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Opening Statements

Ted Morton

It’s a cliché, but it’s true. Our children are the future of Alberta, so education is a priority. It’s a priority for parents, employers and each of the candidates. I am a teacher, my wife was a teacher. I taught at the U of C for 24 years, my wife taught in Calgary public for 13 years. Why did we become teachers? We were inspired by teachers we had when we were in school. After parents, teachers are the most influential people in children’s lives. I know what you do, I respect what you do, and I admire what you do. I look forward to a positive and constructive relationship with teachers and the ATA. You helped make Alberta have the best K-12 education system in Canada and one of the best in the world.

Doug Griffiths

The first policy that we’re rolling out is on education. Education is our number one priority. I grew up on a ranch with 200 head of Black Angus cattle. I loved ranching, but I got my teaching degree and I loved teaching more than anything else. In fact, I taught grade 5-6 social, grade 3-9 math, 5-9 science, 6-9 PE and 6-9 computers. And believe it or not, that wasn’t over the course of my career, that was over one year! I taught in a small school where we had a lot of double and triple grading and I will tell you from that experience I understand how critical education is to the future, not just to the province, but to every single community in this province and I personally understand how important teachers are to the lives of our students. My kids are 5 and 2 and when I talk about the future of this province, I talk about how important education is going to be and I know that nothing is going to set a better course for my kids than the

education they're going to get from Kindergarten right through to post-secondary. That's going to determine the future of this province, too. We have to make sure that whoever we choose (as premier) makes education number one.

Rick Orman

I set out three priorities in my campaign. The first is accessible healthcare. The second is excellence in education and the third is safe communities. I told the AUMA, healthcare should be your top priority as well. If we're having health care grow at 6% and our economy grow at 3%, it's an unsustainable model. If we're not more efficient with taxpayer dollars, we will have things that happen in the last go round, in that schools that were promised were cancelled, so the sustainability of our health care system is in the best interest of educators, it's in the best interest of our public school system and it's also in the best interest of health care. I have had conversations with teachers and principals and their view and my view is resources in the classroom. That's all I really have to say in terms of where I want to go in my education policy.

Alison Redford

I've lived in a lot of places where democracy was fragile and where economies are at best developing and where opportunities are extremely limited. But, not here. We have a strong democracy in Alberta, we have an economic engine that is powerful and our possibilities are limitless. And that is why, no matter where I go, I always come home. I'm not a career politician, but I've been in cabinet for three years. I know what's worked and what hasn't, and I think I have some understanding as to why it hasn't worked. We've developed partnerships, we've broken down silos, and developed partnerships that have really made a difference in Alberta. One of the partnerships that I'm most proud of is that with the police. We're reducing gang violence and domestic violence. We're putting prevention programs in place and identifying kids at risk whether in the health care system or the education system. I want to have this kind of strong relationship with Alberta teachers. The Safe Communities initiative was a foundation for consultation and consultation leads to trust and trust is what will allow us to change and make changes, and to trust each other in that change. I think Inspiring Education was a very important step. As a consultation process, I feel strongly that it worked well. However, I will say that as a trust building initiative, it failed. Without trust, we cannot create the change that we all want to make for kids in the public system. In Safe Communities, we had a plan for change and that's what I bring to this race. I bring a plan for thoughtful change. We have a plan for change in education.

Gary Mar

I don't purport to have the same teaching experience as Doug Griffiths has, but I can say that vicariously through my wife Nancy, I do have a great appreciation of what it is teachers do every single day. Of all the portfolios that I've held, education was the most important and one of the most interesting because for me, it's about future prosperity. The future prosperity of our province rests not only with the mining of the resources that are under the ground, but also the resources that rest between the ears of our young people. And, education is absolutely critical to creating economic opportunities that will allow our future to continue to be a bright one. My family has called this province home for over a hundred years. I want it to be our family's home for the next hundred years. In order to do that, I want to make sure that my three kids, all of whom have gone to school in the Edmonton public school system where Nancy teaches, I want to make sure that they have the knowledge, the skills, and the attitudes to be able to compete in a competitive world and not only the advantage of having the best school system in Canada, but one of the very best in the world. It's one that I've talked about in the US where there's been

tremendous issues with respect to education, so I've come home and I'll say this: You don't know how good things are at home until you've been away and so I've seen lots to compare it to and I know that if we collaborate with teachers there's much that we can accomplish and whatever challenges we have, they are, to my mind, solvable. I thank you for the work you do every single day in our classrooms.

Doug Horner

Everyone of us is touched by a teacher. Everyone of us, even at the podium, has teachers who are in our families. My brother taught in Grade Prairie and I've been surprised by the number of people who have come up to me today and said, "Your uncle was Uncle Marvel, right?" I don't know how many of you have taught with him or worked with him but it's a little bit scary to me. There's only two degrees of separation in Alberta. The reason that I'm doing this, is, I was a talking to a young teacher two weeks ago and he was telling me he teaches his kids what progressive conservative values are. I asked him to tell me what he thought they were and I didn't like the answer I got. The answer should have been, "We're compassionate, we're innovative, we have integrity and we have a commitment to excellence in everything that we do. We want to lead on the world stage and we want you to help us do it." We have to, as Alison said, recreate the trust, the bond between us, because the reality is, we both want the same thing. We want success in the classroom for our kids, and you can do that for us. But we have to give you the tools to do it, and that means that we need to change. We need to change the way we make decisions. We need to change making our decisions through the lens of dollars and dogma to the lens of those values: compassion, innovation, integrity. I believe that the change Alberta wants is for us to work in partnership with the people who are going to create the future for our province and the future leaders of our province and that's you, and that's my commitment.

Alberta is world-renowned as a top-performing jurisdiction with regards to public education. What do you think of the system today, and what are your priorities for change that would help ensure continued excellence?

Doug Griffiths

I gave this a lot of consideration and I know that we brag a lot about how exceptional our education system is. We have one of the best education systems in the world, but being a teacher, I know that the success of the student in the classroom usually depends 95% on the teacher in the classroom, not much else. That is the most critical element. This means we don't have the best education system in the world, it means we have the best teachers in the world. So, if we're going to continue to improve our education system, I'd pick three areas where I think we need to focus. The first is to make sure that we have the best professional development still going forward. We have exceptional professional development but we need to put resources and partner with the ATA to make sure that we have the best PD for our teachers so that we have the best teachers, always, in the classroom. The second is to make sure that we maximize the tools available for teachers in order to make sure they're doing the best job they can in the

classroom. If you don't give the tools to the teachers, no matter how good that teacher is, it's like asking a carpenter to build a house without giving him a hammer. Teachers need the tools in the classroom to make sure that they maximize the growth and development of our students. The third are we need to focus on for teachers is to make that some of those issues, and we all know what they are, that creep in the classroom that affect the student's learning, whether or not they had breakfast in the morning, whether or not the home is a good environment - those sorts of issues - the teachers have the resources available to be able to deal with those and address them right away so they can go back in on focusing on being the best professionally developed people in the world and make sure that they utilize all the tools possible to improve the education for our kids. Those are the three areas we need to focus on. We can talk about computers and stuff, but if you start with the teachers themselves, I think we'll continue to have the best education system in the world.

Rick Orman

There are a series of things we have to focus in on. The first is to make sure that we attract top-notch educators to our public system. That comes through attracting top-notch educators in our post-secondary institutions. It starts right there. Predictable, long-term funding for our educators is key. The other thing we have to focus on is classroom pressures. What are the pressures of the teachers? I have talked to teachers and they've said, "Look. Our first responsibility is to make sure that every student that comes through our door, whether they have language challenges, whether they have learning disabilities, whatever their challenge, the teacher needs the classroom to make sure that nobody gets left behind." For me, my top priority is resources in the classroom. I think as government, we have to make sure that school boards are dedicating resources to make that happen. I think it's also important to recognize that teachers aren't police officers and they're not social workers. So, when you talk about resources outside the classroom, you have to make sure that the support is there. Again, to make sure that as one of the principles of our party is deliver excellence in education, so we have to make sure that the things we do reflect those principles. Predictable funding, leading edge, new technologies, and I also think it's incumbent upon government to work with the teachers and the school boards to make sure that our parents understand what our teachers are doing, make sure they understand what their challenges are and be sort of less critical and more supportive and have more input. When I look at my children, my grandchildren, I see that as something that needs to be provided.

