

AURA OF POWER

An Alberta Election Game

Five players; not appropriate for children or idealistic adults

A. OBJECT OF THE GAME

- i. The goal is to win a majority of Alberta's 87 seats (i.e., at least 44) and, with them, raw, unchecked power for four long years.
- ii. In a minority situation, a party leader can win the election if they successfully debase themselves. See **Game's End, viii**.

B. BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- i. You'll need one six-sided dice, one large paper clip, at least 10 tokens for each party (see **Setup, v**) and some "money" (coins, poker chips, Monopoly bills or Alberta prosperity certificates).
- ii. Go to albertaviews.ca/game and print the game cards (see **Draw a Card**). Cut them out, shuffle them, make a pile.

C. SETUP

- i. Each player selects the party of their parents' choice, or randomly by rolling the dice. Note this formula:
 - 1 = Alberta Party
 - 2 = Greens
 - 3 = Liberals
 - 4 = NDP
 - 5 = UCP
 - 6 = Undecided voters (unplayable but important)
- ii. The players are now the leaders of these parties.
- iii. Each party comes with various strengths and weaknesses (see **Baggage**). Read these aloud before the campaign begins.
Note: During the campaign, leaders draw cards. Certain cards allow the hiring of War Room staff who counteract baggage.
- iv. Each party starts the campaign with \$500k (i.e., five coins) except the UCP, the darling of political action committees (PACs), which starts with \$1-million. Distribute this money.
- v. To mark each party's place on the game track, their poll standing and their popularity with undecided voters, you'll need tokens, at least 10 for each party. We suggest:
 - Alberta Party:** literally anything will do
 - Greens:** dried beans or peas; something healthy but unpalatable
 - Liberals:** pieces of your Ph.D. parchment or dollops of caviar
 - NDP:** nuts or cogwheels
 - UCP:** loose screws or rosary beads
 - Undecided voters:** something beige
- vi. For a realistic election, determine the initial poll standings based on current, real-world polls. (Just kidding. Leaders will never agree on which polling company is least biased.)
- vii. To set up the initial poll standings, roll the dice. (Roll again if you get a 6—i.e., undecided voters.)
 - First party rolled:** 25% support. Put a party token on the poll track (which wraps the board).
 - Second:** 20% support. Ditto—but use a different token.
 - Third:** 15% support. Ditto. At this point you can stop rolling.
 - Fourth and fifth:** 10% support each. Ditto.
 - The undecided vote:** 20%. Put an undecided voters token on the poll track.

Or just start all five parties at 15% support. This is naive and without Alberta precedent, but do what you want.

- viii: Decide the price of oil (to the nearest \$10) by consensus.
 - Put the paper clip on the board's left-hand edge so as to indicate the price of oil (\$20–\$100). As the price climbs and plummets during the campaign, move the paper clip up and down.
 - The incumbent will want the price of oil to rise; other leaders will want it to fall. See **Game's End, iv**.
- ix. Roll the dice to determine the incumbent, who drops the writ whenever it's convenient for them. They can make the other leaders wait hours or days if need be.
- x. Begin the campaign.

D. GAME PLAY

- i. Place a token for each party on the Writ Drop space.
- ii. The incumbent goes first. Play rotates clockwise if all leaders can agree on a specific example of "wasteful government spending." Otherwise, play goes counter-clockwise.
- iii. Each turn, a leader rolls the dice, moves to a space and chooses one of the actions shown. There are eight possible actions (summarized here and explained in excruciating detail below):

ACTION:

- Doorknock
- Dogwhistle
- Mail vague pamphlets in an appeal to the mushy middle
- Fundraise
- Advertise
- Oppo (i.e., opposition research)
- Pray (for a boom or for world peace)
- Draw a card

OUTCOME:

- +1% to you; -1% to random
- +1% to you; -1% to choice
- Put a token on the waffle
- Gain \$300k, \$200k or \$100k
- +X% to you; -X% to choice
- Chance of +6% and -6%
- Oil rises by \$30 or falls by \$10 (your choice)
- Follow the instructions

DETAILED EXPLANATIONS:

Doorknock

Raise your party's poll standing by 1% and lower a random party's (or undecided voters) by 1%. Roll the dice to determine random.
To raise or lower poll standing, move tokens forward or back along the poll track.

Dogwhistle

Raise your party's poll standing by 1% and lower another's or the undecided vote (your choice!) by 1%.

Mail vague pamphlets in an appeal to the mushy middle

Put one of your tokens on the undecided vote space (the waffle). (See **Game's End, iii**.)

