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Alberta premier a frequent flyer

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Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach has been racking up the frequent flyer miles since taking office, jumping on government planes more than 110 times so far this year.

Stelmach has flown more than 36,000 kilometres since he was sworn in last December, according to government flight logs.

Among provincial politicians, only Lt.-Gov. Norman Kwong -- with 122 one-way trips -- has flown more.

Alberta operates Canada's largest fleet of government-funded aircraft, with four planes that cost \$24.3 million and have an annual operating budget of \$3.7 million.

Most provincial governments operate only a single plane or use commercial or charter aircraft to get around.

As of Dec. 17, Alberta's taxpayer-paid fleet logged 1,928 flights, flying with an empty passenger compartment 279 times. Last year, the fleet made 2,115 trips and flew empty 329 times.

The bulk of the Alberta flights are flown between Edmonton and Calgary.

It costs \$942 to fly a government aircraft from Edmonton to Calgary and back, but when fixed operating costs are factored in -- like salaries and insurance -- the cost jumps to \$3,000 return.

Stelmach still isn't flying as much as his predecessor.

Former premier Ralph Klein flew about 200 times a year.

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