Alison Redford

We have to go back to the values about what we want education to be. Not just what it's been done in the past and funding it better - of course we have to do that. Two months ago I talked about long-term sustainable funding in education, but now the question becomes, "How do we work together to get to where we need to go next?" We have to change the way in which classrooms are working. We have to give you the tools to be able to do the things that you want to. We have to understand that a lot of the work that you'd like to do now isn't work that you have the opportunity to do. It's going to involve changing curriculum and it's also going to involved identifying kids who need to be given better employment options and better opportunities and then resourcing programs that are going to allow those kids to have the options that they want to have. I agree with Doug and with Rick as to what happens in a school and as a community, we have to understand that schools are much more complicated now than they were twenty years ago. We know that at this point in time, we need to build partnerships with other agencies and communities. We have had some success in doing that and we have to

think differently about doing that, be bold about it, and understand that that work happens both inside the walls of a school and outside the walls of a school.

Gary Mar

One of the main objectives, if I were to try to think about what the big picture was for education, would be to have a system that ensures that our kids are privately happy and publicly useful. In order to do that, that means giving resources to teachers to be able to teach our children, not only curriculum, but knowledge plus skills plus attitudes that will allow them to succeed in the future. Core to that is stable, predictable, funding. I think all of us would agree with that particular issue. As Rick Orman was saying and in the observation of Nancy, she's a great teacher, my wife, but she's not a cop, she's not a social worker and she's not a nurse. So, to wrap-around services around those kids whose needs go beyond mere educability within the classroom is really, really important. I've also learned that with respect to change that we can't change things without deep engagement with our most important stakeholders. So, with my experience as a minister, it's not talking so much about what I've done in the past, but what I've learned from those experiences and what I've learned is that we can change curriculum, but only if we have the ability to be deeply engaged with stakeholders like teachers. We can only have success if we have parents that are engaged in being involved in the support of their children at home. We must look also at early testing for kids to determine what their needs are and get those needs dealt with as quickly as we can rather than fishing kids out of the water who have learning disabilities and allowing two more to float past... we should be getting out of the water, walking upstream, and seeing how they're getting in there in the first place. As Dr. Fraser Mustard would say, "You can pay me now, or pay me later." I would rather invest early in dealing with learning issues such as ESL, dealing with those up front, so that educability of students in the classroom is easier.

Doug Horner

We have to change the way we make decisions, and one of the things we have to change is we have to start planning for outcomes. Let's talk about outcomes, together in partnership. Partnership with you, with industry, with parents, with society as a whole, and then let's fund for the outcome that we're trying to achieve. We start with the dollar all the time - let's separate out the labour component of what we're doing, let's deal with that, together, but then let's also fund the outcomes. So, does that mean we want to have healthier kids, that have maybe a low population school, vision that says you're going to have a registered nurse in the school to help you, to help the kids, to help the families. Does it mean that we're going to have family counsellors in the schools to help you, to help the kids, to help the families? Let's start talking about where we're going to go with the outcomes. Let's measure it, but let's measure it in partnership together. The PAT exams, we should remove them, and go to random sampling. We'll get the same statistical outcomes, we'll get the same thing. Now, let's do it on the grade 3 and take a look at how it works. Then, let's talk about grade six, let's talk about grade nine, again in partnership, build that trust. Let's bring society back to the table in education and make sure that you have partners in the homes that are helping you with the kids. Let's try to create that value. Let's not change the curriculum unless you're ready for it, unless you've been involved in it, so that we can move forward with that. When I look at the outcomes that I want to have for our education system, it is to lead on a world stage, and I agree with that. We've had great results. We've had great things to stand up and crow about. But the reality is, we all know, that there are better things that we could be doing that we could lead on the world stage. We could create a system that the rest of the world comes to see - How did you do that? How are

you guys competing so well on a global stage with those other students? That's what we need to change.

Ted Morton

I agree that professional development, classroom resources are key for continuing success, but I think we should begin by repeating what others have recognized; that we do have one of the best performing K-12 systems, not just in Canada, but in the world and certainly I, and everybody else up here, recognizes the importance of teachers in that. But, when I look at my experience, both as a student and a teacher, and I think, "What's been the key to my best learning opportunities?" it comes down to the enthusiasm and connection between teachers and students, but also in K-12, parents as well, there's kind of a triangle there. I think one of the keys to the success in Alberta has been the principle of choice and diversity in education. The Catholic, the public, the private and now the charter system, has created that chemistry of enthusiasm that matches interests between teachers, students and parents. As Doug mentioned, we'd like to have a system that people come from around the world to see. What is the key to our success? Well, we know for a fact, particularly in the Edmonton public system, people have come from around the world to look at that, and the key has been that element of choice. So, I think we have a good system, we have to work hard to keep it good and better, but I would go to the structure that creates that trilogy or that chemistry between teachers, students and parents that I think is the key to continued success.

Follow up question

This government promotes charter schools as a place where innovation and enhanced education take place. Alberta students are among the top-performing in the world - innovative and enhanced education is taking place on a daily basis in classrooms across Alberta. What is your view of the role of charter schools and to a further extent private schools in Alberta's education system?

Ted Morton

I mentioned charter schools for a reason. We happen to be fortunate enough that we have friends whose daughter and son-in-law are teaching in one of the charter schools in Calgary that focuses on performing arts and visual arts and we also have friends who have a daughter in that school, so we hear from both sides, from the teacher side and from the parent/student side. One of the reasons why I emphasized that enthusiasm and the chemistry is because that's what I hear, that's what we hear from our friends, both on the parents side and on the teachers side and on their child's side. There's great enthusiasm for the curriculum. The parents love the teachers, the teachers love the kids. Again, I think that choice is critical. In terms of the instructional subsidy for private schools, I support that as well.

Do you support as well, funding following the student, Ted, in the private system?

I think that's what I'm saying. Right now, there's a 65% instructional subsidy. Those parents obviously pay the same taxes as everybody else does, so I do support that, because again, I

think that it creates the diversity, the choice, the enthusiasm that has been one of the key contributors to Alberta's success.

Doug Horner

I too, am also a big believer in choice in our system, and as a parent, my choice was to put my kids through the public system. My upbringing, I went through the public system, I have a great deal of faith in the public system, and I think that if we funded it appropriately and dealt with the other issues that we have in terms of the resources and those sorts of fundings, we get away from those discussions - Well you're stealing from there to put into here. Let's make sure that we're funding again for those outcomes so we don't have those discussions. Choice is important, because I want our kids to actually have an education. I don't want them to not have that education because they didn't feel that they were impassioned by their school and there's a number of our charter schools where kids have a passion for what that charter might have. That helps them learn. Why would we take that away? I think it's important that we're funding the public system so that we can get the outcomes that we want and that we have choice within the system.

But what about on the private question, Doug?

That's part of the choice. I think that the level that we have today is a good level of both private contribution and public contribution. We don't do any contribution to the capital side of it and that should remain where it is. Again, if we gets kids educated, either through the private, the charter or the public system, that is the goal, that's the outcome that I'm after.

I understand that, but I just want to clarify, with both candidates, so that we all understand - On the question of private money, we're hearing from some other political parties that perhaps certain kids should be able to opt out of the public system and let that public money follow them to a private school. Ted, Doug, do you agree with that idea?

Ted Morton

I support the system that's been in place in Alberta, I think since the late 1960s, where a percentage of the instructional cost, I think it's 65%. 70%? Okay, 70% does follow the student to the private school. Again, for the reasons that I explained. It creates the chemistry, the choice, and the support from home that is critical for student success.

Let's bring in the other candidates. What are your feelings about the idea of charter schools? Doug Griffiths, you're a teacher, do you think there should be more charter schools in the province of Alberta?

Doug Griffiths

Before we get to that question, I think the bigger point is that public funding should go to support public education. Now, my notion of charter schools is that it's a place that you can go to to experiment with education, with different teaching styles. Private schools are where parents and teachers decide they want more focus on issues, but those should not be supported by public dollars because everybody has the right to a public education and that's the government's

responsibility to fund. If someone makes the choice to go to a private school or a charter school, then I think they make the choice to pay for it themselves.

