

= Wildrose Party =

The Wildrose Party (legally Wildrose Political Association , formerly the Wildrose Alliance Political Association) is a conservative provincial political party in Alberta , Canada . The party was formed by the merger in early 2008 of the Alberta Alliance Party and the unregistered Wildrose Party of Alberta . The wild rose is Alberta 's provincial flower .

It contested the 2008 provincial election under the Wildrose Alliance banner , and was able to capture seven percent of the popular vote but failed to hold its single seat in the Legislative Assembly . Support for the party rose sharply in 2009 as voters grew increasingly frustrated with the Progressive Conservative (PC) government , resulting in a surprise win by outgoing leader Paul Hinman in an October by @-@ election . In the fall of 2009 Danielle Smith was elected as leader and by December the Wildrose was leading provincial opinion polls ahead of both the governing PCs and the opposition Liberals . Wildrose 's caucus grew to four members in 2010 , after two former PC members of the Legislative Assembly defected in January and an independent MLA joined the party in June of that year .

In the 2012 election , while the party failed to have the breakthrough predicted by most media pundits (many predicted it would become the government) , it did increase its vote and seat totals and become the official opposition .

In December 2014 , nine Wildrose MLAs including leader Danielle Smith left the party to join the Progressive Conservative caucus under its recently elected leader Jim Prentice . All of the defectors to the PCs who sought re @-@ election in the 2015 general election lost their seats , through either losing the nomination process in their riding , or losing the general election to the Wildrose challenger .

Effective February 3 , 2015 the party 's registered name was changed from Wildrose Alliance Party to Wildrose Party .

= = History = =

= = = Founding and 2008 general election = = =

The Alberta Alliance Party voted to change its registered name on January 19 , 2008 to the Wildrose Alliance after it merged with the unregistered Wildrose Party of Alberta . The name officially changed to Wildrose Alliance Party of Alberta after being approved by Elections Alberta on January 31 , 2008 .

The two parties had similar policies and the Wildrose had key personnel previously involved with the Alberta Alliance . They hoped that a union would allow the new party to present a stronger front for an anticipated election in the spring of 2008 . Paul Hinman , the party 's only sitting Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) remained leader after the merger . During the 27th Alberta general election , the Wildrose Alliance attempted to position itself as a conservative alternative to the governing PC party , and released a platform that promised fixed election dates , increasing personal tax exemptions , elimination of health care premiums , the creation of an Alberta Pension Plan , and a reworking of the controversial changes the PC government made to the oil and gas royalty regime .

An anticipated backlash against the governing PCs failed to materialize , as Premier Ed Stelmach extended his party 's seat total to 72 from 60 . While the Alliance finished second in eight ridings across the province , they failed to win any seats as Hinman lost his Cardston @-@ Taber @-@ Warner riding by just 39 votes . Running candidates in 61 of the province 's 83 ridings , the Alliance took 6 @.@ 78 % of the vote , fourth behind the PCs , Liberals and New Democrats .

= = = 2009 leadership election = = =

Hinman announced on April 20 , 2009 his intention to step down as leader . He remained the party

's leader in an interim capacity until the leadership convention . Former Canadian Federation of Independent Business provincial director Danielle Smith and Mark Dyrholm , a chiropractor in Calgary , announced their candidacy at the June convention . The party viewed the leadership campaign with optimism , announcing that its membership was growing rapidly as Albertans grew increasingly frustrated with the Stelmach government 's performance .

Growing opposition to the government 's oil and gas royalty program , a record \$ 4 @. @ 7 billion deficit in 2009 , and the PC 's " liberal spending " facilitated the growth of the party . The party began to attract former Reform Party of Canada supporters along with high profile former members of the provincial Progressive Conservatives , including former premier Ralph Klein 's father . Using the slogan " Send Ed a message " as a rallying cry , Paul Hinman sought to take advantage of public discontent as he ran in a September by @- @ election in the Calgary @- @ Glenmore riding . He surprised political observers by capturing 37 percent of the vote , narrowly defeating Liberal opponent Avalon Roberts to win the election and gain the Wildrose Alliance its first seat in the legislature . The Tories , who had held the riding uninterrupted since 1969 , fell to third place . Political observers argued the result was more a protest against the Stelmach government than firm support for the Alliance , though it gave the party momentum as it prepared to vote for a leader .

Smith and Dyrholm both attempted to capitalize on the party 's election win , proclaiming that Albertans wanted change and that each of them would lead the Wildrose Alliance to a victory in the next general election . The party experienced a considerable growth heading into the leadership election , announcing it had 11 @, @ 670 members at the beginning of October , compared to 1 @, @ 800 in June . Smith was elected the new leader at the convention held in Edmonton on October 17 .

