

For immediate release
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Campaign 2008: Week 2 in review

Alberta Liberal Leader Kevin Taft continues to be the leader to watch

Edmonton – Alberta Liberal Leader Kevin Taft continued to set the agenda for the 2008 election campaign, with policy announcements on Aboriginal affairs, forestry, seniors, post-secondary education, empowering major cities, and democratic reform.

- “Liberal Leader Kevin Taft completed an aggressive week of election announcements Saturday by releasing his policy on aboriginals, while Tory Leader Ed Stelmach returned to his constituency after facing criticism over early promises.” (Calgary Herald, February 10, 2008)
- “‘Whoa, finally!’ said Dean Brown, acting executive-director of the Canadian Native Friendship Centre in Edmonton, when he heard [the Alberta Liberal policy announcement]. ‘It’s like, holy man, we hardly get any money from the provincial government as it is- so this sounds great.’ Brown also praised the timing of the announcement, following the release last month of census figures showing the explosive growth of Edmonton’s aboriginal population. ‘They’re touching on all the needs we have right now: health, education, and community support. They’ll definitely get the aboriginal vote.’” (Edmonton Sun, February 10, 2008)
- “[Peter] McCormick found Liberal Leader Kevin Taft came off ‘nicely focused’ with his agendas for various cities and regions (promising hospital expansion in Medicine Hat, more police in Calgary and Edmonton, a new arts centre in Lethbridge) while also pledging to cap Alberta’s greenhouse gas emissions. ‘He was nicely focused on the (each of the) places where he was, without contradicting himself.’” (Peter McCormick, politics professor at the University of Lethbridge, Calgary Herald, February 10, 2008)
- **Re: police funding formula:** “If there’s one thing out of this entire campaign that the people of Westlock should pay attention to, it’s this: a[an Alberta Liberal] promise to revamp the police funding formula so that communities do not pay for policing if they are in excess of 5,000 residents. Instead, that number would go up to 20,000. It’s something that Westlock would benefit greatly from, as we are looking at a colossal policing bill in 2009, and it’s the one thing that our Conservative government seems content to screw us over on.” (Kevin Berger, Westlock News, February 11, 2008)
- **Re. big cities charter:** “Ald. Joe Ceci welcomed the Liberals proposal. He said it would eliminate much of the ‘political football’ between the different levels of government that occurs now on issues such as condo conversions.” (Calgary Herald, February 12, 2008)
- “I’ve been a card-carrying Conservative for a long time,’ said Richard Creelman, part of a morning coffee klatch in Josie’s Time, a busy family restaurant on the junction of Highways 55 and 36, filled with over 200 clocks. ‘But I’m voting Liberal in this election. A lot of my friends are doing the same.’” (Edmonton Journal, February 13, 2008)