Rick Orman

I actually support some of what Doug Griffiths has said, but for a different reason. You know, in the system, we talk about public funding, it is taxpayers funding. And, for me, it's important that parents have choice, that there's accountability in the education system, whether it's public or private and that there's a consistent curriculum. Now, on the issue of funding, I don't believe that funding should follow the student. I have actually, surprisingly, talked with two members of boards of directors of private schools, and actually both of them said, "We don't need the funding. We don't need the public funding." I got the sense from them, so for me, if that's the choice that they make, that they don't want to access public funding, I don't think that they should be forced to take the public funding. I think there's a sense though, that the government wants some public funding inside the private system, so that the department of Education can control some of the aspects, like curriculum and some other matters so there's an element of control there. I actually think it's time to have a review of that.

Alison Redford

I remember when charter schools started to arise and we saw a difference in Calgary and Edmonton with respect to the rise of charter schools and my impression, just as a citizen of Alberta, was that one of the reasons we saw that difference was because in Edmonton we saw a board that was prepared to respond to what teachers wanted for their kids. We were able to see a public school system that was able to grow and develop and respond in a way that was responsive to what taxpayers and citizens and parents wanted for their kids' education. In Calgary, we didn't have quite the same experience, and I think for some period of time there was a higher percentage of charter schools in Calgary than in Edmonton. I think that what that speaks to, is that we're not creating a public system that allows you to do the work that you want to do but that allows parents to feel that they're getting the services that they need. What I'm quite concerned about right now, is that we could very well see, with the continuing development of charter and private schools, the public system being considered to be a second tier level of education, and that can't happen.

Gary Mar

I'm most focused on the outcomes and what I want to make sure is that we prescribe as a province, in collaboration with school boards and with teachers, curriculum that we believe is important for kids to have success, and it focuses on reading, writing and arithmetic, of course. Numeracy and literacy skills are quite important. But, so too are issues with respect to the types of skills and attitudes that children have that we think are important collectively for our society. There are some debates with respect to who should be able to deliver this and there are some in Alberta who say we shouldn't have a Catholic school board. I'm not as concerned about whether a child is taught curriculum that we prescribe whether it's by public school or whether it's by Catholic school, or whether it's by charter school or by a private school. So, with respect to private school funding, I think, as Doug said, the balance is about right, that we have to recognize that not all kids learn the same ways. But, the reality is, is that the overwhelming majority of parents choose the public system, and that is a choice that they make consciously. It speaks of the kind of work that is being done by our public system, and when I say our public system, I also mean the Catholic school board as well.

A number of grants for school boards were reduced or eliminated in the 2011 budget. As a result, hundreds of teachers across the province were laid off in June. Will a government under your leadership reverse grant cuts to school boards and what principles will be used in the future to ensure stable, predictable and sustained funding for schools?

Rick Orman

I think that one of the reasons that the public, not just the school system, is angry at this government, is that they have been unpredictable and they have been unreliable. Let's start with things that were cancelled that were promised, like grants. How about freezing teacher's salaries in the middle of an agreement? We have these panelists, ladies and gentlemen, that are connected with this government that have made some decisions that adversely affected the education system and I think it's important that you hold them accountable for that and you ask those questions. "How do you explain the last five years in the education system?" I also think that it is offensive for any leadership candidate to talk about funding outside of a budget cycle. We have to be mindful that taxpayers expect us to make decisions in the context of the rest of the province - the \$35 billion dollars that we take in. I guess it would be glib for the programs that they cut or eliminated for them to say that they would put them back in. The question is, "Can you trust the actions of the people connected with the existing government?" My government would be clearly mandated to live up to it's commitments, make promises whether it's to the education or to the health system and live up to it. If we can't make those promises, if we can't live up to those promises, I'll make you one promise here, we won't make them. So, predictability and sustainability so that you can do the job that you do best, and that's teach. You shouldn't have to worry about these other issues. Is the funding there for next year? Do I have the resources in my classroom? Are there going to be school cancelled that were promised? Not acceptable, and in a Rick Orman government, you will not see that.

Alison Redford

When I released my education policy over two months ago, I talked about long-term predictable and sustainable funding. It's got to be a value of where we go in the future. But, that's just really table stakes. That just gets us in the door. If government negotiates a contract, honour the contract. If we're going to honour that contract then we don't then go to school boards and say, "We want you to renegotiate the locally negotiated contracts." You have a vision for education. You make the commitment. You give the people who are participating in the system, you the teachers, the parents in the system and the school boards, the certainty that they need to have to make the long term plans. If we don't have vision and we don't have the commitment then we're all not all agreeing to go in the same direction. We're going to continue to have the same types of problems that we've had in the past two years, and we can't afford that anymore. We can't let it happen. We have to rebuild that trust. We have to change the relationship that we have with you and you have to understand where we want to go as a government. One of the ways that we will do that is to ensure that we make that commitment. The question is how to guarantee that? It's to have a premier that will make a commitment to do that and ensures that his education minister follows through.

Gary Mar

My education policy does talk about the importance of stable and predictable funding because from my perspective, you cannot plan unless you have some sense of what your funding is going to be on, at the very least, a three year horizon. So, my view would be that school administrators, school boards, teachers themselves, who are part of making up those plans, need to have stable and predictable funding. I'd go further that it's not just in the education area but I would say the same thing about other important areas like health care, like municipal governments. They all require the same kind of stable and predictable funding in order to make plans. That's how you avoid circumstances where you're announcing new schools and then on the same day, having teacher layoffs. I would also make this point, that we do have to review our education funding framework from time to time. In my policy, we've talked about doing it on a five-year basis and the reason for doing this every five years is to ensure that the funding throughout the province continues to be equitable and continues to be consistent. As we know, there are different circumstances in different parts of the province and we have to recognize that there are differences in sparsity and distance, or with respect to the number of kids you have that have learning disabilities. Nancy would tell me, it's not always so much the issue of how many kids are in your classroom, but if five of them are in your classroom that have a profound learning disability, then that is already too large a classroom. The idea that we recognize those differences in different parts of the province in our education funding framework is important to me, important for you and one that we must continually update from time to time to recognize the differences throughout the province.

Doug Horner

This is a perfect example of what I'm talking about when I talk about the way we make decisions. If the minister of education is given a target, the first thing that he's told is that the target is three and a half percent or whatever it may be, because you're trying to achieve a dollar amount as opposed to an outcome. You're just made half of the decisions for that minister. The other half is how does he get underneath the target. Many of us have had that challenge in our departments in the past, and that's one of our frustrations, that's one of the reasons why I'm running. We have to change how we make those kinds of decisions. We have to say, do we value education? Yes. Then, let's value the outcomes, and let's fund to the outcomes. Yes, stable and predictable, but what is stable and predictable? Is it four percent a year? Do we say, that's it? No, that's not the way to do this? We should be saying, here's the labour piece, separate that out, let's negotiate that in good faith, let's honour whatever that ends up to be. Now we're done with that. Now we move on to, how do we fund what you need to achieve the outcomes, as I said before that we all want. And then I want to build the budget around the outcomes, not build the budget around the percentage, because that's the thing that we've been doing. I agree with Gary that there's differences in the funding model that we have to start changing too. When we talk about the occupancy of our schools and you include the gym space and all these other things and say, there's the size of the school. That's because we want to have this total accountability. We have to move away from that and start saying, we're building for the future of this community and we might have to build a little bit bigger today because you're going to fill it. We're going to build for the future in terms of the teachers that we're going to hire. So, you can't just say it's stable, predictable and this is the percentage, you have to build for that future. Look at low-population schools? Maybe it's not classroom space you're building. Maybe it's clinic space. Maybe it's ADAC space. Maybe it's space for a family day care. Why aren't we looking at those things as outcomes instead? Building the funding around it. Let's stop talking about dollars, let's start talking about the outcome we want.

