



Despite what you may have heard, if you lick a toad you won't get high—you'll just look like a moron. And while dropping by our **4pm meetings every Thursday** will also fail to take you to the moon, at least you'll look intelligent while you do it.

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# 37 years far too long for Tories



CHRIS VIARD

**“While they cut hospital budgets, they simultaneously gave their rich friends and political donors tax breaks. This is also the government that cut medical spaces at Alberta’s universities, introduced health care premiums, and tried desperately—yet thankfully in vain—to privatize our health care system.”**

We will very shortly be going to the polls for a provincial election, and it's now incumbent upon us to make the most out of this opportunity. Every single province in Canada has changed its elected representatives at least once in recent memory, but Alberta has bucked the trend by keeping the Progressive Conservatives in power for 37 years. It's most certainly time for a change, and there exists for the first time a chance that might happen.

After being crowned king of Ralph's world, Ed Stelmach has had an eventful run as Premier. He took on abysmally low royalties, skyrocketing pollution and carbon emissions, a huge increase in homelessness, strained public infrastructure, and a population whose demographics have changed considerably. His response to these numerous challenges has been consistent, in that it's consistent with 37 years of indifference, business pandering, and generally selling out the public trust.

Greenhouse gas emissions are continuing to rise at a dramatic pace with no end in sight, yet Stelmach insists on business as usual with his pathetic and toothless “green plan.” This plan doesn't foresee cuts in emissions until 2050, and thus can hardly be described as green at all. Perhaps too many years of oil industry donations to the party have made Stelmach and his cronies a little skittish about saying no to Big Oil, despite the fact that this is increasingly what the population is demanding.

Sadly, it's not just on the environmental front that the Conservatives have

neglected over the years. Homelessness has become a serious concern, despite the enormity of the wealth that's being sucked out of the ground in this province. One might ask what our provincial homeless strategy entails, only to find out that we don't have one. Instead, the Conservatives say that the market will solve this problem for us, much as it will solve industrial pollution and healthcare problems as well.

This smells of the putrid rot only found in stale and discredited supply-side economics à la Ronald Reagan—or should I say à la Stelmach? Last I checked, there wasn't a massive outpouring of businesses proposing the construction of low-income housing. This is a government responsibility, yet the government is notably mute on the subject. Students are among the first, though not the last, to feel the effects of rapidly rising rents, as the uncontrolled boom has made affordable living just about impossible to find.

On royalties, Ed Stelmach has preached balance between citizens' rights to profit from oil and those of the companies who currently exploit it. It's public knowledge that the Alberta government, with Stelmach as a cabinet minister, knew oil royalties were ludicrously low several years ago yet did nothing about it, costing the treasury billions of dollars in lost revenues. If this wasn't bad enough, most might remember the report that came out a few months ago stipulating that Alberta should be taking—at minimum—an extra \$2 billion a year. Steady Eddie's response: a \$1.4-billion increase that

starts in a couple years. So not only does he sell us out for \$600 million, but he takes his sweet time doing it.

While we're talking about health, one must remember that this government is the one responsible for the deterioration of our health care system to begin with. While they cut hospital budgets, they simultaneously gave their rich friends and political donors tax breaks. This is also the government that cut medical spaces at Alberta's universities, introduced health care premiums, and tried desperately—yet thankfully in vain—to privatize our health care system. As university students, we hardly need to be reminded of the fact that knocking two legs off a table and propping it up with a broom isn't the way to approach a sacred institution such as health care.

Despite all the challenges we face, however, I believe that given the right combination of ideas and leadership, they can be overcome. This isn't what any of us will find with the same tired old PCs. Just once, it would be nice to see Albertans throw the bums out as they have called for so many times at the national level. Regardless of political affiliation, most of us agree that 37 years is too long for any government to stay in power—a fact that was reflected in a recent poll that appeared in the *Edmonton Journal*.

We owe it to ourselves to implement a new environmental/economic strategy for Alberta, and it's high time we lead the country with the merit of our good ideas instead of being an obstacle to sustainable development.

## Canadians not all that ignorant, Ignatieff

After all, I know plenty about China—I could probably even locate it on a map



VICTOR VARGAS

All Canadians know that everything, from our flags to our pencils, is manufactured in China. This is because ever since the Chinese accepted the teachings of Communism, the world saw them transform from kung-fu-fighting wise men to business-suit-wearing buddhas that are completely consumed in the quest for the holy dollar.

should be doing business with.

As for India, great movies, like *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* have taught us a great deal about Indian culture and history. For example, I learned that a long time ago India was part of the immense and evil British Empire, but one day, a man named Gandhi rose up and freed India from Imperialism after Lord Irwin tossed the Emperor into the CANDU reactor.

And while some would worry that India is a nuclear power currently in a cold war with an unstable Pakistan, they clearly don't understand Indian politics. Since India is a democratic nation, it surely will have the sense not to start anything, say over Kashmir, which could lead to a major nuclear war. If something were to happen in Pakistan, India would take things in stride and make calm, rational decisions—after all, every Canadian knows that democracies always do the right thing.

So take ease, Canada, despite what Ignatieff may think, because you already know everything there is to know about those pesky international issues concerning China and India. And other things like arctic sovereignty and Darfur are issues that will simply resolve themselves. I mean, we live in a world where all free nations are governed well and their leaders make logical and rational decisions. Anyone that would say differently is paranoid and should be tuned out.

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It seems that Michael Ignatieff, deputy leader of the federal Liberal party, believes that Canadians don't know much about India or China. During his address last Friday, he implied that Canadians are still stuck in the Cold War and are too Eurocentric, but in fact, Mr Ignatieff would be surprised to know that Canadians are smarter than he thinks.

As Canadians, we above all others pride ourselves on our vast knowledge of the world around us—Rick Mercer proves this on a weekly basis. Granted, defeating the United States in world trivia is about as great a triumph as beating a blind man at Pictionary, but at least we go out of our way to demonstrate our superiority—after all, I don't see anybody putting out a *Talking to Canadians* show.

And while Mr Ignatieff may believe that it's important for Canadians to know about the emerging Asian Tigers, I believe that Canadians not only know enough about these rising powers but have no need to fear China and India's place in the world.