

## Ed Stelmach



**E**D STELMACH may not have a university degree, but with over a decade of experience in the legislature, the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville wants to make postsecondary education a priority.

"I can assure you that as premier, not only will postsecondary have a much higher standing in Cabinet, but I will ensure that all ministers reflect my style of leadership, and that is thoughtful, inclusive and rational decision-making," Stelmach says.

Particularly concerned with the costs incurred by rural students who have to leave their homes to study in the city, Stelmach proposes improving upon the use of distance education and college transfer programs, which helps students stay in their communities longer.

"I'm going to make every effort to push out as much of the introductory courses to smaller communities, those that have the infrastructure through the latest technology, especially the SuperNet." The SuperNet connects isolated communities with broadband Internet at a uniform rate.

MLA (1993–Present)  
Minister of Agriculture  
Minister of Infrastructure  
Minister of Transportation  
Minister of International and Intergovernmental Affairs

He notes that distance education is especially important for adult students who want stay in their communities while acquiring technical or professional training.

Believing that each area of the province has different needs, Stelmach says that while the south of the province has universities in Calgary and Lethbridge, Edmonton draws from a larger student base in the north. Before distributing new student spaces, he says that "we have to have a good look at the size of the population and where the students are coming from."

"I've always found balance as minister of infrastructure and transportation and I will continue to do that by ways of ensuring that every, every part of Alberta is treated equitably," he says.

Though he voted in favour of Bill 40, Stelmach explains that this doesn't prevent discussions surrounding tuition, but simply makes the policy easier to amend.

"I supported it; putting it into regulation allows the government to bring about changes in the overall tuition policy without coming back to the House all the time."

## Ted Morton

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science (Colorado College)  
MA in Political Science (U of T)  
PhD in Political Science (U of T)

**T**ED MORTON, MLA for Foothills-Rocky View, may be better known for his work in academia, studying and teaching at a handful of universities and colleges in Canada and the US.

When it comes to administering Alberta Centennial Scholarships—a \$21 million endowment fund created last year, which gives \$2005 to 25 postsecondary students in each of the provinces and territories in celebration of the Alberta's centennial year—Morton suggests limiting the scholarship to students studying in Alberta.

"I would still let it be available to Canadian students in other provinces but it would have to be held at an Alberta university or college, so that we could recruit to bring the best and the brightest from around Canada to come to Alberta to study for one year," Morton explains. "That way, it would fulfill the goal of sharing our centennial with other provinces, but there would be something in it positive for Alberta universities and Alberta."

Morton voted in favour of Bill 40 and says that the announcement of the new tuition policy is satisfactory for the time being.

"As a policy for the next year or two, I think the policy announced last week to index tuition to inflation is acceptable," he says.

Still, he suggests that universities and colleges need to build up endowment funds, which "would create an additional stream of operating income."

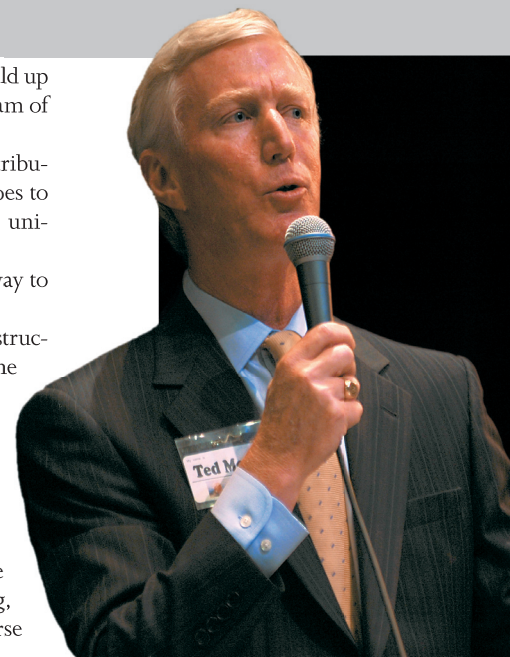
"I've committed to a program of matching private contributions—one private dollar to one government dollar that goes to endowments. That's the longer term approach to keeping universities affordable," Morton says.

He went on to say that using technology can go a long way to increase efficiency in both colleges and universities.

"I would create some incentives for more web-based instruction and we could get more spaces, more education out of the existing budget and resources," he says. "I had websites for all of my courses before left the university for politics."

Morton wants to support and expand upon existing distance education programs, as well as community colleges across the province. However, he's cautious about converting colleges into universities to create more degree spaces.

"When you convert from a college to a university, the university faculty can be paid more and do less teaching, so I'm worried that that would make the access issue worse rather than better," he says.



MLA (2004–Present)

## Lyle Oberg

Medical Doctoral degree (U of A)



**L**YLE OBERG spent ten years practicing medicine as a family physician and general practitioner in rural Alberta before leaving the profession behind to enter politics in 1993.

Oberg, a former minister of learning, explains that the provincial government and the taxpayers currently pay roughly 75 per cent of a student's education. The father of four, who has three of his children in university today, thinks the method works.

"I think it's fair that I pay 25 per cent," Oberg says. "I think it's a very good deal that someone is going to pay 75 per cent of my children's tuition."

Still, he conceded that not everyone can afford that 25 per cent up front, suggesting that student loans become accessible to everyone for tuition regardless of parental income.

Records from the Alberta Legislature show that Oberg wasn't present to vote on Bill 40, however, the MLA for Strathmore-Brooks is not keen on the bill.

"It should be in legislation. It should not have been taken out of legislation and put into regulation," Oberg says.

And while there's a demand for more student spaces at Alberta's universities, Oberg is not in favour of transforming colleges into universities.

"All of our colleges have really filled a niche throughout the province," Oberg says. "For example, Mount Royal College has done an excellent job on diplomas and certificates, and I would hate to see them lose that."

He went on to say that colleges would see the hours of instruction go down quite significantly and that class sizes would increase dramatically if they moved towards university status. Instead of increasing the number of universities in the province, Oberg says it would be better to increase funding at the current universities to help them grow. His platform suggests creating 30 000 new spaces at colleges and universities in the province by 2012.

However, Oberg did encourage universities to continue programs that enable rural colleges to grant degrees through partnerships with universities.

"Our colleges are quite spread out all over the province, so there's pretty good access to our local colleges right now," he says, adding that rural colleges decreases the living expenses of students who live in those communities.

MLA (1993–Present)  
Minister of Family and Social Services  
Minister of Learning  
Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation