

What You Need to Know About the Alberta Provincial Election

Your vote matters! Take a stand for quality services and responsible government.

ALBERTA UNION OF
PROVINCIAL EMPLOYEES
**ELECTION
HANDBOOK
2012**



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INTRODUCTION

If you never thought much about politics, now's definitely the time to get serious.

Hello Brothers and Sisters,

Just like you, we consider ourselves average AUPE members and average Albertans. We work hard providing quality public services to all Albertans. We care deeply about our families and our communities. Just like everyone else, we have the same hopes and fears.

Politics affect everyone's life, but none more so than public service workers. Increasing workloads and stress, erosion of public health care, education and social services have had a dramatic, negative impact on us.

All of these issues are the result of decisions made and policies set by elected politicians. All of these political decisions have affected quality of life for ourselves, our families and our communities.

That's why we need to get more involved, especially in the upcoming provincial election. We must get more involved politically if we want to protect our jobs, our incomes, our families and our public services.

When you look around, there are thousands of us: average, hard working AUPE members. Just think what we would be able to achieve if we all took a stand together to make sure that our voices are heard and listened to in the next provincial election.

Only 41 per cent of the province's 2.3 million eligible voters cast ballots in the 2008 election, a record low, and the Conservatives received 52.66 per cent of this vote (*Source: www.cbc.ca/albertavotes2008/*).

Each individual AUPE member has the opportunity to make sure that politicians with an agenda to protect jobs and public services

get elected. As AUPE members, we have the unique opportunity to hire (and fire!) our bosses.

When you look around, there are thousands of us: average, hard working AUPE members. Just think what we would be able to achieve if we all took a stand together to make sure that our voices are heard and listened to in the next provincial election.

That's why we think it's very important to communicate to you through this handbook. We want to help you gather the facts and information you need to get involved in the next provincial election and make a real difference.

In the next few pages you will see the responses from political party leaders on some key issues of concern to AUPE members. You will learn what you can do to make sure your issues become part of the provincial election.

This is your opportunity to do something as simple as talking to

your coworkers about this handbook or as involved as working on a campaign. Whatever you decide to do, you can make a difference.

Take a stand, stand together! Read on. Enjoy! And get active!



Credit: Canadian Association of Labour Media



ALBERTA POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS

Prior to the election, five political parties were represented in the Alberta Legislature. Below is a list of their leaders.



Brian Mason, New Democratic Party



Alison Redford, Progressive Conservative Party



Raj Sherman, Liberal Party



Danielle Smith, Wildrose Party



Glenn Taylor, Alberta Party



HIT & MYTH

The budget hoax that hoodwinked us all

All of the hits suffered by AUPE members in particular, and Albertans in general, starting with the government's debt and deficit myth.

It is not a myth that there are budget deficits. It is, however, a callous and purely political myth that the cause of that deficit was government overspending on services and salaries. This myth has been used by politicians to impose hiring freezes, justify staffing shortages and force unmanageable workloads on frontline workers. As a result, Albertans have suffered through the steady erosion in the quality and availability of public services. But the truth is, Alberta's fiscal problems have been caused by inadequate revenues. Alberta gives away billions of dollars every year to multinational

companies through massive grants, corporate tax and resource royalty breaks.

It is a callous and purely political myth that the cause of the deficit was government overspending on services and salaries.

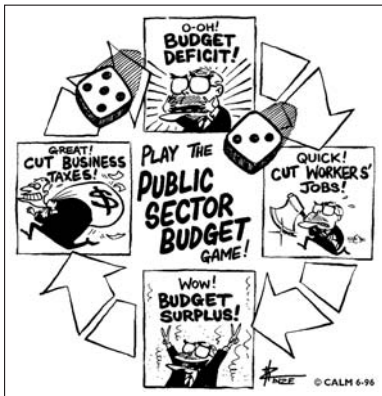
So what were the real causes of the debt and deficit in Alberta?

1. Reduced revenue from natural resources due to royalty breaks for oil, natural gas and mineral companies
2. A global recession caused by deregulation and unbridled greed in the world financial industry
3. Revenue lost through tax breaks and rebates to corporations and big businesses
4. Generous private sector grants and subsidies

Interestingly enough, the same explanations hold true when we look at the federal debt and deficit. A 1991 Stats Canada study showed that

the growth of the federal debt during the 1980s came from high interest rates (50 per cent), corporate tax breaks (44 per cent), and social spending (6 per cent).

Obviously, corporations, banks and big business enjoyed the so-called Alberta Advantage while average Albertans were put at a disadvantage through job losses, cuts and elimination of services, and increased user fees. Successive governments did their jobs well.