Fundraise

If you're leading in the polls, collect \$300k. If you're tied for the lead or anywhere else in the polls except last, collect \$200k. If you're in last or tied for last, collect \$100k.

Note: If you're in last by 5% or more, lose \$100k (i.e., not even diehards attend your pathetic fundraiser).

Advertise

To buy an ad, announce the targeted party and the ad's message, which by longstanding Alberta tradition must be negative. Your ad cannot target undecided voters.

For every \$100k you spend, the targeted party loses 1% in the polls. You gain this support. Spend as much as you like.

Oppo (i.e., opposition research)

Announce which party you'll dig for dirt on*. Roll the dice.

- *If you roll 1–5, your digging uncovers nothing. Owing to baggage, a roll of 1–4 against the UCP leader uncovers nothing.*

- *If you roll 6 (or 5/6 against the UCP), you uncover problematic moral commentary from a candidate (e.g., in an old blog post, sermon or dating-site profile).*

- *If dirt is uncovered, state your findings aloud. That party's leader falls into the Lake of Fire. Their party loses 6% support to you and the leader misses two turns while trying to downplay the scandal. Put one of their party tokens in the Lake of Fire.*

- *This token remains in the Lake of Fire for the moment. As long as it stays there, that leader cannot fall in again.*

- *Remove this token when a different party leader falls into the Lake of Fire. Replace it with a token from that party.*

* **Note:** *Although NDP candidates are prone to youthful gaffes, the NDP leader can't fall into the Lake of Fire; see **Baggage**.*

Pray

Choose which event to pray for:

- *Boom: War erupts between Saudi Arabia and the US. Raise the price of oil by \$30.*

- *World Peace: The US withdraws all troops stationed in the Mideast. Lower the price of oil by \$10.*

Draw a card

Read the card aloud. Some effects (e.g., bozo eruptions) apply immediately, after which the card is put on the bottom of the deck.

- *Some cards allow a leader to build a War Room (e.g., to hire a debate coach). After the salary is paid, the effects of political staff apply immediately. If a leader declines to hire or can't afford staff, the card is discarded. Leaders may hire multiple staff.*

- *Roughly 75% of cards help the party whose leader drew the card.*

- *The NDP suffers disproportionately from cards (see **Baggage**).*

E. BAGGAGE

The Alberta Party leader can't dogwhistle, as their underlying values are unknown even to them, but starts the game with one free token on the waffle.

The Green Party leader isn't allowed to formally participate in the debate (see **Debate, iii**), but, given their obscurity, can't be targeted by negative ads.

The Liberal Party leader can't fundraise more than \$200k even if leading in the polls, but is a fiery debater the likes of which Abraham Lincoln would cower before (+1 to debate rolls).

The NDP leader continuously needs to "explain away" candidates' youthful indiscretions (see **Draw a Card**), but can't fall into the Lake of Fire, as the folly of youth pales in comparison to the narrow-mindedness or intolerance of certain adults.

The UCP leader is more prone to falling into the Lake of Fire, but starts the campaign with \$1-million (instead of \$500k) to reflect their support from PACs.

F. DEBATE

i. When a leader reaches the debate space, they stop, even if their dice roll would have carried them beyond that space. They skip turns, waiting for the other leaders to arrive, and prepare for the debate by rehearsing their zingers and bon mots.

ii. Once all leaders are on the debate space, each rolls the dice.

iii. The Green leader is unwelcome at the debate, but rolls the dice anyway to represent the release of their post-debate YouTube video. Subtract 2 from this roll.

iv. In the event of a tie, keep rolling. Subtract 2 from all Green rolls.

v. The highest-rolling leader wins debate day and deeply impresses undecided voters; put four corresponding tokens on the waffle.

G. A NOTE ABOUT POLLS

No party can go below 0%. Anything that would lower their share of the popular vote below 0% lowers the undecided vote instead.

H. GAME'S END

i. Once a leader reaches the Election Day space, their campaign is over. They wait for the others to catch up. If leading in the polls, they may pretend they've been issued an RCMP security detail, refuse to speak to other leaders and prepare a victory speech.

ii. Once all leaders reach Election Day, the game's imaginary voters cast their imaginary ballots.

Check that all parties' support plus the undecided vote equals 100%. If not, adjust the undecided vote.

iii. Undecided voters cast their lot with the party that has the most tokens on the waffle. (Roll the dice if there's a tie.)

