

[ Alberta Party ]

# Alberta Party Policy Directions



November 2010



## Summary

This document contains the first set of policy directions ratified by the Alberta Party membership at the 2010 Policy Conference on November 14, 2010. They are intended to provide guidance to the Alberta Party Policy Committee as it works toward more fully articulating the Alberta Party platform.

The Alberta Party views policy development as a continuous process. We expect that our policy will grow and evolve as we research, reflect, and engage increasing numbers of Albertans. The policies contained within this document reflect the input gathered during the first phase of our engagement process: the Big Listen.

The seeds of the Big Listen were planted in February 2010, when members of the Alberta Party united with Renew Alberta to pursue their common goal of a moderate, forward-looking government responsible to the citizens of Alberta. This new relationship gave members of both organizations a vehicle to put into motion their vision of a new mode of citizen engagement: one in which Albertans aren't talked to, but talked with.

This vision was developed into the Big Listen, an ambitious and authentic program of citizen engagement designed to meaningfully connect our party to citizens. Through this ongoing process, we've talked with over 1000 Albertans in their homes and communities about their stories, challenges, and hopes for our province. The input from these meetings has been recorded in detail, and forms the foundation of the policy directions included within this document.

Albertans have told us that they live a beautiful province blessed with inspiring natural landscape, and a proud history of citizenship, community spirit and entrepreneurship.

Citizens of all types—members of our First Nations, newcomers to the province, descendants of our pioneers, and everything between—have shared with us their hopes that Alberta can continue to be place of economic creativity and strength, and that our enterprising spirit can be used to protect our environment, and to create compassionate communities that embrace all citizens and enable them to access the enormous opportunity our province is known for.

People from across the province—in cities, towns, suburbs, and rural areas, from north to south—have spoken to us about turning our province into a place of ideas, where debate is welcomed and citizens are inspired to create a bright future for their families, community, and province.

We believe this vision can be achieved by engaging Albertans to collaborate with us in solving the problems our province faces. The policies contained within this document, developed with citizens, represent the first step toward a prosperous, sustainable, thoughtful and caring province that provides opportunities for all of its citizens.

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## Process overview

The first phase of the Big Listen was completed on September 28th. Immediately following the 2010 AGM, held in Red Deer on October 2nd 2010, our members began to distill the hundreds of pages of notes gathered during the Big Listen, searching for areas of agreement and common themes. This process identified five areas of priority:

- Economy and diversification
- Environmental stewardship
- Education
- Healthcare
- Democratic renewal

Following this meeting, the Alberta Party Policy Committee organized fourteen Big Listen Policy Events organized around the themes listed above. Like the Big Listen meetings held during the first phase, these meetings engaged people from across Alberta. They were hosted in Edmonton, Camrose, Calgary, Lethbridge and Breton, and online, and involved previous Big Listen participants, regular citizens, and people with experience in the theme areas. The focus of these discussions was generating sensible, realistic ideas that spoke to the stories we heard throughout the Big Listen's first phase.

Ultimately, our goal was to develop policy by the people, and for the people, of Alberta.

Following these discussions, our Policy Committee and other volunteers refined the ideas we heard into a policy draft that was discussed and debated at the 2010 Alberta Party Policy Conference held on November 13-14, 2010. Members attending this convention passed approximately 65 amendments to the draft. These amendments and other feedback gathered during the policy convention were integrated into the policy draft to form the policy directions contained below.

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## Document organization

Participants in the Big Listen and members attending our policy conference consistently commented on the inherent difficulty of dividing policies into arbitrary categories when, in reality, many policies have aspects relevant to several of the priority areas described above. Why worry about categorization, when acknowledging that the problems that policies are meant to address have multiple dimensions can lead to better and more effective solutions?

We've tried to organize this document in way that reflects these ideas. The policy directions will be preceded by a brief description of our philosophies in the five priority areas listed above. Following this, policy directions will be listed individually, and the relevant priority areas (taken from this list of five described above) will be indicated for each policy direction. This will be done in a visually prominent manner, to facilitate the scanning of the document by users with interest in a particular priority area or areas.

