

Alberta Liberals

CRCAG Election Questionnaire to Candidates

To the candidates of Calgary-Elbow, Calgary-Buffalo, Calgary-Mountain View, Calgary-Bow and Calgary-Fort:

Please find below a questionnaire from the Calgary River Communities Action Group (CRCAG). CRCAG is a non-partisan organization that has been advocating for upstream flood mitigation since the 2013 flood. We believe that flood mitigation should continue to be priority in this province so that our great city has a comprehensive plan to not only protect against the financial cost that will result from the next flood, but most importantly, the human cost. Implementing upstream mitigation is a matter of public safety and therefore cannot be ignored. As we approach the second anniversary of the 2013 flood, implementing upstream mitigation strategies and infrastructure must be pursued with a sense of determination so that Calgary will be more able to withstand the next inevitable flood.

We ask that your responses be sent to us no later than 5PM May 1, 2014 at info@crcactiongroup.com. Your answers will be posted on our website and emailed to our membership for them to review.

Thank you,

CRCAG Board

ELBOW RIVER MITIGATION

- 1) Are you supportive of building upstream flood mitigation infrastructure for the Elbow River? If yes, what is your understanding of the infrastructure projects for the Elbow River and their current status? As an elected MLA, what do you intend to do to ensure that these projects are completed as soon as possible?

The Province is currently moving forward with the Springbank Off-Stream Diversion to protect Elbow River communities. It is to our understanding that the land has yet to be obtained for this project and that land access has also not been granted. There is contention around this project given that it does not protect communities upstream of Calgary and may become more costly than estimated due to the price of acquiring the land. Other projects that have been proposed for the Elbow River are outlined in the AMEC report (<http://alberta.ca/flood-mitigation-studies.cfm>) and WaterSmart report (<http://albertawatersmart.com/bow-basin-flood-mitigation-and-watershed-management-project.html>). When the Province decided to move forward with the Springbank Off-Stream Diversion versus other upstream flood mitigation infrastructure, economic and environmental reasons were not provided. However, the recent Provincial Flood Damage Assessment Study justifies the Springbank Off-Stream Diversion, McLean Creek Dry Dam and the Glenmore Reservoir Diversion Tunnel (<http://alberta.ca/flood-mitigation-studies.cfm>). What should be

Alberta Liberals

done now is to interrogate the engineering, geotechnical, hydrological and environmental reasons for these three projects in order to come up with the best solution that will protect all flood-affected Elbow River communities. Liberal MLAs will ensure that the best solution is built to maximize protection for flood-affected Elbow River communities by not only taking into consideration the cost-benefit, but also the engineering, geotechnical, hydrological and environmental analyses for each of the projects.

- 2) Do you believe that more than one upstream mitigation infrastructure project is needed for the Elbow River? If so, which ones? If not, why not?

According to the March 2015 Auditor General (AG) Report (<http://www.oag.ab.ca/webfiles/reports/OAG%20March%202015%20Report.pdf>), ESRD needs to improve its systems to identify where the flood risk is, who is at risk, and what is at risk. What the AG report found was that ESRD has not developed adequate systems to assess what will be the cumulative effect of flood mitigation programs and initiatives on communities. Liberal MLAs will act on the AG's recommendation to ensure that ESRD has this system in place in order to determine whether more than one upstream mitigation infrastructure project is needed for the Elbow River, in addition to pursuing further engineering, geotechnical, hydrological, and environmental analyses, for other Elbow River projects to come up with a sound and an effective decision.

BOW RIVER MITIGATION

- 1) Are you supportive of leveraging existing infrastructure along the Bow River system for flood mitigation? If yes, what is your understanding of how the existing infrastructure can be leveraged and the current status of such an endeavor? As an elected MLA, what do you intend to do to ensure that a timely agreement is put into place to utilize existing infrastructure along the Bow River system for flood mitigation?

One of the Liberal Policies for Sustainable Environment is to *designate all surface and groundwater as a public good to be managed in the public interest, and regulated accordingly*. TransAlta holds a fairly senior water license in Alberta and also owns the dams along the Bow River system. The Province has been focusing on a short-term agreement to leverage the Ghost Reservoir for flood control. The Ghost Reservoir does not have enough storage capacity to hold back a flood with the same potential as the 2013 flood. Leveraging only the Ghost Reservoir is a band-aid solution. The PC Government has been in negotiations for 2 years without a concrete long term plan that will provide adequate protection to communities along the Bow River. Perhaps it is time to think more radically about how water is managed in this Province – starting with public interest first, then corporate interests. The negotiations between TransAlta and the Province must be transparent and the element of accountability need to enter into the discussions in order for a timely agreement to be put into place. Liberal MLAs will ensure that public interest enter in the negotiations and that a long-term solution will involve other reservoirs which have a much larger capacity to hold back greater amount of flood waters.

Alberta Liberals

- 2) Do you believe that additional upstream mitigation measures need to be pursued for the Bow River? Is so, what additional measures should be considered? If not, why not?

The Liberals have always highlighted the importance of protecting the Eastern Slopes because this is where our water source comes from. Therefore, additional upstream mitigation measures must incorporate a balance between natural and engineering solutions. Finding new upstream storage sites may be difficult with the number of sites currently occupied by TransAlta dams, but such an investigation should nonetheless be considered. Further, one of the Liberal Policies for Sustainable Environment is to *amend the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan and South Saskatchewan Regional Plan to slow forest degradation and fragmentation under any new Land Use Regional Plans*. The wetlands and forests in the upper watershed can provide some natural storage capacity to flood waters and should be protected to ensure that land-use activities in our watersheds do not jeopardize the health and quality of our water source, while at the same time providing some degree of flood protection. Sustainable reservoir management must also be regulated by the Government to ensure that the operation of existing dams and reservoirs along the Bow River system are done so safely, while maximizing storage capacity for flood control. According to the March 2015 Auditor General (AG) Report (<http://www.oag.ab.ca/webfiles/reports/OAG%20March%202015%20Report.pdf>), ESRD has not completed enough work and received enough information from dam owners to determine whether dams are operated safely and to identify whether changes need to be made to regulatory activities based on identified risks. Liberal MLAs will ensure that the AG's recommendations for dam safety are acted on as a means of sustainable reservoir management in this province.

FLOOD POLICY

- 1) What is your current understanding of the status of the Provincial Floodway Development Policy?

According to the March 2015 Auditor General (AG) Report (<http://www.oag.ab.ca/webfiles/reports/OAG%20March%202015%20Report.pdf>), Alberta has not had a consistent approach to managing development in flood hazard areas, which has resulted in inconsistent land use bylaws across the province because some municipalities restricted development in the flood hazard areas, while others did not. The current policy would restrict development in the floodway, while exempting some municipalities, such as Fort McMurray and Drumheller. Development in the floodway represents ongoing risk to public safety and property. Restricting development in this area would minimize the economic and public safety risks.

- 2) Considering the current revisions to the Provincial flood hazard maps and the impact upstream flood mitigation will have on reducing inundation, how do you propose that the Provincial Floodway Development Policy take these two items into account?

Alberta Liberals

According to the March 2015 Auditor General (AG) Report (<http://www.oag.ab.ca/webfiles/reports/OAG%20March%202015%20Report.pdf>), ESRD needs to improve its systems to identify where the flood risk is, who is at risk, and what is at risk. The AG report found that ESRD has not created complete and up-to-date maps to identify flood hazard areas, where some communities at risk of flooding have never been mapped. ESRD has also not developed processes to identify and quantify flood risks, in addition to not developing adequate systems to assess what will be the cumulative effect of flood mitigation programs and initiatives on communities. The Provincial flood maps must be completed so as to appropriately inform the Provincial Floodway Development Policy and any future amendments to policies concerning additional flood hazard areas. As per the findings from the AG report, ESRD must also understand the cumulative effect of flood mitigation programs and initiatives on communities. This, in turn, could further inform policy in addition to assessing whether additional mitigation projects should be further pursued for communities in Alberta, as outlined above.

BUY-OUT POLICY

- 1) Do you believe that the buy-out policy achieved its stated goal? What should be done with the vacant lots that have resulted from this policy?

As outlined previously from the Auditor General Report, ESRD does not have adequate processes to assess what will be the cumulative effect of flood mitigation programs and initiatives within communities when it approves new projects. Therefore, full consideration may not have been given to the buy-out policy when it was implemented. Future discussions about what to do with these vacant lots must take into account the impact of other mitigation programs and initiatives on the communities in which the vacant lots exist. Moreover, dialogue with community associations and residents should also be taken into consideration when deciding what to do with the vacant lots before a final decision is made.