

Canadian
Parliamentary
Review



The Independents

Volume 47, No. 2



*A Roundtable Discussion
with Independent and
Independently-Minded
Parliamentarians*

Parliamentary Relatives

Political Jugglery and the Public Spirit:

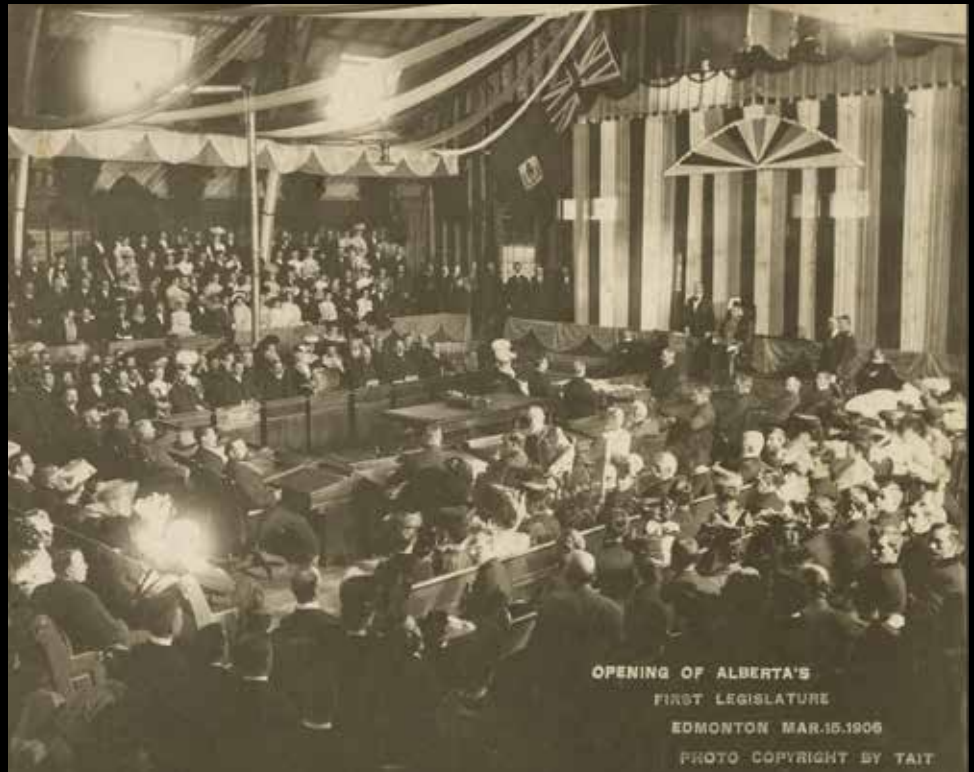
The Rileys and MacArthurs of Alberta

The years following the creation of the Province of Alberta were marked by a dynamic era of rapid growth and development. This was a time of economic expansion, infrastructure projects, building provincial institutions, establishing the education system, and social change. People were drawn to the province by the promise of new opportunities.

Many elements of these foundational years, the turbulence and the settlement, are evident in a story of two sets of brothers who came to the Calgary area with their families from the east. From 1906 to 1917, the constituency of Gleichen alternated in representation between these brothers: Ezra H. Riley (1906-1910), Archibald J. 'A.J.' McArthur (1910), Harold W.H. Riley (1911-1913), and John P. 'J.P.' McArthur (1913-1917).

The Riley family came to Canada from England, arriving in Ontario, where Ezra was born in 1866. The family then moved near to Montreal, where Harold was born. Turning to the west, the Rileys came to Calgary from Quebec in 1888 to homestead and engage in ranching. Ezra became a landowner, subdividing the community he named Hillhurst and donating the adjacent 21-acre Riley Park to the City of Calgary in 1910. Harold was the first Deputy Provincial Secretary from 1905 to 1910, became the first University of Alberta Registrar in 1908, and then worked with his brother in finance and real estate. Harold also served three terms as a Calgary Alderman (1911-1912, 1914-1915, and 1932-1935).

The McArthurs hailed from Scotland, where A.J. was born in 1867. His father Peter had taken part in the early California gold rush during the late 1840s and early 1850s. Peter returned to North America with his family in 1861, settling first in Bruce County, Ontario, where J.P. was



born in 1862. There, A.J. engaged in the timber business and subsequently exported stock. When he settled in Calgary around 1892, A.J. acquired land just north of the Bow River and started the residential district of Crescent Heights, one community over and within three kilometres of Ezra Riley's Hillhurst. J.P. came to Alberta around 1901 to ranch northeast of Calgary, settling in the city some 10 years later. Both brothers were also involved with the Knee Hill Coal company in Carbon, Alberta.

Ezra Riley was elected as the Liberal Member for the constituency of Gleichen in 1905 and again in 1909. During the First Legislature, Gleichen covered a large area to the north and east of Calgary, surrounding the city electoral division entirely. When the boundary map was amended in 1909 for the Second Legislature, the area of Gleichen was reduced on the northeast and southwest sides, so that it no longer enclosed Calgary but shared just the city's northeast boundary.

The *Canadian Parliamentary Review* was founded in 1978 to inform Canadian legislators about activities of the federal, provincial and territorial branches of the Canadian Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and to promote the study of and interest in Canadian parliamentary institutions. Contributions from legislators, former members, staff and all other persons interested in the objectives of the Review are welcome.

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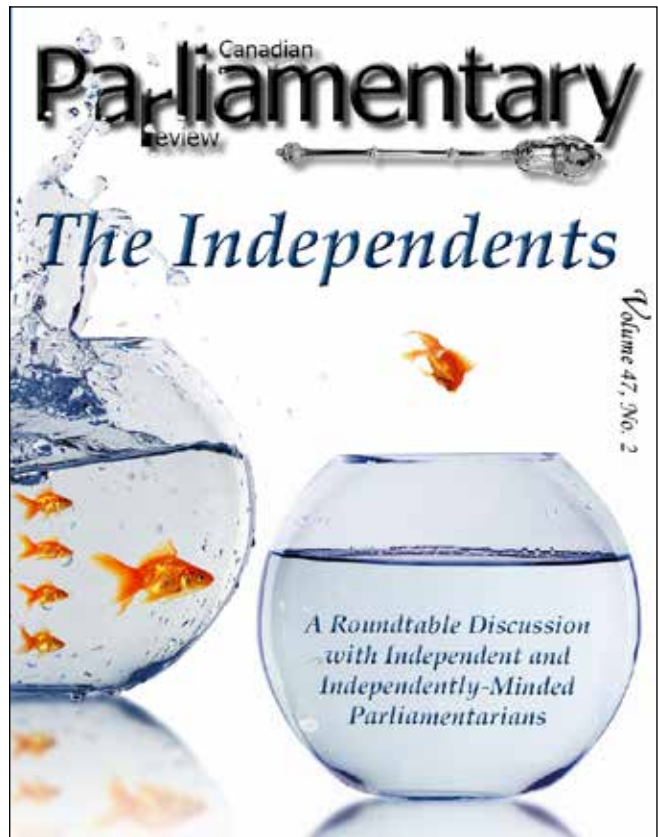
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On May 26, 1910, after months of criticism, Premier Rutherford tendered his resignation in response to the outcry over his handling of the Alberta and Great Waterways (A&GW) Railway contracts. Lieutenant Governor Bulyea immediately called upon Arthur L. W. Sifton, Chief Justice of Alberta, to form a Government. Ezra Riley was not satisfied. He too resigned from office, publishing his resignation letter in the June 3, 1910, edition of the *Calgary Herald*. In it, Ezra protested what he called the Lieutenant Governor's tactics of "political jugglery" to form a new ministry. He called for the people to have a say in who shall be their political leaders, for cancellation of the A&GW contract, and further demanded that no member of the former government be in the new ministry.¹

In the ensuing October 1910 by-election, Ezra ran as an Independent only to lose to Liberal A.J. McArthur. However, A.J.'s time in office was short-lived. Just eight months after his election, he faced a bout of pneumonia and died in office. Once again, an October by-election was held to fill the vacancy. In 1911, A.J.'s brother J.P. McArthur faced off against Ezra's brother Harold Riley. Despite strong support during the campaign from Liberal Cabinet officials, including Attorney General Mitchell and Premier Sifton, Conservative Harold Riley defeated Liberal J.P. McArthur. Harold's tenure was not much longer than A.J.'s; he served only the one term, just under a year and a half, before losing his seat in the next election.

According to census figures, Alberta's population increased more than fivefold in just 10 years, growing from 73,022 in 1901 (before it became a province) to 374,295 in 1911.² To account for the surging population, electoral boundaries were redrawn, and seats added to the Legislative Assembly. Starting with 25 electoral divisions in the First Legislature (1906-1909), this number was increased to 41 in the Second Legislature (1910-1913), and 56 in the Third Legislature (1913-1917). The boundary changes made in 1913 saw three Calgary constituencies (North, Centre, and South) established over an expanded area so that Gleichen no longer covered to the north of the city, but rather was entirely to the east and effectively rural.

For the 1913 general election, Harold Riley made the fateful decision to run in Bow Valley, the constituency

directly to the east of Gleichen, rather than challenge J.P. McArthur to once again represent Gleichen. Despite a generally stronger showing by the Conservatives in the election, Harold was not successful, going down in defeat to Liberal George Lane. Conversely, J.P. McArthur was elected in Gleichen, returning the constituency to the Liberal caucus. A notable moment demonstrating the social change of the time occurred in March 1916 when, during the reply to the Speech from the Throne, J.P. McArthur remarked that he was proud to be "one of the legislators in the first province in the Dominion of Canada to announce that equal suffrage should be granted to the women at this session of the legislature." He claimed it a "personal honor to be the first member to officially refer to the question in this House as a matter of legislation to be enacted."³

The story of the Riley and the McArthur brothers, each variously described as having a pronounced public spirit, follows many common themes from the early days of the province.⁴ Although the description of the Gleichen constituency as a 'dynastic political battlefield'⁵ may be an exaggeration, there was both turbulence and continuity as these two families competed for roles in governing and establishing the foundations of Alberta.

Heather Close

Director of Library Services and Records Management
Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Notes

- 1 Riley, E. H. "Notice: to the Electors of the Electoral Division of Gleichen," *Calgary Herald*, June 3, 1910, p. 2.
- 2 Statistics Canada, "Table A2-14 Population of Canada, by province, census dates, 1851 to 1976," *Historical Statistics of Canada*, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-516-x/sectiona/4147436-eng.htm#1>.
- 3 "J.P. McArthur Moves Reply to Speech From Throne," *Gleichen Call*, March 23, 1916, p. 1, https://archive.org/details/GCE_1916032301/mode/2up.
- 4 Archibald Oswald MacRae, *History of the Province of Alberta*, vol. II ([Calgary]: Western Canada History Co., 1912), p. 828; "Passing of E.H. Riley removes last Witness Confederation Signed," *Calgary Herald*, January 5, 1937, p. 9.
- 5 "Riley, Ezra Hounsfeld," *Glenbow Archives*, fax August 1, 2002.

Reaching a Critical Mass: A Roundtable with Black Parliamentarians

In our democracy, a parliamentarian has a duty to represent the interests of all people in a particular constituency or district. But parliamentarians who belong to communities that extend beyond their electoral district often find they assume a secondary responsibility to bring attention to community interests and/or share some common experiences with other parliamentarians who are part of these communities. In this roundtable, *Canadian Parliamentary Review* Intern Kaitlin Gallant spoke with three Black parliamentarians to discuss their experiences campaigning, as members of legislatures and political parties, and about the value of Blacks caucuses and multiparty organizations such as the Canadian Congress of Black Parliamentarians. *Responses from two separate telephone conversations were compiled into a transcript which was then reviewed and revised by all participants.

Participants: Patrice Barnes, MPP, Tony Ince, MLA, David Shepherd, MLA

Moderated by Kaitlin Gallant

CPR: What has been your experience campaigning as a Black candidate?

David Shepherd: Campaigning was an interesting and unique circumstance for me. To be candid, at no point when I was thinking of running, or campaigning, or even on the night I was elected, did I stop and think “I’m running as a Black candidate.” It simply didn’t occur to me. I grew up in an environment where I had no connection to Black communities. I spent most of my life not connected to Black communities. It simply was not something I was aware of until *after* I was elected.

So, after my election, I began to be invited to events with folks in Black communities and I discovered I was only the third Black person ever elected to the Alberta Legislature. I had been starting to learn about Black experiences in the US with the Black Lives Matter movement and those sorts of things. I’d been educating myself, reading a lot from Black journalists and activists, and recognizing there are a lot of folks that look like me but who have had very different experiences than mine. But it was only after my election that it really became a priority for me. I embarked on a period of learning, trying to build those connections and relationships.

Tony Ince: Unlike David, I’ve had a lot of connection with Black organizations and the Black community. I grew up around the corner from Africville. My wife’s family was from Africville. There’s a gentleman, Burnley Rocky Jones, who was one of many mentors to me.

I approached campaigning and going door to door as just an individual. It was only the odd individual who would raise an issue around race. To give you one example, I knocked on the door of a teacher, who was wrestling with terminology. How would she refer to Black students in the class. How would she

Patrice Barnes is MPP for Ajax, Ontario. First elected in 2022, she was appointed Deputy Speaker in 2023. Tony Ince is MLA for Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia. First elected in 2013, he is a former cabinet minister. David Shepherd is MLA for Edmonton-City Centre, Alberta. He was first elected in 2015. Kaitlin Gallant is a former intern for the Canadian Parliamentary Review. She was selected to be part of the 2023-2024 Ontario Legislature Internship Programme.