Add the undecided support to that party's support and remove the undecided token from the poll track.

iv. The incumbent party then gains or loses voter support based on the price of oil.

- *If oil is below \$40, they lose 15% to a random party (roll the dice; if 6, roll again).*

- *If oil is above \$80, they gain 15% from a random party (or parties, if need be).*

v. With the popular vote counted up, the will of the people is now known. However...

vi. The party now leading gets four seats from every other party as a "first-past-the-post bonus."

- *The polling track is now a seat track. Adjust it by seats (the tiny numbers at each square's corner), not by popular vote.*

- *The leading party gains 16 seats. All other parties lose 4. The total number of seats won should equal 87. Resolve with the dice if not.*

- *The game pauses for 15 minutes as all players Google "problems with first past the post."*

vii. The winner should now be apparent—unless the leading party has fewer than 44 seats.

viii. In such a minority situation, the leader with the most seats can try to convince a leader with enough seats (i.e., together they have 44+) to prop them up.

- *To do so the leading party must debase themselves by raving about their prospective coalition partner's ethical rigour and denouncing their own platform in a one-minute speech.*

ix. If this works, the election victory is shared.

x. If the speech is deemed too short or insincere by the coalition partner, the new government falls on a non-confidence vote and no party wins. Mere anarchy is loosed upon Alberta.

WAR ROOM

Do you want to hire Stephen Harper's former debate and body-language coach?

- Salary: \$500k
- Add 1 to all of your debate dice rolls. Keep this card.

WAR ROOM

Do you want to hire Preston Manning's one-time hairstyle and clothing consultant?

- Salary: \$400k (or \$800k, \$1.2m etc.)
- Add 1 token to the waffle for every \$400k you spend. Play this card immediately; discard afterwards.

WAR ROOM

Do you want to hire a shady pollster?

- Salary: \$400k
- Switch two parties' standings in the polls if they are not more than 6% apart. Play this card immediately; discard afterwards.

WAR ROOM

Do you want to hire a political double-agent?

- Salary: \$300k
- A rival party's volunteer—actually working for you—“misplaces” \$600k in donations. Rival leader must pay this to the bank (or as much of this amount as they can). Play this card immediately; discard afterwards.

WAR ROOM

Do you want to hire professional heckler Rob Anders?

- Salary: \$400k
- Choose a leader; they become distracted at the debate by a rude (and oddly uncensored) audience member. Subtract 1 from their debate rolls. Play this card just before the debate.

WAR ROOM

Do you want to hire teenagers to steal lawn signs?

- Salary: \$200k
- Roll the dice. If you roll 1–3, the youths grab hundreds of rival party signs; remove up to two tokens from the waffle. If 4–6, they are caught; your party loses 3% to a random party. Play this card immediately; discard afterwards.

WAR ROOM

Do you want to hire a crackerjack investigative researcher?

- Salary: \$400k
- All of your oppo research (i.e., not just against the UCP) turns up dirt on rolls of 5 or 6. Keep this card.

WAR ROOM

Do you want to hire veteran political campaigner Brian Topp?

- Salary: \$400k
- When rolling the dice to move along the game track, you may roll again if you don't like your original roll. You are bound by your second roll. Keep this card.

WAR ROOM

Do you want to hire a seasoned fundraiser?

- Salary: \$400k
- Gain an extra \$200k every time you hold a fundraiser. Keep this card.

WAR ROOM

Do you want to hire an unscrupulous UK-based data mining and analysis firm?

- Salary: \$500k
- Gain 1% from undecided voters every time you roll a 1 as you move around the game track. (Not valid with debate rolls, doorknock rolls etc.) Keep this card.

WAR ROOM

Do you want to hire a political advertising guru?

- Salary: \$300k
- Add 1% to the effect of your ads (i.e., an ad that cost \$300k and lowered a party's support by 3% costs the same but lowers that party's support by 4%). Keep this card.

WAR ROOM

Do you want to hire a shameless lobbyist?

- Salary: \$200k
- Roll the dice; that number is X. Gain \$Xk in donations from “Make Alberta Great Again,” a PAC funded by used car dealers and payday loan companies. Play this card immediately; discard afterwards.

OPPORTUNITY! One of your supporters offers to make a “deep fake” YouTube clip in which a rival leader mocks Ukrainian-Albertans. You...

Accept the offer. Name the leader, then roll the dice.
If you roll 1–4, that leader’s party loses 4% to your party.
If 5–6, the ruse is discovered, and you lose 4% to that party.
Decline in disgust. Discard this card.

