

the approval of new projects, on the scale that we've been doing it, to continue into the future? Why do we not insist there's a need to slow it down, if for no other reason—no ecological concerns, no environmental concerns, no cultural concerns of the small communities there—at least for the economic health of the province? Even if you use that as a major reason to slow down, I think there are enough reasons to say 'slow down.' Look at the rising labour costs. Look at the labour shortages. Look at the impact of these two things on the cost of housing, infrastructure development, [...] all of these reasons call for a slow-down of the rate of growth."

IU: "On that note, I think one misconception people have is that the market knows best and that the state has absolutely no positive role to play in managing growth and in trying to balance

served by whatever decisions they make? And so the regulatory role of government is critical to this."

DC: "So much of [the debate] has been about the fiscal side of it, about 'What kind of revenue are we going to collect from it?' and I think until recently, there hasn't been someone who's started to articulate the environmental consequences of it, and I think it's because it's 'out of sight, out of mind.' [...] Maybe more people should go up to Ft McMurray and see what those tailing ponds look like, because I think if every Albertan had an opportunity to go up there, they'd change their mind."

SP: "It's disappointing to me that no political party has taken the position that [tarsands development] needs a moratorium or it needs to stop. There seems to be a conversation

to make meaningful change, they may have to repudiate some of what they've done in the past. So I don't expect much change from the Tories' re-election.

But political parties are not the only factors in determining change. Powers outside the Legislature, behind the scenes. Alberta's power structure has been changing quite dramatically. Calgary—no wonder everyone refers to it as Alberta's new capital, it is indeed. Enormous economic power is concentrated in those shiny towers in Calgary. So things have changed. We shouldn't simply look to a political party to come into power to change the situation; [...] we need to engage in analysis of the power structure in Alberta, which is quite different from what it was 20 or 25 years ago.

It would be implausible to say that New Democrats have any chance of getting elected as a government on March 3rd—the only plausible alter-

say, 'No one up there is saying what I want to hear, what I need to hear, and we need to do something about that.' And that's sort of what I'm hoping comes out of this election, that civil society says, 'It's time for you guys to actually what we believe.'"

IU: "To go back to what I said at the beginning about the dissection and what's the electoral map going to look like, if I'm right, I think the next government will be a Conservative government that will have even more representation from outside Edmonton and Calgary in percentage terms than it does now. So that makes me think in terms of what can we expect from that government in terms of policy, it makes me expect 'not much'—not much in terms of change, and frankly, I think we've seen some signs of that already. Stelmach, despite saying we've got the royalty agreement that he did, has backed off on that since then.

If it's a minority or a reduced majority, then I hope that's going to mean that we're going to see stronger opposition in the Legislature just by the mere presence of opposition MLAs [...] and then, when [we talk] about ridings in Calgary with 60 000 constituents, we're looking at an electoral redistribution for next time. So I think if one wants to be positive about what can happen from within, I think the voices for change are going to be strengthened in Alberta in this election.

Change is coming, and it's going to be forced on us. So we have to take notice of what's going on in California when it comes to things like vehicle emission standards; we have to take notice of what at this point is just, I would argue, symbolic legislation, but makes an important statement, that Congress has passed in respect to federal vehicles and using 'dirty' oil versus 'cleaner' oil. Those are signs that others outside are changing their attitudes to things that are really crucial to how we've made our lives in the past.

If we don't embrace change and we don't see the need for change ourselves, it's going to be forced on us from outside."

RP: "To rephrase your question if I may, rather than saying what kind of meaningful change is likely to happen this election, [we should ask] 'What kind of Legislature should we elect for meaningful change to happen? And I think it would be the one that produces a minority government.

You have to change the balance of power within the Legislature. When a party has an unequivocal majority, and especially when it's a party that has already been there for 37 years, you can't expect change to happen. But once it's pushed into a situation of a minority where it's required to survive, it must negotiate, it must listen to more than just its own lobbyists—then there's a possibility of formulating new changes when that will occur. So wish for a minority government. Will it happen? Who knows?"

"We have lived here a version of laissez-faire that's more extreme than what the Canadian government in the 1890s was prepared to tolerate when it came to the Klondike gold rush, and the government then was more interventionist in terms of trying to manage what was taking place up there for that gold rush than we have been for this black-gold rush that's been going on."

—IAN URQUHART

different objectives and trying to create a good livelihood, which means more than just a big paycheck for some people—it means a healthy environment; it means good job opportunities, good educational opportunities, good life chances, all those sorts of things. And when you look at what's happened in this province since the mid-1990s, we have lived here a version of laissez-faire that's more extreme than what the Canadian government in the 1890s was prepared to tolerate when it came to the Klondike gold rush, and the government then was more interventionist in terms of trying to manage what was taking place up there for that gold rush than we have been for this black-gold rush that's been going on. 'Plan' is not a four-letter word, [but] that's the belief the Klein government operated on."

RP: "And companies plan. These are huge corporations, big entities—these are bigger than most governments in this world—and they plan. Why is it wrong for our government—democratically elected—to simply be given the responsibility of doing any planning? If they're not about the public interest, if they're not about the public good, what else are they about? Philosophically speaking, what is the role of government if not to protect public interest, to define public interest and devise policies around it, to make sure that it's protected and enhanced and well-

about, 'Well, we need to evaluate the situation,' but I'm not sure how much more we need to evaluate—we know what's going on up there, and I think it's time for someone to say, 'This needs to stop; this needs to slow down,' besides Peter Lougheed and Greenpeace.

One other misconception that I've heard is that if we stop it or if we slow it down, the United States will hate us—and there may be some element of truth to that—but first of all, isn't it a problem that we're destroying our own province for the export to another country? That needs to be evaluated. And secondly, if we are doing that, we need to start tossing out some of these agreements. It's because no one's talking about the possibility beyond what's immediately happening that we're not getting these new ideas out there."

All major parties—including the Conservatives—have talked about change. Do you think we're going to see meaningful change in this election? Is it possible if the same party stays in power?

RP: "Being in power for 37 years creates certain kinds of difficulties. How do you disown your past? Political parties very much live on their reputation—what they've done so far, and what they will do therefore in the future—so for a party that has stayed in power for 37 years, it's difficult to expect much change because in order

native are the Liberals. The question is, then, can the Liberal party strike a new direction which is radically different from what's been going on? Can it in fact institute policies and bring in programs that result in meaningful change? I'm skeptical.

DC: "A lot of people have been talking about how it's just been an incredibly boring election campaign, yet it's a campaign where nobody knows what the results are going to be. A lot of people are saying Conservative government, but I've talked to a lot of people who are saying minority [government], and they don't laugh afterwards like before.

I look at the undecided vote, and the last poll had it around 18 per cent. In the last week of the campaign, that seems pretty big. Whether those people actually show up to vote, whether they move en masse to vote for one party, where exactly are those voters?"

SP: "I think there is the possibility for a change—even a minority government. But what I'm hoping comes out of this election is a stronger presence from civil society, from Albertans themselves. I think there are some missing pieces in progressive movements in Alberta—there's not a lot of more radical stances being taken by Albertans as in the past, and I'm hoping that maybe after this election, regardless of the results, Albertans might be a little bit more willing to