

United Conservative Party Leadership Contestant Questionnaire

August 2022

1. Alberta Provincial Police Service

In June 2020, the province released the Fair Deal Panel's report, which included a recommendation to create an Alberta Provincial Police Service (APPS) to replace the RCMP. In October 2020, the province contracted PricewaterhouseCoopers to conduct a feasibility study into the creation of an APPS. This study was released in October 2021, but it doesn't answer the most pressing questions municipalities have about a provincial police service, including how the APPS will be funded and what service levels municipalities can expect.

In the spring, 2022, both ABmunis and RMA members voted to strongly oppose the APPS models proposed in the PwC feasibility study.

Do you support establishing a new, independent APPS to replace the RCMP in Alberta? If you were to become Premier, would you uphold Premier Kenney's commitment to hold a public referendum for all Albertans on replacing the RCMP with an APPS?

2. Mental Health and Addictions

Alberta recorded its deadliest year on record for drug overdoses in 2021, with 1,758 deaths. There were 685 deaths reported in 2016; this number grew to 1,351 in 2020.

In November 2019, a Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council was appointed to develop a new provincial mental health and addiction strategy. The Council was mandated with identifying key actions to improve access to recovery-oriented mental health and addiction services, with a focus on primary and home care services, as well as people in crisis or in contact with the justice system.

The Council's report, *Toward an Alberta Model of Wellness*, was publicly released in April 2022. The report establishes a goal of creating "a coordinated network providing a continuum of supports (prevention, early intervention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery) for people at risk of or suffering from addiction and mental health challenges." The report's recommendations "acknowledge the severity of the ongoing opioid crisis and seek to find recovery-oriented solutions, inclusive of service that reduce harm, as well as other integrated health and social services."

Do you support the inclusion and appropriate funding of harm reduction services, including supervised consumption sites and supportive housing, in the provincial mental health and addictions strategy?

3. Transitioning out of Provincial Systems

The recent case of [Justin Bone](#) illustrates the gaps in Alberta's justice, health, and social services. Bone was released from the Edmonton Remand Centre on bail in late April 2022 and ordered to attend an addictions treatment centre. He has since been charged with two counts of second-degree murder. There is a pressing need to ensure that Albertans who transition out of provincial systems and institutions, including incarceration, hospitals, and foster care, receive the supports they require to successfully rejoin their communities.

What solutions would you implement to ensure the successful transition of Albertans out of provincial systems back into their communities?

4. Strengthening Regional collaboration

Given the global competition for business and labour, regional collaboration is essential for municipalities to efficiently provide the planning and services to attract talent and economic development.

What steps will you take to resolve inter-municipal and regional conflict and how will you encourage and support collaboration?

Collaboration is also required between federal, provincial, and municipal orders of government in order to efficiently use taxpayer dollars to provide quality infrastructure and services to Alberta residents and businesses.

How will you help make this happen?

5. Municipal Finances and Viability

The provincial and federal governments have access to revenue sources (income and sales taxes) that are closely related to economic growth. Property tax, the main source of tax revenue for municipalities, is not growth sensitive, which constrains the ability to raise the revenue needed to provide the services that contribute to a high quality of life. The result is less than adequate revenue available to municipal government to fund its program responsibilities.

Do you believe there is a fiscal imbalance between municipalities and the provincial government, and if so, how do you plan to rectify it? What tax reforms do you favour? Are there additional fiscal and legislative measures you'd implement to create a lasting, long-term solution to municipal funding?

The Local Government Fiscal Framework Act was passed by the legislature in fall 2019. Like any program, the Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF) has its strengths and weaknesses.

One of the shortfalls is revenue adequacy. When announced, the starting amount of LGFF was set at \$860 million, which is 25 per cent below the historical average levels of the Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) and Basic Municipal Transportation Grant (BMTG). In Budget 2021, the province took the disappointing step to defer implementation of LGFF until 2024 and reduce the starting amount from \$860 million to \$722 million. This will be 36 per cent lower than the previous ten-year historical average of MSI and BMTG.

Additionally, the funding pool is set to grow at only half the rate of provincial revenues. This presents long-term challenges for municipalities as the funding will not keep pace with Alberta's economy or local community needs.

What are your views on increasing the starting amount of LGFF and removing the 50 per cent limitation in the revenue index factor so that annual changes in LGFF will match annual changes in provincial revenue?

6. Housing

Many Albertans are increasingly struggling to access quality, affordable housing.

What are your plans to deal with the current housing shortage in Alberta?

7. Transportation

A viable transportation system plays an important role in developing strong and sustainable communities. Investing in responsive public transit systems can address both these issues and have the added benefit of reducing greenhouse gas emissions when our citizens choose transit over driving their vehicles.

How would you work with municipalities to develop a provincial transportation strategy to support public transit?

8. Downloading of Costs and Responsibilities

In recent budgets the provincial government has downloaded costs and responsibilities to municipalities. This includes the significant reduction to Grants in Place of Taxes (GIPOT) and the municipal share of fine revenue.

What actions would you take to reverse the seven-year trend of downloading and passing the cost of public service onto municipal governments?

9. Fostering a Positive Relationship

Municipalities seek a positive, respectful partnership with the province, however, they feel the province treats them like subordinates rather than partners, with consultation on significant issues often rushed or lacking entirely. The ability to build a constructive relationship has also been hampered by a revolving door of Ministers within Municipal Affairs; ten different Ministers have held the portfolio since 2011. Although many of these Ministers had good ideas and intentions with respect to provincial-municipal relations, this constant turnover has impeded the ability to foster a consistently strong relationship between the province and municipalities.

What would you change about the current relationship between the province and municipalities and what specific actions would you take to enhance the relationship?

About Alberta Municipalities

From the smallest village to the largest city, across every region of the province, Alberta Municipalities (ABmunis) represents the communities where over 85% of Albertans live. Previously known as the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA), ABmunis was founded in 1905 to provide urban and rural-region communities a united voice.

We work with elected and administrative leaders of Alberta's summer villages, villages, town, cities, and specialized municipalities to advocate for solutions to their common issues, which we categorize as economic, environment, governance, infrastructure, or social.

And we help them build resilient and thriving communities by providing valuable services. We use our members' combined purchasing power to negotiate the best possible value and competitive pricing on employee benefits, insurance, energy, and other services needed to run an effective and efficient municipality.

Please visit ABmunis.ca for more information.