Ted Morton

We all recognize the importance of stable, predictable long-term funding for a well functioning system and I think all of us support the five year contract that was negotiated back in 2007. Of course, in 2007, none of saw what was going to happen in the next twelve months in terms of the global economy and the recession. So, we got caught, as a government, between the contract we signed and the dramatic drop in revenues that occurred in '08, '09, '10 and we're still running a three billion dollar deficit. So, in the future, I would still support trying to do the long-term contract. We want to maybe make them a little more flexible to accommodate unforeseen or unpredictable changes. It's a little hard to know what the new normal is anymore with what's happened in the past ten days, but I remember back to the mid 1990s when my wife and I both took the 5% across the board cutbacks to public sector compensation. I don't want to go back to that. That was not easy for us and I suspect it wasn't easy for a lot of you. So, I think the need again, for the school funding piece, is sound fiscal management, and I can't believe that anyone here wants to go back to what we experienced in the mid 1990s, so I can promise you that a Ted Morton government will have sound fiscal management and there won't be any of those across the board public sector cuts because there won't be debt that of course pushes us into that hole.

Doug Griffiths

I have to admit, I find it a little bit frustrating right now, to listen to some people talk about changes to the funding formula, which I've been advocating for nine years now, having been in the system - and now they're willing to make the changes. But, they were sitting at the cabinet table then, and didn't make changes. I have said for a long time now, I know that Premier Stelmach used to say that selling bitumen to the United States raw is like selling the topsoil off the farm. Cuts to education is like selling the topsoil off the farm. It affects all of our future over the long-term. We do need to reverse the cuts that were made. There's three significant changes on top of what's already been mentioned that needs to be done. First, our budget cycle is poor when it comes to education. We get this reputation amongst my colleagues that education is always coming back and asking for more money. The reason why is because we budget in January and in September when we have more students in the school year and we have to ask for more money, it's set up wrong. It's budgeted to our cycle, not the school cycle. So, it looks like education is always asking for more money, which is poor, and gives us a bad reputation. The second is that we need community based funding. I am not supportive of funding following the students. When I was a teacher in Byemoor we lost three students, we lost fifteen thousand dollars out of the budget. We couldn't sell any desks or any textbooks or turn the lights off earlier. And finally, if we're going to have stable, secure funding in education, we have got to make sure that we make some smart and probably challenging discussions and decisions around our own revenues sources and streams so that we don't subject every other department to these vicious cycles. This won't do us any good in the long term.

Follow up question

What actions and policies do you believe are needed to help preserve the quality of rural education? What changes would be necessary to create a more equitable funding model for rural school divisions?

Doug Griffiths

First, I'm not a fan of funding following the student. In our small schools, like Byemore for instance, when you lose three students and you lose fifteen thousand dollars, there's nothing you can do to change the way the school operates. So, we've got to go back to model where we fund programs and not fund per student, so we make sure that the integrity of the education in every single community in this province, all 422 of them is whole and has integrity. The second this is that we need to go back to the community school, not just on the funding model, but understand the importance of them to the whole success of the community. When I wrote the rural development strategy for the province, I pointed out that there are four pillars to any community having success. There is education, number one. And it's not just Kindergarten to grade twelve, it's Kindergarten right through post-secondary and access to it. Health care, jobs and then community infrastructure. An integral part of any community and its future is its school, because if you lose a school in a community, the community is done. So, it's our responsibility to make sure that the 422 communities in the province all have the opportunity to succeed. Providing that education, and that stability will make sure that the people in that community, the families and the kids will be part of a prosperous Alberta in the future.

Ted Morton

We have a small schools program. I think it's doing a pretty good job. If we can do a better job, I'll certainly support that.

Alison Redford

I heartily support what Doug Griffiths has been saying with respect to community schools. As I said earlier, what we'll find is not only the opportunity to develop and sustain communities, but more importantly to provide the services in schools that we need to provide. One of the challenges that I think we have is that many of the policies that Infrastructure Alberta has put in place with respect to school size, square footage, hallways, gyms, that sort of thing, as has been mentioned earlier, starts to define education policy. In the past two or three years, what I've seen is that what we seem to think is that driving the infrastructure agenda is what will inform other sorts of policy in government. We have to think differently in government about who takes the lead in policy development, and we have to understand the decisions that will be made around long term education policy need to be made by education and not by infrastructure.

Rick Orman

I agree with Alison. This question should not have to be asked. We have a principle of our conservative party and it is excellence in education. That means excellence in education for educators and students on the banks of the Hay river and on the banks of the Milk river and everywhere in between. If there is skewed funding that is not creating that environment, then we as a provincial government are not doing our best job. I think it's absolutely important that we rededicate ourselves and make sure that driving excellence is not being driven or not being deterred by some of the things Alison's talked about and that is the other departments or other agendas. We all have to pull in the same direction.

Doug Horner

As Minister of Agriculture, it was actually my pleasure to implement the Rural Development Strategy and part of that was try and figure out how you make rural communities economically viable. One of the things, and Doug's mentioned this, that people look for when they come to Alberta to earn a living is that they want to look for a place that they can live where they can get a good opportunity for their kids to get educated. They can have good health care. They can

have recreational opportunities, art and cultural opportunities. When you think about some of our low-population schools or our rural schools, that can be the place. I don't want an Alberta where you come, you make your money and you leave. I want an Alberta where you come, you make your money and you achieve your dreams and you make your history here in the province of Alberta and become Albertan. To do that, everywhere in Alberta needs to have those opportunities. That's why I said, let's look at those outcomes and what a low-population school could do for us. What else is required in that community? It isn't just about saying the education budget has to fund it. Why don't we look at what mental health needs are in that area? Why don't we look at what family needs are in that area? Why don't we look at some of the other needs in that area and bring them together in a community centre that is also, by the way, the community school? Let's make that work, and then you're going to be able to achieve the success that you're looking for.

**Show of hands, who agrees that the funding formula needs to be changed?
(All raise their hands except Ted Morton)**

Ted Morton, you do not agree that it needs to be changed, but you also believe that things should be budgeted properly so that we don't need to revisit in times when the economy is bad. So, what would you do in a situation where you don't have the money? You don't like across the board cuts either. How would you address for example, the situation that exists now with the teachers where we've seen the layoffs. You're not the finance minister anymore, but you have inside information to manage these crises. How would you manage it in a way that is right for the education system.

Ted Morton

As I said, I support the longer-term contract such as the one that we signed in 2007 because it gives the predictability, the sustainability to support better outcomes in education. But, I think, given what we've learned now, with the unexpected turmoil in the economy, and the five billion dollar drop in government revenues that have ensued, that there has to be some flexibility in those types of contracts. We've gotten cross pressured now between keeping up with building new schools, which I know all of you want, and honouring that contract. I wasn't part of those negotiations, I guess none of us were, because those of us in cabinet had to resign, but there were some negotiations and they were constructive up to a point between the ATA and the government about trying to find some compromise and some accommodation so that we could keep building schools. I think there has to be that partnership. I look forward to a positive, cooperative relationship with the ATA, trying to do the long-term funding which gives you that security so that you can focus on your main work that is excellence in teaching, but also keep the fiscal ship afloat. We've exhausted the eighteen billion dollar Sustainability Fund by the end of next year. I lived through the '90s. I saw those across the board 5% cuts, both to my wife's salary and to mine and I don't want to go back there. So, again, we look at what's happened in the States. What are the first things that they cut? Social services and education. I don't want

that. You don't want that. So, I think there's something to be said for sound fiscal management on a go-forward basis, particularly for education and social services.

Gary Mar

I wanted to wade in on the issue of the importance of small rural schools. Geography should never be a barrier towards getting a great education. As I travelled to hundreds of schools during my time as minister, and most recently, I've been to places such as Youngstown, Alberta, a place where there were 12 kids and I went to their graduation exercises. Eleven of them were Rutherford scholars. It was an extraordinary teacher named Jeff Hunter (?) who was doing a remarkable job in a very, very small school setting. But my point would be this, is the outcome that we want is for someone to be a doctor at Beaver Lodge, to try and recruit somebody to go to Beaver Lodge to be a doctor, but isn't it better to have someone who's inspired to become a doctor who's from Beaver Lodge, because people who are born and raised and live in a community are more likely to go back there and be that important resource for the community that they come from. So, small schools can have a very important role. Technology plays a role in the ability of accessing educational programs that you might not be able to have in a place like Foremost, Alberta, where I've seen kids learning Chemistry 30 being taught out of a high school in Medicine Hat. Also, talking about our schools about not just being a place for education, in smaller communities, I've seen lots of examples for collaboration where municipal or recreation or public libraries or perhaps a public and a Catholic school working together, putting in services that may be social services, health care services, being part of that facility is a really important part of keeping the viability of our small schools in our communities.