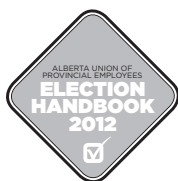


Credit: Canadian Association of Labour Media

They rewarded their financial supporters – corporations and big businesses. Working Albertans, on the other hand, have had the “advantage” of declining real wages, an increasing cost of living and eroding public services.

In the upcoming provincial election it is likely the government will continue to perpetuate the myth of too much government spending on public services as a tool to continue underfunding services, eliminating jobs and privatizing essential services. Unless we take action and stand together we will continue to bear the brunt of the government’s attacks on public services.

In a world of hit and myth, we will continue to get hit if we don’t expose the myth.



QUESTION PERIOD

Everything you ever wanted to know from the political parties, but were afraid to ask

There are many significant concerns for AUPE members about current government policies.

We put these key issues, identified by the members of AUPE, to the leaders of our provincial political parties.

We intended to survey the leaders of every party represented in the Alberta Legislature immediately prior to the 2012 election. In late December, all five leaders were sent a list of questions addressing issues of importance to AUPE’s membership. Four of those parties — the NDP, Liberals, Wildrose and Alberta Party — responded to all eight questions. Officials with the governing Progressive Conservatives told us in January that it was too early to discuss these issues. “I’m afraid you’re too far ahead of the game for us to respond yet,” PC Association of Alberta interim executive director Kelley Charlebois said in an email. “We’d be happy to at a later date but are not able to at this time.” If Premier Redford responds before the election, we’ll post her answers to the questions on COPA’s page on the AUPE website.

1. Government staffing levels.

We know for a fact through our membership that more and more public workers are stressed out, burnt-out, having their health and safety jeopardized and are having problems maintaining their professional standards in such a difficult atmosphere. We also know that front-line staffing levels have stayed virtually the same over the last 10 years, while at the same time the province's population and demand for services have increased significantly.

Question to the Political Party Leaders

Do you believe that government departments are adequately staffed in the provision of front line services? Why or why not?

Brian Mason, NDP: No. Many surveys of public workers in the past two or three years have found a serious lack of morale due to poor management, understaffing, and inadequate resources. This situation creates health and safety dangers for staff, causes high staff turnover, and impedes delivering high quality services. The NDP recognizes the demands placed on frontline service workers are increasingly complex and, as a result, so are the needs of these workers. The government needs to keep up. An NDP government recognizes unions as representing workers and will work with these partners to develop appropriate staffing and funding ratios that are both monitored and enforced. The Alberta NDP would ensure that opinions of staff are responded to with policy and adequate resources, because staff satisfaction and low turnover are critical first steps to meeting Albertans' needs.

Raj Sherman, Liberal Party: No, there are too many case-overloads for front line workers. They are losing their ability to deliver services Albertans need.

Danielle Smith, Wildrose Party: No. There is a top-heavy management structure with too many layers of middle management diverting resources from front line workers. Wildrose would reduce these layers and direct more money to hiring front line workers where they are needed.

Glenn Taylor, Alberta Party: This is a difficult question to answer given the lack of transparency in Alberta. For example, it is impossible to understand the staffing issues in our health care system since so many health care workers are under confidentiality agreements. These agreements prevent health care workers from raising issues. The Alberta Party would relieve health care workers from their obligations under those confidentiality agreements (except with respect to patient information) so that they could share their concerns with the public. With respect to other

departments, we have to examine the mandate of each department and consult with the affected stakeholders to determine if the department has the resources to fulfill its mandate. For example, the City of Calgary has more environmental expertise on staff than the provincial government, a fact that was highlighted during a recent gas leak in Calgary. The Province has very limited ability to respond to environmental issues, which puts the health and safety of Albertans at risk. The Alberta Party is not interested in simplistic answers to tough questions. Until we can review the mandate and related staffing requirements to deliver on a responsible mandate we cannot say that we are adequately staffed – or not. However we will commit to an open process that respects the role of the staff in helping us find the right answer. This begins with a trusting relationship, not one of automatic downsizing, rightsizing or out-sizing as the immediate and often only government answer.

2. Privatization, Contracting Out and Deregulation

AUPE believes there should be full public disclosure of all contracts that the government has with private operators. Any contracted service must be closely regulated and monitored by government and contractors must be fully accountable to the public for the funding they receive.

Whenever public services are being considered for privatization, the public should have full input and give direction with any privatization or contracting out that is being considered. In cases where private or non-profit operators deliver public services, there should be absolutely no erosion of the quality of those services, and no reduction in the wages or working conditions for the workers delivering those services.



Question to the Political Party Leaders

Do you believe that details of contracts made between the government and private service providers should be available to the public? Why or why not?