OPPORTUNITY! It’s come to your attention that a rival party leader served jail time 30 years ago for minor drug offences. You...

Leak this to media. Name a party; roll the dice. If you roll 1–3, gain 2% from that party. If 4–6: Lose 2% to that party.
Ignore this youthful indiscretion. Discard this card.

LEADERSHIP TEST! One of your candidates engages in a screaming match with a voter, later attributing the incident to too much cold medication. A homeowner films the event and threatens to release the clip to media unless your party buys it. You...

Buy it. Pay \$200k.
Refuse. Lose 3% to a random opponent (roll the dice).

OIL IS UP! The premier suspends the election campaign for 24 hours so as to impose mandatory production cuts on Alberta’s oil industry. The price of oil rises \$10 a barrel (move the paperclip). The incumbent party gains 2% from undecided voters.

OIL IS UP! After another record-setting year of Ford F-350 sales in Alberta, Elon Musk throws in the towel and Tesla Inc. declares bankruptcy. The price of oil rises \$10 a barrel (move the paperclip). The incumbent gains 2% from undecided voters.

OIL IS DOWN! The US announces the discovery and imminent exploitation of a trillion-barrel oilfield under Yosemite National Park. The price of oil falls \$10 a barrel (move the paperclip). The incumbent loses 2% to a random party (not to undecided voters).

OPPORTUNITY! You have proof that Russia made ads claiming that a local politician runs a puppy mill out of a Burger Baron basement. Albertans believe the ads. You...

Stay silent. Party of your choice loses 3% to a random party (but not to undecided voters; roll the dice).
Speak up. Roll the dice. If 1–3: You gain 3% from undecided voters. If 4–6: No-one cares. Discard this card.

LEADERSHIP TEST! You’re asked to respond to a BC MLA who questions how Canada can expand the oil sands and meet its Paris commitments. You...

Offer a measured response: Lose 5% to a random party.
Barely contain your anger: Gain 1% from undecided.
Slander the MLA in a spittle-flecked rage: Roll the dice.
1–4: Gain 3% from undecided voters. 5–6: No effect.

LEADERSHIP TEST! You learn that one of your star candidates has plagiarized Don Getty in an imminent fundraising speech. You...

Kill the speech: Lose 1% to a random party (roll the dice) and pay \$100k (if you have it) to the bank.
Proceed: Roll the dice. 1–3: No one notices. 4–6: Scandal! Lose 3% to a random party and pay \$300k to the bank.

OIL IS UP! University of Calgary professor Barry Cooper releases a graph-heavy report that “proves... climate change is a hoax.” The price of oil rises \$10 a barrel (move the paperclip). The incumbent gains 2% from undecided voters.

OIL IS DOWN! OPEC announces a major increase in production. The price of oil falls \$10 a barrel (move the paperclip). The incumbent loses 2% to a random party (not to undecided voters).

OIL IS DOWN! University of Lethbridge researchers announce a “massive breakthrough” in converting field stubble to jet fuel. The price of oil falls \$10 a barrel (move the paperclip). The incumbent loses 2% to a random party (not to undecided voters).

BOZO ERUPTION! A rival leader calls you “the worst human being ever... a nauseating combination of Joseph Stalin and Pol Pot.” This proves to be too much, even for red-baiting Alberta. Choose a leader; their party loses 4% to your party.

BOZO ERUPTION! A rival party’s candidate admits he “strongly considered” seeking a Freedom Conservative Party nomination instead. Choose a party; it loses 1% to all other parties but not to undecided voters (i.e., 4% overall).

BOZO ERUPTION! In an interview, one of your candidates claims that as a child they were held captive for “weeks” by the Ogoopogo. Your party loses 1% to all other parties but not to undecided voters. *If you are the NDP leader, your party loses 2% to all other parties but not to undecided voters.*

BOZO ERUPTION! One of your candidates tweets that “Saskatchewan is North Dakota, but colder and less cosmopolitan.” Your party loses 1% to all other parties but not to undecided voters (i.e., 4% overall). *If you are the NDP leader, your party loses 2% to all other parties but not to undecided voters.*

BOZO ERUPTION! One of your candidates calls you a bully, forgoes their party nomination and runs as an independent instead. Your party loses 1% to all other parties but not to undecided voters. *If you are the NDP leader, your party loses 2% to all other parties but not to undecided voters.*

BOZO ERUPTION! One of your candidates resigns after they accidentally reveal their identity as the leader of a Rocky-Mountain-House-based paramilitary group. Remove one of your tokens from the waffle (if applicable).

