One of Albertans’ top priorities is a strong economy that withstands the boom and bust cycle that comes with having a large oil and gas sector.

This sector is Alberta’s greatest economic resource but it is clear we need responsible planning and smart savings in order to ensure that we minimize the effects of the bust and maximize the gains of the booms.

The Alberta Party envisions a fiscally responsible financial climate that benefits each Albertan. This means defining success, creating a plan, and then measuring our progress and outcomes. It also means making strategic investments that take advantage of economic cycles, while implementing five-year business plans for every ministry.

We must take our planning horizons at least one year beyond the electoral cycle. It means creating smart, responsive budgets, supporting our thriving energy sector, encouraging creativity, and growing the economy to support and promote entrepreneurs.

We envision a Government that uses public dollars as effectively and efficiently as possible, balances the books, mitigates the effects of boom and bust, and sets aside money for a rainy day.

We’ve identified four priority areas, and have included several tangible, common sense actions that can be taken to achieve this vision.
1 Broaden our economic base through a culture of entrepreneurs and new business start ups.

Alberta must be intentional in instilling a strong culture of entrepreneurship and innovation. The Alberta Party believes that developing new enterprises is essential for our future economic success. New ideas and approaches allow for Alberta to stay competitive in the global market. Alberta must develop a vision that links investment, trade and innovation in order to remove barriers to economic diversification through entrepreneurism.

The Alberta party will:

- Provide 0% small business tax rate for all new business start ups. New business start ups in Alberta will pay 0% small business tax for their first 3 years.
- Work with municipalities to support Start Up Business Districts that create a community of entrepreneurs, decrease the cost of commercial leasing for new businesses and connect new businesses to new customers through local communities and research on emerging markets.
- Work with Alberta communities to develop and implement Living Local programs designed to support locally owned and independent businesses.
- Support and encourage entrepreneurship as a career by helping to identify new markets and new solutions for current and emerging industries that can thrive in our province and by funding an entrepreneurial investor network that provides capital to start-up businesses. The Alberta Party recognizes that entrepreneurs will be instrumental in driving economic diversification and future prosperity in Alberta and wish to foster their participation in our efforts to grow our economy.
- Recognize that innovation comes from a creative workforce that uses critical thinking to solve problems and invent new ways of doing things. We will properly fund post-secondary institutions and Albertans engaged in all levels of learning.
- Promote Alberta’s creative and technology sectors. Technology is revolutionizing business models in our economy and cultural, media and IT industries play a vital role in attracting people, business, and investment to Alberta.

We will foster investment in the creative economy while ensuring sustainability, innovation and the availability of high quality professional arts training, by increasing funding levels to key arts, culture and heritage programs in Alberta. Create an environment in which creative endeavours are recognized as an industry that both employs Albertans, and provides innovative and creative solutions to the issues that Albertans face. Artists, arts professionals and cultural workers are an integral part of our economy and culture and deserve support that recognizes their contribution to society.
• Encourage trade partnerships that will contribute to a vibrant and robust economy by working with the business community to make it easier for trade to take place with jurisdictions around the world.

• Create an Innovation Fund, which will be supplied by strategic investments in Alberta Investment Management Corp. dedicated to economic diversification. The Innovation Fund will act similarly to a venture capital fund for specified areas, with the goal of becoming world class within each sector. An independent organization will control access to the Fund to ensure efficiency and non-partisanship. A peer review model will determine which projects are to receive funding.

• Launch the MILLION DOLLAR IDEA PROJECT, in which Alberta entrepreneurs will be invited to develop a new idea that addresses one of Alberta’s primary challenges. We will choose an independent panel to award $1 million grants to five winners, for a total cost of $5 million. Ideas that are not awarded grants but are deemed valuable to Alberta’s future will be included in a province wide initiative aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and new ideas for Alberta’s future.

• Work with community, rural, and regional organizations to support local economic development, specifically through reinvestment in Regional Economic Development Alliances to develop and support clearly understood and complementary working relationships with business and industry, local and sub-regional economic development and tourism organizations. A portion of our savings from our non renewable resource revenues fund will be allocated to a special purpose fund with the sole mandate of funding initiatives from these groups.

2 Realizing the Full Potential of our Resource Based Economy

The Alberta Party recognizes that the development of our natural resources is Alberta’s primary economic vehicle. In order to continue to develop and grow, our resource based industries need to be effectively leveraged and supported with an eye to future economic growth and changes. We cannot control the economy, nor should we. However, we do have the ability to create a favourable business environment and ensure sound environmental stewardship.

It is time we used the public revenue generated from our resource based industries today to catalyze a sustainable, profitable and competitive economy which provides Alberta businesses access to new markets, research and innovation.
The Alberta party will:

• Ensure a stable regulatory and royalty environment, promote a positive brand or our industries globally by insisting on best practices, and a strong commitment to environmental stewardship.

• Support the Forestry, Agricultural and Energy sectors through broad policy frameworks that encourage value added products and processing. We will partner as needed with the industries, enterprises and businesses already established in Alberta to ensure they have the capacity to continue to provide jobs and growth through increasing global market intelligence and access for Alberta entrepreneurs.

• Grow a world-class innovation culture in the Alberta resource sectors and prioritize the diversification of respective value chains within and between the natural resource sectors.

• Endeavour to reduce labour shortages by working with the federal government to increase regional immigration and increase resources for the provincial nominee program by addressing outdated immigration programs. This includes ensuring that the credentials of immigrants are being recognized locally; working with disenfranchised groups to achieve greater employment, and working with municipalities to build communities that attract and retain the people that are needed to power our economy into the future.