## Areas of Priority

### Economy

Alberta has one of the strongest economies in the world and is a global leader in energy production. Oil and gas provide Alberta with a strong economic base, but economic diversification is needed to ensure ongoing prosperity through future economic cycles and position our province strongly for the future.

The Alberta Party believes that we can build an innovative and diversified economy by taking advantage of the incredible opportunities our resources provide. By expanding our knowledge base and investing in new areas of growth, we can turn our economy into one that's less about boom and bust and more about long-term stability.

The Alberta Party will make our economy stronger, and ensure development occurs within the context of environmental stewardship.

### Environment

Around the world, citizens are demanding that their governments take action to protect the environment. More often than not, this debate devolves into a faulty premise: that a healthy environment is bad for business. The Alberta Party believes that a healthy environment is necessary for a strong economy, now and in the future.

By working constructively with citizens and business, the Alberta Party will work to balance the needs of the economy with a healthy environment.

### Education

Education creates opportunity, drives our economy, and builds better citizens. The Alberta Party views education as the foundation for all public policy; it is essential to creating a better province. We believe every Albertan should have the opportunity to pursue education to whatever level they aspire.

The Alberta Party is committed to increasing education accessibility and quality for all Albertans.

### Health system

The Alberta Party recognizes the tremendous financial pressures our health system is facing and believes the answers lie in smarter health policy that emphasizes preventative measures, stable management, predictable funding and efficient delivery systems.

Fixing our health system, however, requires more than getting costs under control. The Alberta Party is committed to improving access to urgent care and mental health services, and to ensuring that Albertans outside of our province's major cities can access the services they need.

### Democratic renewal

Alberta's declining voter turnout demonstrates that Albertans have lost faith in the political process. While several factors contribute to this phenomenon, we believe Alberta is facing a democratic deficit. Put simply, Albertans no longer feel in control of the decisions that directly affect them. They've been left out of the dialogue on important issues and are disconnected from the people elected to represent them.

The Alberta Party will renew Albertans faith in the political process.

## Policy directions

Economy

Environment

Education

Health system

**Investments in the environment, the health system, education, and quality of life are opportunities to ensure the future health of our economy.**

- Recognize that meaningful environmental action in the oilsands is vital to restore our province's international image and relationships with major trading partners
- Strive toward the adoption of full-cost accounting when evaluating the impact of major developments
- Recognize the significant economic benefits of investments in poverty reduction, mental health, public space, architecture and the arts
- Undertake a comprehensive feasibility study on the implementation of a feed-in tariff program and other incentives for advancing renewable electricity generation in Alberta

Economy

**An Alberta Party government will recognize and promote Alberta as a world energy leader and create an environment favourable to economic diversification.**

- Create a regulatory and economic environment that encourages the creation and growth of value-added industries (such as upgrading, refining, processing and manufacturing) where it makes economic and environmental sense
- Build on existing economic strengths and areas of greatest potential by identifying interprovincial and international partners to develop markets and attract investment for our value-added industries
- Create an environment that nourishes local and independently-owned small business, and startup businesses in the creative and knowledge sectors.
- Encourage a vibrant local food economy and a financially and environmentally sustainable agricultural industry
- Support and provide incentives for the development and retention of our diverse artistic community, including the film industry
- Undertake a comprehensive review of our innovation system to promote improved commercialization arising from our existing research infrastructure

Economy

**Alberta needs to be smarter about taxation and expenditures, to ensure stability, shared benefit, and a true reflection of what things actually cost.**

- Strive toward funding programs and services from sources other than direct natural resource revenue
- Develop a comprehensive, transparent plan for the investment of saved resource revenues and expenditure of revenue from these investments
- Develop a province-wide conversation with all Albertans to determine our fiscal priorities and the direction of our financial future – i.e. taxes, royalty rates, long term savings, spending limits, transparency and efficiency
- Minimize taxes on economic activities that align with province’s public policy goals
- Expand upon existing funding models that use industry levies to help grow clean technology and expand the green economy