Patrice Barnes

determine what to call them? Should you call them African Nova Scotians? Should you call them Black? And so on.

It was a conversation that I enjoyed. I said to her: “Well, part of our problem in society, from my perspective, is when we begin to have these conversations people start stammering and stuttering.” They’re not sure what words they could say or what they should say. I said, “I’m an individual. I’m going to tell you. Just say it. If you’re being derogatory, I’ll correct you, let you know, and educate you. But I won’t know where you’re coming from until you open your mouth and just say it.”

What I really noticed while first campaigning was that the main party really didn’t support me in the way that I thought they would have. I don’t think they saw this Black person being able to really affect change, and I wasn’t really getting much support. So,

I found myself knocking on doors by myself, often with my wife or one of my children. But the majority of the time I was by myself.

That didn’t deter me, though, because the more I engaged with people at the door, the more I felt I needed to speak my mind and say it as it is. I often would start with the conversation: “I got involved because I got tired of politicians knocking on my door, making promises to me, and telling me all kinds of pie in the sky stuff.” I said to many people at the door: “The only thing I can ever promise you, because I have no idea what goes on down there, is that I’ll work hard for you.” The rest of this is history.

Patrice Barnes: As a Black person, running for the Progressive Conservative Party played an interesting role in my campaign. Most Blacks and newcomers have said they’ve always felt the Liberals or NDP were more welcoming as opposed to the Conservative Party, so that was an additional layer to my campaign. It led to many interesting conversations at the door about culture, identity, and representation, I’m very lucky that my area of Ajax is a very diverse community. Our highest population being South Asian, followed by the Blacks. You’re embraced differently in various cultures. So, I found it was very enlightening for me and a great opportunity for me to connect with my community of Ajax.

I served my community as a trustee for several years before I ran provincially. When you run as a trustee, you represent yourself, your values, your culture, and you have your own opinion. When you’re running provincially, you’re running with a party and with 124 other people. So, you recognize and are conscious of potential ripple effect of the things you do and say.

As a Black person knocking on doors, I was always very cautious to make sure I wasn’t too close to the doors. I did that because sometimes people find it intimidating just seeing a Black person at the door. You had to navigate those parts of campaigning. But outside of that, I had a great team of people supporting me who were excited to be a part of the journey. The campaign was a lot of fun and I was happy to talk to the community and see how I can impact people’s lives and make it better. And that’s why you run. Well, that’s why I ran. It was and continues to be a great journey.

CPR: What is it like being a Black parliamentarian in a predominantly white legislature?

Tony Ince: I found it quite interesting sitting in the legislature. When I was elected, it was the first time in Nova Scotia history that two Black people were elected at the same time. I got swept up in the red tidal wave. I beat the premier of the province - the first time that happened in 130 years. So, I get in there and I have colleagues who are eager to learn and understand the challenges of my community. That gave me a lot of freedom and a lot of leeway to bring issues to the table. I had a premier who also was very open and receptive. He pretty much allowed me to do whatever I wanted when it came to anything to do with the community, for example, the Canadian Congress of Black Parliamentarians. At the same time, there were other levels within the party, within government, who were pushing against the things I was trying to move forward. So, while I had some freedoms, there were a lot of things that were denied to me for whatever reasons.

David Shepherd: It was a process of learning for me. Within the first couple months as a parliamentarian, I started getting invited out to a lot of events with different Black communities. It became very clear how much it meant to them to see someone that looked like them in a position like mine. And one of the most frequent things I would hear when I went to these events is “Wow, we’ve never had an MLA show up here before.”

So, I immediately sat down with my staff and said this is a priority. We will never say no to any event that comes to us from a Black community. That was one of our priorities. I made a point to go out to every celebration of the independence days for all the different African communities. And then, of course, Black History Month. I had never been to a Black History Month event before in my 40 years of life. I had certainly never seen it taught or celebrated in school. So, in 2016, I took it upon myself to sit down and start trying to learn some of the Black history of Alberta. I tried to be very open and honest with those event organizers and with the communities about where I was coming from - what I knew and what I had to learn. Initially, there was a lot of learning.

In 2016, I also then reached out and, for the first time, invited Black leaders to come and meet at the Alberta Legislature. We had two meetings, one with elders from the community and one with youth from the community. Our political community was not engaged with Black communities. They did not exist as a calculation or a factor in the way that people would think about the South Asian community or



Tony Ince

the Chinese community. It just was not there. Part of my work was engaging those communities and trying to introduce them into our political sphere.

I was fortunate that our caucus, and our government, was receptive to that. They were receptive enough that in 2017, I was able to work with the Premier and our Minister of Culture to have Alberta become the fourth province to officially recognize Black History Month. That was a game changer. We had the first event in the legislature in early February 2017 and more than 300 Black people attended. That was the first time we’ve had that many people from the communities together celebrating. It’s become one of the favourite events at the legislature every year. A lot of the first four years was about that. Communities were very open and receptive. My colleagues were open and receptive. And we’re able to sort of build a lot of those relationships.



David Shepherd

In the next four years, moving from government to opposition, it became a bit of a challenge maintaining it. We had, for the first time, two Black MLAs at the same time - me and Minister Kaycee Madu, who was with the United Conservative Party of Alberta. There was an interesting dynamic between the two of us. We were on different sides of the House, so we had points where we agreed and points where we disagreed.

But, certainly, we saw an elevation of the dialogue and visibility of Black communities in the political debate, particularly with the murder of George Floyd in 2020. While it was a tragedy, it provided an incredible opportunity to increase the visibility of the discussion. We did some robust consultation with the Alberta NDP on issues of racism, both overt and systemic, and published a report that eventually led to my bill, the *Anti-Racism Act*. It dealt with the collection of race-based data and was inspired partly by the work that had been done in Nova Scotia. We

took pieces of that along with some of the work that had been done in Ontario on anti-racism.

So, my experience as a Black parliamentarian has been relatively positive even though there are challenges. It has taken a lot of work. I had push a lot of things up the ladder. It was not something that came naturally to our caucus or our party, that awareness. I don't think it's something that came naturally to the governing party. When I moved into opposition, I give Minister Madu credit in that he actively pushed some things up the ladder with them. But, sometimes, it only works if you make the argument of political expediency and try to explain why there is a political benefit in doing these things.

Tony Ince: I find the challenge is often our own community. To give you an example, for eight years I was Minister of the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs. I'm the first Minister to sit in that office for so long. For eight years, at every community event, and with every organization I engaged with, I would say, "Please, we need you folks to be more engaged. I'm in a position to help you to get on agency boards and commissions. You don't even need experience. Go sit there for a year and just observe what's going on. The fact that your body is there will remind them to look at things that relate to our community." For eight years, not one individual took me up on that offer, which was quite frustrating.

That's why our most recent meeting in Ottawa, with 45 of us coming together, is so important. It's also important for us to engage and educate the community about the political process, because most have no idea. They figured because I was the Minister, they could come to me, and I would just give them this or that. They didn't truly understand the process. I often say to people, 80 to 90 per cent of my job is explaining my job. You've got people who are calling you, looking for you to solve particular issues that are municipal or federal because they have no idea who does what. Now, with the Canadian Congress of Black Parliamentarians, they can see a mass of us talking to them from different levels of government and trying to educate them.

And, of course, most communities still don't trust us because they see us as being a part of a system that has left them out.

David Shepherd: Tony is absolutely right. There's a lack of trust because these are systems that were designed to exclude our communities specifically.

So, first of all, we've got to work on those systemic issues and try to break those down. But at the same time, our communities are well aware these systems were built to exclude them. They are used to being outside of them. There is the lack of knowledge, understanding, and education that comes from that exclusion, and then there is the lack of trust.

That becomes a dual burden you bear as a Black parliamentarian. On the one hand, you're trying to take apart parts of the system and make room in the system. At the same time, you're trying to earn back trust from the community. You're trying to bring the two together. And that is on top of all of the standard responsibilities that you have as a representative to your broader constituency, community, and whatever ministerial or critic responsibilities you might have.

Patrice Barnes: Overall, I have felt respected and supported since being elected to the Ontario Legislature. I think my additional role as Second Deputy Chair of the whole house (deputy speaker role) has probably helped to support that feeling and my colleagues from all parties have been great to work with.

This is the first year that we have representation in all major parties in the Ontario Legislature. Also, it's the first time the Progressive Conservative party has a black female minister in cabinet. It's really empowering and gives a sense of belonging when I share this space with the other Black members of the house.

We do get a chance to connect and share and just support each other. Sometimes it's in a small way – just the head nod as we pass each other in the halls to indicate “I see you” – and sometimes it's a longer chat to provide support and encouragement. In my role as Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education, I had the opportunity to spearhead the roll out of a mandatory Black history curriculum in Grades 7, 8 and 10. It's something that our community have been advocating for many years; to be able to lead that initiative has really been a fulfilling part of this role.

I agree with both Tony and David – working with our community can be difficult. I work to make myself accessible to everyone, especially members and organizations within our community, to help them navigate the systems and get an understanding of the way government works. It can be challenging at times, and it doesn't always work out in the way

that they want; sometimes that can further erode their trust. But this one was a win, not just for Black students, but for all students.

I have been lucky to have some great mentors, not all of whom are Black, who have been willing to share, guide and advise and that has made it easier. There have been challenges or situations that have been stereotypical, but I don't dwell on them. I treat everyone with respect until they show me otherwise. Being in this role requires a balance of confidence and resilience to overcome some biases and expectations, but I know the impact being in this role can have on the children that come to Queen's Park that see someone that looks like them. I am part of their history and so I will continue to strive to make them proud.

CPR: What is the value of Black parliamentary caucuses?

Patrice Barnes: I think there is value in Black caucuses. If you're Black, no matter what party you're from, the issues and challenges of the community across Canada are similar or the same. Being able to come together and pick three or four things that we want to champion for Black people across the country, there's value in that because you come as a unified voice. To be a unified voice is sometimes a very good way to accomplish things.

David Shepherd: This is something I'm just beginning to learn because I am part of a Black caucus for the first time. We elected two more Black MLAs with the Alberta NDP in this last election: Sharif Haji from the Somali community in Edmonton-Decore, and Rhiannon Hoyle in Edmonton-South, who has a Caribbean background. I had begun speaking with them ahead of the election. Now after the election, we've begun to have strategic meetings. We just had our first two sets of meetings as a Black caucus with some Black community leaders in Calgary this weekend. I cannot tell you how different those meetings were than the meetings I had when I went as an individual.

People trusted me, but they didn't necessarily trust our party. In fact, to be candid, that was a particular point of attack that came against me from Mr. Madu and another Black candidate that ran for the United Conservative Party. They said that “When the NDP were in government, they didn't put David in cabinet. They didn't elevate Black people. So, it's obvious that party does not care about Black people

now.” That was, frankly, a cheap political attack that was unfortunately divisive for communities.

But it reflects a larger truth. When you are a lone individual, there is less trust. With the three of us, there was a marked difference from those community leaders in their desire to engage ideas, their willingness to work with us, and their level of trust and openness. To have the first Black woman elected to the legislature, Rhiannon brings a whole perspective that I could never bring. Having allies who share the cultural experience and perspectives and who bring some unique ones is a game changer. In many ways, that is what needs to be the goal. Tony, I love that you are working across levels of government as well.

Tony Ince: To go back and talk about the Canadian Congress of Black Parliamentarians, Michael Coteau and I were both Ministers of Culture back in 2015. I went to visit him just as a fellow colleague who was a provincial Minister of Culture. We were having a conversation and I brought with me, as a gift, the book *Black Ice* [the history of a Black hockey league in Nova Scotia in 1895]. He started glancing through it and he said, “I didn’t know this information. I had no idea!” I shared with him, some of the other bits of information from Nova Scotia.

And then, as we’re talking, he starts Googling. He checks across the country. At that time, I think there were like 15 of us in government, provincially and federally. He said, “You know what? We’ve got critical mass. Wouldn’t it be nice if we could all come together and have a conversation and just share. Because regardless of the party, if we’re walking down the street, all they see is this, our colour, they don’t care what party or who we are.”

I came back to Nova Scotia, spoke to my premier and told him this is what I’d like to do. He said: “Go ahead, Tony, start it.” Just like that. And that’s how it came about. It was a small group. We said, we have to do this in a non-partisan way; our community needs that. Then, we looked at trying to grow this group. What about those of us who are no longer elected? What happens to them? All these conversations are continuing. I was really impressed with the meeting in Ottawa in August because we had a couple of people who were formerly elected show up as guests. There were 45 of us, and for me, it was a dream come true. All different levels, all different parties sitting

down and discussing issues of importance with our communities. I’m just overjoyed at the success of the last meeting and I’m looking forward to our future meetings because I can only see it growing.

David Shepherd: I would add one other thing to what Tony said. The value of a Black caucus is also in the internal structure. Rhiannon spoke so glowingly of the experience she had and how supported she felt, particularly because there are no other Black women in the Alberta Legislature. But systemic issues don’t just exist in the broader political systems, they exist in the political parties that were built in those systems. They adopted policies that, whether intentionally or not, acted to exclude our communities. So, there are systems that need to be addressed and pieces that need to be dismantled, or broadened, or modernized to address that exclusion. To do that as a lone individual, is exhausting and it’s nearly impossible to keep up with everything. Having those allies and multiple voices who can help amplify and broaden that conversation, it makes a massive difference.

