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10247 124 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5N 1P8

P: 780.414.1124

F: 780.414.1125

T: 1.800.661.9201

E: office@albertaliberal.com

Alberta Liberals Announce Action Plans for Aboriginal Affairs, Forestry

Hinton – Alberta Liberal Leader Kevin Taft announced details today of his party's plans to support the province's Aboriginal population and protect jobs in the forestry industry.

Speaking at the Hinton Friendship Centre, Taft outlined the Alberta Liberal plan to expand services and opportunities for Alberta's Aboriginal communities.

"Alberta is steeped in Aboriginal heritage - our First Nations and Métis communities form an integral part of our society's cultural, economic and social fabric," said Taft. "The Alberta Liberals recognize the importance of ensuring that the province's Aboriginal people have access to the resources they need, and of improving the relationship between the provincial government and Aboriginal people. We'll start by expanding vital programs like those offered here at the Hinton Friendship Centre."

The Alberta Liberals will:

- Double funding to Friendship Centres.
- Reinststate a government ministry devoted strictly to Aboriginal Affairs.
- Advocate for quick, fair and effective resolution of land claims for Alberta's First Nations.
- Take specific measures to improve Aboriginal health care and education, including establishing urban-Aboriginal health centres and taking aggressive measures to boost high school completion rates among Aboriginal students.

Taft also outlined Alberta Liberal plans to boost support for the forestry industry in the face of economic pressures and the effects of pine beetle infestation.

"Forestry is a crucial part of Alberta's economy and a lynchpin of communities like Hinton," said Taft. "The collapsed U.S. housing market, high Canadian dollar, and the looming pine beetle crisis have all combined at once to create a perfect storm that the industry is finding difficult to weather."

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“The Alberta Liberals will work with all stakeholders to protect jobs and the forestry economy. We want communities depending on forestry to emerge from this current turmoil stronger than ever.”

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The Alberta Liberal Action Plan for Forestry includes initiatives such as:

- Working closely with forest industry operators to ease the blow caused by the collapsed U.S. housing market, the high Canadian dollar, and the impact of pine beetle infestation.
- Examining a tax credit for new and recent machinery and equipment installed to improve efficiency and environmental performance.
- Re-regulating electricity to restore access to efficient, reliable power, and to save Albertan businesses and households a lot of money.

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For more information contact:

Michael Spears, Media Liaison
(780) 919-2617

or

Larry Johnsrude, Tour Media
780-914-7689

It's time.
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