Brian Mason, NDP: Yes. It's public money. Transparency and oversight are critical for good fiscal management. As it currently stands, when information about public-private partnerships is requested under the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act, the details of them are rarely released, based on the Conservatives' excuse that doing so may risk 'exposing private business dealings.' Coupled with the fact that private corporations are not required to release information on their earnings, taxpayers are left not knowing how cost effective these partnerships actually are. The omission of this information lets the government continue to privatize without adequate economic analysis. Recent figures released by the Nova Scotia government show major savings from bringing road maintenance work back in-house. Privatization is more costly and is less effective at meeting standards. Good information will make this alarmingly clear.

Raj Sherman, Liberal Party: Absolutely. There should be open tendering of contracts along with independent monitoring and enforcement.

Danielle Smith, Wildrose Party: Yes. We believe in accountability and transparency. All public expenditures should be accounted for properly.

Glenn Taylor, Alberta Party: Yes, I believe that that these contracts should be available to the public. Sunlight is a great disinfectant. Public sector contracts are a matter of public record as are the budgets associated with the work each department performs on behalf of the citizens of Alberta. Therefore it makes sense that private service providers should be made available to public scrutiny as well. A recent study conducted by the Project on Government Oversight in the U.S. found that the U.S. government is wasting billions of dollars each year paying contractors to do work that could be done for nearly half the price by federal employees. Public access to these private sector service contracts would help Albertans to make similar comparisons. It seems clear to me that we need to keep our services public for reasons of equity, accountability and transparency.

Question to the Political Party Leaders

Do you believe that the government's current efforts to monitor contracted and privatized services for quality and cost effectiveness are adequate? Why or why not?

Brian Mason, NDP: No. A recent audit of Sustainable Resource Development, for example, found that from 2003 to 2006 the Department entered into 11 contracts with one consultant, totalling close to one million dollars. SRD did not open the bid process to other contractors nor did it evaluate the financial stability of the contractor who later went bankrupt. Even the auditor general expressed concerns. Such situations may be much more common. Currently, each department assigns and monitors these contracts according to their own will and timing. An NDP government would set strict requirements and would monitor these contracts for the timing, quality, and cost effectiveness of their deliverables. In addition to developing a standardized system of contract accountability for current situations, the NDP would undertake a vigorous review of whether any privatization could be justified in the short and long term, as this is a more fundamental issue than monitoring those in existence.

Raj Sherman, Liberal Party: Absolutely not, the problem is you can't FOIP them.

Danielle Smith, Wildrose Party: Wildrose would be happy to hear from AUPE if there are areas that need to be looked into. It would be a priority of a Wildrose government to work with public sector staff to identify gaps and areas for improvement.

Glenn Taylor, Alberta Party: No, I do not believe that the current effort is adequate. In the child care and seniors' care sectors alone we have ample evidence of poor quality service to the clients at ever increasing prices. I am personally aware of the lack of adequate, quality care being given to seniors in Designated Assisted Living Facilities. Much of the cost prohibitive, poor quality service has been brought to the attention of the current government, but no adequate response has been forthcoming. The effort to monitor and act on the many shortfalls in this must be increased and must be acted upon.

Question to the Political Party Leaders

In specific, what public services do you believe should be privatized or contracted out, and which should not? Why or why not?

Brian Mason, NDP: None. The Alberta NDP stands to protect public services. When privatization happens, profit margins become the goal and standards are more difficult to implement. The loser is the end consumer of these services. Privatization is especially disconcerting when it involves essential services such as health or education. Often workers in private companies are in poorer situations than those in the public sector and this disparity may translate into greater dissatisfaction of those receiving services in the private sector than those in the public sector (long term care is just one example of this). Any proposal for privatization or contracting out should not be considered without overwhelming proof the workers involved will not be penalized and that quality of service offered will not suffer.

Raj Sherman, Liberal Party: Humans should not be contracted out as profiteers. I believe in public education/health care. The government plays a big role, community plays a role, plus in certain areas, private plays a role. BUT in education/health care there is no role for privatization.

Danielle Smith, Wildrose Party: Our first priority is improving publicly-delivered services. Examples of how to create high-performance government can be found in New Zealand and Indianapolis. More generally, we believe in public-private partnerships and creating a publicly-funded, mixed-delivery model that includes public, private and non-profit service providers. This is already done in education and the delivery of many social services, and we would expand on this successful approach.