Patrice Barnes: I agree. And I would add another challenge would be, are you taken seriously and how do you action it if you’re not the party in power? The reality is, you can advocate, but unless you have people that are willing to listen, willing to execute, then you’re only a voice, “that” group. “There they are again. It’s always the Black issue.” That presents its own barrier. So, there’s pros and cons to it. But, as David mentioned, an important value in the Black Caucus is the internal structure to amplify and support Black leaders.

CPR: How can legislatures and political parties be more inclusive for Black parliamentarians?

Patrice Barnes: If you look around Queen’s Park, it reflects a history. But which history? As I walk through the halls of Queen’s Park, I remember coming across a plaque that was donated by “coloured people.” This plaque hangs in the Ontario Legislature. Even though there’s a little bit of me that thought it looks strange, there’s still a piece of me that says, “There’s a bit of my history here.”

We had several Black History Month events in the building this year, as well as the unveiling of the Lincoln Alexander bust, Ontario’s first Black Lieutenant Governor. It was sculpted by a black artist. This was put together by the community

supported by the Speaker, so we are starting to further embed our history and tell our lost stories and that's important.

The legislature represents the people and the legislature, as a building, needs to reflect that history. I don't think that we should rip down statues, because that's a part of history. We can look at it critically through today's lens, but that doesn't mean it didn't happen. I don't think erasing it makes the difference. I think erasing it puts us at the risk of repeating it. Instead, give us room to add our voices so we have a full picture of how our country was built. That creates an environment that gives us permission to be ourselves, not as an add on but as an accepted piece of the rich fabric of this country.

David Shepherd: In terms of the legislature, I can't think of too many things that I have run into at the legislature that I felt were discriminatory. Now, certainly there have been news stories about the incidents of what people have encountered at the Canadian Parliament, where people have faced active discrimination. Black legislators, visitors, others have had experiences of being targeted by security. I have not seen anything like that at the Alberta Legislature from day one. I felt I was respected and treated like any other member.

But regarding resources, absolutely that's worth thinking about. I've had wonderful support from the Speaker's Office for Black History Month, and I think we've seen an increased visibility and consciousness regarding celebrating events and stuff with Black communities.

In terms of parties, as soon as they make a connection with some prominent individual from a Black community, immediately they ask: "Hey, can we get that person to run for us? Can we get that person to be a candidate?" I've seen multiple parties doing this without any thought to building trust in a relationship. Why should this successful Black individual step away from the career they have built in the community? Why should they take the credibility they have probably worked so much harder than others in similar positions to get, and loan it to a political party? This is not a consideration that comes to mind.

I was speaking with a prominent Black woman in Calgary who noted that, if she were to step up to run,

she is going to face a unique level of discrimination. She's going to face a unique level of attack. It is going to take more resources. It's going to take more from her personally. We need to consider that.

Another interesting point that came up in the conversation [at the Canadian Congress of Black Parliamentarians], is that prospective candidates say, "You want me to go out and sell a whole bunch of memberships for your party in order to have the privilege of being a candidate for you?" The question comes up for them: "Am I being used? Are you just using me, inviting me to run so that you can get a bunch of new memberships and fundraising done?" They have no guarantee that after doing all that work, which is more work in these communities than it is in others, that they're going to get anything out of it in the end.

Tony Ince: I don't want to repeat anything that David said, but he nailed it on the head. We've got 400 years of mistrust in a system. That's not going to be an easy thing to turn around. Especially since it's 400 years plus, because it's still going on today.

Let me share a statement that I've often made, and I've stood up in the House and I've made this statement. I said, "I stand on the shoulders of four or five people who were there before me. Four or five people who were lone wolves. The only difference between them and me, is the fact that I have a few more allies now in the time that I'm in than they ever had." Thus, I was able to move a few things forward because of those allies. They were alone. Their own parties didn't even believe in some of the things they were trying to move forward. Regardless of what party you're looking at, they just saw them, as David said, as the token. The community is not stupid. They can see those things. They read them. They're very intelligent.

Patrice Barnes: I'm going to say this as a general statement, that doesn't necessarily apply to everyone. If a party is selecting someone from a racialized community to run, that party has to be purposeful in understanding that person may need extra supports. They may not have the connections and extended network that a candidate from a different demographic may have. They may need to be mentored, and supported on the ways to run a campaign, door knock and, overall, taught how to be a candidate.

The other piece is financial. A lot of parliamentarians tend to be in the latter part of their lives. Politics is often a second career. They might previously have been CEOs or lawyers, or they're further along in their professional life and they can decide to do this. But when you look at a newcomer who is a first or second generation Canadian, or a young person, how do you support them financially if they need it?

How does the party help them grow a network of supporters that can fundraise? How do you produce money to run a campaign? How do you continue to fundraise throughout those four years to help you to be successful? These are questions political parties need to seriously answer if they are looking to support more Black candidates become parliamentarians.

CPR: Are there any final thoughts you'd like to add?

David Shepherd: The last thing I would say is, when we're talking about what legislatures can do, what can parties do, I don't know how much of the role they should be playing in this, but they should be

playing some role. If we want to grow more leaders from our communities, support them, build them up and have them be part of these systems, we need richer soil for them to grow in. That means, more of that education and engagement to overcome some of these historical barriers.

Patrice Barnes: I'm truly blessed to hold the position I hold, and I don't take it a day for granted. I am just always grateful to be able to walk this walk not just for me, but for anybody else that comes after. I think it's so important that we recognize that we carry such a larger responsibility.

Tony Ince: Unless we're having uncomfortable conversations, nothing's going to happen. There needs to be uncomfortable conversations in the broader society, period. And, it is incumbent upon members of our own community to push this agenda and educate. For me, there needs to be more allies who are not nodding their head in silence, but who say out loud, "Yes, we agree," and really step up and be uncomfortable as they help us push this agenda.

The Independents: A Roundtable Discussion with Independent and Independently-Minded Parliamentarians

On January 18, 2024, the Churchill Society for the Advancement of Parliamentary Democracy welcomed three parliamentarians to discuss the experience of Independent parliamentarians and independently-minded partisan parliamentarians in Canada. Moderated by Professor Alex Marland, roundtable participants included Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin, an MLA who won re-election as an Independent after previously being elected with a party, Bobbi Ann Brady, an MPP who was elected as an Independent without previously being elected with a party, and Scott Simms, a backbench MP who spent time on both the government and opposition sides of the House. Topics included the pros and cons of sitting as an Independent or as a party member, the constraints of party whips and “messaging,” and how these parliamentarians carved out a degree of freedom while either inside or outside of a party during their time in office. The session was dedicated to the memory of Peter Russell, author of *Two Cheers for Minority Government: The Evolution of Canadian Parliamentary Democracy* and other works, who passed away shortly before the event. **This transcript has been edited for length and clarity. The original recording of the event is available on the Churchill Society’s YouTube Channel.*

Participants: Bobbi Ann Brady, MPP, Scott Simms, and Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin, MLA

Moderated by Alex Marland

Alex Marland: I just want to situate things by helping everybody here realize how fortunate we are to be joined by our guests. Let’s think about all the politicians who have ever been elected in Canada at the federal or provincial level since 1972. The reason why I picked 1972 is that was the first election at the federal level when party labels appeared on the ballot. Up to that point you had your occupation listed. From that point forward, people could not know who their individual representative was as long as they knew who their party was. Since 1972 if you were to take

all those people who have been elected, including the three of you, you would be able to fill a midsize hockey arena. I’m using that image as context. If you were to take all the people who were elected as an independent [not people who were elected as a member of a party but subsequently left to sit as an independent or were removed from caucus and then sat as an independent], they would fit a small van.

To get even more precise. The people who ran for the first time [as an independent] and were elected as an independent [and not previously elected with a party], you (Bobbi Ann Brady) could sit in the front seat of that van. You are one of five people who have done it since 1972 as far as I can tell. It’s quite an accomplishment.

The three of you all bring similar yet different perspectives. What I’m hoping you’ll do is share some of your stories so that collectively we can learn from those stories.

I want to start out in a place where you might not think I would start out. I would like you to help us

Bobbi Ann Brady is MPP for Haldimand—Norfolk. She was first elected in 2022. Scott Simms served as MP for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame from 2004-2021. Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin is MLA for Cumberland North. First elected as a Progressive Conservative in 2017, she was re-elected in 2021 as an Independent. Alex Marland est titulaire de la chaire Jarislowsky en confiance et leadership politique à l’Université Acadia.



Bobbi Ann Brady

understand why are political parties necessary and when are political parties good? We're going to start from a premise that political parties are not evil, terrible things, and we need to get rid of them. It's more they exist and they're entrenched... what is good about political parties in your experience?

Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin: Maybe we'll let Scott start... *(laughs)*

Scott Simms: I thought you were coming to me for sure because I never was independent, I was independent-minded. For many reasons, I gravitated to the Liberal Party because of my values. In 2004, Paul Martin was leader.

The big benefit of the party is that the machinery that surrounds you is easily attainable once you win a nomination. One thing you can say to everybody

is that you're an independent when you go after the nomination for a particular party to a certain degree. You're independent because of the resources that you have. You can't even use a party logo if you run for a nomination and it's harder to raise money.

Now, once you win the nomination you get the party machinery, such as the advertising. You still have to pay for it, but it's at a reduced rate because everything is printed. You get the benefit of people who have won before. You also get the benefit of people who've lost before, which I think is probably more important. If you want to win, learn from people who lost.

To me, the machinery itself allows you to be more efficient - especially if there's a snap election and you don't have a lot of experience running. There were a lot of things that people came up to me with because they were longtime Liberals. They told me 'you should do this' or 'don't go to that door, go to this door' for whatever reason. I'd ask why, but they'd say you're wasting your time. There is a lot of field work that comes automatically with a nomination win. That, to me, is probably the biggest benefit.

If you're a person who toes the party line, your message also becomes very easy. You don't have to do a lot of homework. You just memorize the lines. I say that facetiously and I mean that facetiously. A lot of people who run use prepared texts by someone they've never met. They go through the issues based on lines from people who never voted, lived, or set foot in your riding. That's someone... *(pause)*, even if I wanted to vote Liberal, I wouldn't vote for that person. But, people do take advantage of that. To me, those are the major benefits of being in a party.

AM: Bobbi Ann, you spend time in the legislature. You see political parties operating. What are some of the benefits of political parties in our system?

Bobbi Ann Brady: I think for the electorate it's the clarity. You gravitate toward a party that supports your ideals or where you best fit in. It creates a sense of clarity. You know somebody is handing you messaging on a daily basis and that all creates clarity when you're concise and you're all singing from the same hymn book. Now, when you stray from that clarity and have a party that runs on a platform but strays from that platform, then the clarity for the taxpayer becomes very murky.

ESM: In addition to that, I would just say, on the surface, parties could work, but when you get into the

actual mechanics of what's happened inside of parties, they've lost sight of democracy. They've lost sight of why we're there to serve. It's a little bit harder for me to share the positives because the experience has been so challenging.

The unification of shared values does help, but the negative of that is that you can be so easily branded. If there's 20 people that are part of a party elected together, there's no way that they all share the exact same [ideas] and it's not fair to brand them all that way. If parties truly functioned democratically, then I think they could be positive. But there's so much work done that's not democratic. For example, staff telling elected officials what they can or cannot say. Most people would be appalled to learn that, right? They say: 'We didn't elect the staff, we elected you to be our voice. What do you mean they're telling you that you can't speak for us?'

I think on the surface they can work. But they've just morphed into something they were never meant to be.

AM: Maybe we can use that as a transition to talk about some of the troubling things about political parties. What are some things that we're not aware of, or only have a surface awareness of, that we should hear?

BB: I think that the majority of people believe that their representative goes to Parliament and represents them. They don't understand the branding. They don't understand how tight the messaging and the control is. They don't understand that in a caucus boardroom there are staffers who tell elected officials to sit down and keep their opinions to themselves.

Let's say I'm a hockey player. When you leave the ice, the door is closed in the change room and you have that discussion with your team. That's how you get better. That used to be the way caucus worked from what I've been told. I've never been in a caucus room, but that's what I was told as a staffer for 23 years. It worked that way, but it no longer works that way.

I feel that these regimes, these parties, are not interested in actually getting better. They don't want to listen to the grassroots. They don't want to listen to their members who are in the coffee shops and on the ground when they're not at Queens Park. It's a real detriment.

ESM: I recall the very first time that it happened to me. I was the health critic and I had done my first interview about this situation. I had been a nurse for a



Scott Simms

long time, and so the journalist asked me a question. I gave an answer and I said this is how we could have made an improvement. Right after the interview I was hauled into the office by one of the staff and told 'You can't ever do that again.' I said, 'What do you mean?' They said, 'You're only allowed to criticize the government. You can never give a solution to what the problem is.' I said that's ridiculous. That's not why I got elected - just to criticize the government. People expect more of their elected representatives in my opinion.

That was the first experience, but it continued on and on. You know the phrase the tail wagging the dog? Absolutely, there is a lot of power with the staff because elected MLAs or MPs are giving them that power. But if you stand up and say, 'No, people didn't elect you, they elected me,' then that takes you down a troublesome road too, because you're not toeing the line.



Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin

AM: You know, we live in a world now where things are really fast. There are a lot of things going on. It's really important to have staff who can be constantly looking on their phones and keeping elected officials informed, kind of steering things and assisting them. There's a reason why there's so many of them. And yet, the concerns that you've raised are actually fairly common from elected officials. Scott, what's your perspective about the role of political staff?

