



Important Information for Union Voters

How the Conservatives Have Failed Us ... and How the Wildrose Threaten Us

Why the Conservatives Don't Deserve Your Vote!

Like other voters, many Alberta union members are justifiably frustrated and disappointed with the Progressive Conservative Party. To put it bluntly, the Conservatives have failed Albertans on a wide range of issues.

Health care: The Conservatives are responsible for years of chronic underfunding and creeping privatization in our health-care system.

Education: The Conservatives have underfunded school boards and frozen payments to universities and colleges even though the economy remains strong and our student populations are growing faster than anywhere else in the country.

Oil Sands: The Conservatives have caved in to pressure from oil companies who want to simply “rip and ship” raw bitumen from the oil sands, without upgrading it in the province. As a result, literally thousands of potential jobs related to upgrading are being lost down the pipeline to the U.S. and China.

Revenue: Thanks to Alberta's natural resources, the Conservatives have presided over the wealthiest regional economy in North America. And yet they have still managed to run multi-billion-dollar deficits over the past three years.

The problem is not over-spending on public services (on a per-capita basis, our spending is middle of the pack and actually significantly lower than it was 20 years ago as a percentage of our overall economy).

The real reason we're running deficits is because the Conservatives have cut taxes for corporations and high-income individuals to the point where we don't have the revenue necessary to maintain adequate service levels. The Tories are also failing on royalties. As a recent report from the University of Alberta's Parkland Institute shows, royalty rates are so low that we're almost giving away bitumen from the oil sands.

Environment: Albertans support development in the oil sands – but they want it to proceed in the most environmentally responsible manner possible. Instead of listening to ordinary voters, the Conservatives have taken their lead from oil companies that say the government should focus on public relations as opposed to more responsible environmental stewardship.

Labour Law: Successive Conservative governments have made sure that Alberta's labour laws are the least worker-friendly in the country. The Conservatives are now considering changes that will make it even harder for workers to organize in the construction industry.

Arrogance: After 41 years in power, the Conservatives have developed a deep sense of entitlement and have forgotten what accountability means. Recent media accounts have demonstrated how the Conservatives regularly bully and intimidate individuals and groups who don't agree with them or who raise uncomfortable, but legitimate, questions. Doctors, municipal leaders and union leaders have all been targets for Tory intimidation.

Bottom line on the Conservatives: They're a party that has been in power too long – and they have a long track record of putting the interests of their corporate supporters ahead of the broader public interest.

Why Wildrose is NOT the answer!

Recent polls show that many Albertans have had enough of the Conservatives. A clear majority say they don't think the Tories deserve to be re-elected.

Like other Albertans, many union voters are looking for a new party to support. That's healthy and appropriate. But before moving to the Wildrose, union voters should consider some of the Wildrose Party's policies – policies that threaten unions and the values shared by most union members.

Health Care: Wildrose leader Danielle Smith has promised to open the door to increased privatization in health care. Instead of putting money into the public system to address waiting lists and bed shortages, she says a Wildrose government would use public money to encourage the establishment of more private for-profit clinics.

The party's stated goal is to create a two-tiered system – ignoring the fact that a for-profit tier would draw crucial personnel and resources away from the public system. The Wildrose proposal won't improve Medicare, as they promise. It would weaken and undermine it.

Labour Law: The Wildrose Party has policies that, if implemented, would have serious implications for unions and union members. For example, the party says it would strip teachers of the right to strike. Even more ominously, the Wildrose Party has pledged to introduce American-style rules that allow individual workers to opt out of paying union dues even if they are enjoying the benefits provided by a union-negotiated contract.

In other words, they want to challenge the Rand formula, a long-established tradition in Canadian law, and bring so-called Right-to-Work laws to Canada. These kinds of laws have been the tool of choice for right-wing American politicians who want to weaken unions and leave workers at the mercy of aggressive employers.

Revenue and Public Spending: Like the Conservatives, the Wildrose Party is bankrolled by wealthy donors and big businesses, especially from the energy sector. As a result, they would do nothing to address the tax and royalty giveaways that are making it difficult for our province to afford high-quality services in areas including education and health care. With a Wildrose government, the sweetheart deal for corporations and the wealthy would continue.

Pensions: The Canadian labour movement has been campaigning for improvements to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) so that working people can enjoy a more secure retirement. But the Wildrose Party has policy calling for Alberta to withdraw from CPP entirely and replace it with a new Alberta Pension Plan. The new Alberta Plan, if introduced, would almost certainly provide inferior benefits. It would also be less efficient (because of its smaller size) and it might impair the mobility of Alberta workers within Canada (because it wouldn't be portable across the country like CPP).

Bottom line on Wildrose: They're a party of right-wing extremism. They've dressed themselves up to look like a "party of the people" but their policies would undermine many of the things that ordinary people really value, like health care, education and fairness in areas like taxation and royalties.

The Conservatives have lost your vote...and the Wildrose are unlikely to earn your vote because of their dangerous policies...what do you do now?

To help union members sort things out, the Alberta Federation of Labour has developed a report card on all the major parties contesting the election. How do the parties' priorities and values stack up against the priorities and values of the labour movement and working people? Find out by visiting www.election2012.afl.org or www.afl.org!

**Don't sit on the sidelines!
Cast your vote for a better Alberta!**