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2019 Provincial Election Party Platform Summary

NDP- Their platform was basically a list of accomplishments that they did while in power, with two clear new promises. The first is that they “will provide stable, consistent funding to post-secondary institutions to ensure higher education remains accessible and affordable for all Albertans.” Many members will look forward to a stable funding model. In the NDP’s response to our questionnaire (see attached PDF), this new funding model would have yearly increases in funding & will backfill the revenue shortfall due to the tuition freeze. The second is that they “will work with post-secondary institutions to renew the funding formula and focus resources on creating new spaces.” Again, this ties into the first new promise, but with a focus on increasing enrollment across the PSE institutions.

https://rachelnotley.ca/sites/default/files/alberta_ndp_2019_platform.pdf

UCP- Their new platform has four key issues for the PSE sector, and one very vague claim to “reduce provincial red tape and mandates on universities and colleges, freeing them to innovate and compete more, and comply with bureaucratic mandates less.” The key component of the platform is that they will set up programs to measure PSE institutions (and their programs). Both in relation to labour market outcomes “to identify the correlation between provincial subsidies and economic returns for taxpayers” and their “performance against leading global research and government networks in key innovation hubs like California, Texas, Israel, London, and Hong Kong.” While how these evaluation programs would work is uncertain, they are clear that industry will take a large role in evaluating the PSE institutions along these lines. Other issues include: increasing foreign student enrollments, establishing a more effective intellectual property framework (this has no details), and requiring all institutions to “develop, post and comply with free speech policies that conform to the University of Chicago Statement on Principles of Free Expression.” This last issue is also a priority of the Alberta Freedom Party.

<https://www.albertastrongandfree.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Alberta-Strong-and-Free-Platform-1.pdf>

Alberta Party- Their “Book of Member-passed Policies,” which seems like their election platform, has four identifiable issues for the PSE sector. Three directly relate to undergraduate students (capping tuition increases, mental health supports, and student loans) and only one that would be relevant to our members: “Ensure stable and predictable operational funding to post-secondary institutions on a multi-year basis.” While most members would be happy to see this enacted, there is little details on what those funding levels would be (are they talking about multi-year cuts or increases?).

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/abparty/pages/169/attachments/original/1543351442/APPA_Member-Passed_Policy_Book_2018.pdf?1543351442

Liberal Party- They have only released a preview of the PSE platform (on March 22nd, 2019). Of relevance to our members are the following points: a possible liberal government would “work with Universities to address the billion dollars in deferred maintenance currently faced by universities” and “increasing the number of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) graduates in Alberta by 25% within the next five years.” They decline to provide details on how they would accomplish these goals. Other parts of their PSE agenda would have to do with increasing trade enrollment, introducing progressive financial supports, and keeping student fees democratically decided.

https://www.albertaliberal.com/post_secondary_adult_education_2019

Green Party- This party had the least amount of discussion on the post-secondary education sector in their platform. The only mention of higher education is a claim to “reduction/elimination” of student tuition, and to reform the student loan program. Nothing to do with research or operation funding for institutions, and no changes to workplace conditions for our members. <https://greenpartyofalberta.ca/tackle-systemic-inequality-in-post-secondary-education-says-green-party/#more-4468>

Freedom Conservative Party- Most of their (vague) platform does not apply to our members: such as making student union membership voluntary or having to do with vocational training. The one point that is salient to our members might be their proposal to “revoke funding for institutions that do not protect freedom of speech, association and assembly.” Likely this would be similar to the proposals by Ford (Ontario), Scheer (Federal), and Trump (USA) attaching university funding to the supposed crisis of free speech on campus. https://www.freedomconservativeparty.ca/fcp_announcement_world_class_education

ACIFA position on the platforms- At ACIFA’s March council meeting, they meet with representatives of Alberta Party, NDP, and UCP. The parties talked in generalities, and all ‘promised’ to not cut any funding. The latter is worrisome since they did not explain how they would balance the budget (in the cases of the UCP and AP) without cuts to post-secondary institutions’ operating budgets. ACIFA does have some issues with some of the proposal coming out of the platforms and news releases. For example, how the Liberals/UCP are going to increase trade enrollment since that enrollment is set by Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board based on current labour market numbers, or whether the UCP understands the teaching credential system at the college level (which they propose to change).

CAFA has sent a series of questions to all of the political parties in the election; but as of April 1st, only the NDP has responded to our questionnaire (it is attached for easy reference).