SS: Well, I think about caucus and how it's becoming more and more useless over time. But when it comes to staff... There's power in certain staff members, especially at the cabinet level and certainly at the leader, premier, or prime minister level. Caucus, in many cases, is just becoming a perfunctory operation of a gabfest where we all get together and try to be friends with each other.

This goes back to the 1980s, when polling started taking over. There was a time when caucus told the

leader about what's happening in their corner of the world. In the 1980s, pollsters came along and made an incredible amount of money doing their job by telling the leaders: 'Those caucus members say that, but that's not entirely true. Here are the numbers.'

I heard a leader once say to a caucus, during a three-hour caucus meeting about a very heated issue, 'Remember, there are stories, but there's also data.' I reminded the leader, 'Excuse me, but behind every piece of data there is a story. We're not data people. Otherwise, we'd be useless and there would be no such thing as a local representative. If you only rely on the data, why would you need us?'

The story needs to be told because policies are complex and people who are affected by policies are complex. This is where staff can help. Staff can build into your knowledge base and bring it to the top. If you're using staff only to push the message out to your own constituents, they're not being used in the right way. Leaders would love to have every member of their caucus to be messengers. What a fabulous world that would be for them. But you're doing a total disservice to yourself and to the country. Because if you've got it wrong, you've got to reverse engineer a bad decision.

AM: Scott you were about to mention caucuses. I'm wondering if you can describe for us what it's like in a national caucus when there might be over 100 MPs from across the country in that room. And then maybe Elizabeth and Bobbi Ann can explain what it was like in Nova Scotia or Ontario, because the caucus is not going to be as large as what happens in Ottawa. I'd like to compare the two.

SS: I was a Liberal, which means it's a big tent party. So, I'm in a room where, in 2004, where one person who believes marriage only belongs to heterosexual couples is sitting next to someone who believes marriage should be open to anybody. And then one person believes that there should be zero spending on military defense, when the next person believes that we should up it by 25 to 50 per cent.

This becomes an interesting conversation. If there's more of a conflict in caucus, it serves the country better. But, a lot of times, we used to poke fun at people who would get up to the microphone and say wonderful things about how we're doing. That's a cabinet audition.

There are people who cabinet audition. There are people who talk to their issues. There are people

who will defend friends of theirs. And we do become friends after a while. That's one of the reasons why it's hard to vote against the party. Everyone thinks it's just about discipline, but it's because you're getting the person sitting next to you, your friend, in trouble too.

Caucus can be a fantastic dynamic and it can also be useless. It doesn't take much to go from one to the other.

ESM: I was a part of a caucus for four years. There were some positives and there were some challenges. I think one of the dynamics in my personal experience is that I jumped into a leadership race six months after being elected to my first term. Maybe that was kind of crazy to do, but, looking back, I have no regrets. But the dynamics that happen in a caucus during a leadership race can be very unhealthy and that was certainly my experience. There are groups and bands, a real lack of trust, and no real team. There wasn't teamwork or camaraderie when it comes to making decisions.

Nova Scotia is a small province; however, the needs of those living in Cape Bretton are very different than those living in Cumberland County, and very different from those living in Yarmouth. Working as a team makes sure that all of the issues and concerns from all of us caucus members are being brought to the legislature.

Unfortunately, it didn't always happen. One of the big reasons that led to my removal from the party was the border shut down between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick during the pandemic. We have a border town, and literally 50 per cent of the people that worked at our hospital lived next door in New Brunswick and 50 per cent of the people on our side worked in New Brunswick. There was about 17 months of just complete disruption.

The decisions that were being made by government never took into consideration the impact on the people that lived in my area. Eventually it led to my removal from the party. But leading up to that, I wrote four different resignation letters over a period of about two years because it was so frustrating for me knowing that the needs of the people that I represented were not getting or met.

AM: Bobbi Ann and Elizabeth, you're both Independents and you're arguably a caucus of one. In Ontario there are other Independents, but they're

very different from you because they weren't elected as Independents.

BB: I'm glad you recognize that. (*All laugh*)

AM: What's it like to be a caucus of one?

BB: There are challenges, but I would say that the benefits far outweigh the challenges. The main challenge is that you don't have support staff to lean on. I worked for a Progressive Conservative MPP for 23 years, and we did a lot of work. When my member went in the House, he was largely handed items from a Minister's office, or from the leader's office. There was no free thinking. There was no individual touch to what he was presenting in the legislature.

As an independent, I don't have party overlords telling me what I can and cannot say or what I can vote for. The people of Haldimand-Norfolk tell me or guide me in how I conduct myself at Queens Park. It's very freeing as somebody who was in the party system for over 23 years and who was the local PC Association president for 20 years.

Some reporters ask me, 'Are you lonely?' I understand the context of the question, but I am not lonely. I have an army of people back in Haldimand-Norfolk who support me this way. They saw what happened in Haldimand-Norfolk as a slap in the face of democracy. They rose to the occasion. They went to the ballot box and they did something they were told never to do. We are different in Haldimand-Norfolk, and I like to represent them in a very different way. I'm not your typical politician.

One of the things that we've missed in some of the questions so far is that the party takes away your ability to be an individual - to be unique, to be dynamic, to be interesting. They want you as boring as possible. (*All laugh*) I don't believe I'm boring, and my constituents don't think I'm boring either. That's a good thing. I think that's the thing that I love the most; my creativity and my personality aren't stifled by a brand.

ESM: I love being an independent as well. When you're an independent, your team are your people - the people that you represent. In my case, the people of Cumberland North are my team. There's no conflict anymore about which team I'm with. If you're with the party, you're expected to be part of that team. Too often that team is not representing the people that elected you.

I'm able to go to the legislature, put forth bills and legislation, and ask the questions in Question Period that actually matter to the people that I represent. Since becoming an independent in 2021, I've tabled 54 bills. Probably about two-thirds of them are on healthcare because that's my main focus. A lot of them are also on affordability, finance issues and tax issues that are important to not only Cumberland North, but, in many, cases all Nova Scotians.

A lot of the other MLAs have taken me aside privately and said: 'We envy you. We wish we could be independent like you.' I say to them, 'You can. Don't let anyone convince you that it's a weakness. It's actually very empowering for the people that you represent, and for democracy.'

SS: That's really good. That's essentially at the core of it.

AM: Scott, you were with a political party, with a brand, for a long period of time. How do you react to that? About your ability to be your true self as a partisan?

SS: Oh, it's maddening. You talked about the benefits of the party. The benefit of being independent is when a microphone comes (*gestures toward himself*), it's 'Let's go.' Now, I got to that point later on because I had no greater ambitions to be in cabinet. I didn't want to do any of that stuff, I just wanted to represent my riding. I was able to get a few things. I was appointed to committees that allowed me to do some things and travel in Europe. I wouldn't have had that as an independent.

But, at the core of a functioning democracy... I mean here's the problem. People who come up to politicians and say I wish I was more independent like you. A good friend of mine, [MP] Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, is very partisan, very Liberal. But he also does his own thing when he talks about certain bills. Leaders will always say, 'I will give backbenchers more power.' Garbage! They can't. They want to, and they can't. I don't care who the leader is. In order for backbenchers to have the power to be in a spot similar to what Elizabeth talked about, you have to take it yourself. If you have to face whatever punishments there are, if you have to be ostracized by your colleagues, so what? Nobody in caucus can vote for you. Everyone seems to forget that.

I always say that the people who don't serve the conversation well when it comes to strengthening a party, and people who should be on the receiving end

at a caucus meeting should be cabinet members and those who want to join cabinet. These people have set ambitions. It depends on what you want to do. If a backbencher wants to be a backbencher, be one!

ESM: As human beings, we all want to be liked. We all want to be included. But, I think sometimes when you're there, you can easily forget why you're there. You're there to represent the people back home, and if you always keep reminding yourself of that, you're going to always make the right decisions.

Can I share a little story? The premier called an emergency session last summer to deal with a potential raise that he didn't want for the MLAs. The house leader for the government came to me and the other house leaders in opposition and said, 'We want to put this bill through without going to committee of the whole and third reading. We just want to do it all in a day. But we need unanimous consent.' The two other opposition party House leaders said yes. I said, 'You know, there is something you could do for me. I'm a little worried because the emergency room expansion at our regional hospital was announced by the previous premier and I would just like to have in writing from the government that this is not going to be delayed.' The house leader said sure, came back to me an hour later, and said 'The minister of Health has assured me that everything is on track.' I said, 'Great! Can you just give it to me in writing?' He said, 'No, we can't do that.' So I said, 'Okay, I can't give unanimous consent.' If it's true, there's no reason why you can't give me that in writing. It's something that means a lot to the area.

It came down to the vote, and out of 55 people I said no. They were furious with me because it meant we had to come back after a long weekend. But I said, 'Listen, I'm not here to make you all happy. I like you, but I'm here to represent the people of Cumberland North. The day after we left, they actually did a press release saying the emergency expansion is on track and on time. So, I actually got what I wanted. They wanted to make sure that everybody knew that it was on track. I just make that point because it's so easy to forget what team we're on and why we're there.'

BB: I think when I went to Queen's Park, the Liberals and the NDP were watching me closely because they believed that I would be a puppet for Doug Ford. I was a conservative staffer for 23 years, and that's what they expected. So when I came to Question Period the first time and asked a really hard-hitting question, I think that helped earn that respect. There are times where I'll stand up and I'll vote with the Conservatives, and

the Liberals that sit beside me heckle me a little bit in a fun way. But I think there's mutual respect. Nobody's angry with me when I vote one way or another. Even the Conservatives just kind of hang their head and say, 'Aw, shucks.' But I don't think anybody is really keeping track except for maybe the leader's office.

AM: Scott, were you able to get things done for your constituents as a backbencher in a political party?

SS: I'm still working on it. (*All laugh*) I'm kidding. Sometimes we forget that there's a micro side of this job, as opposed to the macro issues, that is very fulfilling. I once saved a family from being separated. A man met his wife in the United States - she's a Mexican national. Things happened with immigration that were bad. She had a child in Canada and she and her oldest son were being deported out of Canada to Mexico while her husband and youngest child had to remain. We worked to the point where we actually were able to get the Minister's office to do something to keep them united. That's the type of thing that never makes the news, but it's pretty fulfilling.

I'll never forget... We had this oil spill in my riding, and I called the Minister's office. Every Minister has

staff that work on the political side of things and on the bureaucratic side of things. I called and said, 'I've got this oil spill and I need to talk to someone about what's going on.' They said, 'Oh, well we'll give you the lines to use.' Lines! What am I going to say? That 'as a government we're hoping that it'll be cleaned up, and hopefully the middle class will persevere'?! I just want information. These people want to know who's coming to clean it up.

That's an exquisite example of being a messenger. I find that people who are very partisan take that type of attitude. I've met these people when they weren't in politics anymore, and they're angry about a lot of things. They're angry because they allowed that to happen. By exercising your own little bit of power, you could do great things. You just do your research and be patient.

BB: Just following up on that. A member of government said to me 'It's not my fault. It's the bureaucracy's fault.'

Well, whose fault is it really? It's up to you to lead the bureaucracy. The messengers, they rely on that too much; that 'it's not my fault.' Constituents don't want to hear that.



Front row (L-R): Scott Simms, Bobbi Ann Brady, Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin, Alex Marland, and Corinne Murray of the Churchill Society. Back row: Members of the Ontario Legislative Assembly Internship Program.

Common Seat Allocation Methods in Proportional Representation Systems and a Novel “Priority Allocation by Rank” Method

There are many examples of elections in Canada in which the successful parties who formed government earned a majority of seats that were disproportionate to their proportion of the vote. Some argue these outcomes signal the need to transform to a system of proportional representation. Several types of proportional representation systems exist. In some of those systems, determining how seats should be distributed among parties requires applying some form of seat allocation method. This article discusses two such methods, the largest remainder and highest average methods, and presents a novel method developed by the author, referred to as “priority allocation by rank.” Voting results from British Columbia’s 2020 election were used to create a hypothetical election scenario for the purposes of comparing seat allocations produced by these three methods. The results suggest that the priority allocation by rank method has potential to be a viable alternative to the other two methods.

Tim Sheaff

Introduction

There are many examples in Canada of elections that resulted in the party forming government earning a majority of seats that were disproportionate to their proportion of the vote. For instance, in Ontario’s 2022 election, the Progressive Conservative Party won 67 per cent of the Legislature’s seats while being the preferred party of only 40 per cent of voters.¹ Likewise, in Quebec’s 2022 election, the Coalition Avenir Québec garnered only 41 per cent of the vote but earned 72 per cent of the National Assembly’s seats.² Some argue these seemingly unfair outcomes signal the need for electoral reform, including transforming from the current first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system, more formally known as single member plurality, to one of proportional representation (PR).³

FPTP should be readily familiar to Canadians, as it forms the basis for all federal and provincial elections; the country or a province is divided into electoral districts in which one member of Parliament or a

legislature, respectively, is elected. It’s a simple design that is easily understood – the candidate who gets the most votes wins the spoils of the competition (an invitation to join the relevant jurisdiction’s legislative body). By contrast, PR systems use different models of varying complexity in their attempts to achieve proportional results.