Doug Horner (in response to Ted Morton)

The reality is we're not poor. The reality is, we have an operational reserve. If we say that we can do something for that year and regardless of what happens during that year, the idea behind the operational reserve was to ensure that we keep our promise. There is nothing wrong with us doing that again in the future. Yes, we have to be cognizant about what's going on with our neighbours to the south, but we also shouldn't panic about it just yet. They are going to come out of it. I think we can do some good things in this province and lead on the world stage and take advantage of the opportunity that we have of having the strongest financial position of any jurisdiction in the western hemisphere. When the times get tough in the financial markets, it's a good time to buy, so we should be out there right now.

The ATA has been the professional voice of teachers for over 94 years. The ATA is a unified organization with both union and professional functions representing all teachers in Alberta's public, separate and francophone schools. Do you support the continuation of the association in its current form? And, what would your government do to further support the teaching profession in Alberta?

Alison Redford

The ATA has become pigeon holed. I think that you know who you are. You are an organization that represents its members, you negotiate contracts. You're also terribly involved in professional development. You're here for five days in the middle of the summer talking about

the future of education, and I'll tell you, that as a government, we need to listen to you. We don't need to just negotiate with you. We need to talk to you and build trust with you and talk with you about the future of education and we haven't done that enough. The reason that Safe Communities worked is probably because, when I became a minister - I had never been a minister before - so the first thing I did is I went out and talked with everyone that I thought was impacted by the policy decisions. And I didn't say to them, "Based on your role as a member of the ATA negotiating with the government of Alberta, what would your view be." I said, "Tell me what you think about safe communities." And I did that with stakeholders right across the spectrum. And then you get to have the exciting conversation about what we all want and how we can do it better. And you'll always have those moments where people will say, "Well, I'd really like to do this, but we can't." Well, why can't we do that? We can do it if we want to. And we can do it if we have the trust to have the conversation and sit down and think not only how to improve what we have, but how to make it better. So, I fully support the role of the ATA as it is now, but I want to have a different relationship with the ATA and I want you to be more than you've been so far.

Gary Mar

Having seen how different teacher associations work across the country, I'm very supportive of the way that the ATA is structured now. I don't generally hear this as concern about splitting the roles of the ATA among Albertans at large. It does come up at Progressive Conservative policy conventions from time to time. It has come up, if you'll recall as a private members bill that was debated during the time that I was minister. I can tell you that I was on the record then, and I'm on the record now, that if it isn't broke, don't fix it. Recognizing that we have an excellent education system now, and that's not just me that's saying that. Look at national and international tests that our students are involved that can clearly, measurably demonstrate that we have an excellent system. There are things that we need to change, as the world changes, as the globe changes, we also need to change our education system. But, I also know from my past experience that we can't do it without collaboration with our key stakeholders, the ATA being one of them. I will be focused on improving classroom conditions, I want to be focused on things like wraparound services. I recognize that the needs of kids are complex and that the issue of educability can't be dealt with until you deal with some of the core issues that some of our students come with into some of our schools. So, focusing on things like work conditions, like allied services that can help teachers, will be really important to ensure that the ATA can work with us collaboratively in moving forward on an even better education system that's relevant for the future.

Doug Horner

I think about the relationship that the government of Alberta used to have with the ATA. I think about the relationship that I have in my community with the five school boards and obviously then, the great number of teachers doing great work in my constituency. And, it's a fabulous relationship because we talk about the issues of special needs, we talk about the issues of classroom size, we talk about the issues of Inspiring Education and we talk about how great it would be to get there. Then, we get clouded by this dollar problem. We get clouded by the discussion turning to - well, we've got to do this contract, or we've got to do this issue. Let's settle the issue so that we can get back to the relationship that we should have with the ATA around trust in building that system that we're all wanting. Everyone in this room wants it. The system where every child in the classroom is succeeding because the teacher wants it, the parents want it and we want it and we're actually doing the things collaboratively together to make it happen. We have missed a tremendous amount of opportunity in the past fifteen years,

I think, to work collaboratively together to solve some of the issues that we're talking about today. And, it's because we've been blocked by this dollar decision. Let's settle that. Let's separate it out. You don't need to separate the ATA to do that. We don't need to advocate for it to do that. All we need to do is sit down in a trusting relationship and talk about it. It isn't broke, as Gary said, we don't need to fix it. What we need to fix is the relationship between us and the ATA, just like we did with Campus Alberta, just like we did in the BSE(?) process, that's the kind of thing that we need to do so we can work together collaboratively. It's not about your structure. It's about our relationship.

Ted Morton

I don't think I have much to add to that. I think the results that Alberta students achieve nationally and internationally show that the system is working. If the system is working, why go after the ATA on it's double function? I think what Doug and Alison said is true. We shouldn't just talk to you about salaries and working conditions, it should also be about improving education, so let's keep that channel of communication and collaboration open, or maybe more open than it has been. Although, my sense was, and is, that Dave Hancock's initiative on Inspiring Education was a very positive step in that direction and there was a lot of participation from your membership. If we got off the path, I think that Dave Hancock helped get us back on the path of two way communication, not just on working conditions and compensation, but also on the quality of education. That's clearly the direction that I would like to go.

Doug Griffiths

I have also heard colleagues and members of the public on occasion talk about separating the union and professional services. To me, that seems to come from a point of animosity, of antagonism, as if for some reason the government has to do battle with the ATA. I don't know how we address half the issues in education unless the ATA is a partner and advisor in making sure we make the right choices because not everyone in government is an expert. For instance, ensuring that we have the best trained, qualified, educated teachers, that we're doing the best professional development. Again, the reason why we have the best education system in the world is because we have the best professional teachers in the world and the ATA can help advise us on how to address that. But, there are longer term issues, that we can use the ATA to help give us advice on, that do damage to the profession. We have a lot of great, young teachers that get educated, get trained and then come out and there's no jobs. Or, they get one year jobs and then they're left, sometimes, looking for another career. That does damage to the entire profession and to the reputation that we have as teachers. So, advice from the ATA on how many people we should be graduating and how to ensure that they do wind up in the education system and that they're doing perfectly what they're trained and qualified to do, would help tremendously. Advising on how to make sure that we have a strong, long-term budget is important. Giving us advice on how we make sure, because no one knows better than teachers on how we make sure we keep education strong in communities. We need to realize the services, the expertise the ATA has to make sure we make the right decisions. If we continue down the path in thinking that it's an acrimonious relationship, we do a disservice to the people that we are all working for, and that's the kids.

Rick Orman

My view is that it's up to the association, up to the union to make their decisions as to keeping their membership contemporary. It's the ATA that should be responding to the critics. It's the ATA that should be finding ways to make sure that the critics understand the importance of how they conduct their affairs. Having been Labour Minister, I fully support the right to organize. I have a

solid record in this regard, having brought in the Labour Code in 1988, and I was also the first minister to institute secret ballots for shop certification. So, I am a supporter of it. My father at one time and my two grandfathers before him were members of the union. I am a conservative. I'm a fiscal conservative, but my experience around my family and my time in Labour led me to the conclusion that there is no conflict between the two. So, I support that right. I want to close by reiterating, it's not our job to decide whether or not there should be a dual purpose, it's your job to decide. And if the decision is to keep the status quo, then I think it's important that you communicate the benefits of that to your organization and to the parents and children that you serve.

Follow up question:

The education environment, mounting student expectations, and shifts in provincial policy are increasing the demands made on our schools. One of the approaches explored in tripartite discussions this year was the restructuring of teacher time and workload to allow more professional development and collaboration. Would you support this direction?

Rick Orman

I'll recall my last statement. I think that it's important that the teachers and the organizations - If this is important for them to provide excellence in education, it's important for them to communicate that to the public, the taxpayers, the parents and the students. Far be it for me to dictate whether or not you should have less or more professional time, less or more vacation time, whether you should be a dual purpose union, your cross with certification as a teacher and as a member of the union. I think those are your issues and that it's incumbent on you to communicate the value and the benefits of your actions. It's not up to government to dictate to you or respond in any particular way from our taxpayers or from our public. I think we have to take the advice from you, work with you and achieve your goals, and if that's excellence in education then I'm all for it.