Glenn Taylor, Alberta Party: The push for privatization of public services throughout North America has not been backed by evidence that this is in the best interests of the general public. Whether it is expecting energy companies to perform their own environmental oversight or asking private companies to build P3 highways, the cost effectiveness and service improvement evidence has not been provided. As with any workplace, good management coupled with clear direction, accountability and cost controls will result in more efficient services delivered to the consumer. In Alberta, we have a top-notch public service that appears to be overworked, under resourced and poorly directed. Until such time as clear support for our Public Service Workers along with the adequate resources to do their work is provided by their

government employers, we should not be expanding the drive to private delivery of public services. Government has an important role to play in the delivery of public services and this role must be strengthened not weakened.

3. Public Service Employee Relations Act

AUPE members are covered by two separate labour laws. The first is the Labour Relations Code. The second is the Public Service Employee Relations Act (PSERA), which applies only to government employees and other government-sponsored organizations. Employees under PSERA have fewer rights than other Albertans. For instance, it is illegal for them to strike. At the same time, under PSERA, the arbitration process to resolve negotiation disputes is flawed in that the arbitrator is legally restricted from ruling on important items such as pensions or job classifications. AUPE feels that all workers – public and private sector – should have full bargaining rights and the right to strike (with reasonable agreement for the provision for essential services during a labour dispute).

Question to the Political Party Leaders

Do you feel the Public Service Employee Relations Act is fair? Why or why not?

Brian Mason, NDP: No. We should always have the right to collectively bargain and decide whether or not actions such as arbitration or strikes are essential to securing standards and having our demands heard. If public sector employees are unsatisfied with the terms and conditions of their workplace and fail to have their concerns adequately addressed then there may be no other option but to strike. In this increasingly closed off government the legal right to strike may be the only way to get commitment to necessary government action. The Alberta NDP believes there are alternatives such as non bias arbitration and organized and mediated disputes and that strikes can generally be prevented with an employer committed to good working conditions, the protection of good jobs, and on-going honest communication with unions, but this does not mean there is a case to make them illegal. Public employees deserve the same rights as other workers.

Raj Sherman, Liberal Party: A fairer and more balanced labour relations environment could definitely be achieved by amending PSERA to allow civil servants (excluding firefighters and police officers) the right to engage in a legal work stoppage.

Danielle Smith, Wildrose Party: Wildrose is open to hearing from AUPE on proposed changes to PSERA. Many publicly delivered services are provided as a public monopoly, with no

competitive alternatives, and this may be the reason there is not full bargaining rights. If we allow a mixed delivery approach with public, private and non-profit providers for more public services, then full bargaining rights could potentially be restored (with provisions for essential services during a labour dispute).

Glenn Taylor, Alberta Party: There is no question that organized labour in this country is under attack. These attacks have come at the very core of what it means to be a union – our right to collectively bargain. Far too often politicians seek to vilify labour as the cause of their fiscal woes and make us pay through stripping our rights to bargain on behalf of the working men and women that our Unions represent. For many years I was an activist in the union movement here in Alberta. The principles of fair play, giving voice to those that are without and organizing to stand up, speak out and fight back are at the core of my philosophy of leadership. The Alberta Party began as a citizens' movement for political change and democratic renewal. We soon recognized that in order to be heard and be effective we had to organize citizens that shared our concerns into a viable political alternative. I understand, support and respect the need for a full and fair collective bargaining process in all aspects of labour including those in the public service.



Credit: Canadian Association of Labour Media

4. Health Care

AUPE believes in a fully funded, publicly administered and operated, universal health care system which focuses on the dignity of patients and care givers. AUPE not only opposes private health care, it has also played an important role in a broader social movement which has fought against the expansion of private health care.

At the same time AUPE proudly represents thousands of workers in the private-for-profit and not-for-profit long term care and continuing care sectors. These workers often face increased obstacles and barriers to achieving appropriate pay and working conditions than their colleagues in the public sector.

Question to the Political Party Leaders

Do you support a fully-funded, publicly administered and operated, universal and single-payer public health care system? Why or why not?

Brian Mason, NDP: Yes. The Alberta NDP has been working hard to defend public health care. We've seen repeated attempts under the Conservatives to introduce for-profit health care and every time the people of Alberta say no. Last year, the Alberta NDP introduced Bill 208 with the objectives of defending and improving public health care. Bill 208 would lower the cost of prescription drugs and would implement universal seniors' and children's dental care programs. The Alberta NDP believes that for-profit provision of health care violates Canada's laws and values and takes money out of services and adequate pay, to put dividends in the pockets of shareholders. The universal model of health care that the NDP supports is the most cost effective, as it eliminates intermediaries and insurance company overheads. It also more clearly protects high quality standards of care.