PR has long been a topic of interest and debate for Canadians. Attempts have been made in Canada to institute PR, but, to date, none have been successful. For example, Ontario, Prince Edward Island and British Columbia have held referenda on the subject, with voters rejecting PR in each case.⁴ In 2015, the Governor General’s Speech from the Throne expressed the Liberal government’s commitment to “undertake consultations on electoral reform and ... take action to ensure that 2015 will be the last federal election conducted under the first-past-the-post voting system.”⁵ The Liberal government’s goal, however, was ultimately abandoned.⁶ Recently, the Liberal Party of Canada, at its 2023 party convention, expressed its desire to try instituting PR again by passing a motion to add to its party platform the establishment of a National Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform.⁷

Numerous variations of PR systems exist. As between BC’s three referenda in 2005, 2009 and 2018, the province put forward four different types: single

Tim Sheaff is a lawyer with the BC Ministry of Attorney General and was formerly legislative counsel. The opinions expressed in this article are his own and do not represent the Ministry of Attorney General or the Government of British Columbia.

transferable vote, dual-member, rural-urban and mixed-member.⁸ Amongst Prince Edward Island's referenda in 2005, 2016 and 2019, the province proposed dual-member, mixed-member, preferential voting and FPTP plus leaders.⁹ Ontario, in its 2007 referendum, sought the public's opinion on the mixed-member system only.¹⁰ Another PR system used in many international jurisdictions, though not submitted to Canadian referendum voters, is the party list system (List PR).¹¹

Under List PR, a jurisdiction is divided into regions, referred to as multi-member districts (MMDs), from which several members are elected.¹² For each MMD, parties put forward a list of candidates, and on election day voters select their preferred party. After voting concludes, seats in the MMD are proportionally allocated to parties using some predetermined seat allocation method. Presently, there are two general categories of methods used – largest remainder (LR) methods and highest average methods. Each party's allocated MMD seats are then distributed amongst its candidates according to their ranks on the party's list. In a List PR system that uses a closed list, parties determine their candidates' rankings before the election. When an open list is used, voters also identify their preferred candidate when selecting their preferred party, and candidates' rankings are determined by voter preferences.

This article sets out to do several things. First, it describes the LR and highest average methods. More specifically, this article discusses two variants of the LR method (differentiated by their use of the Hare and Droop quotas, which are explained in greater detail below) and the D'Hondt method, a variant of the highest average method. Next, this article introduces a novel method developed by the author as an alternative to the LR and highest average methods, referred to as the "priority allocation by rank" (PAR) method.¹³ For the purposes of explaining these three methods, each of them is presented in the context of their use in the List PR system. This article then discusses an experiment conducted by the author (primarily as a proof of concept of the PAR method) that used BC's 2020 election results to create a hypothetical election scenario that applied List PR to compare seat allocations produced by employing the three methods.

Description of LR method

The LR method allocates seats in an MMD over several steps.¹⁴ First, a quota is determined for the MMD. A quota is a bloc of votes that, for each time

it is exceeded by a party's vote total, will guarantee the party one seat. Two commonly used quotas are the Hare quota and Droop quota. The Hare quota is calculated by dividing the MMD's total votes by the number of MMD seats.¹⁵ Slightly more complicated, the Droop quota equals the MMD's total votes divided by the sum of the number of MMD seats plus one, after which the resulting quotient is increased by one.¹⁶ For the purposes of this article, the phrases "LR (Hare)" and "LR (Droop)" are used to distinguish between LR methods that apply these quotas, respectively.

Next, each party is awarded one seat for each bloc of votes within its vote total that is equal to the quota. Those blocs of votes are then subtracted from the party's vote total, and the party's remaining votes are its remainder. If there are any remaining unallocated seats after the parties have been given their quota allocations, the remaining seats are distributed to parties one at a time, in order starting with the party having the largest remainder, until all remaining seats have been allocated. For illustrative purposes, an example of seat allocations using the LR (Hare) and LR (Droop) methods are provided in Tables 1 and 2.

Description of D'Hondt method

The D'Hondt method is a highest average method that employs an iterative process by which seats are allocated to parties in an MMD one at a time.¹⁷ For simplicity, each time a seat is allocated in the iterative process is described in this article as a "round." In each round, the party with the most votes attributed to it is awarded the round's seat. The votes attributed to a party for a round is determined by dividing the party's total MMD votes by the number of seats awarded to the party in all previous rounds (if any) plus one.¹⁸ If a party has not been awarded any seats, then the votes attributed to it would simply be its MMD vote total.

As an example of how this process would unfold for a party, suppose that a party that earned 5,000 votes in an MMD is awarded its first seat. For the next and subsequent rounds, that party's MMD votes will be divided by two (two being the sum of the party's one awarded seat plus one), resulting in 2,500 votes being attributed to the party. If that party is later awarded a second seat, the party's attributed votes will be 1,667 (its MMD votes divided by three) for each proceeding round until it earns a third seat. The process of dividing the party's MMD votes continues for each additional seat the party earns. A complete example of how seats are allocated among many parties using the D'Hondt method is shown in Table 3.

Table 1 - Example seat allocation using the LR (Hare) method for an MMD with 10 seats and 10,000 votes

Quota = 1,000	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Votes	4,650	2,550	1,675	775	350
Full quotas [total votes in quota blocs]	4 [4,000]	2 [2,000]	1 [1,000]	–	–
Remainder votes	650	550	675	775	350
Remaining seats allocated by largest remainder	1	–	1	1	–
Final allocation	5	2	2	1	–

Note: “P” means party. Quota is calculated as 10,000 / 10 = 1000.

Table 2 - Example seat allocation using the LR (Droop) method for an MMD with 10 seats and 10,000 votes

Quota = 910	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Votes	4,650	2,550	1,675	775	350
Full quotas [total votes in quota blocs]	5 [4,550]	2 [1820]	1 [910]	–	–
Remainder votes	100	730	765	775	350
Remaining seats allocated by largest remainder	–	–	1	1	–
Final allocation	5	2	2	1	–

Note: “P” means party. Quota is calculated as 10,000 / (10 + 1) + 1 = 910 (910.09 rounded to the nearest whole vote).

Table 3 - Example seat allocation using the D’Hondt method for an MMD with 10 seats and 10,000 votes

	P1 4650 votes		P2 2550 votes		P3 1675 votes		P4 775 votes		P5 350 votes	
Round	Div	Round Vote	Div	Round Vote	Div	Round Vote	Div	Round Vote	Div	Round Vote
1	1	4650	1	2550	1	1675	1	775	1	350
2	2	2325	1	2550	1	1675	1	775	1	350
3	2	2325	2	1275	1	1675	1	775	1	350
4	3	1550	2	1275	1	1675	1	775	1	350
5	3	1550	2	1275	2	838	1	775	1	350
6	4	1163	2	1275	2	838	1	775	1	350
7	4	1163	3	850	2	838	1	775	1	350
8	5	930	3	850	2	838	1	775	1	350
9	6	775	3	850	2	838	1	775	1	350
10	6	775	4	638	2	838	1	775	1	350
Final allocation	5		3		2		–		–	

Note: “P” means party, “Div” means divisor (the number of seats that have been allocated to a party plus one), and “Round Vote” means the votes attributable to a party in a round. Bolding in the table indicates which party has been awarded a round’s seat.

Description of PAR method

As noted earlier, the PAR method is a novel method created by the author as an alternative to the LR and highest average methods. In developing the PAR method, the author's overall guiding principle was to limit the use of mathematical formulae while still achieving a proportional distribution of seats that is consistent with the other methods.

Under the PAR method, each party is assigned a rank based on its MMD vote total. The party with the most votes is assigned the highest rank. Seats are then allocated to parties in priority order according to rank. When it's a party's turn to receive seats, the party is allocated a percentage of the MMD's seats that is closest to its percentage of the MMD vote (subject to the caveat below); for example, a party that gets 25 per cent of the MMD vote should receive a share of the MMD's seats that is closest to 25 per cent. This continues until all MMD seats are allocated. As a caveat, if, when it's a party's turn to receive its seats, there are not enough unallocated seats remaining to fulfill all of the party's percentage share, the party will only receive the remaining number of unallocated seats, or, similarly, the party will receive no seats if none remain. An example allocation using the PAR method is presented in Table 4.

Sometimes, there could be unallocated MMD seats that remain after all parties have been given their percentage shares.¹⁹ In such cases, as a supplemental step, one of the remaining MMD seats will be allocated to each party in priority order by rank (again stopping when there are no more MMD seats left to allocate). An example of such scenario is provided in Table 5.

Converting a party's percentage of the MMD vote to seats is the only aspect of the process that requires a mathematical calculation. To make this conversion, the party's percentage share of the MMD vote (its MMD votes divided by the total MMD vote) is multiplied by the number of MMD seats. The product of that multiplication in almost all cases is likely to be a mixed number (such as 2.54 or 3.12). That mixed number is then rounded up or down, as appropriate, to the nearest whole number. That whole number represents the party's percentage share of the MMD's seats.²⁰

As an example of this calculation, consider an MMD with five seats and 6,000 total votes, in which a party garnered 3,300 of those total votes. That party's share of the MMD vote is 3,300 divided by 6,000, or 55 per cent; consequently, the party should be awarded a share of the MMD's seats that is closest in proportion to 55 per cent. The direct proportional equivalent of 55 per cent of the five MMD seats is 2.75 seats; however, because there is no such thing as a partial seat, 2.75 is rounded up to three (being the nearest whole seat). The party's share of the MMD's seats is, therefore, three seats.

Comparing the PAR, LR and D'Hondt methods

Using BC's 2020 provincial election results,²¹ the author conducted a test to examine how the PAR, LR (Hare), LR (Droop) and D'Hondt methods compare in allocating seats in a List PR system. The author combined the province's 87 electoral districts into 19 test MMDs (11 MMDs consisting of five seats and eight MMDs consisting of four seats). In each case, the electoral districts forming an MMD were adjacent. Test voting results were derived for each test MMD by adding the votes for each electoral district that formed

Table 4 - Example seat allocation using the PAR method for an MMD with 10 seats and 10,000 votes

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Votes	4,650	2,550	1,675	775	350
Parties' rankings	1	2	3	4	5
Share of MMD vote	46.5%	25.5%	1.675%	7.75%	3.5%
Share of MMD vote multiplied by number of MMD seats	4.65	2.55	1.675	0.775	0.35
Parties' proportional shares of seats	5	3	2	1	–
Final allocation	5	3	2	–	–

Note: "P" means party.

Table 5 - Example seat allocation using the PAR method for an MMD with 10 seats and 10,000 votes when there are remaining unallocated seats after parties have been allocated their seat shares

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Votes	5,400	3,400	450	400	350
Parties' rankings	1	2	3	4	5
Share of MMD vote	54%	34%	4.5%	4%	3.5%
Share of MMD vote multiplied by number of MMD seats	5.4	3.4	0.45	0.4	0.35
Parties' proportional shares of seats	5	3	–	–	–
Initial allocation of parties' shares	5	3	–	–	–
Supplemental allocation of remaining unallocated seats	1	1	–	–	–
Final allocation	6	4	–	–	–

Note: "P" means party.

the MMD. Votes were divided into five categories, as delineated by the province's reported election results: four categories representing votes attributable to the New Democratic Party, Liberal Party, Green Party and Conservative Party, respectively, and one category named "Other" consisting of the votes of all other candidates. For the purposes of this test, the Other category was treated as though it were its own party.

Applying each method, seats were allocated to parties in each test MMD based on the test voting results, after which the seats in all test MMDs were added to derive the parties' theoretical provincial seat allocations. The results of this experiment are summarized in Table 6, which shows (1) the parties' total provincial votes and shares of the total provincial vote, (2) the parties' actual provincial seat allocations and actual shares of the province's seats, and (3) the parties' theoretical seat allocations using the four methods and derived theoretical shares of the province's seats.

As can be seen, the parties' respective theoretical seat allocations produced by the four methods are more proportionally aligned with the parties' provincial votes as compared to the parties' actual seat allocations. Moreover, the PAR method's seat allocations are not only consistent with those produced by the other three methods, but they are also closer in proportion to the parties' provincial votes as compared to the seat allocations produced by the LR (Droop) and D'Hondt methods.

Conclusion

People are bound to have different views about which seat allocation method is best. For lawmakers, in choosing their favourite method, factors under consideration would likely include not only which one produces their most preferred proportional distribution but also which one is easiest to explain to, and most easily understood by, the voting public. There are examples of lawmakers expressing concern about the latter issue of understandability. For example, in the context of the Droop quota, one opposition member during second reading in the BC legislature on the *Electoral Reform Referendum 2018 Amendment Act, 2018*,²² (which formed part of the legal basis for the province's 2018 referendum on PR) stated, "I have yet to hear anyone, after all the hours of debate that have gone on in this House, actually explain the Droop formula — how that works."²³ As stated by another, "I don't think it's fair that we ask voters to go back to college or high school and learn formulaic, mathematical equations to understand if they're going to get a representative of their choosing to represent them in Victoria."²⁴

This author hypothesizes that the PAR method's use of rankings and allocations of shares of seats nearest to parties' respective proportions of the vote is at least as understandable as the LR method's use of quotas and comparisons of largest remainders and the D'Hondt method's process of iterative divisions and is perhaps even more easily understood. This hypothesis requires further testing.