Doug Griffiths

Well, I mentioned that I taught Grade 5 & 6 social, Grade 5-9 math, Grade 5-9 science, Grade 5-9 computers and on and on and on. We were double and triple graded and I had one prep class a week. I know! My point is that I wasn't alone. There were a lot of teachers, especially in smaller communities that were very taxed and didn't get the time for professional development that was needed. Every moment that was ever invested, the small times that I got to do it, professional development paid off substantially in adding to the good base of education that I got. I know that when I got out of university, being a teacher, I didn't have all the answers. I had more questions than I had answers and professional development helped me fill those gaps. As I said before, we have the best education system in the world because we have the best educated and trained teachers in the world and if we're going to keep the best education system in the world, professional development is the way we keep on top of that.

Alison Redford

I have to say that when I was first told about some of the discussions that were going on with respect to the tripartite discussion, I was disappointed in where we were. The reason for that is

we were back into this discussion, and Donna (moderator), you alluded to it, where we're saying, "If this is something that we think is a good idea, that professional development is a good idea, where will we get the money to fund it?" Now, as Doug would say, that's not what the equation should be. And, he's right about that. But I'll tell you, when there is not long-term planning and vision, we end up in a situation in January where Dave Hancock is trying to sit down with you guys to renegotiate a contract around fiscal parameters, and his commentary is, "Well, this is a really good idea, because we actually need teachers to have more professional development." That conversation takes place two years ago, so that when we're in that situation, the real conversation can not be - Well, we're going to do this and it's going to make our education system look like Singapore, and that's a really good thing. That conversation should have been a conversation that we started having two, three, four years ago to say, "We like things in the Singaporean education system. We want to develop those. That includes more professional development time for teachers. That the strengths of an education system will not only be about kids sitting in classrooms with teachers in front of them." And that was a big part in where we could have gone with Inspiring Education. And that's where we have to go, so that we don't come to these crisis points where we're trying to come up with a quid pro quo and then try to figure out some way to sell it to whoever we have to sell it to. That's not responsible leadership in education.

Doug Horner

I'm probably going to echo a little of what Alison just said here. The reality is, if you want to get something like that done, then you have to set the stage for it. We're both in a public position. You're teaching the kids, the parents are watching what you're doing. Together, we have not done a very good job at telling parents about what's going on in our system - their perception about what you're doing and their perception about what we're doing. It's not about teacher time in the classroom, it's about what the outcome is we're trying to achieve. And Dave made a very good case. The problem was, as Alison said, was that we were trying to hit a percentage. And if we're trying to hit a percentage, guess what? The decision is made. So, that's where we have to turn this thing around and say, "If we're going to move down the path that we're moving, the hours of instruction rule, so that we can do some other beneficial things." Let's have a good discussion about that with our stakeholders and your stakeholders and bring them onside with us, because there's a good argument to do it. It will make a good difference in the classroom on the outcomes. And then let's make it happen. Campus Alberta and Alberta Innovates did not happen in six months. It took us two and a half years but everyone believed in it when we launched it. The execution was short. The planning and the set-up was long. That's how we have to start working together again. As I've said, we've missed some very important opportunities because we've been focused on the wrong thing. Let's focus on the right thing.

Doug Griffiths

When it comes to funding, I think that the problem is not that the system is strapped. The problem is that the system is strapped because of lack of sound fiscal management for the province and the acceptance of some of our fiscal realities. We spend 36 billion dollars a year as a province. We collect 12 billion dollars a year in personal and corporate income tax. We spend 15 billion dollars a year on health care alone. So, we have a 24 billion dollar gap that's made up by royalty revenues, cigarette tax, booze tax, gambling, and the federal government. And then we wonder why we get into this vicious cycle. We will not have stable funding for any department, and we will be cash strapped if we don't own up. Conservatives don't believe we spend too much money, I think. Some say we do, but conservatives believe that we should pay

for what we get - and we don't right now in this province. I would be happy to pay for taxes if it went to education for my kids.

Show of hands on who thinks we should pay more taxes if it went into the education system.

Doug Griffiths is the only one to raise his hands.

Gary Mar

Just to reiterate what both Doug and Alison have said about the need for focusing on the outcomes and having predictable, stable funding, so we can plan accordingly. When it comes to the issue of things like professional development - I mean, I've seen the difference that it can make, not just among teachers, but among administrators as well. Whenever you go to a really great school, and I've seen many, great schools also have in addition to great teachers, great administrators who put together a team of people who are focused on the educational needs of their kids. That often means bringing in parents to be part of the equation because there are many partners that will all have a great interest in each of those children succeeding. It's not just teachers, it's parents and administrators as well. So, as you go forward in how you plan out what appropriate professional development will mean, you also have to have school boards in as part of this equation as an important stakeholder.

(From a counsellor in Morinville) Teachers are often the first responders to mental health issues in children and youth. In what ways do you see the Ministries of Health and Education working together to address the mental health concerns of students?

Gary Mar

I can tell you this story. There was a situation when I was Education Minister and I had written a memo to Howard Johnson, who was the Health Minister, because the Department of Education was paying for very, very expensive equipment for kids to have mobility in classrooms and then about thirty days later there was a cabinet shuffle and I was the Minister of Health. So, I got to answer my own memo. And I will say this, on the connection between Health Care and Education, there is an inextricable link between the two. There is a linkage that I believe is more than a correlation, but is a cause and effect relationship, between personal education level and personal health status. So, if we were ever to hope to bend the curve on our health care expenditures, in my view, expenditures in education actually make a great deal of sense. Now, there are many things that can be done in our education system that can help bend that curve to promote better outcomes from a social point of view, but also from a health care point of view. Early identification of the issues is something that all of us have really talked about, and that would include mental health. As I've said, Nancy is not a nurse, she's not a mental health professional, but to have those services available in a school to deal with those issues, so that you can then deal with the issue of educability of that student and the curriculum and the knowledge and the skills and attitudes you want is really important. When we think, for example about vaccination of kids, is it easier to take 550 thousand kids to go to clinics, or is it easier to take 250 public health nurses into 1500 schools. I would argue the latter. So, delivering those

services in places where kids actually are would be very, very important. It's not about spending more money, it's about redeploying where those services are being done.

Doug Horner

As you know, my kids all went to Morinville, so I hope this question isn't about one of my kids. As I said earlier, we have to start thinking differently about what a school can provide. Gary touched on it. It is about health care. The problem we have in health care is not the system, it's the access to the system. Think about what would happen if you had a registered nurse that was floating through the high schools and junior highs. I've often said, wouldn't it be great if a registered nurse could talk about choices to some young people in our high schools, talk about nutrition to some of the parents, the new parents that are coming into the system. Think about what that would do to help us offset some costs down the road. Think about what that investment in early childhood development, early childhood education, the class size initiative from K-3, would do for health care, perhaps even of the family. They're doing a study right now in Fort MacMurray. It's amazing the results they're getting in terms of health and education results. Why aren't we leveraging that? It's actually benefiting us, the taxpayer, you the teacher, and me as a parent. Those are the kinds of things that we can actually do to help you deal with the issues that you're facing in classrooms and in our schools which are our communities. I would have no problem at all in looking at ways in which we could encourage, invest and fund those kinds of services in our schools.

Sometimes it makes sense in a personal budget to run a deficit, in particular where the investment is worthwhile, like a post-secondary education or a house. What investments would you run a deficit budget to sustain, and which budget lines would you cut in order to sustain a balanced budget? (directed to Doug Horner and Ted Morton)

Doug Horner

You're going to get two different answers coming up. I have started and run three successful businesses in this province and in the United States and in Mexico. I have worked with some of the largest corporations in the United States and Canada. I was an employee in a company called ConAgra, where we actually used to self-finance any of our assets that were larger than a ten million dollar investment. Every business that's out there leverages its balance sheet. We do not. Every family and household that's out there leverages its balance sheet and cash flow. We do not. There's a culture, and idea that's out there that we should not be leveraging our balance sheet, that we should not be amortizing an asset that has a useful life of 40 years over 20 years. We have to start doing that. That's not deficit financing. That's financial responsibility. This party has a principle of fiscal responsibility, not fiscal restraint. So, when I talk about going back to our values, and I talk about compassion, innovation, integrity and commitment to excellence, we should also be talking about those values when we talk about our financial situation. We should be presenting you with an operating budget. Full stop. Then we should present you with a capital budget. Full stop. Then we should show you how we're going to pay for all of that without putting your future in jeopardy, because that is financial responsibility. There are exceptional examples of things that we should have done, could have done, that we should do in the future. Paying 1.4 billion dollars cash for a hospital asset that will be there for 40 years when you could

have put half a billion of that into a savings account, could have put half a billion of that into the priorities that we have today, is not the right decision. We need to make those decisions differently.