Raj Sherman, Liberal Party: Yes, I do. A) It's an Albertan and Canadian value, we must protect. B) Evidence shows public health care is cheaper for better care. C) Must not allow insurance companies and lawyers to come in between front line workers and their patients. D) As junior minister of health, I disagreed with government positions of privatizing seniors' care and government direction of health care in general, especially when Fred Horne presented the new Alberta Health Act phases 1 and 2 which will lead to American style private health care. While in government, I fought against PC government direction which led to my expulsion.

Danielle Smith, Wildrose Party: Wildrose supports a fully-funded, public-administered, universal, single-payer, public

health care system. We also believe in public-private partnerships and creating a publicly funded, mixed-delivery system that includes public, private and non-profit service providers. This is already done in education and the delivery of many social services, and we would expand on this successful approach in health care.

Glenn Taylor, Alberta Party: The Alberta Party supports a fully funded, publicly administered and operated, universal and single-payer public health care system. What is more important however is the nature of the debate. In Alberta we have had 41 years of the same government and the same weak opposition parties. The quality of Alberta's health care system is on the minds of most Albertans. The debate around health care has been increasingly framed as a choice between our public system, which already includes private elements, or introducing more privatized services. The debate in the legislature is usually lived out through opposition parties calling for the PC Health and Wellness Minister to resign and the PCs reacting by spending even more money, usually without a plan. The PCs, as we have also come to learn, also react by silencing health professionals willing to speak out. Albertans need to have a better conversation about health and wellness. It needs to be about more than just private versus public or political incompetence. It needs to be about new ideas and the right solutions to the problems we face in our health system.



Question to the Political Party Leaders

Do you support the idea of legislated staff/client ratios in long term care and continuing care facilities? Why or why not?

Brian Mason, NDP: Yes. These ratios are essential, particularly in those sectors of the industry where the profit margin is the bottom line and where there is frequent understaffing, low pay and high turnover rates as a result. There is evidence of a clear link between inadequate staffing levels and higher rates of adverse outcomes for residents. Ensuring that there are enough staff on site is a fundamental measure critical to the delivery of quality care and ensures staff work under conditions that are safe and fair.

Raj Sherman, Liberal Party: Yes, it's a way to guarantee a high quality standard of care for those seniors who built our province. Albertans in care are living longer and have specialized needs that require highly specialized staff and adequate support.

Danielle Smith, Wildrose Party: No. The Wildrose trusts in the expertise of health care professionals and local administrators and, as such, we believe staff ratios should be decided by individual facility operators based on their unique client mix. However it is the government's role to set service standards and ensure that outcomes in quality of care are achieved.

Glenn Taylor, Alberta Party: The Alberta Party supports the idea of legislated staff/client ratios in long term care and continuing care facilities. In the absence of such legislation Albertans have suffered the results of low staffing levels and the very real, very negative impact on the care that the residents in these facilities require. As individual facility managers attempt to provide a service within the narrow funding confines currently on offer from the PCs they often look to reduce staffing levels to stay within budget. This has to change and a legislated ratio will force this to happen if it is set at levels based on a realistic level of care, not the existing definition as it is applied today.

5. Education

AUPE believes that a strong, stable and well-supported education system is vital to the prosperity and sustainability of Alberta's economy and Alberta families. That means adequate, predictable long-term funding from the provincial government. Too often in this province, we have seen budget cuts, staff reductions and fee increases creating uncertainty in our schools and post-secondary institutions. It's time for politicians to stop looking at education as an expense, and start looking at it as an investment.

Question to the Political Party Leaders

Do you believe Alberta's education system, including K-12 and post-secondary universities, colleges and technical institutions, are adequately and sustainably funded, particularly in regard to support services and staffing? Why or why not?

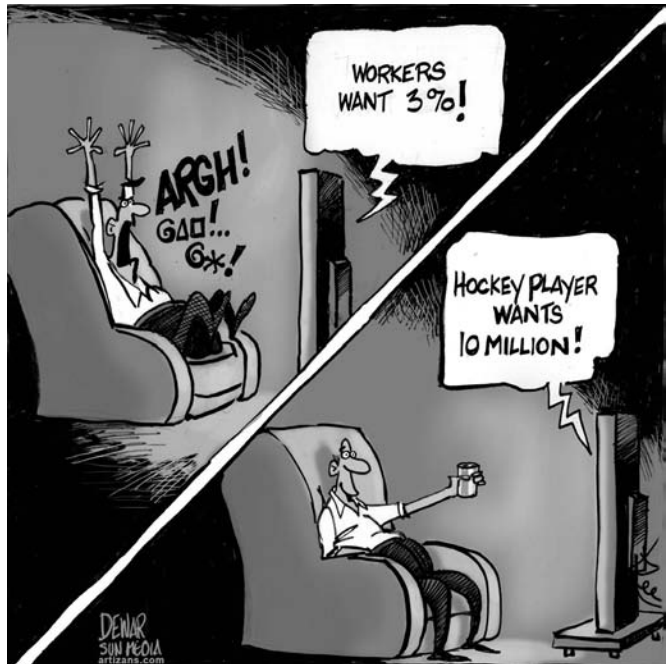
Brian Mason, NDP: No. Education breaks the cycle of poverty and builds social capital; yet base funding for educational institutions has continued to decline. Supports, training and advancement opportunities for staff are getting choked out. There are a wide range of skilled workers essential to the delivery of good education, including administrative, custodial, teaching and many other human services personnel. Without adequate, multi-year funding commitments, these professionals are not supported and equipped to do their jobs and institutions operate in chaos, hiring