Table 6 - Comparison of actual BC provincial voting results, actual provincial seat allocations and theoretical seat allocations derived using the PAR, LR (Hare), LR (Droop) and D'Hondt methods

	NDP	LIB	GRN	CON	OTHER
Total provincial votes	898,384	636,148	284,151	35,902	29,047
Proportional share of votes	47.7%	33.8%	15.1%	1.9%	1.5%
Actual provincial results					
Actual provincial seat allocation	57	28	2	–	–
Proportional share of actual seat allocation	65.5%	32.2%	2.3%	–	–
PAR method					
PAR theoretical seat allocation	45	30	11	1	–
Proportional share of theoretical seat allocation	51.7%	34.5%	12.6%	1.1%	–
LR (Hare) method					
LR (Hare) theoretical seat allocation	39	30	16	1	1
Proportional share of theoretical seat allocation	44.8%	34.5%	18.4%	1.1%	1.1%
LR (Droop) method					
LR (Droop) theoretical seat allocation	46	32	8	1	–
Proportional share of theoretical seat allocation	52.9%	36.8%	9.2%	1.1%	–
D'Hondt method					
D'Hondt theoretical seat allocation	48	34	5	–	–
Proportional share of theoretical seat allocation	55.2%	39.1%	5.8%	–	–

Note: NDP, LIB, GRN and CON mean New Democratic Party, Liberal Party, Green Party, and Conservative Party, respectively.

Additionally, the results of the experiment presented in this article suggests both that List PR will produce more proportional results compared to FPTP and that the PAR method is capable of being a viable alternative to the LR and highest average methods.

Further testing is needed to confirm if this holds true across many election scenarios. Such additional testing does not necessarily need to use voting data from actual elections; instead, such tests could likely be completed using computer-generated random scenarios, since the methods are algorithmic functions

that can be applied to any data set to extract results for comparison purposes. Of course, randomized scenarios that fit more closely with typical election results are bound to provide data that is more relevant.

Finally, while this article focused on seat allocations in the context of List PR, the LR and highest average methods may also form part of other PR systems.²⁵ Consequently, there is potential for further examination of whether the PAR method could have application to such other PR systems as well.

Notes

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- 12 Ibid, Miligan and Alchin.
- 13 The author reached the conclusion that the PAR method is novel following extensive research. It remains possible that the PAR method has been articulated in literature that was not uncovered by the author.
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The Medium is the Message: Usage of Messaging Apps by Parliamentarians and their Staff

The days of hushed huddles and paper note passing between MPs appear to be coming to an end. The use of messaging apps by parliamentarians and staff have permitted instantaneous communication between people on the Hill and beyond without anyone ever needing to leave their seat. But do parliamentarians and their staff believe this new technology has changed their work for the better or the worse? In this article, the author uses interviews with MPs and staff from all recognized parties in the House of Commons to analyze how and why they use and choose specific messaging apps. Although there are clear benefits of having open channels to communicate among and between staff and parliamentarians, concerns over information security, work-life balance, and the growing influence of the Leader's and Whip's office were identified by interviewees.

Sarah Rollason-MacAulay

I do think there's going to be more and more risk associated with (messaging apps) as we rely more and more on this technology.

– *Conservative MP*

Introduction

When the House of Commons was established in 1867, there were 181 MPs who communicated verbally, face-to-face, or by physically passing the written word. At the time of writing, there are 338 MPs whose communication has been augmented using messaging app technology which allows them, for better or for worse, to communicate instantaneously, wherever they may be, in the fast-paced, cut and thrust world of politics.

The use of technology and how it is embedded within the culture on the Hill is fascinating.

Sarah Rollason-MacAulay participated in the Parliamentary Internship Programme in 2022-2023. She is currently completing her Masters in International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS University of London where she is continuing her research on messaging apps in the field of diplomacy.

While messaging itself is not new – remember pagers on peoples' belts or in purses? – its use has become far more widespread since the introduction of smart phones. Even then, it wasn't until the pandemic ground many things across the country to a halt in March 2020 – including in-person gatherings at Parliament – that both politicians and staff on the Hill were forced to change how they communicated with each other digitally, safely, and securely.

The genesis of this topic, and my interest in it, began long before I became part of the Parliamentary Internship Programme. During a panel discussion on Zoom, held during the pandemic, a panelist who represented Canada at the United Nations mentioned just how much international diplomacy work takes place in WhatsApp chats and how Canada would be left behind if its own diplomats did not participate. This piqued my interest in the subject, especially the security issues surrounding the technology. My participation in the non-partisan internship programme allowed unique access to both politicians and their staff in researching this topic.

But this article does not take an in-depth look at the security issues surrounding messaging apps – that could be the basis for an entire project on its own. Rather, I examine how parliamentarians and their staff use messaging apps to communicate with each other and the impact this has had on their work.

For the purposes of this article, I define messaging apps as applications on phones and computers capable of sending messages. This includes Short Message Service (SMS) (otherwise known as texting), iMessage, WhatsApp, and more robust apps such as Microsoft Teams and Slack which include functions beyond messaging. During the course of my interviews with participants, they also defined what they considered to be a messaging app and the ones they chose to use. Several brought up the use of Facebook Messenger, even if it was used infrequently and mostly by staff to communicate with each other and constituents back in the riding.

Research in Canada about the use of messaging apps by politicians to communicate with one another is non-existent. This made the exploration of the subject more challenging, but also motivating as my research fills a gap amongst scholarly work on emerging communication technologies.

This article aims to share original research on this topic, exploring who is using which applications, in what context, the growing central party control of its use, and, ultimately, what effect this has on the autonomy of individual MPs.

Literature Review

As research on this specific topic in Canada was non-existent at the time of writing, I chose to focus on the United Kingdom as some published literature exists there – mainly in the form of newspaper and website articles – and because of the similarity of its parliamentary system to Canada's.

In the UK, *The Guardian* summed it up accurately by stating “Political deals used to be done in smoke-filled rooms, but parliamentary plotting nowadays happens mostly on WhatsApp.”¹

But there are perils. WhatsApp messages have dogged former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson in recent years. *The Guardian* reported on July 2, 2023, that experts have recovered old WhatsApp messages that would be handed over and used in that country's COVID inquiry to better assess how the government was working during the early days of the pandemic, and to determine if restrictions on social gatherings had been violated.²

The Official Opposition Labour Party also uses WhatsApp, not only to whip the vote, but for various group chats. Scandal and bad press erupted, and

apologies were issued, when a woman MP mistakenly sent a critical chat meant only for a select few, to the entire women MP group chat.³

The Institute for Governance, a UK think tank, published a report that looked at the increasing use of messaging apps in the British government, with a special focus on WhatsApp.⁴ The report reveals the growing use of messaging apps by Ministers, MPs and departmental staff, and the surrounding lack of accountability. My own research produced similar findings, but I focused on use by parliamentarians and their staff using these messaging systems rather than their use within government departments.

The old scholarly adage “publish or perish” could be reworded to “publish and perish” if private correspondence falls into the wrong chat – or hands – resulting not only in bad press, but the possibility of the record of the chat being used in public inquiries or in criminal or civil proceedings.

To quote Esther Webber in *Politico*: “Forget the National Archives. WhatsApp receipts could offer the most candid version of history we ever get.”⁵

The digital trails which WhatsApp messages leave behind have also been filed as evidence in Canada. During a public inquiry in Ottawa that examined deficiencies with the city's light rail transit (LRT), a transcript of WhatsApp group chat messages between the city's mayor and the city's former transportation general manager revealed its prime role in communicating problems that plagued the system. The mayor messaged the group chat so often about issues he faced while riding the LRT, that John Manconi, former transportation general manager, responded by saying: “Mr. Mayor, I beg you please, I am getting so many messages from you on multiple channels and your staff. I will answer every one of them. All being actioned. We are drowning in message overload.”⁶

When an employee is unable to perform their duties due to an excessive number of messages, it suggests problems in the messages and with the medium.

Evolution

While these large group chats may be new, the use of messaging apps on the Hill is not. One staffer who has been on the Hill since 2004, when Blackberry was the *phone de jour*, reported that messaging was sent on this device through the Personal Identification Number

(PIN) channel. PIN to PIN was considered secure because it meant two phones were communicating directly to each other. As each BlackBerry came with its own distinct pin, no other phone could duplicate it; this communication method was deemed to be a safe and secure way to send messages to others.

But there was one glaring security issue. If an old BlackBerry was given to someone else, it could not issue an update to ensure everyone was aware the phone had changed hands. A person could never be certain that the person on the other end was the one intended recipient. Therefore, when a ministerial staffer left their position – a regular occurrence – the solution was simple: they would be given a hammer and a Ziplock bag. The phone would be simply recorded as damaged beyond repair and disappeared.

The IT guy would come to you with your new BlackBerry and a hammer, and you would actually destroy your old BlackBerry before turning it in. – *Conservative staffer*

When BlackBerry Messenger (BBM) was released, it gained popularity because all the contacts stored on the phone would update when the screen name was changed. Users would be made aware immediately that someone new was using the device.

However, it was not until Parliament went virtual during the pandemic, and then eventually began holding hybrid sittings, that the use of group chats became vital, expanding their function in new places such as committees.

Pre-pandemic, everything committee-related happened almost exclusively in the committee room. If an MP wanted to speak to their staffer, they would have to take them aside and whisper. If someone missed a pre-committee meeting, or the committee meeting itself, they would have to be brought up to speed by someone who was there.

With the use of group chats, suddenly people could share information immediately, wherever they may be, with everyone on the chat. Communication with the Whip's office, the House leaders' office and the Minister's office could all occur in the group chat. Strategy could be planned without anyone moving from their seats – or even being in the room.

Because every committee now has a group chat, with the Liberals in their own chat and the Conservatives in another, chats are slowly becoming semi-regulated.

There are specific people from each party's Whips office who add and remove people from the chat as needed, such as staff substitutions or changes. Unfortunately, while I could not formally interview anyone in this role, during my time as a parliamentary intern I was able to informally speak to some who work in those positions. They advised that, as of yet, there are no official guidelines set down.

Research Methodology

The majority of insights derived from this research were gained through interviews with politicians and members of their staff about how the messaging apps are used.

As there are far more MPs and staffers from the Liberal and Conservative parties on the Hill, and fewer representatives from other opposition parties, it was not unexpected that those two parties are overrepresented in the final study. Moreover, it was only the Liberal and Conservative MPs who used a group messaging app to communicate contemporaneously with their respective party members also sitting on the committee.

From the Liberal Party, I interviewed one Minister, two MPs, one ministerial staffer, and three other staff members. From the Conservative Party (CPC), I interviewed three MPs and three staff members assigned to various committees.

From both the Bloc Québécois (BQ) and the Green Party, I was able to interview both an MP and a staff member.

I was also able to interview a staff member from the New Democratic Party (NDP).

While beyond the scope of this research paper, I also interviewed one Senator and a Senator's staff member to understand the differences between the House and the Senate when it comes to messaging services.

I used semi-structured interviews as this allowed me the flexibility for follow up questions to obtain more information as needed.

All interview participants were told that, aside from their positions, their identities would be kept confidential, with the hope it would allow them more freedom to tell me what was really happening instead of a censored version. One MP indicated they would not mind being identified but, for consistency, I have kept them anonymous.

It is important to note that I interviewed both a Liberal and a Conservative MP in their respective lobbies while they were potentially within earshot of colleagues. Despite this lack of privacy, they both spoke to me at length, and I could not detect they were any less forthcoming than if the interview had been conducted in the privacy of their offices.

Research Findings

During my interviews, individual MPs spoke about the implications these messaging apps have on their autonomy. Questions were raised about party authority and direction, the centralization of decision making, and the future implications of usage of the apps. Everyone interviewed questioned the security of the apps.

Apps

The apps that were used in some capacity by both MPs and staff were iMessage, Signal, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, and Wickr.

While the use of WhatsApp by international diplomats sparked my research, on the Hill, iMessage is the most used messaging app in large part because it is the pre-installed messaging app on iPhones which every interviewee used.

“I use iMessage as a total default. Going back to when there was still such a thing as BlackBerry, we all used it in my previous life, everyone that I worked with used BlackBerry Messenger. Then, when iPhones achieved ascendance and BlackBerry disappeared, I think everybody who was using BBM just automatically switched (from what) was native to the BlackBerry platform... to iMessage, which is native to the iOS platform.” – Liberal MP

Microsoft Teams is the second most widely used messaging app by all parties because it is integrated with the House of Commons communications services and therefore it is seen as the most secure app by many people I interviewed. It is used on both their phones and computers to do text chats and video calls. Interviewees who used Teams were often less likely to use other messaging apps; but while this messaging app was used in the House, it was not used by either the Liberals or Conservatives when in committee.

At committees, WhatsApp is the messaging app mainly used by the Liberals. It is seen as safe and

secure with security features such as encryption, and optional disappearing messages. However, both politicians and their staff, as well as the wider public, have expressed concerns over its parent company, Meta Platforms Inc., and its commitment to privacy.

WhatsApp has way more functionality and like most things that have more functionality, they’re a little more complicated. – Liberal MP

I mean there are some concerns about security with iMessage. I think that’s why committees went to WhatsApp and then even WhatsApp has vulnerabilities we’re told. And so, I think that’s why the national caucus thread is on what do you call it? Wickr. – Liberal MP

After Teams, Signal is considered the safest messaging app. It has privacy features such as end-to-end encryption, optional disappearing messages, and regularly asks the user to input a PIN to validate their identity. Signal is used by Conservatives in committee, but also by Tory staff in their offices, as well as Liberal staff in both ministerial and MP offices.

Signal has end to end encryption in a way that is more secure than any other messaging app. – Conservative staffer

Wickr was the messaging app used by the Liberals during the pandemic, when Parliament was virtual, to alert Liberal MPs on how and when to vote. Now that most politicians have returned to the Hill and vote in person, it is no longer used by the party for this purpose anymore.