= = = Danielle Smith leadership = = =

Upon her election , Smith sought to continue the party 's growth , focusing her efforts on fundraising and a search for strong candidates . The Wildrose Alliance 's growth was evident in the polls . Shortly before Smith 's election , a Return on Insight poll found that the Alliance had the support of 22 percent of respondents . By early November , the party had improved to 28 percent according to an Environics poll , firmly in second place and six points behind the Conservatives . By December , they topped the Tories , leading with 39 percent support according to an Angus Reid poll , while the Conservatives had fallen into a second place tie with the Liberals at 25 percent . The party revealed at the same time that it had grown to over 13 @, @ 000 members .

Amidst this wave of popularity , Smith announced on January 4 , 2010 that two former Conservative MLAs had crossed the floor . Rob Anderson and former cabinet minister Heather Forsyth announced that they had joined the Wildrose Alliance after growing frustrated with Ed Stelmach 's leadership , accusing the Conservative government of being undemocratic . The defections moved the Wildrose Party past the New Democrats to become the third largest party in the Legislature , Guy Boutilier joined the Wildrose Alliance on June 24 , 2010 . The fourth Wildrose MLA , Boutilier took the party over the threshold for recognition as an official party in the Assembly . He was unveiled at the party 's annual conference , which was attended by 700 people : up from 175 the previous year .

In late July 2010 , a controversy developed between Edmonton mayor Stephen Mandel and Smith over the future of the city @- @ centre airport . Smith argued that a vote on closure of the airport should be added to the October civic elections ballot . Alberta Liberal and NDP politicians also opposed the closure .

For much of the run @- @ up to the 2012 provincial election , it looked like the Wildrose would defeat the Tories in a landslide . Polling immediately before the election suggested that the gap had narrowed somewhat , but that the Wildrose was still poised to end the PCs ' 41 @- @ year tenure in government . In the general election , however , the Wildrose took 17 seats out of 87 , well behind the Tories . This was mainly because its support was confined to rural areas . The Wildrose only won two seats in Calgary (while losing the two seats it held there at dissolution) and were completely shut out of Edmonton . Nonetheless , it tallied 34 @. @ 3 percent of the popular vote , a

healthy increase from 2008 . This was , however , enough to make the Wildrose the Official Opposition for the first time .

In 2014 , Allison Redford stepped down as PC leader following numerous scandals , and polls began to show a resurgence in Wildrose support . Jim Prentice then won the PC leadership and called four by @-@ elections to get his new cabinet , which included former Edmonton Mayor Stephen Mandel , seats in the Legislature . The Wildrose was expected to win two out of the four seats ; however the PCs retained all four . The by @-@ elections were seen as a test of both the PC Party under its new leader and Wildrose . As a result of the by @-@ election losses , Smith asked the party to conduct a leadership review . On November 2 , 2014 , after Rimbey @-@ Rocky Mountain House @-@ Sundre MLA Joe Anglin left the Wildrose caucus to sit as an independent due to the party 's " turmoil " and after making criticisms of Smith 's leadership team internally . , the remaining members of caucus unanimously pass a resolution asking Smith to withdraw her request for a leadership review ; Smith agreed . At the party 's Annual General Meeting on November 15 , 2014 , Smith pledged to resign as Wildrose leader if the party did not win government in the next provincial election . Also at the AGM , members voted 148 @-@ 109 against a resolution supporting equal rights for all minority groups , regardless of race , religious belief , sexual orientation or other differences . This vote reversed a party policy supported by Smith which had been adopted the previous year and signified a shift by the party towards social conservatism resulting in resignations by more moderate party members .

= = = Defections = = =

On November 3 , 2014 , Joe Anglin (Rimbey @-@ Rocky Mountain House @-@ Sundre) quit the caucus to sit as an Independent MLA stating that he had found out he was out to be expelled due to his public criticisms of Smith 's advisers . Anglin had previously lost his bid to be renominated in his riding as Wildrose 's candidate for the next provincial election .

On November 24 , 2014 Kerry Towle , (Innisfail @-@ Sylvan Lake) , and Ian Donovan , (Little Bow) crossed the floor to join the ruling PC Party 's caucus giving the turmoil within the Wildrose Party , uncertainty about Smith 's leadership and confidence in Prentice as reasons for their move .

On December 17 , 2014 , Smith confirmed she and eight other Wildrose members ? Rob Anderson , Gary Bikman , Rod Fox , Jason Hale , Bruce McAllister , Blake Pedersen , Bruce Rowe and Jeff Wilson ? would cross the floor to the Progressive Conservative caucus , with Smith saying " Under Premier Prentice ? s strong leadership , I believe we can work together to lead Alberta with a renewed focus on the values and principles that we share . " The action followed several days of rumours and a PC caucus meeting in which that party agreed to accept the Wildrose members on terms which have not been officially disclosed . This leaves five MLAs still affiliated with the Wildrose Party . In a letter to the party executive , Smith asked that all party members vote on a " reunification resolution " to merge the Wildrose and PC parties ; a request which the party executive rejected . This development angered many party members and provoked widespread controversy . Wildrose has stated that " At no time has the Wildrose Party been approached by any representative of the PCAA regarding a merger , combination , partnership or alliance . Yesterday ? s events are confined to nine former Wildrose MLAs who opted to cross the floor without consulting the Wildrose Party . "

The defections placed Wildrose in a tie with the Liberals for the second most seats but the Speaker ruled that Wildrose would continue as the Official Opposition based on prior precedent . Official Opposition status comes with additional funding and privileges .

