



Election '08

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce (ACC) has prepared this provincial election package as a means of highlighting ACC policies that deal with issues of key interest to Chambers across the province.

The policies fall under the following topics: fiscal responsibility, labour, affordable housing, regional cooperation, and Alberta's water.

Individual ACC policies that relate to these issues have been summarized and we have provided questions Chambers can pose to candidates. The questions found with each summary are only suggestions; Chambers are invited to localize them and/or add to the list.

To view ACC's three-year policy book, visit our website at www.abchamber.ca, and click on *Policies & Positions* in the upper left-hand menu, and then click on *ACC's Policies* in the drop-down menu.

ACC plans to query each of the party leaders on these key issues. We will post the responses on our website as the leaders respond to our questions.

Fiscal responsibility



Policy: Maintaining the Alberta Advantage – Through ongoing fiscal responsibility

Objective: Plan for Alberta’s fiscal future with prudent government spending based on balanced budgets that don’t allow for multi-billion dollar surpluses and sudden spending sprees.

Key government departments: Finance; Municipal Affairs; Treasury Board

Requested government actions:

- Eliminate surplus budgeting.
- Reduce corporate and personal taxes.
- Produce and adhere to three-year business plans that set responsible priorities and fund quality programs.
- Limit annual per capita spending to rate of population growth and inflation.
- Limit one-time spending initiatives to fiscal and environmental emergencies.
- Deposit 30 to 40 per cent of all annual non-renewable resource revenues in the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, and consider depositing other windfall natural resource revenues into the fund.
- Create a comprehensive plan to address infrastructure needs.
- Work with municipalities to ensure they can provide effective, efficient and sustainable services, and address their infrastructure needs.

Possible questions:

1. How will your government budget in regards to surpluses?
2. What is your government’s plan for addressing taxes?
3. How will your government monitor and control spending?
4. Will your government deposit 30 to 40 per cent of non-renewable resource revenues in the Heritage Fund?
5. How will you ensure municipalities have predictable, sustainable funding?



Policy: Alberta debt-free, long-term fiscal planning

Objective: Now that Alberta's debt has been eliminated, the provincial government needs to broaden its disciplined fiscal management practices.

Key government departments: Alberta Finance

Government actions:

- Legislate balanced budgets
- Institute 15- to 20-year planning
- Accurately report sustainable government revenues by excluding non-renewable resource revenues
- Concentrate and invest surpluses in the Alberta Heritage Savings and Trust Fund
- Diversity the economy

Potential questions:

1. Does your party have plans to address an annual budgeting system that allows the province to rack up multi-billion surpluses?
2. How far down the road would your government plan fiscally?
3. Does your party see a benefit in reporting Alberta's non-renewable resource revenues separately from more stable, sustainable revenue streams?
4. What plans does your party propose for diversifying Alberta's economy?

Labour



Policy: Fully engaging the skills and talents of immigrants in Alberta

Objective: Immigrants are considered an important resource for labour-strapped businesses. However, the federal and provincial governments need to implement strategies that will expedite their acceptance in Canada and support them as they strive to become independent members of Alberta society.

Key government departments: Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry, Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Government actions:

- Expedite applications.
- Recognize foreign credentials for professionals and trades people.
- Allow foreign students to work in Canada during and after their education is finished.
- Make the Alberta Provincial Nominee Program more efficient.

Possible questions:

1. Does your party see immigration as a means of addressing Alberta's labour shortage?
2. What steps would your government take to promote immigration, help immigrants relocate to Alberta, and develop the skills they need to fully participate in our workforce?



Policy: The aging workforce: Removing disincentives and creating incentives to keep working

Objective: Ensure working past the age of 65 is a worthwhile financial venture for seniors

Key government departments: Human Resources Canada, Federal Department of Finance, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry

Government actions:

- Make changes to Income Tax Act, Old Age Security, RRSPs that provide incentives to older workers

Possible questions:

1. What will your government do to encourage older workers to participate in the workforce as a means to expanding Alberta's labour pool?



Policy: Maintaining the Alberta Advantage – By strengthening industry and labour

Objective: Support small- and medium-sized businesses with farsighted programs that address labour shortages, link high school and post-secondary education to industry needs, and research and development that will diversify the economy

Key government departments: Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry; Alberta Finance; Advanced Education

Government actions:

- Create an environment of stability for small- and medium-sized businesses through stable taxation and fees, effective government programs, and regulatory regimes that don't hamper operations.
- Explore avenues for diversification and investment.
- Better integrate high school and post-secondary education with industry needs.
- Seek new solutions for labour force shortages, with a special focus on Aboriginal inclusion and immigration.