I was told Wickr was the app where all the MPs could be found. I was very excited, thinking I could contact any of my colleagues that way until I realised you had to add everyone individually. – Green MP

They wanted people to have Wickr because that was a way that they could communicate instantly with every MP, no matter where they were in the country that there was a vote. – Liberal MP

Some direct messages are sent through social media apps such as Twitter or Facebook Messenger, but these are almost exclusively used by staff to speak to constituents. One staffer, who is part of a regional assistants’ group chat for the Liberal party, noted that one of these social media apps is the medium of

choice. Many interviewees said they do not trust in the security of any direct messaging through social media. One MP had an old classmate who took what they believed was a private response to a question and contacted the media.

Notably, the Senate appears to be distinct from the House of Commons in terms of using messaging apps. Interviewees noted that the Senate was the first to be connected, pre-pandemic, to Teams. The Senate has fewer members and staff, and interviewees speculated this may have made it easier to integrate.

Both the Senator and Senator's staff member interviewed, as well as another ex-staff member who is currently at the House of Commons, believed the Upper Chamber continues to use Teams because it was the app used prior to the pandemic.

Committee

Committee group chats on messaging apps are where the parties tend to get involved.

With the use of group chats, strategy can be planned while participants remain seated and with others who were not physically in the room. As such, previous practices known to committee rooms such as huddles or excited whispers have become a thing of the past.

It's definitely less exciting for the public now. It used to be when something happened there was a flurry of activity, now it's boring to watch.
– *Conservative MP*

Because both the Liberals and Conservatives each have their own individual party group chats on every committee, the chats are slowly becoming semi-regulated. There are specific people from each party's Whip's office who add and remove people from the group chat as needed.

In the Conservative party, the Whip's office asks its lead staffer on the committee to choose the app that will be used. Afterwards the party's committee coordinator for that committee sets up the group chat and maintains the membership list, adding and removing MPs and staff as needed. While most of the chats in committee used by the Conservatives were previously on WhatsApp, Signal is now generally the app of choice.

Most, if not all, Liberal members on committees use WhatsApp.

The NDP MPs use Teams or iMessage to communicate with each other. For matters relating to the confidence and supply agreement between the Liberals and the NDP, as the smaller party, the NDP uses the Liberal's preferred WhatsApp for communication. Unlike the Liberals and Conservatives, there is only a single NDP MP on the committee and therefore generally no communication between the NDP MP and other committee members. Usually, the MP and a staffer text each other using iMessage. A staff member from the Leader's office maintains all Teams chats that are not office-based.

The BQ, also having only a sole member on committees, described having group chats set up between the MP, staff, and relevant staff from the House leader's office on iMessage. They also use Teams to communicate with each other when not using iMessage.

Every committee we always open an iPhone group chat. So basically, we will record information about motions that are brought on the floor, and we will use it so that anyone that has to monitor this meeting, if there's anything to let us know, like for example, something's happening in the House that we must be aware of, and we will get information. So, this is opened at the beginning of your meeting and closed at the end. – *BQ staffer*

From personal observation, while monitoring group chats when sitting in a committee room, there are times when it seems another committee meeting is occurring in the group chats. On one occasion, when traveling on a study trip, I found I had missed close to 200 messages from just one committee's group chat that day. Group chats have become prolific and are an important way to relay information.

There are also times when a committee meeting does not go according to plan and the Minister's office, Whip's office, and/or the Leader's office need to be contacted immediately. By using the apps, all of these offices can monitor individual committees and intervene with information as necessary. Sometimes the only way to tell that a party is surprised and looking for guidance on how to respond, is by how quickly MP thumbs start typing all at once.

It is not all work, though. Sometimes jokes will be shared – usually about something that just happened in committee or, occasionally, about something that is prominent in the media that might be relevant.

I've certainly been in a number of conversations where we wonder about it, but we don't have the answer. We wonder whether the bad jokes that we just told will wind up in the *Hill Times* or worse. – *Liberal MP*

Security

Although fully examining security concerns would require a separate research project, it is important to note that these issues frequently came up during interviews. There is a general feeling of mistrust around all apps. Signal is the messaging app of choice by most of the people interviewed – in both Liberal and Conservative offices – to send sensitive messages.

There're a few jokes that are made at the expense of or maybe about other people and parties. That would not be great if they got out. But in terms of actual security risks and confidential information, there's none of that. – *Conservative staffer*

Because of the more secure nature of Signal, I also confirmed at least two ministries use it.

Repeatedly, I was told that if there was something which was truly sensitive, it would require a phone call or a conversation in person instead of writing something down that would leave a trail. This opinion was shared by every person in every party I interviewed.

There was also concern that, in a "post-Me-Too" era, former staff now have what they refer to as "bombs." It's well known that not all MPs can reign in their temper. Staff can screenshot any interaction and keep it or share it. There was a feeling that these messages would eventually be leaked sometime in the future and potentially destroy some careers.

I've heard instances of staff sharing amongst themselves crazy texts from employees. They're losing their s--t on staff. But there are some employees on all sides that I've heard can be very irrational or are short tempered, and that stuff could come back to haunt people.

That's the risk of casual texting conversations; if you get mad, or if you say something about someone else or both, that person and that staff person leaves with this treasure trove of stuff. – *Conservative MP*

When an MP or Senator first comes to the Hill, they are given some training on security measures. Those interviewed believed that it is inadequate, with 75 per cent mentioning the need for better security training.

I was given one instance of training on digital security and then it was never mentioned again. – *Prairie Senator*

Autonomy

The most unexpected theme to come up during interviews with individual MPs was individual autonomy.

Multiple MPs admitted that, because of messaging apps, they felt far more pressure not to vote against the "advice" given by staff from the Ministers, Whips, or Leader's office.

In the House, MPs are whipped on certain votes. The use of these apps means, while they are not officially being whipped while on committee, MPs are now given advice that they can see in real time. I found this to be more common with the Liberal MPs, but it was not exclusive. One Liberal MP said: "I will pretend to not see a message if I want to vote the opposite way, though I rarely do this as I know I can get in trouble." All but three MPs, a Liberal, Conservative and Green,, said that this was a downside with messaging apps, and they now felt more pressured to vote in specific ways.

Hill and Constituency integration

The Microsoft Teams platform has also been found to be useful in integrating an MP's office on the Hill and their constituency office(s). Prior to the pandemic, shared drives were not in general use; with the adoption of OneDrive, SharePoint, and other applications such as OneNote, virtual collaboration is easier. Some offices choose to use Google Workspace over Microsoft products.

The MPs and staff members who had been on the Hill prior to the Teams integration agreed that Teams is a better option than Skype for Business, which it has fully replaced. Approximately half of the interview participants were ambivalent about whether it made much of a difference, but the other half were adamant that it has been overwhelmingly positive for cohesion.

Consequences

One of the downsides of these messaging apps is that they amplify the feeling that an MP must be tethered to their phone and limit opportunities to disconnect. For example, according to a study done by the Bank of America, 71 per cent of people reported they usually sleep with their cellphone next to their beds.⁷ During interviews, many MPs and staff stated that the first thing they do in the morning is check their phones for messages.

The most common complaint was that each app is just one more channel to keep track of. With multiple email accounts and phones to check, each additional app used becomes just one more distraction in their day.

These distractions can also affect work-life balance; however, individual MPs and staff member may set boundaries. One staff member for the NDP said their MP was adamant about maintaining work hours and, except for an emergency, they wouldn't be contacted outside of work hours. However, other staffers in the NDP and other parties reported they were contacted by their MPs outside of regular work hours.

While some messages have been urgent, the majority were not. It seems to be up to the individual office culture to determine how these communications are handled or their frequency.

On the MPs' side, most said that they tried not to send messages outside of work hours. But, interestingly, one Conservative MP was adamant that instant messaging allowed his staff to have a better work-life balance if they could access a message he sent when he was thinking about a subject rather than wait until they were at work.

Why, when my alarm goes off in the morning and I push stop, is the next thing I do is put on my glasses and look at my messages... why do I think it's okay to send people messages if I'm up at two in the morning? So, this has had a profound effect on the way we work. – *Liberal MP*

The consensus was that the use of messaging apps does not lead to a better work-life balance.

However, everyone commented that, despite the downsides, messaging apps allow them to do their jobs more effectively and efficiently.

It may not be as visually exciting, but it allows me to be more efficient. – *Liberal MP*

Recommendations

There were differing opinions about messaging apps, but security was the common concern. Better digital security training and awareness for all MPs, Senators and their staff needs to be provided. A refresher course after a set number of years or after every election is also recommended.

Several people brought up the need for having an official app which the House of Commons could use, like the app that allows MPs to vote on their phones. This would allay security fears and limit the number of apps to monitor. However, if an official app is only allowed on House of Commons issued devices, the concern is that numerous staff members may not have access to it. Devices for staff are obtained through Telecommunications Services in the House of Commons, but it is up to the individual MP to decide which staff are issued devices because the cost comes directly out of the Members' finite office budget.⁸ The staff not provided with devices would therefore need to continue to use outside apps.

It is also questionable whether a single app would, in practice, be used by everyone. Some MPs and staff would most likely continue to use alternative apps for certain messages if there was any concern about the security of the official app.

Conclusion

Whether you are the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, or the mayor of Ottawa, or an MP or staffer, messaging apps can be very useful, but also full of pitfalls.

Research conducted for this article resulted in several notable discoveries:

- Just as the two main parties have different political philosophies and platforms, they also use different messaging apps as their main communication network in committees.
- There were no regional differences, only party differences, found in the use of messaging apps.
- Despite security concerns, at the time of writing there were no guidelines or systems put in place by either Parliament or parties for messaging apps.

- Of concern, in an increasingly partisan and polarized Parliament, there is a belief that messaging apps will lead to more centralized control, and increased pressure on MPs to toe the party line in committees; this could further diminish the chances for meaningful collaboration across party lines.
- Messaging apps contributed to the proliferation of communication channels MPs and staff must monitor. If boundaries are not established to limit their use, there is a potential for these apps to be detrimental to efforts to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Despite all the concerns raised, interviewees agreed that messaging apps are here to stay and will continue to be used by the federal parties, politicians, and political staffers.

So, it's the old conundrum about these time and energy saving inventions that end up consuming more time and energy than we did before they were invented. – *Liberal MP*

Notes

- 1 J. Elgot. "WhatsApp: the go-to messaging tool for parliamentary plotting." *The Guardian*, June 12, 2017.
- 2 A. Allegretti. "Experts recover messages from Boris Johnson's old mobile phone," *The Guardian*, July 21, 2023.
- 3 J. Lyons. "'I'm a sorry cow': MP's apology for insulting party." *The Times*, January 29, 2017.
- 4 T. Durrant, Lilly, A., & Tingay, P. "WhatsApp in government: How ministers and officials should use messaging apps—and how they shouldn't." Institute for Government, March 2022. URL: <https://apo.org.au/node/317053>
- 5 E. Webber. "The perils of Boris Johnson's government by WhatsApp." *Politico*, June 18, 2021.
- 6 K. Porter. "Thread of 2019 WhatsApp texts show mayor's fixation on details during LRT woes." *CBC*, July 6, 2022.
- 7 S. Loleska, & Pop-Jordanova, N. "Is Smartphone Addiction in the Younger Population a Public Health Problem?" *PRILOZI*, 42(3), 2021, p. 30.
- 8 House of Commons. *MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES AND SERVICES*, accessed 2023. URL: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/MAS/mas-e.pdf>

New and Notable Titles

A selection of recent publications relating to parliamentary studies prepared with the assistance of the Library of Parliament (December 2023 – May 2024).

Edwards, Cecilia. "Curating the record of free speech in Parliament." *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 38 (2):146-68, Spring/Summer 2023.

- The value of freedom of speech in parliamentary debates is enhanced when it is recorded and communicated beyond the debating chamber and its immediate audience (members, the press, and the public). It can inform and influence a future readership. This paper takes a gentle look at some bruising encounters in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the struggle to curate the parliamentary record in New Zealand and across the Tasman. 'Curating' rather than 'editing' the record speaks to the origins of *Hansard* as an attempt by members to have their speeches reported fully and accurately. The paper takes as its starting point the principle that our understanding of the past can inform how we approach present and future challenges.

Feldman, Charlie. "You can't print that in *Hansard*: Surveying *Hansard* expungements in Canada, Australia and New Zealand." *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 38 (2): 97-117, Spring/Summer 2023.

- *Hansard* is thought of as being the complete parliamentary record; however, Parliaments in Canada, Australia and New Zealand have occasionally expunged portions of their *Hansards*. Using newspaper reports, this article surveys examples of this practice to identify both the contexts in which expungements have occurred and their associated parliamentary mechanics.

Fleming, Tom. "Recall petitions: process, consequences, and potential reforms." *Constitution Unit* 5p., December 11, 2023.

- The author outlines how the UK's recall system works, summarises its effects to date, and outlines possible areas for reform.

Hall, Rowan. "Should military action require parliamentary approval?" *Constitution Unit*: 4p., May 2, 2024.

- The role of parliament in authorising the use of military force has been much debated in recent years, and most recently due to airstrikes against targets in Yemen. The Unit hosted an event with three distinguished experts to discuss what role – if any – parliament should have in approving military action.

Hestermeyer, Holger, and Alexander Horne. "Treaty scrutiny: the role of Parliament in UK trade agreements." CITP - Centre for Inclusive Trade Policy *Briefing Paper* 9: 30p., 22 January 2024.

- This project sets out to describe the development and current state of UK treaty scrutiny and, from there, to develop realistic proposals for improvement, allowing for a greater involvement of Parliament in treaty-making and thus for a more inclusive trade policy.

