

Why I plan to run for the Wildrose

Written by John Carpay

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By John Carpay The Calgary Herald August 18, 2010 When I started serving the Canadian Taxpayers Federation as Alberta Director in 2001, I thought I would be working co-operatively with the Progressive Conservative government to advance taxpayer-friendly policies.

I assumed the PCs, based on their reputation (at that time) for reducing the size of the Alberta government, would welcome proposals like taxpayer protection legislation: no tax increases without the approval of taxpayers in a referendum. I thought they would embrace spending-control legislation: a law to limit growth in government spending to inflation and Alberta's population growth. I assumed the PCs would support citizens' initiative legislation and MLA recall as ways of increasing accountability. I thought the PCs would welcome suggestions for health care reform, and transparency regarding MLA compensation.

The April 2001 provincial budget was a rude awakening for me: spending rose by more than 20 per cent. This set the trend for the next decade. A few months later, when Albertans were in holiday mode in August, the PCs (with full support from the Liberals) voted themselves fat severance pay packages, ensuring that retiring ministers walked away with as much as \$600,000 in severance pay. What utter hypocrisy, after the PCs had won an election by making a big deal out of having scrapped the MLA pension plan. The PC and Liberal MLAs never forgave me for placing 82 pink pigs on the legislature lawn to protest the obscenity of these huge severance pay packages (which are still in place today).

Under Premier Ed Stelmach, the size of Alberta's government has continued to grow astronomically, far exceeding inflation and population growth. More and more tax dollars are tossed at one of Canada's most expensive health care systems, yet Albertans suffer on some of the longest waiting lists in the country.

Corporate welfare -- abolished by Premier Ralph Klein in the mid-1990s -- has made a comeback through misguided initiatives such as the Alberta Enterprise Corp. Stelmach's new royalty regime almost killed the goose that lays our golden eggs, and while that damaging policy has been reversed, no apology has been made for the damage caused to Alberta's economy and reputation. Alberta's "human rights" laws, under which respected citizens like Calgary Catholic Bishop Fred Henry have been prosecuted for speaking out against same-sex marriage, remain on the books, undermining our fundamental right of free speech. A large, bloated cabinet seems to have no purpose or direction, and most Albertans question the competence of the premier who leads it.

After almost 40 years in office, Alberta's Progressive-not-Conservative government has truly

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lost its way. Their commitment -- demonstrated anew with each provincial budget -- is to put more and more money into the hands of politicians and bureaucrats. They have forgotten that nobody spends somebody else's money as carefully as he or she who earns it. They have lost respect for the ability of taxpayers to spend, save and invest our own money with greater wisdom than the wisdom of politicians spending our money on our behalf.

Albertans yearn for a competent and principled conservative government. One which understands and respects things like private property rights, and parental choice in education. A government which does not see large centralized bureaucracy as the answer to every public policy challenge. A government which will provide a stable and reliable framework for investment, growth and business, without seeking to get into business itself. A government which limits its annual spending increases to inflation and population growth. A government which trusts Albertans enough to give them a direct say in public policy through citizens' initiative. A government in which MLAs will be able to represent the views of their constituents without fear of being kicked out of caucus for doing so. A government which will introduce transparency into the realm of MLA compensation.

I want to be a part of the change that is coming to Alberta. I want to be part of a new government led by a competent, strong and principled leader: Danielle Smith. I want to direct my energy specifically toward better public policy -- and better government -- for Alberta. For these reasons, I am leaving behind a decade of non-partisan work with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and the Canadian Constitution Foundation, and seeking the Wildrose Alliance nomination in Calgary-Lougheed.

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