Economy

Environment

**The Alberta Party will ensure the province has the infrastructure necessary to support a strong economic future.**

- Develop a comprehensive plan to determine short-, medium-, and long-term physical infrastructure priorities and the appropriate resource mix to fund them at each stage
- Build efficient and affordable mass transit networks that include the use of options like bus, light rail, high-speed rail, which benefit all Albertans
- Undertake a comprehensive geothermal survey in order to give investors and entrepreneurs a starting point for development

Economy

Education

**Alberta should be the best place in the world to work or start a business—no matter who you are, what you do or where you’re from.**

- Improve access to employment for skilled immigrants, and require professional associations to develop and implement accreditation plans for immigrant workers
- Improve access to education, employment and business opportunities for Aboriginal people, with a view to enabling Aboriginal peoples’ full participation in the economy
- Make it easier to start and grow a new business by eliminating unnecessary red tape
- Focus job training and skill development toward the requirements of our current and future economy
- Support investment in the voluntary sector and create an environment friendly to social entrepreneurship and community economic development

Economy

Environment

**Alberta must optimize the return from our resource-based industries and protect our environment.**

- Make eliminating and reclaiming tailing ponds a top priority
- Effectively and consistently enforce existing regulations
- Encourage industry to reduce its demand for fresh water
- Ensure regulators have full independence and are empowered to act
- Provide resource industries with clear, consistent and accountable direction

Environment

**The Alberta Party will make it easier for Albertans to make environmentally sustainable decisions.**

- Addresses the environmental impact of our built environment by providing incentives to residential and commercial property owners and improving building-related standards
- Work with post-secondary and research institutions to develop programs that are oriented towards renewable energy and clean technology careers
- Work with urban municipalities to encourage density and active transportation and to reduce urban sprawl
- Work with industry to expand availability of technologies which help consumers to reduce their own consumption, such as smart power metering

Environment

**The Alberta Party recognizes the pressures on our fresh water supply are growing and that it is vital we become more active stewards of this precious resource.**

- Recognize that human and ecosystem water needs must take precedence over other regulated uses; view water as a public good and not a marketable commodity
- Build a stronger, more complete water monitoring process
- Set and enforce high standards for water quality, quantity and conservation objectives
- Mandate shift toward use of best available technology and practices for all fresh water users
- Create incentives for companies, institutions and households to substantially reduce water consumption
- Create an accurate inventory of surface and groundwater supply to ensure it is allocated sustainably
- Explore implementation of a no-net loss policy for wetlands
- Encourage an open dialogue among all user groups over freshwater use while recognizing First Nations Treaty rights
- Build stronger partnerships between landowners, industry and land users to protect source water and upstream catch-basins
- Use the above principles to inform and implement a comprehensive strategy on water regulation, usage, allocation, and sales

Economy

Environment

**The protection of the quality of our air and atmosphere is one of the most important environmental challenges we face.**

- Strengthen existing greenhouse gas emissions legislation
- End subsidies for unproven carbon capture and storage and use funds for more cost-effective greenhouse gas emissions reductions
- Reduce greenhouse gas reporting thresholds for major emitters, and increase openness and transparency of all greenhouse gas reporting under provincial legislation
- Work to identify and protect the natural carbon sinks
- Employ evidence-based, cost-effective methods for reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Ensure Alberta uses the same air quality index for health as every other province in Canada

Environment

**Power generation is a key part of reducing Alberta's greenhouse gas emissions.**

- Implement a policy that requires electrical generation in the province meet greenhouse gas emissions targets in line with international obligations by 2025
- Prohibit the construction of new coal-fired electrical generation facilities, unless such facilities produce GHG emissions no greater than an equivalent natural gas generation plant
- Shift our electrical generation capacity from large, centralized coal-fired generation to smaller decentralized solar, wind and natural gas and co-generation facilities
- Implement a regulatory framework and incentives that reduce per capita electrical consumption
- Work with owners of legacy coal fire electrical generation facilities to shift electrical production to cleaner sources of electricity

Environment

**The Alberta Party recognizes the need for protection of our land and that reclamation is a vital step in the life cycle of any project.**