It’s time.
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- **Re: climate change:** “We like the [Alberta Liberal] idea of a Premier's Strategic Council on Climate Change and the Environment, regardless of who is in the driver's seat. And we believe that all parties should have a seat at the table, along with environmental and industry experts.” (St. Albert Gazette, February 13, 2008)
- **Re: public schools:** “Closing schools in older neighbourhoods contributes to their decline and encourages young families to move out to developing areas. [Patricia Grell of the Sustain Woodcroft Committee] said the committee welcomes Liberal Leader Kevin Taft's election pledge for a three-year moratorium on all school closures.” (Edmonton Journal, February 13, 2008)
- **Re. minor-injury compensation ruling:** “Liberal Leader Kevin Taft, showing more sense and heart, said immediately that he would not have appealed the decision.” (Don Braid, Calgary Herald, February 13, 2008)
- “Taft...wants ‘aggressive action’ to cut emissions. Stelmach, who wants to go slow after a long period of going nowhere.” (Roy Macgregor, Globe and Mail, February 13, 2008)
- “Alone among the party leaders, Taft refuses to paper over Alberta's deep urban-rural rifts. He's not afraid to say the big cities need special status within Alberta so they can make their own decisions, free from muddling by rural politicians.” (Don Braid, Calgary Herald, February 14, 2008)
- “A confident-sounding Kevin Taft laid out a series of targeted regional announcements in the opening week.” (Vue Weekly, February 14, 2008)
- “Even in our quasi-democracy, then, there is perhaps some room to manoeuvre. The Social Credit party governed this province for 36 years. At this moment, the Conservatives have managed to do so for 37. It is hard to shake the nagging feeling we all might be better off if they did not make it 38.” (Ira Wells, Fast Forward Weekly, February 14, 2008)
- “University of Alberta political scientist Lois Harder believes Taft's post-secondary commitment will play well with students, including those about to leave high school and their parents... ‘I would say the way the Conservatives have run so far, they don't seem to be responding that closely to what the opposition parties propose,’ Harder said.” (Edmonton Journal, Feb. 16, 2008)
- “Tricia Brown, who is now studying part-time at U of C before starting Mount Royal College's nursing program this fall, welcomed the [Alberta Liberals’] proposed extra help for books. ‘Getting money for books is really important...I pay a lot of money for books. Sometimes they can cost half as much as tuition.’” (Edmonton Journal, February 16, 2008)

As for the Stelmach PCs, it was another week of stumbling and bumbling from one disaster to the next:

- “The discouraging news for him is that public opinion polls show a great number of Albertans remain uninspired by the Conservatives and their leader, Ed Stelmach.” (Graham Thomson, Edmonton Journal, February 9, 2008)
- “Ed's [campaign] might be heading for a dry gulch even deeper than the one former Premier Don Getty's campaign crashed into in 1989. Like Stelmach, Getty made a string of money promises which he could not explain. They were deeply flawed as policy and made voters worry about debt.” (Don Braid, Calgary Herald, February 9, 2008)
- “In what's been a trend the first week on the hustings, Stelmach's daily announcement was overshadowed by rebukes of his election promises by affected groups and comments from unexpected sources.” (Calgary Herald, February 9, 2008)
- “Party infighting has also plagued two Calgary ridings, in both cases blamed on the heavy-handedness of Mr. Stelmach in rejecting locally nominated candidates, spurring one to announce Thursday that he would file a human-rights complaint against the leader and the party.” (Dawn Walton, Globe & Mail, February 9, 2008)

