

{ INTRODUCTION }

Albertans will head to the polls in the spring of 2019 to make important decisions about our province's future. Leading up to that election, all political parties will be determining what direction they want to take Alberta.

Our aim with this document is to provide clear suggestions about progressive directions for activists and advocates across the province to help educate their friends, families, and coworkers about what they should expect of their elected officials and political parties in the important time ahead.

For decades, Alberta was governed by conservative parties who, at best, put a low priority on improving public services and at other times actively attacked, privatized, or dismantled them. These assaults were made much worse by those same governments dramatically reducing their own base of tax revenue, primarily with large tax cuts for wealthy individuals and large, profitable corporations. Those wealthy interests have also guided much of the governments' decision-making, leaving citizens and civil society with little voice in policy direction.

Since Alberta's NDP government was elected in 2015, considerable progress has been made in many areas of public policy. Despite inheriting a severe shortage of annual tax revenue, the new government reversed its predecessors' plans to cut health care, education, and other public services. It made significant new investments in programs like Early Learning and Child Care Centres, affordable housing, and the Alberta Child Benefit. It reduced the role of big money in election campaigns by banning corporate and union donations, introducing spending limits, and lowering contribution limits. For the first time, an Alberta government took meaningful action to begin addressing climate change by introducing a carbon tax and a host of programs to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

The new government also made changes to Alberta's tax system, increasing revenues from wealthy individuals and large corporations. However, the changes were not nearly enough to fix the severe shortage of tax revenue created by the conservative governments' years of massive tax cuts and the drop in the global price of oil, which led to a sharp drop in resource royalty revenues. Those factors have left Alberta short approximately \$10 billion in annual revenue. A solution to that shortage is required to ensure the province can sustain its existing public services and expand them to improve the lives of all Albertans.

We need to address these crucial concerns and to focus clearly on priorities and directions that will not just preserve but actually enhance and revitalize our public services, substantially increase government revenue, and strengthen our democracy. We need big changes and bold advocacy.

These proposals in this document are the result of input from a wide range of organizations and individuals who advocate for a more just and fair Alberta, including Public Interest Alberta's Task Force members, our board of directors, attendees at our annual advocacy conference, and Friends of Medicare. We asked them all to give us their best advice on two things: the current situation in their policy focus area and the priorities elected officials and parties should adopt to improve the situation. Their collective insights represent clear, progressive directions for the lead up to the 2019 election and beyond, and provide a basis for the important advocacy efforts that must follow.