

campaign for a **smoke-free** alberta

- NEWS RELEASE -

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ALL EIGHT LEADERSHIP CANDIDATES RESPOND TO TOBACCO CONTROL SURVEY

All eight candidates vying to be the next Premier of Alberta have responded to a survey of various policy measures to reduce tobacco use in Alberta. The Campaign for a Smoke-Free Alberta originally distributed the survey last April and collected the last survey over the weekend following a concerted provincial effort to garner the candidates' support.

The survey questions addressed tobacco taxation, smoke-free workplace legislation, restricting tobacco sales and marketing, and suing tobacco companies to recover a portion of tobacco-related healthcare costs resulting from deceptive marketing practices.

Here are the survey results:

CANDIDATE	Pass 100% smoke-free workplace ban	Increase tobacco taxes to reduce youth smoking	Ban retail tobacco displays (powerwalls)	Ban tobacco sales in pharmacies	Make tobacco companies pay compensation for misdeeds
Ed Stelmach	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO
Lyle Oberg	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Gary McPherson	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Mark Norris	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
Ted Morton	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Dave Hancock	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Victor Doerksen	YES	YES	YES	YES	Undecided
Jim Dinning	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Lyle Oberg, Gary McPherson, Dave Hancock and Jim Dinning support all of the proposed policy measures. Mark Norris and Victor Doerksen support four out of five proposed policy measures. Ed Stelmach supports one policy measure and Ted Morton does not support any of the proposed policy measures.

"We are very pleased that all of the candidates have responded to our survey" said Dr. Roger Hodgkinson of Action on Smoking & Health. "We are even more pleased that tobacco control has become one of the focal issues of the leadership race. We are not endorsing any candidates. However we are urging Albertans to vote wisely based on the strength of each candidate's support for measures to reduce tobacco use in Alberta. The next Premier must take concrete and immediate action to curb Alberta's tobacco epidemic".

At last Thursday's leadership forum in Lethbridge, candidates committed to the following time lines for bringing forward smoke-free workplace legislation:

Lyle Oberg - First day of office
Mark Norris – Immediately
Dave Hancock - First legislative session
Victor Doerksen - First legislative session
Jim Dinning - It's time now

Although not reflected in the table above, all eight candidates indicated support for free votes on private members bills that would achieve the same policy objectives. If a free vote would have been held on Bill 201—the Smoke-Free Places Act—in its original form, health groups feel that all indoor workplaces and public places in Alberta would now be completely smoke-free. Unfortunately, the bill was severely weakened through amendments and subjected to a government-ordered vote.

“Alberta has the worst legislative record on tobacco of any provincial government” said Dr. Charl Els of Physicians for a Smoke-Free Alberta. “However based on the survey responses, we have reason to believe that this is about to change. Nonetheless, we are not taking anything for granted and we will be urging the next Premier to follow through on his promises as soon as he takes office.”

According to Alberta Health and Wellness, tobacco use is responsible for one in every five deaths in Alberta, or 3,400 premature deaths annually. Many Albertans continue to be exposed to secondhand smoke at work and in public establishments.

The Campaign for a Smoke-Free Alberta is a coalition of 15 prominent health organizations who are working to reduce tobacco use in Alberta.

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