- Ensure planning for reclamation is ongoing during the life of a project
- Improve transparency of the existing reclamation trust framework that companies must pay into, so that public can ensure scale of trust is appropriate to level of liability.
- Ensure the liability of a site follows the project, not the producer



Environment

**Conservation of wild lands and natural areas is needed to ensure a healthy biodiversity for Albertans in the future.**

- Establish more conservation areas to preserve ecosystems and wildlife habitat
- Expand existing parks and recreation areas to include conservation objectives
- Encourage voluntary conservation efforts from landowners with incentives

Economy

Environment

Education

Democratic renewal

**The goal of our learning system should be to position our citizens and our communities for the future.**

- Build a public education system that
  - > Ensures local governance
  - > Serves all students
  - > Fosters school-readiness
  - > Respects the student voice
  - > Ensures high literacy rates
  - > Ensures high completion rates
  - > Develops students' ability to thrive in the society of their day, while contributing to the health of our communities

Education

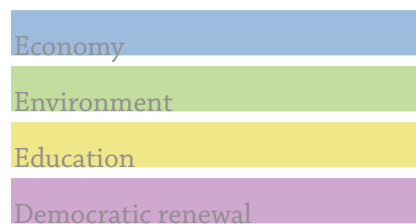
**Alberta's education system must equip students for success while acknowledging diversity.**

- Repeal the provision of Bill 44 that relates to classroom instruction
- Empower and support students, teachers, parents, administrators and local governance to collaboratively make decisions that will benefit their classrooms and their communities
- Provide supports to at-risk learners and students with unique learning needs
- Replace the Provincial Achievement Test with an evaluation system that focuses on individual progress over a period of time

Education

**Schools are the hub of our community. All levels of government need to work together to build a stronger system.**

- Decentralize decision-making over the construction, operation, and disposition of school buildings by restoring authority to locally elected school boards
- Find and develop opportunities for collaboration between school boards, municipal and provincial governments
- Enable schools to house the wraparound services children need for their development



**Under an Alberta Party government, Alberta’s post-secondary education system will respond to the needs of a diverse society.**

- Develop high-quality researchers and teachers
- Position Alberta to transform from a carbon-based economy to a green economy
- Develop leaders and engaged citizens
- Support the process and continuum of life-long learning



**Access to our post-secondary system should be opened rather than restricted. No student should be prevented from attending a post-secondary institution for financial reasons.**

- Reduce tuition costs for post-secondary students
- Increase access to student loans, grants and bursaries
- Enhance debt forgiveness for graduates who remain in Alberta
- Provide support for the indirect costs of attending a post-secondary institution
- Increase the number of spaces available in the system while maintaining the quality of the educational programming
- Take a holistic view to improving access by embracing local education, promoting online learning, and growing intra- and inter-institutional services
- Reduce the barriers faced by students in rural communities wishing to attend a post-secondary institution



**Promoting healthy living and preventing disease are key strategies to reduce our health care costs. Increasing our investment in these areas only makes sense.**

- Implement and sustainably fund comprehensive health policies in all Alberta schools
- Work collaboratively with local governments to design communities that promote and support healthy living; encourage the review and implementation of best practices in this area from other jurisdictions.
- Ensure efficient and effective workplace safety regulation by reviewing existing regulations to ensure they’re achieving desired outcomes and developing new ways of working with employers and employees in the prevention of workplace injuries.
- Address the real economic impacts of poverty on health by working with communities and key stakeholders
- Develop strategies to identify and address emerging trends in health and disease prevalence
- Recognize the ethical and economic value of investing in early childhood development to close early gaps among Alberta's youngest children

## Health system

**Every Albertan deserves timely access to quality health care  
—whether they live in an urban or rural community.**

- Ensure health care is fundamentally publicly funded, publicly administered and fiscally sustainable
- Ensure every Albertan has a personalized primary care relationship
- Establish clear benchmarks for quality in health care which promote a seamless continuum of care (long-term care, home care, community care, acute care, palliative care and emergency care)
- Ensure health services and programs are evidence based
- Ensure all Albertans have timely access to urgent care
- Create an arm's length, non-political, health auditor for Alberta's health system
- Promote investment and innovation in family and rural health among Alberta's post-secondary institutions
- Build strategic health plans around the care needs and input of individual communities and recognize the need for flexibility
- Expand access to vision, dental, and mental health care
- Build a comprehensive strategy to mitigate the rising cost of pharmaceuticals

