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EDITORIAL: Long-term plan

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Politicians running for local election this year will likely be signing on for four years - instead of three - if they win their race this time.

B.C. is going ahead with changes this year that will increase the terms of councils and school boards.

That's of interest, because local government is the level that tends to have the most immediate impact on its citizens.

A longer term comes with both benefits and drawbacks.

In part, it's a natural reflection of the increasingly complex issues municipalities have to deal with. Gone are the days when deciding which potholes to fill was the most taxing issue on the agenda.

Local governments now deal with complex social issues and lengthy planning processes that can take years.

Many newly elected councillors spend the first year of their term figuring out the job and the last year campaigning for re-election. extending the time between elections lengthens the time when work is actually accomplished.

But a longer term may also dissuade a lot of regular folk from running for a largely thankless task. Money saved on general elections may be spent on byelections instead as council members bow out early.

Then there's question of what to do if things go wildly off the tracks. there are only two words that can describe that possibility: Rob ford.

Perhaps with the longer term, the province would do well to consider an extra measure of accountability - perhaps in the form of a recall mechanism - before local voters head to the polls.

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The rather new section of LGA now allows "phased developments agreements" lasting up to 20 years. That is plenty of time for any council - even with a 3-year term! - cjk