

2022

# ALBERTA UNITED CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADERSHIP RACE

WEDNESDAY,  
AUGUST 31, 2022

## WHERE WE ARE

With just over a month until United Conservative Party (UCP) members vote on a new leader, Leela Aheer, Brian Jean, Todd Loewen, Rajan Sawhney, Rebecca Shultz, Danielle Smith, and Travis Toews took the stage at the Citadel Theater in Edmonton with a live crowd of roughly 700 people for the second, and final leadership debate.

In late July, the seven candidates faced off in their first debate where many took aim at frontrunner, Danielle Smith's proposal for a sovereign Alberta. Travis Toews, who is currently in second place, was also under fire during the last debate specifically around provincial sales tax (PST), which Toews rebutted saying he had never made comments about implementing a PST for the province.

It was also the July debate that boosted the narrative in the media that Smith would be the winner of the leadership race, and Alberta's next premier, a notion that remains after last night's debate.

Final numbers of UCP memberships have been finalized with a total of 123,915, more than doubling since Premier Jason Kenney announced his resignation.

## DEBATE SUMMARY

- Danielle Smith continues to lead the media's attention following the second debate. During last night's debate, Smith continued to push for her proposed Alberta Sovereignty Act as a way to address issues with unity within the party and province, education, police, and energy.
- Unsurprisingly, the two most heated topics of the debate were unity and Alberta sovereignty, and energy. Other topics covered arts and culture, agriculture, and police.

### Unity and Alberta Sovereignty

- Smith used every opportunity she had to push forward the Alberta Sovereignty Act while citing that as leader, she will bring together the UCP.
- Schulz, Sawhney and Toews, while all agreeing on party leadership, fought back Smith's proposal. Sawhney saying that "distracting constitutional turmoil is not a top priority for Albertans".
- Jean chimed in with his proposal to open Canada's constitution in order to get a better deal for Alberta, and that Smith's Sovereignty Act is nothing but virtue signalling.

### Energy and the Future Economy

- Part of Smith's proposal for Alberta's energy sector included the creation of energy corridors without the help of the federal government. In addition, Smith says this would allow for the building of rail lines, broadband infrastructure, transmission lines, and pipelines.
- Toews in response said that economic diversification and the energy sector do not need to be mutually exclusive, but recognized that the federal government does not value the industry.
- Sawhney, Aheer and Schulz all came back to criticize Smith, saying that her ideas will drive current and new investment in Alberta and the energy sector out of the province.

## OUR PERSPECTIVE

The last UCP leadership debate - judging by the focus of attention and scrutiny - showed that Danielle Smith continues to be the front runner in the UCP leadership race. It also demonstrated that should she win the race and become UCP leader and Alberta's 19th Premier, she will have tremendous short-term challenges keeping the United Conservative Party united.

Travis Toews, who is clearly Smith's main rival and most likely to earn second ballot support from others, would not commit to running for Smith if she becomes leader. Toews, who is the former Finance Minister for Premier Kenney and is widely respected, said that that Smith's proposal for an Alberta Sovereignty Act - which would allow the province to ignore federal laws is unAlbertan and would create chaos. "The sovereignty act is a false bill of goods," said Toews. "It will send tens of billions of dollars packing out of this province."

It is hard not to imagine that clip being played over and over again by Rachel Notley's NDP in next year's election should Smith win this leadership contest.

In sum, Smith continues to perform well, communicate effectively, and she continues to dominate the media coverage of the race. Toews is clearly the most credible alternative to Smith and is most likely to garner down ballot support from others in the race and will be a key symbol of party unity going forward behind this contest.

- Hon. James Moore, P.C., Senior Advisor, former Federal Cabinet Minister

## RECENT POLLING



**DANIELLE SMITH**

**40.07%**



**TRAVIS TOEWS**

**29.5%**



**BRIAN JEAN**

**11.86%**



**REBECCA SHULZ**

**8.17%**



**TODD LEWEN**

**4.20%**



**LEELA AHEER**

**2.17%**



**RAJAN SAWHNEY**

**0.98%**

Source: iPolitics and Mainstreet Research – August 27, 2022

## KEY DATES

### September 2, 2022

**Ballots mailed out to United Conservative Party members.**

### October 3, 2022

**Deadline for mail in ballots to be sent back.**

### October 6, 2022

**Six in-person voting stations open to United Conservative Party members and the new party leader is chosen.**



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