



AB Today – Election Report April 5, 2019

Quotation of the day

“Maybe you've been smoking things you shouldn't have been smoking.”

*Stephen Mandel reacts to Alberta Liberal Party Leader **David Khan**'s accusation that the Alberta Party would open the door to privatization in health care during Thursday night's leaders' debate.*

Day 18: Today on the campaign trail

On the schedule

The spring election will be held on April 16. Advanced polling begins next Tuesday.

Leaders stick to careful talking points in televised debate unlikely to shift voter intentions

NDP Leader **Rachel Notley**, UCP Leader **Jason Kenney**, Alberta Party Leader **Stephen Mandel** and Alberta Liberal Party Leader **David Khan** squared off Thursday evening for the campaign's first and only leaders' debate.

The leaders took questions on federal-provincial relations, pipelines, debt elimination, health care, education, social issues and the environment.

All four leaders held some ground, but there was little in the way of a slam dunk moment.

For close #abpoli watchers, almost everything the candidates said was a continuation of talking points and policy promises that have already been fine-tuned on the campaign trail.

Notley, clad in a millennial pink blazer, used her opening statement to paint Alberta as a province at a “crossroads” between a forward-thinking government that would fight for public services and a UCP party that is “fundamentally out of step” with societal progress and willing to pander to far-right extremist groups.

Notley faced a few tough moments, including when Mandel brought up the two NDP MLAs accused of sexual misconduct; Kenney chimed in to ask for their names. Notley used her usual defence, saying the politicians will remain anonymous to protect the victims.

Kenney repeatedly went after the premier over her “alliance” with Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** — an even more ungainly jab than usual considering the hot water Trudeau is in over the SNC-Lavalin scandal — which he said is to blame for Alberta’s carbon tax as well as pipeline delays and cancellations.

“You surrendered and you didn’t raise a word of protest,” Kenney said.

“We got the federal government to buy a pipeline and that is what leadership actually looks like,” Notley shot back.

Kenney was in the toughest spot heading into the debate, following even more “bozo eruptions” from his candidates this week and still hurting from his tough Wednesday night interview with **Charles Adler**.

However, the UCP leader, wearing his standard issue blue suit, was even-tempered and able to shut down attacks about his social conservative leanings. When the other leaders went after him on his proposed changes to gay-straight alliance protections, he wrote it off as a “driveby smear campaign.”

Kenney said the NDP leader is only going after his candidates to divert her record on the economy and asked her to recognize the “human cost” of the province’s economic lull, such as increased crime and addiction. “The election is about those people and how to get them back to work,” the UCP leader said.

Mandel, wearing a purple shirt with green stripes (but *sans* his trademark bowtie), appealed to Albertans concerned about “splitting the vote” and encouraged them to instead “take a good long look at the Alberta Party” and its vision for a “good economy and a kind society.”

Khan was the evening’s wildcard. Sporting a Liberal red tie and pocket square, he managed to throw some wrenches into his opponents’ talking points. He also leaned on his background as a

constitutional lawyer to squash Kenney's plan to hold a referendum on the federal equalization system. Mandel echoed the criticism, calling the scheme "ridiculous."

Who was missing

Freedom Conservative Party Leader **Derek Fildebrandt** was not invited to take part in the debate, despite holding a seat in the legislature going into the election, something neither Khan nor Mandel can claim.

The Alberta Independence Party — which is campaigning on a platform of secession from Canada's federation — held a protest outside the debate studio. While the startup party has more registered candidates than the ALP, it was only granted official party status on March 22.

With 13 registered political parties in the province (Kenney technically heads up three — the UCP, Wildrose and Progressive Conservatives), the media consortium determined only leaders elected under their current party banner could take the stage.

Today's events

April 5 at 6:30 p.m. – Calgary

An all candidates' forum for the riding of Calgary—Mountain View will be held at the Renfrew Community Association.

