

# Stelmach to exit with \$1M payout

Severance for retiring MLAs called 'obscene'

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A number of veteran politicians are just a few months away from a whopping payday, but it's possible they could be the last batch of Alberta MLAs to receive such a shiny golden handshake.

The generous transition allowance for departing provincial politicians — which pays the equivalent of three months salary per year of service, based on a members' three highest-paid years in office — will see millions of taxpayer dollars doled out to departing politicians after the upcoming provincial election.

By law, the next vote must be held in the period between March 1 and May 31, 2012.

Scott Hennig of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation said former premier Ed Stelmach will be at the top of the list, with a payout of more than \$1 million.

He estimates former cabinet ministers such as Iris Evans and Janis Tarchuk, each



**\$1,008,100**

**ED STELMACH**  
Former premier



**\$709,500**

**BARRY MCFARLAND**  
Tory MLA



**\$698,700**

**IRIS EVANS**  
Former finance minister

first elected in 1997, would receive around \$698,000 and \$648,000, respectively.

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# Estimated transition allowance



Ed Stelmach  
\$1,008,100



Barry McFarland  
\$709,500



Iris Evans  
\$698,700



Janice Tarchuk  
\$645,400



Richard Marz  
\$544,200



Lloyd Snelgrove  
\$513,000



Mel Knight  
\$513,000



Hugh MacDonald  
\$491,800



Kevin Taft  
\$405,500



Ron Liepert  
\$348,700



George Groeneveld  
\$312,200



Harry Chase  
\$229,100



Dave Taylor  
\$231,600



Broyce Jacobs  
\$147,200

Canadian Taxpayers Federation estimates of transition allowance payments that will be made to retiring MLAs, based on an April 1, 2012, election date

## PAYOUTS: 'Something needs to change'

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Tory MLA Barry McFarland, who has not served in cabinet since first being elected in a 1992 byelection, will get around \$709,500, Hennig estimated.

"It's more than you would get in the private sector, it's for reasons that you would never get money paid to you in the private sector. It's ridiculous," said Hennig.

"Clearly something needs to change."

Retiring former cabinet ministers such as Lloyd Snelgrove and Mel Knight, and backbencher Richard Marz will all get more than \$500,000, while Liberal Hugh MacDonald will be just under that amount, according to the CTF.

The transition allowance was introduced by Premier Ralph Klein's government af-

ter it eliminated the former MLA pension plan, but has long been a source of controversy.

Earlier this year, Wildrose MLA Rob Anderson introduced a motion that would see the payout replaced with a retirement allowance not exceeding one month's pay for every year served, to a maximum of 12 months. It was defeated.

In an interview Thursday, Anderson said the current allowance is "just completely out of touch with reality" compared to both the private sector and other provincial governments.

"A severance, transition allowance is supposed to pay the bills for a few months while you transition to a new job. What it's become is basically a winning lottery ticket," he said.

During the recent Progress-

sive Conservative leadership campaign, now-Premier Alison Redford raised concerns about the transition allowance — among other aspects of MLA compensation — as she promised a review of Alberta politician pay that is the most lucrative among Canadian provinces.

That review, first called for in a Liberal motion in the legislature in 2010, is now underway. Speaker Ken Kowalski announced last week that it would be headed by former Supreme Court of Canada Justice John Major. Part of Major's mandate is to look at the transition allowance.

Neither Hennig nor Anderson are confident that there will be significant reform however.

"I think the whole review has been set up for this not to change," said Hennig, who

wanted a citizens panel to review compensation.

However, Mount Royal University political science professor Duane Bratt said the large number of veteran politicians leaving at the same time and receiving big payouts may produce the impetus for change.

He noted that the MLA pension plan was a hot button topic in the 1993 election.

And the transition allowance was a key issue in the recent Tory leadership campaign because front-runner Gary Mar had accepted a \$478,499 payment after he left political office and took the post of Alberta's representative in Washington, D.C., said Bratt.

"Once you get over \$400,000, \$500,000, it just starts to look obscene," he said.

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