and releasing professionals, preventing the focus on the delivery of education. Large class sizes, insufficient funding for special needs students, and mounting post secondary student debts partially account for Alberta's comparatively low graduation rates and hurt the province's long term strength. The NDP will commit to a sustainably funded, quality education system.

Raj Sherman, Liberal Party: No. A) Hardworking families are getting nickel and dimed on school fees. B) My son in grade 12 and daughter in university tell me about increasing class sizes, lack of support for their teachers, resulting in lack of attention given to their educational needs. C) University highest fees and tuition in nation, yet amongst the wealthiest places on the planet. D) Lowest High School completion rate. E) Lowest university participation rate, yet wealthiest province, I find this disturbing. F) Children are our future and we must do what's required to ensure that they are able to achieve to the best of their abilities. For this, we need sustainable predictable funding for not only K-12 and post-secondary. G) We must invest in the public education and not privatize our kids' education.

Danielle Smith, Wildrose Party: K-12 Education: According to the Government of Alberta website, funding for education has increased by more than 60% in the last ten years, whereas student enrollment levels have increased by less than



10%. If there are funding challenges, it is because of a top-heavy management structure with too many layers of middle management diverting resources from front line workers. Wildrose would reduce these layers and direct more money to hiring front line workers where they are needed. Post-Secondary Education: A Wildrose government would consult with post-secondary institutions to get a better idea of their specific funding challenges. Wildrose believes in funding post-secondary institutions by removing arbitrary caps on program enrollment and having funding follow the students to the program of their choice.

Glenn Taylor, Alberta Party: The Alberta Party sees education as the cornerstone for all public policy; the more educated a society, the more prosperous, healthy and democratic the society will be. We believe education is critically important to the future of our province and the welfare of all Albertans. It is the best way to reduce health costs, lower crime rates, improve social cohesion, strengthen the economy and create a more fair and just society. The Alberta Party believes that education is a wise investment and that stable, predictable funding is required to maximize and protect that investment. Currently, we see considerable wasted energy and resources expended trying to second guess government direction. We see decisions being made in an atmosphere of uncertainty and doubt, rather than confidence. Given these limitations, it is no surprise that long-term planning is impossible. This needs to change, so that school boards and administrators can focus on delivering the very best education. Education depends on people – teachers, custodians, exempt staff, professors, administrators and boards all need to work together to serve and guide the most important people of all: students! The Alberta Party supports lifelong learning, from strong early education programming all the way through post-secondary and additional career training. We need to ensure that every Albertan has access to the education they need so they can reach their full potential.