Weekend events

April 7 at 7 p.m. – Edmonton

Alberta Party Leader **Stephen Mandel** will host a \$100-per-plate fundraising dinner at the Tiramisu Bistro.

Topics of conversation

- A new attack website has popped up, this time targeting the New Democrats. Sponsored by third-party advertiser Shaping Alberta's Future, NDPfacts.ca is digging up dirt on NDP candidates under the tagline "The Alberta NDP: Wrong Priorities. Still Wrong for Alberta."
 - Thus far, there is only one entry on the website's list of facts. It notes NDP incumbent candidate for Calgary—Klein **Craig Coolahan** was the contributing editor of a pick-up artist book called *Make Every Girl Want You: Everything from picking up girls to having a successful relationship*. The book, by **John Fate** and **Steve Reil**, uses sexist and misogynist language to give dating advice to men.
 - The Alberta NDP has three similar attack websites geared at **Jason Kenney**.
- NDP candidate for Drumheller—Stettler **Holly Heffernan** is under fire for remarks she made at a candidate forum earlier this week. Heffernan suggested her party would

reduce the number of jobs in the oil and gas sector as a way to protect the environment in a debate.

- When asked by the moderator what the NDP would do to protect the environment, Hefferman responded, “We’re going to diversify our economy and look towards less oil-based jobs. Am I making sense?”
 - In a statement, UCP candidate for Rimbey—Rocky Mountain House—Sundre **Jason Nixon** said the NDP has spent the campaign trying to “talk a good game to save their political skins,” but Hefferman’s remark proves they are still “the same NDP that routinely condemned our province’s oil and gas industry prior to forming government.”
- The Canadian Energy Pipeline Association released a [report](#) prepared by EY Canada that blames provincial and federal regulations for the United States’ business advantage over Canada’s pipeline industry.
 - The lobbying firm makes a series of recommendations to government in hopes of improving the pipeline industry’s competitiveness: increased certainty; avoiding overlapping regulations between jurisdictions; more transparency and clarity; predictability of outcomes; enforceable timelines; and greater consideration of companies’ costs.
 - “More than anything, pipeline companies and investors are looking for clarity, certainty and predictability,” EY strategy partner **Lance Mortlock** said in the report. “Balancing the environment, social and economic tradeoffs is critical to enhance global competitiveness, job creation and economic growth.”
 - NDP Finance Minister **Joe Ceci** defended his government’s recent decision to take out a loan in South Africa. In February, Alberta borrowed 750 million South African rands (or approximately \$70 million Canadian), which must be paid back by 2024.
 - This makes up a small piece of the \$28 billion in debt the province has taken out in loans since 2008.
 - Ceci [told the CBC](#) the funds were exchanged immediately into Canadian currency and called the loan a good deal.
 - “They look around the world to see where there’s available funds to borrow, and these were the least expensive funds at that time,” Ceci said of the finance ministry.
 - The Alberta Liberal Party is on the endangered species list with its habitat in the Alberta legislature threatened come voting day. Liberal Leader **David Khan** is hoping to hold on to retiring MLA **David Swann**’s seat amidst fierce competition in Calgary—Mountain View, but the odds are not in his favour. The *Edmonton Journal* [has more](#).
 - The Alberta Liberal Party formed the province’s first, second and third governments from 1905 to 1921, but have been shut out ever since. The party recovered enough to form the official Opposition in 1993 and 2012, but may soon lose its solo seat.

News from the campaign trail

Funnel cannabis revenues into harm reduction programs: Mandel

Alberta Party Leader **Stephen Mandel** proposed a change to the province's revenue sharing model for cannabis sales that would divert funds into communities dealing with the "challenges" and "consequences" of cannabis legalization. Mandel previously proposed this policy at the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association conference last October.

"The current government does not recognize the importance of [communities'] role and is not planning to equitably share the revenues with the communities that must manage the issues and deal with the consequences. This needs to change," Mandel said in a statement.

AB Today is written by Catherine Griwkowsky, reporting from Alberta's legislative press gallery.

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