

An open letter to UCP members

April 6, 2022



In only a few days, United Conservatives will begin voting or not they will stand behind Premier Jason Kenney heading into the 2023 provincial election.

The question before party members is simple: Do you approve of the current leader?

But the consequences of the outcome are anything but.

If less than 50% plus one of delegates vote yes, the governing party will be immediately plunged into a leadership race roughly one year before a general election in which it will face off against a disciplined, organized, and well-funded opposition.

Party members, even those unhappy with Premier Kenney, should think long and hard about what that will look like.

Here's a glimpse:

First, even a short campaign will take at least four months. It's already too late in the year to hold a vote before summer and the party will want to avoid a vote during the dog days of summer.

Early fall would seem appropriate, until you realize the Conservative Party of Canada will select its new leader on Sept. 10. So not only will candidates, campaigns, volunteers, and members be split between two races, the already established CPC timeline likely pushes a UCP vote another month.

During the race, government decision making would grind to a halt. The bureaucracy would go into caretaker mode and all progress on programs and initiatives will cease - including several that are critical to support Alberta's economic recovery that is already underway.

Now we're into mid-October before a leader is chosen. Assuming the result is decisive, the new leader and Premier will have two months to revamp cabinet, shuffle senior bureaucrats, hire political staff, craft an agenda, and begin work on a budget and throne speech that will also double as an election platform to give voters some idea of the new government's vision and priorities.

All of this work will take place in Legislature offices in Edmonton while Rachel Notley and her 86 other candidates are out making promises and knocking on doors on the pre-election campaign trail.

That takes us to Christmas, which means it will be 2023 before we get back to the meaningful work of governing and preparing for an election which is suddenly mere weeks away.

We will have forfeited 10 months of economic progress and election planning while the NDP nominates their candidates, builds their platform, and connects with voters, while credibly telling Albertans that once again conservatives are too busy fighting each other to fight for them.

We have been down this road before and we don't want to go down it again.

The last time conservatives embarked down this path we went through four leaders in 10 years, eroding Albertans' confidence in our ability to stay united and put their interests ahead of our own.

In 2015, they had enough and elected Rachel Notley's NDP. They were poised to do so again until Premier Kenney united conservatives before the 2019 election.

It is largely for this reason that we will be supporting Premier Kenney in the leadership review.

But there are many others.

In just three years, Premier Kenney has kept almost 90% of the 372 promises made to Albertans in the United Conservative Party platform, despite being interrupted by a once-in-a-century health crisis, a global recession, and the largest collapse in energy prices in history.

He has made good on promise to create jobs - more than 130,000 last year and 15,000 already this year.

He has repealed the NDP's carbon tax and fought Justin Trudeau's all the way to the Supreme Court, fiercely advocated for new pipelines, took union money out of elections, cut taxes for job creators, took on the teachers union over teacher discipline, brought in a back-to-basics curriculum, stood up to Trudeau on equalization, and brought in Alberta's first balanced budget in nearly a decade - a full year ahead of schedule.

He did all this, of course, while navigating a pandemic and making decisions nobody ever expected any government to be faced with.

Did he get everything right on COVID? No. And he's admitted as much.

OPEN LETTER TO UCP MEMBERS

Every government made mistakes throughout the pandemic, but more than any other Premier, Premier Kenney balanced protecting hospital capacity with preserving our rights and freedoms. In February, Alberta became the first province to drop its proof of vaccination program.

For these reasons, Premier Kenney has earned our support. And a recent poll indicates he is starting to win back the public, too.

But even if he hasn't earned yours yet, ask yourself what you're willing to risk in a leadership race.

For us, nine lost months, a divisive internal campaign, and the real threat of an NDP government aren't worth it.

Sincerely,



Shirley McClellan
MLA, Chinook & Drumheller-Chinook
1987-2004



Pat Nelson
MLA, Calgary-Foothills
1989-2004



Christine Cusanelli
MLA, Calgary-Currie
2012-2015




Dave Quest
MLA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park
2008-2015



Wayne Drysdale
MLA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti
2008-2019



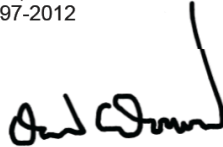
Iris Evans
MLA, Sherwood Park
1997-2012



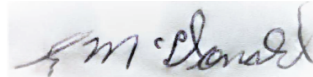
Shiraz Shariff
MLA, Calgary-McCall
1995-2008



Steve Young
MLA, Edmonton-Riverview
2012-2015



David Dorward
MLA, Edmonton-Gold Bar
2012-2015



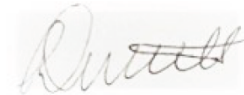
Everett McDonald
MLA, Grande-Prairie-Smoky
2012-2015



Genia Leskiw
MLA, Bonnyville-Cold Lake
2008-2015



Mary Anne Jablonski
MLA, Red Deer North
2000-2015



Luke Ouellette
MLA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake
2001-2012



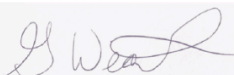
Jeff Johnson
MLA, Athabasca-Redwater
2008-2015



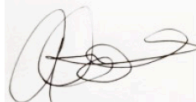
George VanderBurg
MLA, Whitecourt-St. Anne
2001-2015



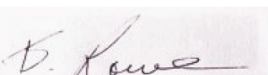
Gary Bikman
MLA, Cardston-Taber-Warner
2012-2015



Greg Weadick
MLA, Lethbridge-West
2008-2015



Alana DeLong
MLA, Calgary-Bow
2001-2015



Bruce Rowe
MLA, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills
2012-2015