HE WHO PAYS THE PIPER CALLS THE TUNE

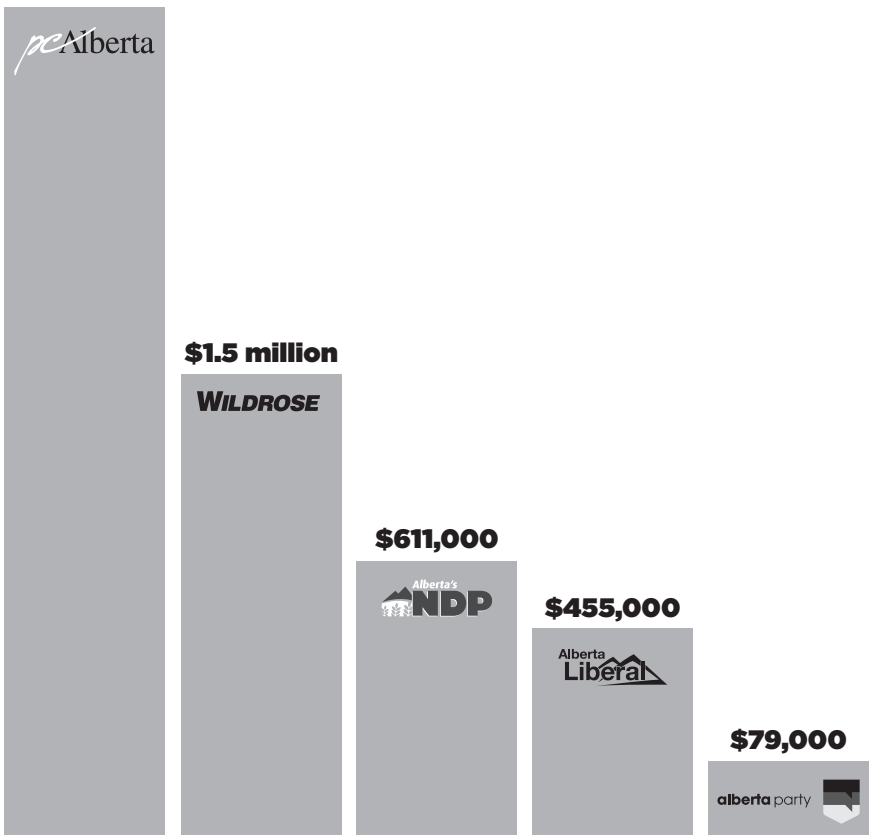
The right-wing rumba – No wonder Big Business is treated so well in Alberta

You can tell a lot about a political party by the company it keeps. Here is the most recent data on donations to the five political parties currently represented in the Legislature, according to Elections Alberta (figures are rounded).

Total Donations

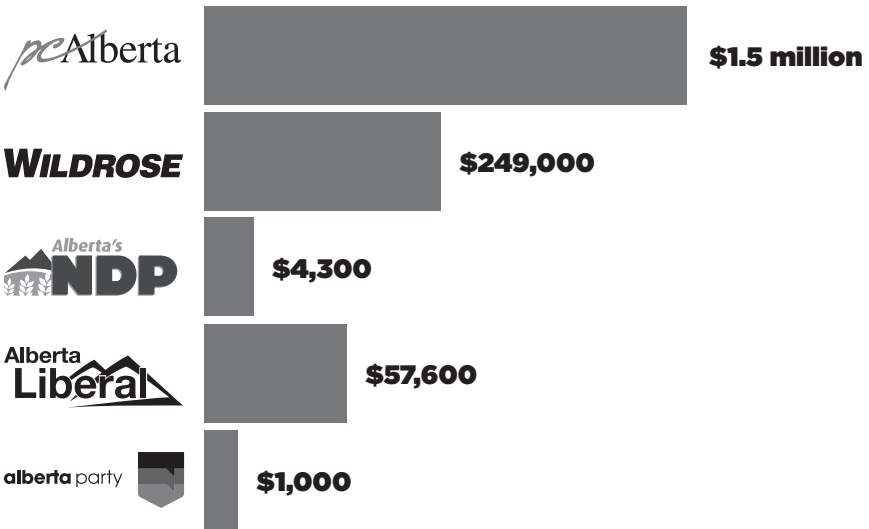
Total donations in 2010:

\$2.8 million



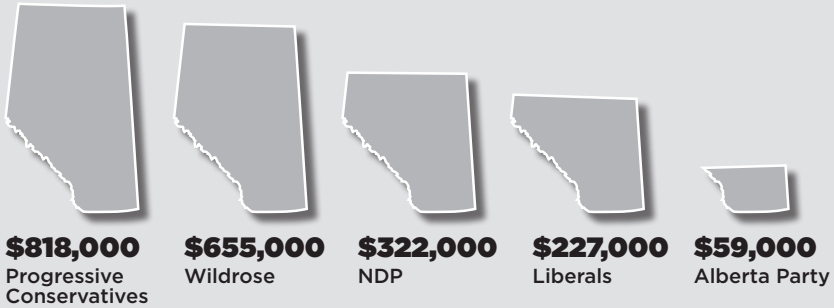
Corporate Donations

Corporate donations over \$375 in 2010:



Private Donations

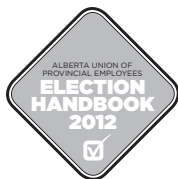
Individual donations over \$375 in 2010:



Non Itemized Donations

Donations of \$375 or less are not required to be itemized. Here are the total amounts of small donations to each party:





GETTING INVOLVED

The choice is yours. Make democracy work for you – get involved!

There are many things we can do together and as individuals to ensure that our voices and issues are heard. Ultimately we want to elect those people who are dedicated to quality public services and the people who provide these services.

