Premier cuts partisan patronage appointments

An investigation reveals that Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach has recently reduced the number of partisan appointments to government boards. An Edmonton Journal investigation found that less than a quarter of all recent appointments to government controlled boards were card-carrying members of the provincial Progressive Conservative (PC) party. Previous to PC Party leader Ed Stelmach becoming Premier, nearly half of all board members were PC members. Although the PC party has had the support of over half the electorate in recent elections, its members consist of a small number of the Alberta population. Only three percent of Albertans are members of the PC party.

The provincial cabinet, lead by the Premier, has customarily possessed the authority to appoint members of government boards and the deputy ministers of the civil service. The recent move of reducing the number of PC members to the boards of provincial agencies is an effort to reduce suggestions of impropriety in the appointment process. A 2007 premier-commissioned report, “At a Crossroads,” suggested that government appointments be non-partisan, transparent, and based on competence.