BOZO ERUPTION! A rival party’s candidate writes on Facebook that “capitalism is not perfect.” You are the first leader to denounce them. Choose a party; it loses 3% support to your party. *If the candidate is running for the NDP, that party loses 6% to your party.*

BOZO ERUPTION! Two rival party candidates get into a fistfight during a debate. One of your candidates steps in to separate them and suffers a broken jaw. Your party gains 1% from two different parties of your choosing and 1% from undecided voters (i.e., you gain 3% overall).

BOZO ERUPTION! In a debate, a rival party’s candidate asserts that everything from lung cancer to plantar warts is caused by vaccinations. Choose a party; it loses 1% support to all other parties but not to undecided voters (i.e., 4% overall).

BOZO ERUPTION! A rival party’s star candidate is caught on video defacing several of your signs with moustaches. Choose a party: it loses 4% support to your party; it loses 6% if that party’s leader apologizes.

BOZO ERUPTION! A rival party leader announces that if they win the election, they will not allow women to run for office in future elections. Choose a party; while it gains support in pockets of Alberta, it loses 2% to all other parties and to undecided voters (i.e., 10% overall).

BOZO ERUPTION! A rival candidate gives a roaring speech about personal responsibility, then is caught days later trespassing on private property while hunting illegally after leaving the scene of an accident. He denies it all. Choose a party; it loses 1% to all other parties (but not to undecided voters; i.e., 4% overall).

PUSH POLL: A crooked pollster asks if you'd like to commission a survey full of leading questions to deceive the public. You can decline. If interested, however, pay \$300k, then roll the dice; that number is X. Boost your party's support X% and lower another's (your choice; incl. undecided) by X%. You must pay \$300k regardless of your roll.

SCANDAL! You allow Chad Kroeger of Nickelback to secure your party's nomination in Drumheller-Stettler. Your party gains moderate support in that riding, but the rest of Alberta is mortified. You lose 1% to all other parties and to undecided voters (i.e., 5% overall).

SCANDAL! A rival leader offers to "cross the floor" to your party mid-campaign if you'll secure a nomination for them and guarantee them a cabinet post. You agree—but then CBC Edmonton's Charles Rusnell discovers and reveals the plan. Choose a party; both it and your party lose 6% to a third party of your choice (which gains 12%).

SCANDAL! One of your volunteers secretly records a rival party's candidate busing three dozen elderly Albertans to an advance polling station and "helping" them fill out their ballots. Your party gains 4% support from that party (your choice).

SCANDAL! A rival party's candidate tells a debate audience that "all Alberta news media... is communist lies, except for the *Edmonton Sun*." Your candidate vigorously denounces this statement. Your party loses 4% to their party.

ENDORSEMENT! The *Edmonton Journal* endorses your party. You gain 1% from every other party (i.e., 4% overall). If you choose to immediately pay Postmedia an additional \$100k, the *Journal* will wrap its election-day cover with your party logo and colours, and on that day you'll gain 2% from undecided voters too. If you pay, keep this card.

ROBOCALLS: A disgraced Harper-era campaigner offers to lend you his robocalling equipment. You may decline. If interested, however, roll the dice.

*1-4: Many voters go to the wrong polling stations. Boost your support 4% and lower another party's (your choice) by 4%.
5-6: The scheme is discovered! Lose 2% to all other parties (not including undecided voters).*

SCANDAL! One of your candidates is prone to embarrassing outbursts, but you can't suspend his candidacy—his family are major donors to your party. From now on, lose 1% of your support to a party of your choice every time you roll a 6 while moving around the game track. (Not valid with debate rolls, doorknock rolls etc.) Keep this card.

SCANDAL! A rival party candidate is revealed to have self-published a book challenging the safety of band-aids. Choose a party; it loses 1% to all other parties but not to undecided voters (i.e., 4% overall).

SCANDAL! A rival leader announces that if they win the election, they will eliminate taxes, and the only remaining provincial government services will be courts for property crimes and jail for violators of property rights. Choose a rival party; it gains 2% from all other parties and from undecided voters (i.e., 10% overall).

SCANDAL! A rival party's candidate is revealed to have worn a Che Guevara T-shirt through much of high school. You are the first leader to denounce this. Your party gains 2% from his party and 2% from undecided voters (i.e., 4% overall).

ENDORSEMENT! The *Calgary Herald* endorses the UCP. To reflect the surprising nature of this announcement, the UCP gains 0% from the party of its leader's choosing.