



AN **Alternative**  
**Speech** FROM  
THE **Throne**

FIRST SESSION OF THE  
THIRTY FIRST LEGISLATURE

OCTOBER 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2023

DELIVERED BY  
His Majesty's Loyal Opposition  
The Alberta NDP Caucus



Albertans,

The fall session of the Legislature begins next week. When we take our seats, we do so as the largest Official Opposition in Alberta's history, and we are focused on caring for people and moving our province forward.

We know that Albertans continue to face incredible challenges with the cost of living and accessing healthcare. They also have growing concerns about whether the pension they've worked so hard for will still be available when it comes time to retire. Their children are worried about whether they will ever be able to afford a quality post-secondary education.

A government that is focused on Albertans, their families, and their priorities would be:

- Putting an end to the healthcare crisis,
- Lowering costs for basic needs, from rent to utilities to tuition and more,
- Making housing more affordable and rapidly increasing housing supply,
- Building more schools and ensuring kids are better supported to learn and grow,
- Developing an economic plan that embraces the future, creates good-paying jobs, and drives investment, and
- Protecting your pension

There is much work to be done.

The Alberta NDP has been talking to constituents throughout the summer and listening a great deal on what their priorities are. Now, we intend to introduce several pieces of critical legislation that will, if passed, make life better for Albertans.

As the Official Opposition, our duty is also to hold the government to account and demand action where it is desperately needed. We take the trust and confidence you've placed in us seriously.

## HONOURING THE FIRST PEOPLES OF ALBERTA

We care deeply about our relationship with the First peoples in Alberta. We can continue to work to right the relationship that historically has caused tremendous pain and suffering for First Nations, Metis and Inuit people through the legacy of residential schools.

As a sign of respect and reconciliation, we intend to bring forward a motion and legislation to respect Treaty and to honour this agreement and the Indigenous people who play a significant role to the foundation and success of this province.

## ENDING THE HEALTHCARE CRISIS

The Alberta NDP believes everyone deserves access to quality public healthcare — it's a gift we give each other as Canadians.

Sadly, many Albertans are currently being denied access to the most basic primary care.

After years of attacks and chaos under the UCP, doctors are leaving our province at an alarming rate. The Alberta Medical Association reports an 80 percent decrease in the number of physicians accepting new patients over the last three years. The association warns that family medicine clinics are “dying,” a devastating development that puts even greater strain on hospitals and makes it harder for everyday Albertans to access timely medical care.

Rural emergency rooms continue to shut down without warning across the province, leaving Albertans stranded without care when they need it most.

This Government also claims to be adding addiction treatment spaces, but their commitment falls far short and comes too late. More people are dying due to drug use than ever before as wait times for care grow, and the government ignores best practices.

Mental health supports also continue to fall well short, especially those available to young people.

Seniors in desperate need of better support are instead faced with rising costs and a lack of attention to the critical reforms and additional funding needed for continuing care.

And we still don't have needed accountability for several healthcare crises directly caused by the current government's mismanagement.

We are pleased that Alberta's Auditor General has accepted our request to investigate the privatization of provincial lab services — a decision that has resulted in healthcare that is either delayed or barred altogether for so many Albertans.

We will also continue to demand an independent inquiry into the series of horrific errors that led hundreds of small children to contract E. Coli in what has become the second-largest outbreak of the bacteria in Canadian history.

Albertans deserve better than the UCP's patchwork of failed policies and political bluster. Despite the Premier's claim more than a year ago that she'd fix healthcare, the crisis has actually worsened. Now, there are early warning signs that the government will accelerate the problem by imposing politically motivated chaos through the reorganization of a system already under constant duress.

Instead, ending the crisis will require a government with vision, committed to long-term investments in proven solutions: a government that's ready to listen to frontline healthcare workers and act.

The Alberta NDP will continue to push for the adoption of evidence-based policies that include:

- Supporting family doctors to work in teams with other health professionals so they can provide better care;
- Working with doctors to ensure we have competitive pay and proper work environments;
- Recruiting healthcare professionals with signing bonuses and working with rural municipalities to facilitate community integration;
- Working with health colleges to develop a clear path for international medical professionals to provide patient care; and,
- Funding post-secondary institutions to expand the number of spaces for future healthcare graduates, including rural training spaces.

We categorically reject the privatization of healthcare. Albertans deserve equal access to care, regardless of their income.

You have our word – we will never support any measure that forces Albertans to pay to see a family doctor. To fully protect Albertans' rights to quality healthcare, we intend to introduce legislation this fall to make these practices illegal once and for all.

## MAKING LIFE MORE AFFORDABLE FOR ALL ALBERTANS

Life has become deeply unaffordable for families across the province.

Alberta has seen the highest increases in rent across the country.

In the last four years, the number of people experiencing homelessness in Edmonton has doubled. Today, to afford a rental home in Calgary, a person needs to earn \$84,000 annually.

Electricity prices have quadrupled under the UCP in the last year alone. This government lifted the cap on utility prices years ago, leaving families to deal with massive price spikes on multiple occasions. We have received reports of Albertans with monthly utility of \$600 or more.

Auto insurance rates have also been driven up by 30 per cent of more since the UCP lifted the cap. These massive cost hikes have forced some Albertans to permanently park the vehicle they rely on to get to work and pick up their kids.