Get involved in a local campaign

The most important thing you can do is work to get a candidate you support elected. The earlier you get involved, the more valuable you will be. No matter how popular that candidate might be, they can always use more help. You can door-knock, work the phones or distribute signs. If you're a behind-the-scenes kind of person, there are plenty of other jobs to do.

Prior to the election call and during the election campaign

Just prior to an election, politicians are much more eager to please and to deal with situations quickly before they become embarrassments for them. So there are a number of things that you and your colleagues can do right now.

Meet with the candidates

Often your candidates won't be fully aware of your issues. Even if you think your candidates won't agree with you, it's important to let them know there is an issue of concern for a group of their constituents (i.e. people who vote).

It is never too early to raise the profile of AUPE members' issues. In fact, on an ongoing basis many AUPE members have been working hard to ensure that their issues get heard and are acted upon.

Be prepared and knowledgeable about the points you want to make

Don't allow the candidates to change or avoid the issue. You can disagree without becoming disagreeable. You can be polite but firm.

Don't take a large group (4 or 5 max)

Some good general questions to ask candidates: Is this issue important to you? How much are you affected by how your constituents feel about this issue? Is there any information that might cause you to change your mind on this issue?

Take notes, and record all answers

Follow up directly with a phone call or a letter, especially if the

candidate said they needed some time to think about what you had told them. Make sure you let others (colleagues, supporters, the media) know about the meeting you had and the outcome of it.

Invite candidates to your next union meeting

Give your fellow members a chance to speak directly with them. Participants can be firm and direct, but should remain civil and avoid personal attacks.

Letters to the media

Letters to the editor are a great forum for raising and debating important issues.

Many media outlets can be emailed or voice mailed

Remember some simple advice when writing a letter: be brief and to the point. Make sure your letter is typed and double-spaced. Include your full return address and phone number or the media will not publish your letter. Don't rant and rave. Even though you may be emotional about an issue, a firm but well-authored letter without personal attacks is more effective.

Radio phone-in shows

Use every opportunity to phone into radio talk shows or call-in programs. Especially as the election draws nearer, many issues will be debated on the radio.

Try to anticipate when your issue will be discussed (be aware of what tomorrow's program is about).

Be prepared. Make some written notes, but don't read them verbatim on the radio.

Get colleagues to phone in to make similar or supportive remarks.

If you are debating an issue directly with a studio guest, stay calm. If you become too emotional the important points you are making may be dismissed or misunderstood.

Candidates forum/town hall meeting

AUPE members with support from AUPE Regional Offices can sponsor an all-candidates forum for their riding.

- Plan this far enough in advance to ensure all candidates can attend.
- Book appropriate space.
- Advertise the forum through local media, posters and leaflets.
- Make sure AUPE members in the area attend and are prepared to ask questions of the candidates.

During the campaign politicians will be under increased public scrutiny and more publicly exposed. The media will likely be

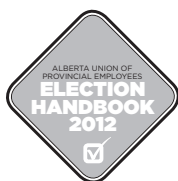
following him or her around. This is a great opportunity to pursue and approach the candidate and ask them questions in full public view.

Work for a candidate who supports issues and a program of benefit to workers, their families and their communities

The whole purpose of this handbook is to help AUPE members get involved in electing a government that cares about people and providing quality public services to people. The most effective way to do this is by working directly on a campaign and getting others to work on the campaign. This work will include phoning, leafleting, door-knocking, canvassing and celebrating your efforts.

Election Day: VOTE!!!

Encourage your co-workers, family, friends and relatives to vote and make sure they know where and when to vote. Set up car pools so people go together to the polling station.



CONCLUSION

Once every few years we get the opportunity to hire and fire our bosses

Once every few years, as AUPE members, we get the opportunity to hire and fire our bosses. We cannot let this opportunity pass us by. Democracy is a daily responsibility for all of us. Engaging in political action on an ongoing basis helps keep democracy alive and well.

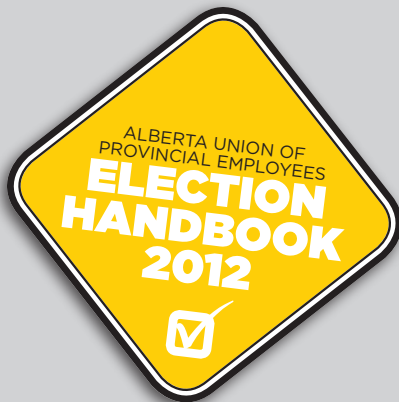
But it is at election time when we must make this political action a priority. This handbook will be a tool you can use in a successful provincial election experience.

It only takes one to make a change. You can be the one.

On election day vote for quality public services and for fair government!

Make your vote count!

PDF copies of this handbook can be downloaded on the COPA page at www.aupe.org/committees/copa



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