

# If Left Wins in Alberta, Who Will Care for Interests of 'Sensitive' Tar Sands Industry?

Leader of progressive New Democrat Party says she would not lobby on behalf of TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline or support building of Enbridge's Northern Gateway project

By [Deirdre Fulton](#), [Common Dreams](#) 5/5/15

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The fossil fuel industry is bracing for what one news outlet [called](#) "a potentially massive political shift to the left," as voters in Alberta—also known as Ground Zero for Canadian tar sands—head to the polls on Tuesday.

Surveys in advance of the provincial election showed the left-leaning New Democrat Party (NDP), led by former union activist and lawyer Rachel Notley, leading both the right-wing Wildrose party as well as the Progressive Conservatives, or Tories, who have ruled Alberta for more than 40 years.

"Now that the campaign is almost over, it appears the NDP are headed for a truly historic victory, almost as historic as the rout the 40-year Alberta Tory dynasty appears to face," [said](#) Forum Research president Lorne Bozinoff, whose firm conducted one recent poll.

Should such predictions come to pass, Alberta's tar sands sector could face higher taxes and a loss of support for major pipeline projects.

[According](#) to *Reuters*, Notley "says she would not lobby on behalf of TransCanada Corp's controversial Keystone XL pipeline or support building of Enbridge Inc's Northern Gateway pipeline to link the province's oil sands with a Pacific port in British Columbia."

In addition, the *Globe and Mail* [reports](#), "The NDP has said it would hike the corporate tax rate to 12 per cent from 10 per cent, a move the Tories resisted in their March budget. The New Democrats said companies should pay more to make sure health care and education are not underfunded."

And the New Democrats have [called](#) for a full review of royalty payments made by oil and gas corporations to the province, in order to ensure "a full and fair return to the people of Alberta for their energy resources."

The issue of royalties is Alberta's "most politically volatile energy issue," according to the *Globe and Mail*, and is likely to be a major factor in the results of Tuesday's election.

As *Ricochet* co-founder and editor Derrick O'Keefe [wrote](#) in an op-ed published Monday, current provincial premier Jim Prentice "is struggling in the polls because the whole economic set-up of his *ancien regime* has been exposed as a disaster. While Big Oil extracted massive profits, the weak royalty regime left the province totally vulnerable. When the price of oil cratered, Alberta found itself with a \$5-billion deficit."

Unsurprisingly, Big Oil's resistance to the NDP has been robust.

*Bloomberg* [reports](#):

Executives have expressed their own concerns about the NDP's plans. Cenovus Energy Inc. Chief Executive Officer Brian Ferguson last week [said](#) there wasn't "any room" to raise the government's take of oil production, pointing to his company's first-quarter loss.

"Right now, the energy industry's got more than enough problems," John Stephenson, president of Stephenson & Co. Capital Management in Toronto, told the *Globe and Mail*. "A government that isn't sensitive to that and sees pockets of cash that can be raided is probably not the right thing for resource development."

Results will be tabulated after polls close at 8pm local time.