## Health system

**A comprehensive, province-wide mental health strategy is required to protect our most at-risk populations and reduce our long-term healthcare costs.**

- Ensure every person who needs mental health services receives timely access to them
- Immediately address the rise in suicides with a targeted mental health strategy
- Recognize the relationship between addictions and mental health problems and provide seamless care from first point-of-contact to completion of treatment in both urban and rural settings
- Support programs that promote good mental health, good workplace mental health, education and awareness
- Promote programs that recognize and explore the importance of early life experiences on a child's mental health
- Work with at-risk communities to address unique challenges in mental health services

Health system

**Alberta must take an integrated and collaborative approach to the delivery of health-related programs and services.**

- Support opportunities for integration between different disciplines, institutions, and points of delivery within and outside the health system
- Fund innovative health care models that address quality of life and the factors that influence it.
- Establish an integrated delivery and governance system for health that promotes efficient seamless care for Albertans
- Develop a provincial health labour strategy that promotes the most cost-effective use of personnel and cross-disciplinary team-based care.

Democratic renewal

**Open and transparent government is necessary to build public trust and encourage direct participation.**

- Replace the Public Affairs Bureau with the Citizen Affairs Centre designed to more actively engage Albertans in the legislative process and in local community issues
- Allow data collected by government for official reports and other purposes that does not include personal or sensitive information to be made available to the public, using an “open data” framework where applicable.
- Strengthen financial transparency by requiring public disclosure of leadership campaign and political party financial contributions prior to election days, decreasing limits on political donations, imposing limits on party expenditures, and explore public finance models for political parties.
- Strike an independent committee to review MLA salaries on a fixed date between elections, which will take effect after the next election
- Institute a Code of Conduct for Members of the Legislative Assembly, which encourages better representation of their constituents through active engagement.
- Properly resource the Officers of the Legislature: Auditor General, Privacy Commissioner, Ethics Commissioner, Chief Electoral Officers and Ombudsman
- Establish the Chair of the Human Rights Commission as an Officer of the Legislature to ensure independence and transparency.
- Develop “whistleblower” legislation that protects employees from mistreatment and threats of dismissal from their private or public sector employers in the event that an employee discloses illegal, unsafe or unethical practices.

Democratic renewal

**Increasing citizen engagement and participation in policy development and governance is the key to re-engaging Albertans.**

- Build on the Big Listen Process by continuing to engage with all Albertans when developing new initiatives and policies
- Restore Albertans' democratic and landowner rights and return power to the Legislature from the Cabinet and Appointed Ministers by amending the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, the Land Assembly Project Area Act, the Electrical Statutes Amendment Act, and the Alberta Utility Commission's Act
- Establish an open and transparent process in selection and appointments to boards, committees, councils, agencies

Democratic renewal

**Strengthening local governance is necessary to create a grassroots culture of political engagement.**

- Engage in a province-wide, measurable dialogue with municipalities and school boards to develop more equitable, decentralized revenue-sharing strategies
- Work with appropriate municipal leaders, citizens and organizations to harmonize jurisdictional boundaries (i.e. school boards, municipalities, etc), encourage agreement concerning local boundaries where possible, and improve and strengthen the functional relationship between neighbouring municipal jurisdictions.

## Next steps

The Alberta Party views policy development as a continuous process. As our party continues to grow, and we continue to use new methods to meaningfully engage Albertans, we will work toward refining the directions presented in this document into more detailed policy, and toward developing policy in other important areas.

We're looking for volunteers to help us with this task. If you'd like to get involved, visit our website at [www.albertaparty.ca](http://www.albertaparty.ca), or send an email to [info@albertaparty.ca](mailto:info@albertaparty.ca). Policy development is hard work, but with strong values, an engaged membership, and a strong connection with our province's citizens, we're confident in our ability to deliver.