

UCP Leadership Candidates Survey Questions

- 1. In the 2019 election, neither the NDP nor the UCP mentioned co-operatives in their platforms despite the important role co-operatives play in the Alberta economy and in communities across the province. Would a party under your leadership give some consideration for maintaining and enhancing co-operatives in the party platform?**

Rebecca Schulz: Yes, a Rebecca Schulz government would commit to sitting down with the Association to learn more about your priorities and concerns in order to learn how we can effectively work together to build a more resilient co-operative community in Alberta.

Danielle Smith: Yes. I'm particularly interested in how we can use cooperatives to allow more people to be part of REAs, Gas Coops, gasoline and diesel and find solutions to threatened federal fertilizer reductions.

- 2. When the federal government brought in the carbon tax, they left out a provision that unfairly punishes fuel retailers by requiring a tax to be paid even on unpaid debts. Every province, except Alberta, does not require fuel retailers to pay the carbon tax on uncollected debts. Will you advocate to ensure Alberta's co-operative fuel retailers will be treated fairly and not have to pay the carbon tax on uncollected debts?**

Rebecca Schulz: The carbon tax is a non-starter for many Albertans. A Rebecca Schulz government commits to continuing to stand up to the federal government to remove the carbon tax in full. We will further look into the matter of the tax on unpaid debts for retailers.

Danielle Smith: This is the reason I have advocated for an Alberta Sovereignty Act. The best level of government to regulate local industries and respond to local needs is the provincial government. I will advocate for the change you ask, but I think the real solution is to find a way to end the retail carbon tax.

- 3. Currently, it is easier to invest in Wall Street and Bay Street investor-owned companies than it is for community members to invest in a member-owned co-operative located on 1st street in our local rural towns. Money invested in co-operatives stays in the province. Would you be willing to commit to reforming Alberta securities regulations to enable Albertans to more easily invest in local co-operative businesses?**

Rebecca Schulz: A Rebecca Schulz government will sit down with your board of directors to discuss this matter in more detail. Ultimately, we want money to be invested in and stay in the province in order to create jobs for Albertans and build up our communities.

Danielle Smith: Yes. I've spoken with experts in the industry about how the ASC [Alberta Securities Commission] should be used to assist in capital formation for small and medium firms. I am watching the changes of the OSC [Ontario Securities Commission] with great interest and would be interested in talking to you more about what you'd like to see changed.

- 4. Right before the last election, an investment tax credit specific to investing in Alberta co-operatives was created. This tax credit would have encouraged Albertans to invest in Alberta to create jobs and build their communities. Unfortunately, this tax credit was removed in a 2019 omnibus bill. Would you commit to reinstating an Alberta co-operative business tax credit?**

Rebecca Schulz: I've committed to Albertans to pay down our debt, save the surplus and get our finances on a path to sustainability. A Rebecca Schulz government will sit down with your board of directors to discuss this matter in more detail.

Danielle Smith: I would have to learn more about why you think this is the correct approach. I tend to favour broad-based tax reforms to benefit all industries, but I have been persuaded that the film industry and the digital media production needs specific tax credits so I'd be open to having the discussion about your specific needs.

- 5. Electric co-operatives are built by and belong to the communities they serve. They are led by community members and are uniquely suited to meet local needs. Will you show support for maintaining the rights of the electricity co-operatives by enabling them to continue to manage their business within the co-operative model in its entirety, including that of tariff and rates?**

Rebecca Schulz: A Rebecca Schulz government will sit down with your board of directors to discuss this in more detail.

Danielle Smith: Yes. As the cost of power and transmission in traditional electricity has gone up we need to renew our support for REAs to control costs for consumers and provide choice.

- 6. The core of the Credit Union Act was written at a time in the 1980s and has not been materially amended in many years. The conservative nature of the Act has not kept up with the banking environment and this has left Alberta Credit Unions in a competitive disadvantage, losing growth to banks residing outside Alberta. This marginalizes our presence in the market and makes it difficult to build more head office and high skilled jobs in Alberta. Would a party under your leadership modernize the Credit Union Act to ensure we can innovate and compete?**

Rebecca Schulz: Yes, this is an issue that has been raised a number of times and a Rebecca Schulz government will take a serious look at the Credit Union Act among other pieces of legislation that are out-dated and impose unnecessary red tape on our local business owners.

Danielle Smith: Credit Unions are a very important part of providing protection to Alberta consumers and support of small business. As Eastern financial institutions grow more hostile to our energy and farming sectors (through things like the divestment movement) I will encourage more Albertans to open accounts at credit unions.

7. Would you support an annual consultation with Alberta's co-operative business community to help ensure co-operatives have the opportunity to recommend legislative and regulatory changes allowing co-operatives to grow and protecting the interests of our nearly three million member-owners?

Rebecca Schulz: Absolutely. The only way to advance the interests of Albertans is to hear from them first hand and the only way we can truly reform government and be accountable to those we serve is to listen to them.

Danielle Smith: Yes - I have an open-door policy when it comes to hearing good policy ideas.

8. Generally, how do you see member-owned co-operatives continuing to contribute to the economy given Alberta's current challenges and opportunities?

Rebecca Schulz: Co-operatives play such an important role in our province, including investing in our communities, both in job creation and economic growth, and support for community organizations that are the backbone of many of our cities, towns and neighbourhoods.

Danielle Smith: A friend of mine gave a personal story about moving to Stony Plain and joining a gas co-op. While neighbours bills surged to \$500 one month, his was \$180. That speaks volumes to me about the role co-ops can play in addressing one of the number one affordability issues for Albertans. I am keen to learn more.