

PLATFORM 2015

Introduction: The Green Party of Alberta stands with the vast majority of Albertans in supporting strong, publicly-funded institutions to provide excellent education, health-care and open, fully-accountable government.

The GPA also advocates for:

1. Ethical resource development

- Moratorium on expansion of oil sands
 - The Green Party of Alberta would place a moratorium on additional oil sands projects until the impacts of existing and approved projects on the environment, infrastructure and society are assessed and an overall development policy is created;
 - Any expansion of the oil sands would also be contingent upon there being negotiated a comprehensive, global plan to address climate change aimed at keeping the world below a 2 degree C temperature rise;
 - The net result of these changes and others is there would be no need for additional export pipelines;
- Phasing out the use of coal for electric power generation, with the goal of complete elimination by 2030:
 - Greens would replace coal generation with renewable power, improved efficiency, small-scale co-generation, demand management, and natural-gas peaking capacity;
- The Green Party would set a goal of a 50% renewably-powered grid by 2030. We would provide economic incentives for the transition through a combination of carbon tax revenues, feed-in tariffs, tax incentives, and regulation;
- The Green Party of Alberta would give preference to decentralized power which would decrease the need for long-distance transport from large, centralized power plants;

2. Adoption of an Environmental Bill of Rights

- Alberta's ecosystems and wildlife habitat have been nickle-and-dimed nearly to death. It's time Albertans had stronger legal tools to protect the environment;
- Greens would adopt an Environmental Bill of Rights to confer substantive rights – such as the right to a safe, healthy and unimpaired environment – and would impose a duty on the minister of the environment to protect these rights. It would also confer procedural rights, such as the right to environmental information and the right to go to court to enforce all these rights;

- An Environmental Bill of Rights could be used to prevent measures that are difficult to oppose in any other way, such as the sale by the government of energy leases to endangered caribou habitat;
- This Bill of Rights would not have constitutional status – at least not initially – but would, like the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, have priority over all other provincial legislation;

3. **Water**

- Alberta has to deal much better with both quality and quantity issues connected with this most vital resource. The Green Party of Alberta endorses the July 28, 2010 United Nations resolution recognizing the human right to safe, clean drinking water and sanitation. Greens support adoption of a water management plan that ensures the health of our seven watersheds, including adequate water flows throughout the year;
- Greens support regulated standards for water usage, for the retention and restoration of wetlands and riparian margins, and for the density of all linear developments (roads, utility corridors, pipelines, railways, power lines, telecom infrastructure, rights of way and the like) within our watersheds to minimize the harm resulting from these facilities. Greens also support careful monitoring to prevent pollution caused by industry and eutrophication due to farm effluent;

4. **Serious environmental regulation**

- All environmental protection rules, including those connected with the water policy provisions set out above, should be strictly enforced. Greens would ensure sufficient staff and other resources to carry out that enforcement;
- Greens support application of the precautionary principle to all regulation. As a result, because the onus would be shifted to development proponents to show harm will not occur if their proposals go ahead, many fewer dangerous proposals would be approved;
- Stricter enforcement of environmental laws would greatly reduce the harm being done, for example, by high-pressure fracking, across the province;

5. **Fair public finance**

- Greens would end the flat income tax and return to progressive income taxation;
- Greens support a return to higher corporate taxes;
- Alberta may well have to impose a sales tax, but we must first make the existing tax system fairer;
- Ordinary Albertans suffer from cuts to government-funded services when commodity prices drop. The Green Party would reduce government's dependence on resource revenues for normal operations and would put more of those revenues into the Heritage Trust Fund for the benefit of future generations;

- Norway’s approach to the use of resource revenues should be studied and lessons learned should be implemented here in Alberta;
- Greens would implement a real carbon tax, one modelled on BC’s successful carbon levy. We would isolate revenues collected from the carbon tax and use those funds to support sustainable options (see immediately below) and help consumers where there is a need;

6. **Leadership on transition to a smart economy**

- Greens would use revenues from a real carbon tax to support development of renewable energy resources – solar, wind and geothermal – and to support other green innovation and creation of green jobs;
- The challenge to change directions is a broad one impacting many aspects of life in the province; accordingly Greens would create a Provincial Sustainability Transition Strategy;
- Part of that strategy would be to have the province work at the local level, e.g. with municipal economic development agencies, on diversification which would emphasize affordable housing, renewable energy, zero waste, co-operatives and social enterprise development. These local initiatives would be coordinated with the re-imagining of inner-city industrial lands;
- In the result, Alberta could proudly present itself to the world as a leader in the move away from intensive hydrocarbon dependency to a sustainable path;

7. **The sharing economy**

- Greens support policy and legislative frameworks, including tax measures, to nurture co-operatives which are the most significant alternative economy. Co-ops extend beyond housing and credit unions. For example, there is a solar energy co-op in Saskatchewan;

8. **Sustainable towns and cities**

- Alberta needs a provincial framework which sets targets to achieve greater sustainability in our cities and towns. For example, the framework could include density targets – which would speak to the possibility of such things as secondary suites – diversity of land-use targets, so we have more vibrant towns and cities, creativity targets, for example, to bring innovative housing forms such as co-housing to fruition and “sense of place”, such as walkability, goals;
- Greens support empowering municipalities to require a percentage of affordable units in multiple-housing developments. This is called “inclusive zoning”;
- Alberta also needs a framework for achieving the physical sustainability of towns and cities, for example, requirements for anti-flooding measures, such as minimizing the use of non-porous materials;

- Greens support the idea that the basis of property tax should not be confined to market value but should also include “ecological footprint”;

9. **True social justice**

- Greens embrace full equality for the LGBTQ community and would be vigilant in protecting Albertans from discrimination in all its forms;
- Greens support implementation of a Guaranteed Annual Income;
- Albertans need a provincial housing authority to build and manage affordable, rental housing in the province. A chronic lack of affordable housing signals a clear market failure, thus government has to step in. A provincial program could both require the building of rental housing and provide funding to make this initiative possible;
- Greens would create an Urban Lands Trust of publicly-owned lands to support the construction of affordable and sustainable housing, primarily but not only for families;
- There is acute need for high-quality affordable day-care in the province. As with affordable housing, the market has failed to provide what is required. In fact Alberta has the worst situation in Canada in terms of daycare wages and staff turnover for daycare;
- Greens support equal protection under the law for all farm workers;
- Greens would not allow tuition and fee increases at post-secondary educational and training institutions to exceed the rate of inflation;

10. **Honest, trustworthy government**

- Greens would end the secrecy and negligence that breeds a culture of entitlement in the provincial government. There would be a radical overhaul of rules around transparency and accountability. The current piecemeal reforms (such as those recently introduced around international travel) are not sufficient;
- Albertans should demand the highest ethical standards from everyone in public service. Greens would create the office of Integrity Commissioner for the provincial government. An all-party committee would appoint a commissioner for one non-renewable term;
- Alberta Greens support amending the *Conflicts of Interest Act* to prohibit cabinet ministers from making spending promises during election campaigns, as was recently done in the 2014 Calgary-Elbow by-election;

11. **Strengthening democracy**

- Greens would hold a referendum on whether to adopt proportional representation (PR) and would create a Citizens’ Assembly to advise on adoption of PR; the experience in BC with its citizens’ assembly would be studied and improved upon;
- Greens would put strict election-finance rules in place.

Note: Readers should consult the Party's web site for the list of policies adopted by the membership: <http://greenpartyofalberta.ca/policies/>