Ted Morton

The good news is, is that with proper fiscal management, if we stick with the fiscal plan that we have, that we don't have to do radical cuts to balance the budget. We have the Sustainability Fund, the short term savings account that accommodate the ups and downs that are inherent in a commodities based economy like ours. And then, of course, we have the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, that Peter Lougheed set up, precisely to take energy revenues, that you can only harvest once, so to speak - to put it there and help pay for programs out of the interest that that generates. So, in the downturn that we're still coming out of, four deficits in a row with one more to go, the good news for Albertans, and particularly the good news for those in the education and social services section, is despite the four deficits in a row, we have no new long-term debt. I'm a little surprised, given the events of the last couple of weeks of what government debt is doing in Europe and in the US at both federal and state levels, that Doug (Horner) talked earlier about running up new debt. Remember, I would be surprised if Doug Griffiths doesn't have something to say about this, debt is paid off by our kids and our grandkids. Politicians leave, but the kids are still there. We are spending a lot of the non-renewable resource revenue on current operations. We're already spending future revenues now. So, the key is to get back to sound fiscal management, build up the Sustainability fund again, get the Heritage Savings Trust Fund growing again - that way we can accommodate the ups and downs that are inevitable in an economy like ours and have stable funding for health, for education and other social services. That's the less exciting, but sober and prudent approach to government finances. It's pretty depressing, the last ten days, that unsound government finance over a period of time creates real chaos and greater hardship than the fiscal prudence that I think we have exercised as a government and as a party in the past and that we are close to getting back to now.

What is your position on raising taxes and/or royalties to help address Alberta's deficit or funding shortfalls?

Doug Horner

To suggest that we don't have long term debt today is a bit of a misnomer. The infrastructure deficit is as good as long term debt as anything else. The other thing is that the Albertan's of tomorrow will be using the assets that we're going to build today. So, there is an issue there that we could have a very good discussion about, but ideologically, if that's where you want to be, then that's what you'll do. You will not pay for anything except by way of cash. That's the change that I want to make. You need it now, you don't need it tomorrow.

Doug Griffiths

I am a fiscal conservative and I don't believe in running up a debt or a deficit, but I also grew up on the farm and I know that you don't sell off the cows and then wonder why you have no revenue coming into the barn. You have to invest in the things that are going to grow your economy and your future. I'm not saying this because I'm in a room full of teachers, I've said it to a room full of economists. It's stupid to cut funding to education which is the future of this province.

Alison Redford

Whether we are talking about education, or what we were talking about earlier with child mental health, I think that we don't have to raise taxes. And, I don't think that at this point in time, we need to amend or restructure our royalty framework. That piece of work, for us, allows us to have a competitive economy that brings revenue into the province that we can use for other things. The question is, how are we using that revenue? It's pretty easy for politicians to say, "We'll be more efficient. We'll be smarter. We'll deliver services better." But, there's been a theme to the discussion today about how we've done things well in the past, and we have programs, and we can build on those programs, we can spend more money on those programs, we can deliver those programs in different places. That's not what Albertans understand the future looks like. Albertans know we have resources, and as Doug Griffiths said, what they want to know is that they're getting value for what we're spending money on. And we if look at something, like the way that education is structured right now, the way we're funding education, and the way that services are provided in schools, we have to know, that if we're not prepared to invest in the long term, not only in the education funding as we've seen it in the past, but in terms of how we're addressing some of those root causes of future social problems, that we're going to end up having a legacy that is much greater than financial debt. And one of the problems that we have, and one of the reasons that I decided to run is because when you sit around government decision making tables, I'll tell you the first thing that falls off the table: It's social programs, it's education. We can't let that happen. It has to be a priority as we move forward, and we have to know that we are able to exist with the revenue that we have if we're prepared to put education and social policy as a priority in future governance.

Rick Orman

Under my government, there will be no new taxes, there will be no goods and services tax. It is about how we spend our money. Ladies and gentlemen, you should be asking the people who served in this government, not, "Are you going to raise taxes?" but holding them to account for choices they made in areas other than education. That's the real question here today. Not to continue to allow for the continued spending in other areas of government, and then hopefully, you get your piece. That in my view, is the wrong question to be asking the panelists. They have to be accountable for the choices that they made, and if those choices have adversely affected our education system, then they are running afoul of what you believe, what I believe, is a principle of our party: Excellence in education. So, to me, it's about choice, it's about accountability and predictability and those are the questions that you should be asking.

Gary Mar

I will say that raising taxes or changing royalties is not on my list of priorities. I believe that we can drive the money that we spend now, towards the front-line services where it actually makes a difference. If you don't think that there's a great cost to administration, consider this: Persons with development disabilities in this province, these are 9300 of the most fragile people that we can imagine, KPMG did a study and they said that for every \$100 that goes to a person with developmental disabilities, it costs an additional 31 dollars to administer it. So, I'm not talking about spending less money on people with PDD, in fact I want more money to go to their pockets where it's needed to help them with the services that they require in order to cope with the conditions that they find themselves in. Can we deliver it with less administration costs and I say the answer is yes. I would say the same thing of health care, of education. We need to focus on what it is that the outcomes are and we need to put our resources in those places. We spend a great deal of money on education. It is a legitimate question to ask, "Are we spending too much?" But, I would also say an equally legitimate question to ask is, "Are we spending

enough.” There are some areas, where if you look at the value equation, not the cost equation, that the answer is that we can be spending more in certain areas in order to get a better outcome.

It seems as if the “progressive” part of the “Progressive Conservative” name has been lost since the days of Peter Lougheed built schools, roads and invested in the province’s long term future. In what ways does your platform define you as a progressive and as a conservative?

Gary Mar

There are some people that would say “progressive conservative” is a contradiction in terms and I would say that that is not in fact the case. The conservative side of me is that government has to help Albertans, not hinder them. It has to be fiscally responsible. It has to be governments that understand that people have dreams and aspirations. Government is there to assist them and then to get out of their way. The part of me that is progressive is to recognize that there are elements, roles for government, that are important with respect to, for example, setting standards, establishing that we have high expectations of our school system, of our teachers, of our students, of our parents and that is an important part of growing the economic opportunities of this province. It is about demonstrating the importance of the arts and our culture because ultimately people will come to this province because it’s an interesting place to live. The good news for our province, is that people have come from all over this country and all over this world, to make a better life for themselves and their families in this province. It means that we look after the most disadvantaged people in our society, people with developmental disabilities. When we think about our aboriginal people, seven per cent of the population, they lead in many areas that they do not want to lead in. Rates of diabetes, sexually transmitted diseases, unemployment, rates of incarceration, non-participation in post-secondary or completion of high school. We can do better than this. It’s important for the future prosperity of our province that all Albertans participate in the future that can be ours and the opportunities that we can achieve. There are elements of both progressive and conservative.

Alison Redford

I think we’ve all heard the adage, that the value of a society is best reflected in how we care for the most vulnerable. We have people in our society that are vulnerable. We know that we have people with different strengths, and we know that as a government, that we have a responsibility to support people that need support. Every person in our province, every child in our province and every adult in our province as well, has to be given the opportunity to excel to the best of their ability. And I will tell you that one of the things that I believe is going to matter in the future is acknowledging that as we’ve grown in the province from two and half million people to three and a half million people and soon to be four and a half million people, that we had better ensure that we remember that value. Because, if we don’t, we are not going to live in a community that we are proud to be a part of. The role of government will change, because as we grow as a community, we’re going to have to deal with different problems that we’ve never faced before. We can’t look back and think about how we governed, managed public policy ten, fifteen years ago. We have to think about the future. And when I think about my life, and the times that I’ve lived in this province, and the times that I’ve been away, we all know that there

have been times in this province where we have had governments that haven't had sufficiently progressive values that we've dealt with the issues that we needed to deal with, and we still have the legacies of those decisions and we can't let that happen again.