= = = 2015 election = = =

Brian Jean was elected Wildrose leader on March 28 , 2015 . Days later , Premier Jim Prentice called a provincial election for May 5 , 2015 which resulted in an upset victory by the Alberta New Democratic Party under Rachel Notley , returning an NDP majority government . Despite its lack of preparedness , due to the caucus defections and having to organize an election campaign on the heels of a leadership election , Wildrose was able to rally and win 21 seats , 16 more than the five

seats it had at the dissolution of the legislature , and four more than it had won in 2012 , allowing the party to remain the Official Opposition . Prentice 's Progressive Conservatives , however , collapsed and lost 60 of the 70 seats it had at dissolution , returning only 10 MLAs , finding itself out of power for the first time since 1971 and coming in third behind the NDP and Wildrose . Wildrose 's popular vote fell by one @-@ third , however , from 34 % of the vote in 2012 to 24 % in 2015 .

= = = Wildrose on Campus = = =

Following the Wildrose Party 's jump to official opposition status in 2012 , undergraduate students Chris Bell , Braden Meunckrath , Kean Bexte , Samantha Hossack , and Alex Szojka founded the first campus branch of the Party 's youth wing on November 12 , 2013 . Often abbreviated " WROC " , the youth branch does not enjoy official status under the party constitution , although they have worked in an unofficial capacity passing party policy , hosting debates , and engaging campus communities . The only Alberta campus to currently have a branch of the campus club is the University of Calgary , the current president is Jenn Galandy . The branch is run by an elected board consisting of a President , Vice @-@ President Internal @-@ Affairs , Vice @-@ President External @-@ Affairs , Vice @-@ President Events , Vice @-@ President Membership , and Vice @-@ President Operations and Finance .

= = Policy and identity = =

Election reform is a focus of the Wildrose Alliance . The party proposes to set fixed election dates rather than the current format which allows the Premier to call an election at any time . It would allow more free votes in the legislature and would seek to elect the province 's Senators rather than have them appointed by the Prime Minister . The party also plans to introduce a bill giving voters the right to recall their MLA . The Wildrose Party proposes numerous changes to how the province delivers health care , which it claims will remain compliant with the Canada Health Act , as well as controls on government spending . Smith is also critical of international climate change treaties , believing climate change science remains inconclusive .

Smith stated that controversial social issues would not play a part in the party 's election platform .

Polling indicated that the party retained the support of a quarter of the electorate throughout 2010 as the party further attempted to define itself as not just a protest party but a party capable of forming government . By July 2011 , the Wildrose 's support had fallen to 16 percent , while PC support had risen to 51 percent .

However , by March 2012 , the Wildrose was polling the support of four @-@ in @-@ ten Albertans , showing significant improvement and a credible challenger to the PCs .

In the wake of the mass floor crossing , new leader Brian Jean stated that each candidate must sign a contract , under which they would need to pay a \$ 100 @,@ 000 fine if they intend to cross the floor to another party .

= = Leaders = =

Randy Thorsteinson 2003 ? 2005

Eleanor Maroes 2005 (interim)

Paul Hinman 2005 ? 2009

Danielle Smith 2009 ? 2014

Heather Forsyth (interim) 2014 ? 2015

Brian Jean 2015 ? present

= = Current caucus = =

Brian Jean ? Fort McMurray @-@ Conklin

Leela Aheer ? Chestermere @-@ Rocky View

Wayne Anderson ? Highwood
Drew Barnes - Cypress @-@ Medicine Hat
Nathan Cooper ? Olds @-@ Didsbury @-@ Three Hills
Scott Cyr ? Bonnyville @-@ Cold Lake
Derek Fildebrandt ? Strathmore @-@ Brooks
Dave Hanson ? Lac La Biche @-@ St. Paul @-@ Two Hills
Grant Hunter ? Cardston @-@ Taber @-@ Warner
Todd Loewen ? Grande Prairie @-@ Smoky
Don MacIntyre ? Innisfail @-@ Sylvan Lake
Jason Nixon ? Rimbey @-@ Rocky Mountain House @-@ Sundre
Ron Orr ? Lacombe @-@ Ponoka
Prasad Panda ? Calgary @-@ Foothills (by @-@ election)
Angela Pitt ? Airdrie
Dave Schneider ? Little Bow
Mark Smith ? Drayton Valley @-@ Devon
Pat Stier ? Livingstone @-@ Macleod
Rick Strankman ? Drumheller @-@ Stettler
Wes Taylor ? Battle River @-@ Wainwright
Glenn van Dijken ? Barrhead @-@ Morinville @-@ Westlock
Tany Yao ? Fort McMurray @-@ Wood Buffalo

= = Electoral results = =