Possible questions:

1. What kind of initiatives will your government introduce to support small- and medium-sized businesses?
2. What kind of solutions will your government offer to promote Aboriginal inclusion in the workforce?
3. Does your party see the need to coordinate high school and post-secondary education with industry needs? If so, how will you accomplish this goal?



Policy: Certification of foreign health care practitioners

Objective: Expedite certification of much-needed health care practitioners trained in other countries

Key government departments: Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry

Government actions:

- Ensure sufficient core class space is available to allow foreign health care practitioners to gain the opportunity to take the courses required for certification
- Provide them with enough financial support to allow them to pursue their studies full-time

Possible questions:

1. What steps will your government take to address the labour shortage in the health care field?
2. How will your government expedite the certification of foreign health care workers?

Affordable housing



Policy: Solutions to Alberta's affordable housing challenge

Objective: Encourage a focused, multi-departmental effort to advance Alberta's economic security by ensuring citizens have access to affordable housing.

Key government departments: Alberta Municipal Affairs

Government actions:

Display leadership

- Create an Alberta Commission on Affordable Housing & Homelessness made up of deputy ministers of provincial departments involved in housing services.
- Develop a 10-year provincial plan for housing.
- Work with municipalities to create plans addressing housing in their communities
- Lobby the federal government for more funding and to make existing grants more flexible.
- Encourage federal government to increase the GST New Housing Rebate.

Increase land supply

- Develop a program that will allow surplus or underutilized provincial property available for housing.
- Free up excess school sites and municipal reserves for affordable housing initiatives.

Create development incentives

- Increase zoning flexibility in Municipal Government Act.
- Encourage municipalities to offer private sector regulatory incentives for affordable housing projects.

Secondary suites

- Remove hurdles to secondary suites and create incentives to allow homeowners to develop them.

Possible question:

1. What kind of initiatives will your government implement to ensure Albertans have access to affordable housing?

Regional cooperation



Policy: Creating opportunities for regional success in Alberta

Objective: Create a framework that will ensure the regions in Alberta coordinate services and plan for future growth

Key government departments: Alberta Municipal Affairs

Government actions:

- Create mechanism to develop and promote a cohesive vision for economic growth and diversification in every region.
- Mandate a regional planning body with representation from municipalities and Chambers of Commerce/Boards of Trade.
- Develop a structure to plan and manage major regional infrastructure.
- Establish a body to act as a steward of regional environmental sustainability.
- Develop new models of sustainable, predictable funding for municipalities.

Possible questions:

1. Does your party see value in requiring regions around Alberta to create common growth plans?
2. How will your government address this issue?
3. Do you see the value of involving Chambers of Commerce in regional planning?

Alberta's water



Policy: Water for Life – Alberta’s Strategy for Sustainability

Objective: Manage water as the vital resource it is. This policy supports the province’s Water for Life initiative but recommends many ways of improving the strategy.

Key government departments: Alberta Environment, Sustainable Resource Development

Government actions requested:

- Improve reporting structure for monitoring water sources.
- Create watershed plans for Alberta’s major river basins.
- Work with each watershed advisory council to develop detailed implementation plans.
- Develop overarching policy framework to help guide watershed planning authorities.
- Develop a master land use plan that recognizes the effect of planning decisions on water quality and quantity.
- Clean up most contaminated sites.
- Expand definition of aquatic ecosystems to include riparian areas.
- Include identification of critical wetlands part of all watershed planning.
- Develop public awareness program to educate citizens about the importance of private wetlands and the need to manage them.
- Create pool of funding for state-of-the-art waste treatment research and other innovative projects.
- Work with design and construction industries and municipalities to promote/require water-saving technologies.
- Work with EUB to reduce amount of fresh water used by resource industry.
- Develop process to transfer water licences to ensure volumes are not used up in a watershed or defined aquifer.
- Develop incentives and public awareness programs to reduce water consumption in Alberta.
- Develop a long-term water shortage strategy for the province.

Possible questions:

1. What kind of priority would your government place on Alberta's water?
2. How will your government ensure fairness among competing interests seeking to tap in to the same water source?
3. What kind of initiatives will your government introduce to protect Alberta's water?
4. How would you better manage Alberta's water resources?
5. What kind of initiatives would your government implement to reduce water consumption?