



Alberta Party Guidelines for Members of the Legislative Assembly

Overview

The Legislative Assembly of Alberta is the central democratic institution in Alberta. It is apparent, however, that major reforms are required to make the legislature more transparent, accountable and democratic. The first stage in reforming the legislature requires a re-examination of the role of the Members of Legislative Assembly (“MLAs”).

Statement of Principles

The Alberta Party believes that MLAs have an obligation to continually engage their constituents about public policy in Alberta. Genuine citizen engagement can only occur if citizens have access to information about the public policy issue under discussion. MLAs must be focused on listening to their constituents and having real conversations with them. The role of the MLA is not to sell the policies of the government to citizens, but to engage citizens in a conversation about those policies.

Guidelines for MLAs

Each MLA for the Alberta Party shall:

- engage their constituents in person, through community conversations, coffee parties, house meetings and similar citizen engagement events throughout their term;
- conduct themselves in a professional manner and with integrity, including within the legislature. Alberta Party MLAs shall conduct themselves in a manner that is respectful to other members of the legislature and shall not engage in disrespectful behaviour;
- use technology to engage their constituents on the Internet. Each MLA shall have a comprehensive website which will be designed to facilitate communication among constituents and between constituents and the MLA;
- engage their constituents on commonly used Internet platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, where appropriate;
- make it easier for their constituents to obtain easy access to information about public policy issues;
- contribute a portion of their office budget to the Alberta Party Caucus (the “Caucus”) to retain administrative and research support for the Caucus;

- cast their vote on any issue after consideration of the views of their constituents, the Alberta Party Caucus, the Alberta Party Policies, the merits of the issue and what is in the best interest of Albertans. The role of an MLA is not to simply conduct a poll of their constituents and reflect the results of the poll. Rather, an Alberta Party MLA is to make an informed decision on each issue before the legislature. An Alberta Party MLA may vote for or against any resolution that is under consideration provided that such MLA has engaged her constituents in a conversation about the issue, considered the issue, and has concluded that passing the resolution is in the best interest of Albertans; and provide an explanation of the rationale for casting her vote in a particular manner on major issues on their website.

Party Discipline

The Alberta Party recognizes that party discipline plays an important role in our parliamentary system. However, the implementation of party discipline in Canadian parliaments has stifled democracy. The Alberta Party will implement legislation to reform the concept of party discipline in the legislature.

In principle, the Alberta Party believes that all MLAs should be able to cast their vote in accordance with the MLA Guidelines above. However, under the existing system, if a government sponsored resolution is defeated, there is a vote of the legislature on whether the government has the “confidence” of a majority of the members of the legislature. If the confidence vote passes, then the government must immediately resign and the Lieutenant Governor can either dissolve the legislative assembly and hold an election or call on the leader of the opposition to form a government.

The problem with this system is that it is impossible for MLAs who are part of the governing party to vote against legislation they may disagree with because the government may fall. The solution is to change this system so that if a resolution sponsored by the government is defeated, it would not result in a confidence vote, unless the defeated resolution was (i) the budget or (ii) a component of the party’s published platform. If the opposition were entitled to call for a vote of confidence, such vote would occur seven days after the call for the vote of confidence so that public discussion can occur on whether the government should resign.