- “There is just Ed Stelmach, farmer, Premier by default, and the performance is much like a Grade 5 pupil giving the first oral composition of his life.” (Roy Macgregor, Globe and Mail, February 9, 2008)
- “Stelmach is a shy man who giggles easily one on one but who goes into lock behind a podium. He cannot connect as Ralph Klein could, cannot inspire as Peter Lougheed could. He makes Don Getty sound like a Kennedy.” (Roy Macgregor, Globe & Mail, February 9, 2008)
- “[Stelmach is] looking like a deer in-the-headlights . . . very flatfooted and surprised at the way things have unfolded. This first week is scripted, right? Everyone's sitting in the backroom working out . . . the campaign. It's all set out and written on cue cards . . . (but) Stelmach sounds wooden all the time. He looks uncomfortable in front of the camera or in front of a crowd. He has a suitcase full of material and he's not using it well.” (Peter McCormick, politics professor at the University of Lethbridge, Calgary Herald, February 10, 2008)
- “What began as a whiff of impropriety last Monday when Ed Stelmach kicked off the campaign inside the legislature had grown by Friday to such a stench that reporters covering the campaign should have been issued gas masks.” (Graham Thomson, Edmonton Journal, February 12, 2008)
- “Premier Ed Stelmach says he won't look into opposition concerns that loyal Tories have been named to supposedly neutral returning officer positions.” (Edmonton Sun, February 12, 2008)
- “Policy analyst Dan Woynillowicz of the Pembina Institute said he was skeptical about the premier's prediction of 335,000 job losses, saying that tackling climate change will spark new industries and technologies. Woynillowicz pointed out that there are not enough people in Alberta to fill current jobs.” (Darcy Henton, Edmonton Journal, February 12, 2008)
- **Re. minor injury insurance cap ruling:** “If Stelmach had the moxie, the guts, the wit, to pull it off, he could actually make this ruling work in his favour. He could acknowledge that the previous regime acted in error, he could pledge to fix the problem, he could establish himself as his own man with his own moral compass and his own independent policy agenda, he could exorcise the party's ghosts. Does he have the gumption to pull off such a strategy? There's little sign of it so far.” (Paula Simons, Edmonton Journal, February 12, 2008)
- **Re. minor injury insurance cap ruling:** “Of course, Premier Ed won't pledge to keep us from future gouges. Oh no, such a stance would involve guts. When insurance profits started going skyward a few years ago and drivers grumbled and wanted the government to step in and show the premium poobahs who was boss, the intestinal fortitude was nowhere to be found.” (Rick Bell, Edmonton Sun, February 13, 2008)
- **Re. minor injury insurance cap ruling:** “Stelmach's decision violates the most basic rule of good government; never support a law that discriminates against a group of blameless people... The whole sorry episode smacks of a cool political cynicism nobody has ever associated with Ed Stelmach. But that impression could stick in people's minds, unless he very quickly sees his mistake and reverses this odious decision... The Tories might as well paint a new campaign slogan on that big blue bus: ‘We favour car insurance that's not too expensive, but worthless when you're hurt.’” (Don Braid, Calgary Herald, February 13, 2008)
- “Many of the promises that Mr. Stelmach is making have been made before and we've documented that,” said [Seniors Action and Liaison Team's Brian] Staples. “We just think it's the same old, same old, and if they're really concerned, why are they not addressing the continuing demand for an independent seniors advocate? It's cost effective, reaches across the province and uses seniors.” (Edmonton Sun, February 14, 2008)
- “The Conservatives are looking vulnerable and increasingly irrelevant under their flimsy leader.” (Ira Wells, Fast Forward Weekly, February 14, 2008)
- “Watching the first few days of the Alberta Tories' election campaign, I am torn between which of two images best describes the impression left: Uncle Jed driving the family into Beverly Hills with Granny rocking on top of the jalopy or Roy Riegels' infamous run in the 1929 Rose Bowl.” (Lorne Gunter, Calgary Herald, February 14, 2008)

- “If Week 1 of Campaign Ed was the premier's stumble from the gate - as goofs galore upset the election launch - Week 2 has been the icy blast from the past. This is where the mess left over by Ralph Klein on cruise control came back to haunt Stelmach and made him look like anything but Steady Eddie.” (Neil Waugh, Edmonton Sun, February 14, 2008)
- **Re. minor injury insurance cap ruling:** “For this news, all Premier Ed has to do is say he'll launch a long-shot challenge of the shooting-down of the cap by the learned judge. The man with a plan doesn't have to reveal a plan on how to protect you and me from hefty hikes. Instead, he stammers and baffle-gabs and smiles and gets on the Ed bus and heads on the road to Who Knows Where.” (Rick Bell, Calgary Sun, February 14, 2008)
- “Voters are being asked to believe that the premier's résumé doesn't count and that if he does have any experience, he is very sorry about it.” (See Opinion, February 14, 2007)
- “Stelmach has maintained there's nothing wrong with the current system (of appointing returning officers) and earlier this week claimed he has nothing to do with the recruitment process. Campaigning in Fort McMurray, he said Friday that if re-elected, he would review the reforms ... suggested 11/2 years ago.” (Calgary Herald, February 16, 2008)
- “The Tories don't just leave their fingerprints on the electoral process; these are hoofprints in the political muck.” (Don Braid, Calgary Herald, February 16, 2008)

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