Closing Statements

Doug Horner

I wanted to answer the last question, but I'll do it in my closing statement. What are you looking for in the next leader for the progressive conservative party? Because, that's what this is. It's a leadership race. By virtue of the honour, trust and faith of Albertans, we are the governing party. We have to earn that, every time out. We have to remember that that's the case. I had the blessing of growing up listening to Peter Lougheed and my dad talk about what it means to be a progressive conservative. I started my opening comments talking about a teacher in G? that I asked that question about what he thinks a progressive conservative is. We have to redefine for our party, for Albertans, what it means to be progressive conservative. I am not a unite the right candidate. I am a unite the progressive conservatives candidate because I believe in those values, I believe in those principles and I believe that the change that we want to make is to change the way that we make decisions so we make them through those lenses of compassion for those in need. Talking about building for the future of our province, the future economies, the future infrastructure, the future of arts and culture, and to lead on a world stage because we have an opportunity, folks, that is unrivaled by any jurisdiction in the world today. When you think about where Alberta sits with energy, environmental solutions, food and farming, health care innovations, and a cutting edge educational system, K-18, this is a generational opportunity for us and we are going to have to invest to make it happen. The values and principles of the conservative party do not get old and they don't get stale. But, if we ignore them, then we will be. I ask you to join me on September 17 to redefine this party the way it should be: progressive conservative, with the values that we've talked about today.

Gary Mar

Ever since I bought a one way ticket from Washington DC to return to Alberta on March 10th of this year, I've travelled extensively through this province. And, wherever I've gone, whoever I've talked to, whether it's been in cities, towns or hamlets or villages. Whether it's been urban or rural, whether it's been north or south. Whether it's been people from the aboriginal community, the Chinese community, those who come from south Asia or from anywhere across Canada, or Albertans who have been here with their families for over a hundred years or those who have been here for a hundred days, I'll say that near the top of everybody's list is a good education for their child. They recognize that their future, personal stakes are high and can be achieved through education. So, what I say to you is that the opportunities that are available in the world in the world are great. The world will demand what we make, what we produce, what we upgrade in this province, be it energy, be it food, be it forestry products. Albertans understand that these are our opportunities, but in order to achieve them we have to ensure that our children are armed with the kinds of skills, attitudes, knowledge, cultural and global awareness, digital literacy - all of those skills are necessary for our kids to be part of the future prosperity of this province, so that they can be privately happy and publicly useful. I will lead a government that will listen to you carefully, work with you not only for the benefit of teachers and education, but for our young people, our students, and our parents in this province. You have my respect,

you have my ear and you have my commitment and that is why I ask you to join my team in supporting me and voting for me on September 17 for a better Alberta, for a better future.

Alison Redford

In my opening remarks, I talked about trust and I talked about wanting to build a trusting relationship. Inspiring Education allows us to begin that process and that's what we now have to work on. I think that the Education Act that was introduced this Spring wasn't good enough. It didn't reflect everything that we've worked on, it didn't reflect everything that you've talked about, and we have an opportunity to do more with that. We have to put students first, we have to put resources in the classroom. We have to have a long-term agreement with you that will create a simple labour agreement with you, and peace so that we can move on to everything that we've been talking about today. We know that we have to change the foundations of our system and we don't have to be afraid about that. We have to be optimistic and confident and positive about that and we have to do it together. We can do that by building that foundation. And that will come from respect. I want to earn your trust, and when I've earned that trust, we can begin to implement those plans for change. We have to focus on individual students, we have to have predictable and sustainable funding and as I've said before, we have to think about what resources should be in the classroom and ensure that they are there. I have consistently talked about three things that matter to this province. We have to have a vibrant and diverse economy, and we understand how education fits into that. Albertans have to be able to make a good living. We have to support basic needs, K-12 education, post-secondary education and protecting our kids. We have to ensure that we have a strong culturally vibrant community where we all feel proud to be a part of this. That is my vision. My values are about good, strong government, listening, consultation, sound fiscal planning and building for the future, and today I ask for your support.

Rick Orman

Just on the issue of are we progressives and are we conservatives or are they mutually exclusive - Actually, I know quite a bit about the other candidates at this table, and I can assure you that if you visited their websites, you would see where they stand on social policy and where they stand on the fiscal side of government and it's important that you do that. If you were to go to my website, you would see statements referring to homelessness, addiction treatment, aboriginal and metis issues, seniors and arts and culture. So, even though I am a fiscal conservative, I have a very big place in my heart for the social side of government. I think that's why we're all here, because we find that the tent of the progressive conservatives is the place that we want to be because of all of those good reasons. You've heard many good ideas here today, and I should remind you that you've got four cabinet ministers here at this table, who in the last six years, were around when the decisions were made. You are hearing a different story today than you would read from their actions. This government had the chance to earn your trust and if you are satisfied with the status quo there are five eminently capable other candidates at this table that can lead your government into the next decade. If you want predictable, trusting government that lives up to its commitments, change you can trust, then you should join the Rick Orman campaign.

Doug Griffiths

Before you is a group of incredibly talented people, any one of whom is fit to lead this party. I get asked by students all the time - because I still love going into the classroom and talking to students on as many opportunities as I can - I get asked, "What qualifications do you have to have to be a MLA or to be the premier?" They say, "Do you have to have a university degree or be famous or something?" and I tell them, "No. All you have to do is have a vision for what you

think this province is capable of. Be brave enough to stand up and tell people about it and then make sure you surround yourself with people smart enough to make sure you get it achieved.” That’s it. That’s as simple as it is. Now, 56% of the people in this province are under 40. That’s an interesting little stat. Their issues are around education for themselves and for their kids, the environment for secure long-term prosperity and quality health care for their kids and for their parents. Didn’t mean to point at you, Ted. My family and I live those issues. Some people have indicated that I’ll be a great premier somewhere down the road. I don’t know if I’ll still be around in the future to run for premier because my goal was not to put “premier” on my resume, my goal was to build a better Alberta for my kids. My kids are five and two and I will be the first premier in this province in 26 years that has kids in school. Peter Lougheed was 38 when he took over the party. I’m 38. Peter Lougheed was progressive, I’m progressive. My notion now is not to think about my retirement, it’s to think about what I’m going to do to help build a better Alberta for my kids. That’s why I’m running. I know you have on here, “The future, it’s why teachers teach.” It’s sometimes why they run for premier, too.

Ted Morton

The name of Peter Lougheed keeps on coming up as the standard by which to measure progressiveness in the progressive conservative party. It’s appropriate since this is the 40th anniversary of the PC forming government under Lougheed. What’s the biggest, most important legacy of the Lougheed government - the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. That was based on vision and foresight that our non-renewable resource revenues, by definition, run out over time, so he set up a fund where 50% of those revenues would go into a fund that would go into this long-term savings account so that as resources declined, and revenues declined, we can still sustain the quality of life that Albertans have become accustomed to. Today, what percentage of non-renewable energy resource revenues are automatically set aside to go into the Heritage Savings Trust Fund? Zero. I would suggest that part of what is being progressive is understanding the economic foundation of a just society. Alison is right. The quality of a society is measured by: Do we take care of people who can’t take care of themselves? I think that was Peter Lougheed’s vision that’s been at the core of this party for 40 years, but to do that requires financial support. I think a prudent savings program, set-up by Peter Lougheed is one of the ways that we sustain that over time. Again just one example, coming back to education and not specifically your issues, but certainly on your radar is post-secondary, after K-12 and I encourage you to look at my website and look at the post-secondary tuition tax credit that I’ve proposed. Giving students up to \$20,000 back in tuition they spend on themselves for any sort of post-secondary education. They finish the program, stay in Alberta, go to work and pay taxes, they can get all of their tuition back over a seven year period, up to a maximum of \$20,000. That’s the kind of progressive investment in education that a group like the ATA would welcome and I hope that you’ll think about that as you participate in this leadership race.