

## **Election Analysis – Alberta 2015**

### **Alberta Election 2015 Results**

In an historic election the Alberta New Democratic Party (NDP) won a majority government resoundingly defeating the incumbent Progressive Conservatives (PCs) ending their 44-year reign. NDP Leader Rachel Notley is Alberta’s new Premier-elect. Wildrose leader Brian Jean will form the Official Opposition.

New Democratic Party	53
Wildrose Party	21
Progressive Conservative Party	10
Liberal Party	1
Alberta Party	1
Undecided	1

The NDP won 53 seats picking up 49 seats in the provincial legislature, while the PC’s won only 10 seats losing 60 seats in the provincial legislature. The Wildrose Party, led by Brian Jean, representing Fort McMurray-Conkin, won 21 seats, picking up 16 seats. Liberal Leader Brian Swan, representing Calgary-Mountain View, won the party’s only seat in the legislature and Greg Clark, representing the Alberta Party, won their first seat ever in the legislature. The constituency of Calgary Glenmore resulted in an electoral tie between the PCs and the NDP forcing a recount that will take place over the next couple of days.

The NDP swept all the ridings in Edmonton, as well as making significant inroads in rural and Calgary ridings that had long been PC strongholds, leaving the PCs who had entered the electoral race with 70 of 87 seats in a distant third with just 10 seats in the legislature. Progressive Conservative leader Jim Prentice who became Premier last September resigned as party leader and resigned his seat in Calgary-Foothills stating “my contribution to public life is now at an end”.

### **Election Analysis**

The NDP’s electoral success was a strong message that voters wanted a change in government in a province that has been ruled by the Progressive Conservatives since 1971. Voter desire for change was demonstrated by the highest level of voter turnout at 57% since 1993. Voter fatigue after nearly 44 years and 13 consecutive PC governments and Alberta’s economic woes primarily related to the collapse in oil prices, were major factors in the NDP’s success.

PC leader Jim Prentice called the election in April after introducing a 'bad news' budget that proposed major cuts to government spending in response to dramatically falling government revenues as global oil prices continued to put a strain on the Alberta oil patch.

The Progressive Conservative's efforts to merge with the Wildrose Party seems to have been met with voter disdain, the failure of which resulted in vote splitting among right-leaning voters with the PCs winning 28% of the popular vote and Wildrose winning 24% of the popular vote. All of the Wildrose candidates who had crossed the floor to join the PCs, including former Wildrose Party leader Danielle Smith, lost their seats. In contrast, the near collapse of the Liberal Party who won just 4% of the popular vote limited the vote splitting on the left strongly benefitting the NDP at the polls who won 41% of the popular vote.

### **NDP Key Platform Highlights**

Listed below are some of the key policy commitments made by the NDP in their election platform:

1. Increase the corporate tax rate from 10% to 12%.
2. Maintain the existing small business tax rate.
3. No provincial sales tax.
4. Introduce income tax increases for high earners, with the new rates being set at: "12% on taxable income over \$125,000 to \$150,000; 13% on taxable income over \$150,000 to \$200,000; 14% on taxable income over \$200,000 to \$300,000; and 15% on taxable income over \$300,000."
5. Review of fossil fuel royalties.
6. Maintain the Charitable Donation Tax Credits as they existed prior to the PC's proposed cuts within the latest budget.
7. No increase to the Mortgage Registration Tax.
8. Increase the railway fuel tax.
9. Commitment to strengthening environmental regulations in the energy sector.
10. Commitment to "boost efforts to collect delinquent, unpaid corporate taxes."
11. Eliminate the proposed "health care levy", as outlined in the latest PC budget.
12. Maintain front line health care services.

### **What's Next?**

Going forward there are serious questions about how the NDP government will tackle the economic and fiscal challenges facing Alberta. The NDP ran on a platform that would increase the taxes paid by large corporations and high-income earners and committed to initiating a review of fossil fuel royalties and to the strengthening of environmental regulations in the energy sector. There are serious questions as to how the NDP government will be able to reconcile these policy initiatives with any serious efforts to revive a slow economy dominated by an oil-sector that has been hit hard by the collapse in oil prices.

The NDP majority government will also be challenged by the general lack of caucus's political experience. With only 5 MLAs who held seats prior to the election, the caucus will be almost entirely new and inexperienced. The NDP even have several students on their electoral slate, illustrating just how inexperienced this NDP government is. Twenty-three year-old former television and arts student Jon Carson in training to become an electrician, beat out a star PC candidate in the Edmonton-Meadowlark riding. However, experienced politicians like Brian Mason, the former NDP party leader, and David Eggen, one of the few experienced NDP MLAs have been speculated as potential candidates for cabinet.

Another challenge – not to be underestimated – will be how the new NDP government will govern in a province that has been dominated by a single political party for more than four decades. All of the province's policies, regulations, programs and bureaucracy are staunchly entrenched in the PC way of doing business. The NDP will have to work hard to put their own stamp on the province's government systems.

### **Who is Rachel Notley?**

Rachel Notley was born on April 17, 1964. Rachel Notley's family has a long NDP tradition in Alberta. Her father, Grant Notley, was the Alberta NDP leader from 1968 to 1984 until he was tragically killed in a plane crash.

Husband Lou Arab is an NDP campaign strategist and a Public Relations representative for the Canadian Union of Public Employees. The Premier-elect and her husband have two children, son, Ethan, and daughter, Sophie.

Rachel Notley, was first elected to the Alberta Legislature in 2008 representing the riding of Edmonton-Strathcona and went on to succeed NDP leader Raj Pannu as leader of the NDP winning the party leadership race with 70% of the vote in a first ballot win on October 18, 2014.

Premier Notley holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Alberta and a Law degree from Osgoode Hall. Rachel Notley is a labour lawyer by training specializing in advocacy and workplace health and safety issues.

Premier-elect Notley will be Alberta's second female Premier and the first non-Progressive Conservative Premier since Social Credit leader Harry Strom (1968-71) who was preceded by Ernest Manning (1943-1968).