

THE GATEWAY

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PCs debate rebate

Faith in past prosperity planning varies greatly among the province's leadership-race participants

CHLOÉ FEDIO
Managing Editor

The race for Premier Ralph Klein's replacement is already in full swing, as candidates met on Tuesday to discuss the future of Alberta and the strategies to deal with excess dollars. But despite the booming economy and rising surplus, Albertans shouldn't expect to receive another rebate cheque in the mail once a new premier takes over.

Klein is expected to submit his letter of resignation this Saturday, but nine candidates who are already competing for leadership of the Conservative Party debated in the first moderated forum at the Arden Theatre in St Albert. When asked about the \$400 rebate cheques that every Albertan received last January, most candidates made clear statements on where surplus dollars shouldn't go.

"You have to recognize that you have an infrastructure deficit that needs to be repaired, and that that's a much better place to put the money," said Lyle Oberg, former minister of transportation and infrastructure, to whom the question was randomly addressed.

Oberg pointed to many schools in

the province in need of renovation, and highway projects that remain incomplete or unaddressed. Ed Stelmach, MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, echoed Oberg, pointing to 200kms of highway that need repaving in the province.

Alana DeLong was the least critical of the rebate cheques and said that her Calgary Bow constituents needed the money and used it well.

"The reason that I was very pleased to see it at the time was that it really did raise awareness that it is their money. That money belongs to the people of Alberta," she said, adding that there were pressing responsibilities, like addressing health care costs, housing issues, and building schools and hospitals, that need to be addressed with surplus dollars before rebates.

Dave Hancock, former minister of advanced education, agreed that doling out money to directly to citizens isn't as valuable as investing it in long-term programs to aid those struggling to make ends meet. However, his view differed from DeLong's.

"It's not our money; it belongs to future generations of Albertans as well," he said.



MATT FREHNER

PICK ME, PICK ME MLA Edmonton-Whitemud Dave Hancock going for a win.

While most candidates were quick to criticize Alberta's lack of a plan to deal with the oil and gas boom, DeLong was more positive.

"I think there's a misconception that we do not have a plan and that we have not been planning," DeLong said.

However, Ted Morton, MLA for Foothills-Rocky View, who publicly criticized the Klein's rebate cheques when they were announced last year, adamantly disagreed.

"When those cheques were mailed, it became clear that we didn't have a plan. When the captain of the ship says there's no plan, I don't care what's in his closet. If he says there's no plan, there's no plan," Morton said.

But Hancock argued that there were plans—plans that haven't been executed yet.

"We do have a plan: we've actually legislated to contribute money to endowment funds, but we haven't put the money into endowment funds," Hancock said.

Mark Norris, MLA in Edmonton-McClung, suggested lower taxes as an alternative to rebate cheques.

The other candidates, Victor Doerksen, MLA for Red Deer-South, Jim Dinning, who was an elected member of government from 1986–97, and Gary McPherson, who doesn't have a seat in the Legislature, didn't get a word in on the matter.

STREETERS

A shooting at Dawson College in Montréal has stunned students nation-wide.

What do you think can be done to prevent future tragedies like this?



Amber Bergeron
Immunology &
Infection IV



Jesse
Christiansen
Medicine I



Leah Remington
Medicine I



Matthew Gaudet
Computer
Science I

Paying better attention to people—people get left behind really easily—because there are some warning signs, so paying attention to those warning signs in lower grades. Locking down campuses and locking down buildings doesn't help, it just creates fear.

It's one of those things that just kind of happens—unless they have metal detectors in front of all the schools, I don't know that there's much you can do.

I think there needs to be good support systems in place so that if someone is having a mental crisis or taking a while adjusting to school they have places to go.

Education. Just keep teaching multi-cultural values and tolerance. Don't let radical ideas get out of control because when they get out of control then people will go nuts.

Compiled and photographed by Natalie Climenhaga and Mike Otto

