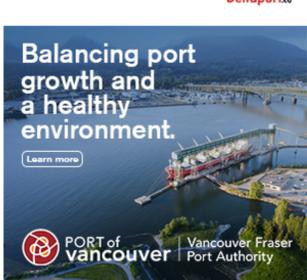
JAN 27, 2021
NDP to focus on pandemic measures, amplifying message in winter sitting

DEC 21, 2020
Kenney's political woes and Maverick Party could put at least four Alberta ridings in play in the next federal election, say veteran political players

MAR 23, 2020
'It's incredibly dire here': Alberta MPs navigating COVID-19 and oil crises



You are already sub: [checked]



MORE IN NEWS

As Liberals trumpet merits of NSICOP, opposition MPs want 'supremacy of Parliament' respected

NEWS | By NEIL MOSS



The government failed to abide by an order of the House to turnover unredacted documents related to the firing of two scientists at a Winnipeg lab leading to a Conservative question of privilege.

NDP's Qaqqaq says nearly two years as MP an 'isolating' experience, did not 'belong'

NEWS | By ZAINAB AL-MEHDIAR



In her June 15 farewell speech, Mumilaq Qaqqaq castigated the House of Commons, calling the institution one that was "created off the backs, trauma, and displacement of Indigenous people."

'This Chamber is a place of history and of decisions, good and sometimes not so good': 12 MPs deliver farewell speeches to House

NEWS | By SAMANTHA WRIGHT ALLEN



On June 15, 12 MPs gave their farewell speeches with it unclear whether Parliament will return in the fall or an election will stop them from appearing in the Chamber again.

Canada can do more to boost global vaccination rates, say advocates, despite G7 pledge

NEWS | By NEIL MOSS



Canada's pledge of 100-million vaccine doses won't come at the expense of its domestic supply. 'Canadians may switch from vaccine envy to vaccine guilt,' says Nicolas Moyer.

Change is the word: Meet the seven candidates for AFN national chief

NEWS | By LAURA RYCKEWAERT



The Assembly of First Nations will elect a new national chief on July 7. Four men and three women are in the running, coming from First Nations communities in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario.

Community-centred, Indigenous approach needed for mental health in the North, say territory denizens

NEWS | By ALICE CHEN



'It's not an academic pursuit anymore. These are real people, says Yukon Premier Sandy Silver, who notes the current per-capita approach 'does not work,' and makes them 'scramble to do more with less.'

New vision for National Press Building requested after years of decline

NEWS | By ALICE CHEN



After years of bleeding media tenants due to short-term leases, rent hikes, and limited space, Parliamentary Press Gallery members want a new, collaborative relationship with the building's federal landlord.

CBSA workers to start strike votes this week amid Canada-U.S. talks on easing border restrictions

NEWS | By MIKE LAPOINTE



Although Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and U.S. President Joe Biden discussed reopening the Canada-U.S. border at the recent G7 leaders' Summit, a firm date has not yet been set.

Reflections on anti-Muslim rhetoric from Tory MPs welcome in wake of London attack, but proof will be on campaign trail, say observers

NEWS | By PALAK MANGAT



Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole, when asked whether his party owes an apology to the Muslim community for past policies—after two members of his caucus expressed regret over 2015 campaign tactics—says 'all parties need

RELATED STORIES

JUN 14, 2021
Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson 'could be persuaded' to run for federal Liberals in Edmonton Centre, say some Alberta insiders

JUN 14, 2021
Canada should revoke diplomatic relations with Holy See if Catholic Church won't apologize for residential schools; and church should be subpoenaed, search warrants issued, says NDP MP Green

JUN 14, 2021
Reflections on anti-Muslim rhetoric from Tory MPs welcome in wake of London attack, but proof will be on campaign trail, say observers

JUN 16, 2021
Why Pride still matters

JUN 14, 2021
'I don't know how Jason Kenney can recover,' political players say; Alberta players in the fight of his life

JUN 14, 2021
Some Pontiac constituents 'puzzled,' after Grit MP Amos caught exposing himself during House virtual proceedings again, says Low Down to Hull and Back News publisher



INSIDE THE HILL TIMES

- News
- Opinion
- Foreign Policy
- Politics
- Policy
- Legislation
- Lobbying
- Hill Life & People
- Hill Climbers
- Calendar
- Podcast

COLUMNISTS

- Andrew Caddell
- Andrew Cardozo
- John Chénier
- Sheila Copps
- David Crane
- Jim Creskey
- Gwynne Dyer
- Michael Harris
- Erica Ifill

HILL TIMES PUBLISHING

- About Us
- Our Team
- Contact Us
- Advertising
- Subscribe
- Group Subscriptions
- Intermittent Article
- Reuse and Permissions
- Member Centre
- FAQ
- The Wire Report
- The Lobby Monitor
- Parliament Now
- Inside Ottawa Directory
- Inside Canada Directory
- Hill Times Careers
- Classifieds
- Hill Times Store
- Hill Times Research
- Health