• Commit to the guidelines outlined in our energy policy by building on the strengths of oil and gas, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and expanding our renewable energy sector, modernizing our electricity production and transmission system, and becoming global leaders in innovation. Using innovation and incentives to reward early adopters of clean technologies. This includes the implementation of enforceable regulations, independent monitoring of environmental impacts and proper reclamation efforts.

• Ensure safe and environmentally friendly access to markets, in addition to the United States, and will work to maximize the value-add industries in Alberta.
3 Smart Fiscal Planning & Balanced Budgets

Fiscal responsibility begins with smart planning. Alberta has lost its way when it comes to planning for the future, and thus isn’t able to sustainably pay for its operations and commitments. Yearly budgets fail to reflect the needs and wants of Albertans, as they are not properly consulted before budgets are finalized. Relying too heavily on non-renewable resource revenues leaves our economy fragile and subject to whims the market, when these revenues should be benefiting Albertans now and into the future.

The Alberta Party believes that smart planning and proper mix of revenue collection, service funding, saving and invest is needed in order to adequately offer the programs and services Albertans expect and deserve from their government now and into the future. What’s more, we believe it is time to engage Albertans in an authentic conversation about the level of service they would like from their government, and how they want government to pay for it. Consultation with Albertans is the key to successfully planning for the future and effectively Governing on Behalf of Albertans.

The Alberta Party will:

• Treat our resource revenues with special regard. Recognizing that the revenues we see from them is one-time in nature and recognizing that a changing global landscape will one day cause our oilsands to be uneconomical to extract. Recognizing that a more diversified economy with money in the bank will be more capable of handling the transition away from a resource based economy.

• Help ensure the future prosperity of our province by saving and investing a significant portion of these one-time revenues. A portion will be used to make capital investments in Alberta, a portion will be used to strategically invest in Albertan ventures and a portion will be used to save for the future through the heritage fund.

• Recognize that a move away from using non-renewable resource revenues to pay for daily operations of government will allow us to manage boom and bust cycles more efficiently. It will also create a budget hole that needs to be addressed.

• Speak frankly with Albertans about the services they expect government to provide and the method by which they want government to pay for them. Through a collaborative and consultative process, the Alberta Party will commit to discussing with Albertans the plethora of options available to cover the cost of services, including user fees and premiums, alternative revenue collection, program cuts, and, should Albertans choose, an increase of taxes or return to progressive taxation.
• Maintain Alberta as the lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada.

• Develop budgets using an open and transparent process. While the budget is being debated in the Legislature, our MLAs will host open meetings, wherein constituents are able to voice their opinions on the budget. MLAs will then bring the concerns back to the house during the budget debate process, to incorporate Albertans’ requests.

• Continue the consultation process after the budget has been approved in order to incorporate Albertans’ feedback from previous budgets into future budgets.

• Make non-confidential government data easily available to Albertans through an “open data” framework, as outlined in our policy brief on democratic renewal.

In order for a collaborative budget process to be successful, Albertans need to have all the cards on the table before talks begin.

• Move towards a five year budget cycle in order to facilitate effective long term planning and decision making. The budget will need to be updated as economic conditions change, but the intent is to make it easier for provincially funded groups to engage in long-term planning by providing them with more certainty on future funding.

• Continue to strengthen the Sustain-ability Fund as a reserve fund to cover fluctuations in government revenues during slower economic times. This ‘rainy day fund’ is necessary to help government save for the future and adequately provide Albertans with the services they need, even when the economy struggles.
4 Making Alberta a great place to live and work

Alberta is often perceived from the outside as a great place to make a quick buck before returning home. The Alberta Party believes that this province is a truly great place to live and to work, as well as a great place to call home. The economy thrives on the talented individuals who have decided to make Alberta their homes and the vibrant communities where they reside.

In order to make Alberta the best place to work and live, the Alberta Party will:

• Create vibrant centres which attract new businesses, talent and ensure a high quality of life, which is essential for growing and diversifying the economy. We will create an innovative fund-matching program for community projects, which promote openness, aesthetics, and social offerings. Following the science based research of Gallup and the Knight Foundation on why people choose where they live. (www.SouloftheCommunity.org)

• We will support municipalities in creating dense, walk-able, attractive centres, where amenities are readily accessible. Encourage strong arts and culture scenes and support the development of accessible community green spaces.

• Commit to and invest in completion of LRT networks in Edmonton and Calgary and support significant public transit in all large and mid sized cities.

• Begin the planning and updated feasibility studies for the development of a high speed rail network that will connect Edmonton and Calgary and eventually move to expand the system to other Albertan centres.

• Encourage healthy living programs, as outlined in our health policy, and promote effective workplace health and safety programs. Innovate programs like the Certificate of Recognition program, to include workplace wellness, reducing healthcare costs, and increasing job satisfaction.

• Promote and ensure a strong public education system, to attract and retain knowledge economy workers.

CONCLUSION

The success of the provincial economy is truly important to Albertans. The challenges outlined in this document are great but not insurmountable. With dedication to a transparent and collaborative framework and smart fiscal planning, the Alberta Government and its citizens will be able to move forward to strengthen our energy sector, diversify and grow our economy, and make Alberta the best place to work, live and to call home.

FEEDBACK:

We are always looking for feedback on Alberta Party policy. If you have any comments or questions, we would love to receive them.

Feedback for the Economic Policy can be given on our website; www.albertaparty.ca

our Facebook page; facebook.com/albertaparty

or by emailing us at; democratic.renewal@albertaparty.ca