Tuition and related post-secondary fees have also shot up 30 percent since this government took office, while financial aid and student support programs have been slashed or, in some cases, cancelled altogether.

Post-secondary students are being forced to live out of their cars, and many families are skipping meals to keep a roof over their heads. Campus food banks — food banks in general, for that matter — are overrun by record demand.

School fees charged to elementary, junior high and high school students have also risen at alarming rates in several jurisdictions.

Even in places where the government claims to be helping, Albertans get second-rate outcomes. While childcare fees are down across the country, Calgaryans now pay the second highest rates in the country, more than families in Toronto and Vancouver.

The piling on of costs for housing, utilities, tuition, and school fees are all tax increases under a different name, and are unacceptable. Not only has the UCP refused to help, in several instances they have made the cost of living much worse.

We will demand immediate action on several fronts.

First, we will bring substantial legislation to address the housing crisis this fall.

The UCP cut rental supplement programs, forcing more Albertans out of their homes. We will push to reverse these cuts.

We will continue to call for a cap on sky-high utility rates and push for a comprehensive investigation into the unrelenting and record-high increases.

We will demand efforts to lower tuition and school fees and increase student support.

We will continue to talk to Albertans struggling to make ends meet and to champion efforts to lower the cost of living across the board.

## SUPPORTING THE LEARNING NEEDS OF OUR FUTURE LEADERS

While Alberta has more school-aged kids than ever, classroom conditions have gotten worse.

Every day, Albertan parents share stories with us about the worsening learning conditions in their children's classrooms. Their kids are falling behind as teachers struggle to educate 40 students or more, by themselves, in classes where student needs are more complex than ever.

Thousands of educational assistants and support workers who were callously fired in 2020 have not been rehired. Those still working in schools are overworked, overwhelmed, and underpaid.

Despite all of this — and the ongoing pleas of parents and teachers — the UCP continues to underfund our schools: Alberta has the lowest per-student funding in Canada, and our children are suffering the consequences. The government also refuses to build new schools with much-needed classroom space in growing communities across the province.

While the UCP has ended annual reporting on class sizes — choosing to bury their heads in the sand instead of directly addressing this issue — the Alberta NDP intends to bring forward legislation this fall to address increasing class sizes and complexity.

We will not stand by while an entire generation of students is robbed of the public education they deserve — this is critical to our collective future.

Public education gives every child an opportunity to learn, pursue their passions, and succeed.

We cannot allow the government to ignore their right to do so.

## LEADING THE ENERGY FUTURE

The world's economy is changing, and Alberta is well-positioned to be a leader across industries, but that requires a government that looks to the future with hope, not despair.

Seventy-five per cent of renewable energy investment in Canada last year happened right here in Alberta. Our province was leading the country in renewable energy growth before a ban on new projects was imposed without warning. Now, \$33 billion in new investment and 24,000 good-paying jobs are at risk.

We intend to introduce a motion in the Legislature demanding that such harmful and irresponsible decisions are never made again. We will also make a formal submission in support of renewable energy growth to the Alberta Utilities Commission.

We will also continue to push for better incentives for the expansion of Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) and advocate for a robust plan to decarbonize Alberta's electricity grid.

Critical work in these areas and across the energy industry will allow us to drive new investment here and create more jobs while taking real action to address climate change.

Alberta has been a global leader in energy development for generations, and we can be for generations more — if we decide to.

We have the ambition, the innovators and the collective drive to build an economy for the future — we just need a government that believes in us and works hard to realize our full potential.

## PROTECTING OUR PENSIONS

When all of the hard work is done, Albertans deserve retirement security.

The response to our consultation on the UCP's plans to gamble away Albertans' Canada Pensions has been overwhelming. Tens of thousands have completed our online survey and their message is loud and clear — the UCP needs to keep its hands off CPP.

This terrible idea has also been criticized as harmful to our economic future by the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, members of the Alberta Chambers, the Business Council of Canada, the Canadian Federation Of Independent Business and others.

To make matters worse, more than \$7 million of public money is being spent on advertising misinformation, including the make-believe benefits of leaving the CPP. The UCP's so-called public consultation process hasn't been designed to persuade rather than listen and therefore hasn't earned the trust of Albertans.

The Alberta NDP understands the value of having a secure retirement — after all, it was New Democrats who began advocating for the establishment of a nationwide pension nearly a century ago.

Unlike the UCP, we aren't afraid of face-to-face conversations. This fall, we will host a series of town halls in communities across the province. We believe Albertans have the right to speak their mind and deserve the respect of being heard by their elected representatives, especially with something as important as their retirement.

Pensions are the reward for a lifetime of hard work, and the Alberta NDP will do everything in its power to protect yours.

## CONCLUSION

The Alberta NDP is here, stronger than ever, and ready to deliver on what matters to everyday Albertans.

We will be relentless advocates on the issues that matter — the crisis in healthcare, the skyrocketing cost of living, affordable housing, good jobs, public education, protecting your pensions, and so much more.

We face both great challenges and great opportunities. But no matter where we live in this province there are certain things that unite us.

We love Alberta.

We care about the people who live here.

And we're focused on moving forward.

Now, let's get to work.

