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Time for a change

The Edmonton Journal

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Re: "Stelmach offers 'change within'," The Journal, Jan. 27

In a short time Albertans will be headed to the polls for a provincial election. Like many others, I am optimistic that there will be a change in governing parties. I will be celebrating my 30th birthday this April, and I have yet to see a single change. My parents, who are both close to 60, have only seen a change of provincial governments once in their lifetimes.

In virtually every other democratic jurisdiction in the world, parties gain and lose hold of governments every few years. Networks of patronage are uprooted, government relationships based on cronyism and nepotism are interrupted as the winning party brings in new people and ideas. There are a large number of complaints about the legacy of federal governments (judicial appointees, adscam and Airbus scandals). Imagine if the federal Conservative or Liberal parties were permitted to retain power for 37 consecutive years.

To pretend that the Progressive Conservatives have even been adequate custodians of Alberta is wishful thinking. They have survived on the strength of perpetual myths while transforming democratic practice into something resembling a substandard theatre production. Paying off a provincial debt loses its lustre when one considers that it was at zero when the Tories first came to power. We are struggling with an infrastructure debt, an overheated economy, maxed-out social services, and a report from the auditor general flat-out stating that Albertans were short changed billions on royalties.

Stelmach's unconvincing statement promising change reminds me of an old saying, which requires some modification to suit the circumstances: "The more things stay the same, the less they will change."

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