Law, Thomas. "Populism, premiers and protection of 'Charter' rights: the notwithstanding clause and the rise of populism in Canada." *Journal of Parliamentary and Political Law / Revue de droit parlementaire et politique* 18 (1): 131- March/mars 2024.

- ...the use of the notwithstanding clause by provincial premiers has surged in recent years after seemingly to have fallen out of favour at the end of the 20th century. The increased frequency in the use of the notwithstanding clause can be attributed to the resurgence of populism in Canadian politics, with populist premiers leading the charge in the provinces' newly rediscovered interest in section 33. This paper will examine the history of the notwithstanding clause and what purpose the clause was intended to serve when it was included in the *Charter*.

LeBlanc, Jeremy. "Introduction: a Canadian perspective on parliamentary diplomacy." *Journal of Parliamentary and Political Law / Revue de droit parlementaire et politique* 17 (3): 501-, September/ septembre 2023.

- Parliamentary diplomacy encompasses a wide variety of activities undertaken by legislators to build relationships with counterparts in other jurisdictions, whether to promote action or attempt to influence decisions in certain areas, to offer technical assistance and capacity building or to hold governments to account. At the Parliament of Canada, there have generally been three goals which have guided diplomatic engagement: 'exchanging ideas and best practices, helping to inform collective policy and action; and promoting democratic values and Canadian interests.' This is achieved through the diplomatic activities of the Speakers of the Senate and the House of Commons, formally recognized bilateral and multilateral parliamentary associations and interparliamentary groups, a series of friendship groups, not to mention individual efforts by parliamentarians through their own networks.

Long, Ramona. "Planting the seed: the importance of parliamentary procedure education for Members of Parliament and the opportunity to inspire during induction process." *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 39 (1): 112-29, Autumn/Winter 2024.

- ...this article ultimately encourages the importance of inspiring members to engage with, learn and seek further education in parliamentary procedure and that the parliamentary role is more integral to the representative and political roles than first assumed. It is identified that the induction process of a new parliament is an opportune time to sell this message.

Meakin, Alexandra and Sabina Siebert. "Custodians of the Palace of Westminster." *Parliamentary Affairs* 77 (2): 240-61, April 2024.

- While the Palace of Westminster, the home of the UK Parliament requires an extensive programme of repairs and action to implement, this programme—known as Restoration and Renewal—has been hampered. This article explores the concept of custodianship and poses a question: who are the custodians of the Palace and for whom do they preserve the Palace? Drawing on two research projects, this article explores differing interpretations of custodianship in this context, and whether decisions made about the parliamentary building are made to preserve the history of the Palace, improve working conditions in the present, or with the future of the building (and institution) in mind.

Norton, Philip. "An inquiry into inquiries: why the House of Lords has established a Statutory Inquiries Committee." *Constitution Unit* 4p., April 11, 2024.

- As the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry and the Covid-19 inquiry continue their work, the author explains how public inquiries can operate very differently, depending on how they are established. The author discusses the numerous ways inquiries can operate, analyses post-legislative scrutiny of the relevant legislation, and outlines the aims of a new parliamentary inquiry on the subject, which the author chairs.

Ouellette, Roger. "The participation of New Brunswick in the parliamentary bodies of the Commonwealth and the Francophonie." *Journal of Parliamentary and Political Law / Revue de Droit Parlementaire et Politique* 17 (3): 597-, September/September 2023.

- ...the provincial legislature has multilateral links with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie. We will examine the nature and scope of New Brunswick's participation in these two parliamentary bodies.

Paquin, Stéphane, and Nancy Rossi. "Parliamentary paradiplomacy: the case of the Québec National Assembly." *Journal of Parliamentary and Political Law / Revue de droit parlementaire et politique* 17 (3): 601-, September/septembre 2023.

- The parliamentary paradiplomacy of the Assemblée Nationale du Québec has been growing rapidly since the second half of the 1970s and more particularly since the 2000s. Paradiplomacy refers to the diplomatic actions of non-central governments, such as the government of Québec, in parallel with those of sovereign states.

Power, Greg. "The personal side of parliamentary reform." *Constitution Unit* 4p., February 20, 2024.

- The view that Westminster is not functioning as it should, and that reform would be beneficial, has become increasingly widespread in recent years. The author argues that it is not sufficient to focus on technical details and process: reform efforts must instead understand what politicians believe to be important and offer them ways of dealing with those issues better.

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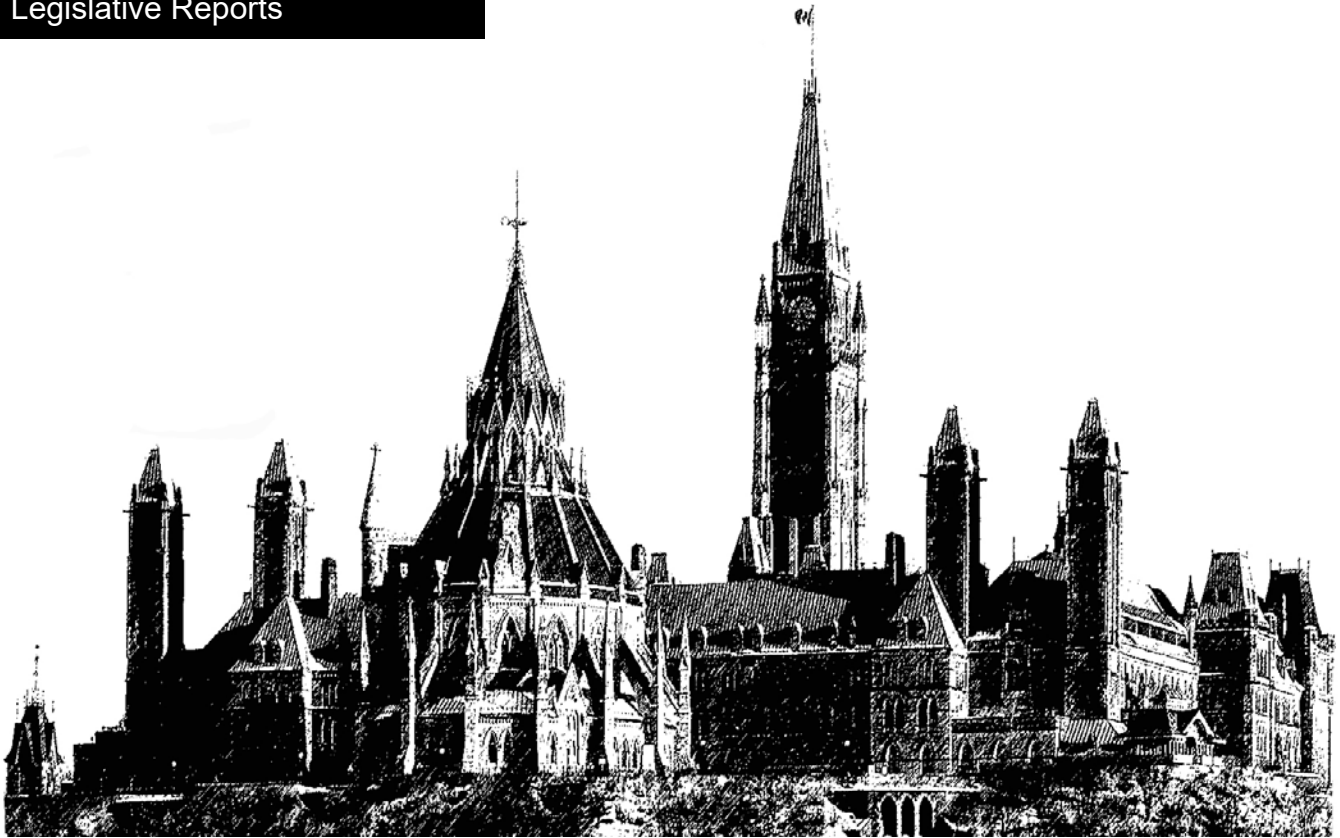
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House of Commons

Introduction

This account covers key highlights of the period from January to March 2024. After having been adjourned since December 15, 2023, the House resumed sittings on January 29, 2024.

Legislation

Admissibility of amendments to Government Business No. 34 - Bill C-62, An Act to amend An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), No. 2

On February 12, 2024, Minister of Innovation, Science, and Industry **François-Philippe Champagne** (Saint-Maurice–Champlain) moved a motion to manage proceedings on Bill C-62, *An Act to amend An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*, No. 2 (Government Business No. 34). The motion would have the effect of managing the bill's proceedings. During debate on Government Business No. 34, **Luc Thériault** (Montcalm) moved an amendment which would have the effect of amending the text of Bill C-62.

On February 13, 2024, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons **Steven MacKinnon**

(Gatineau) invoked closure on Government Business No. 34. During that sitting, House Leader of the Official Opposition **Andrew Scheer** (Regina–Qu'Appelle) rose on a point of order, alleging that Mr. Thériault's amendment was inadmissible as it attempted to introduce a new proposition that went beyond the scope of the original motion. The Speaker confirmed the admissibility of the amendment in a ruling delivered that same day.

Closure was subsequently adopted, and the House proceeded to a recorded division on Mr. Thériault's amendment, which was negatived. Bill C-62 then progressed through the legislative process in accordance with the motion's terms. It received Royal Assent on February 29, 2024.

Procedure / Privilege

Alleged Breach of Speaker's Impartiality

On January 29, 2024, **Claude DeBellefeuille** (Salaberry—Suroît) moved that the House concur in the 55th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs (PROC) concerning the Speaker's use of parliamentary resources while recording a

video played at a provincial party convention. During debate, **John Nater** (Perth—Wellington) moved an amendment to recommit the report to PROC with instruction that the committee recommend that the Speaker tender his resignation. On January 30, 2024, the House took the deferred recorded division on the amendment. The question was put on the amendment, and it was negatived. The question was then put on the main motion, and it was adopted.

Motion G-35 — Extension of sitting hours and conduct of extended proceedings

On February 26, 2024, Mr. MacKinnon, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, introduced a motion titled Government Business No. 35. The motion, which was closed and adopted on February 28, gives the government the power to extend sitting hours, adjourn the House early during the last three sitting days in June and December, and suspend the House if it sat past midnight due to extended voting periods, with the sitting resuming at 9:00 a.m. It is applicable for the remainder of the session.

Prima facie question of privilege regarding witness responses at a Standing Committee

On March 20, 2024, **Michael Barrett** (Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes) rose on a point of order regarding the testimony of Mr. **Kristian Firth**, who had recently appeared before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. Mr. Barrett argued that the witness, through his refusal to answer members’ questions, had disregarded the rights and privileges of the committee.

On March 22, 2024, the Speaker ruled the matter to be a *prima facie* question of privilege. Mr. Barrett then moved the appropriate motion, which called on Mr. Firth to attend the Bar of the House, for the purposes of receiving an admonishment from the Speaker, providing responses to the questions referred to, and to respond to supplementary questions arising from those answers. During the same sitting, **Mark Gerretsen** (Kingston and the Islands) moved an amendment instructing the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to study and make recommendations on the procedure for questioning Mr. Firth at the Bar of the House, and for the latter to attend the Bar only once the committee report had been concurred in. The matter is still being debated at the time of writing.

Financial procedures

Pre-Budgetary consultations by the Finance Committee

After undertaking pre-budgetary consultations with the public, the Standing Committee on Finance presented its findings to the House on February 26, in a report titled “Shaping our Economic Future: Canadian Priorities.”

Order of the day for Budget 2024

On March 21, at the request of Mr. MacKinnon, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, for Minister of Finance **Chrystia Freeland** (University–Rosedale), an Order of the Day was designated for the consideration of a ways and means motion for the presentation of the budget on April 16, 2024.

Motion of non-confidence during an opposition day

During the opposition day held on March 21, Leader of the Official Opposition **Pierre Poilievre** (Carleton) moved a non-confidence motion against the government. The motion was defeated.

Private Members’ Business

Senate amendments to Bill C-234

On December 13, 2023, the Senate passed Bill C-234, *An Act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act*, with amendments. On January 29, 2024, the House considered the amendments. During the sitting, **Ben Lobb** (Huron–Bruce), the bill’s sponsor, moved that it be sent back to the Senate with a message that the House disagrees with the amendments. The motion was also debated on February 6 and 14. Of note, the Standing Orders of the House of Commons do not indicate a time limit for this type of debate. As such, the item will remain in the Order of Precedence until it is disposed of by the House.

Bill S-1001

On January 30, 2024, in accordance with articles 131(5) and 132(2) of the Standing Orders, the House received a petition from the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporations for Ottawa and Alexandria-Cornwall, requesting the adoption of a private bill to amalgamate both organizations. The same petition was also sent to the Senate.

On February 6, 2024, the House received a message from the Senate, informing it that the Senate had adopted Bill S-1001, *An Act to amalgamate The Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Ottawa and The Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation for the Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall, in Ontario, Canada*. On February 14, 2024, the House adopted the bill at all stages of the legislative process by unanimous consent.

This event is procedurally noteworthy, as it is the first case since 1998 that a petition concerning a private bill was tabled in the House, before the House had received a message from the Senate regarding the same bill.

Other Matters

Tribute to the late Honourable Ed Broadbent

On January 29, the House agreed by unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence for the late **Ed Broadbent**. The motion also provided an opportunity for New Democratic Party leader **Jagmeet Singh** (Burnaby South), a member of each of the other recognized parties, and a member of the Green Party, to make a statement to pay tribute.

Tribute to the late Right Honourable Brian Mulroney

On March 1, 2024, in light of the passing of **Brian Mulroney**, the House agreed by unanimous consent, pursuant to Standing Orders 24 and 28, to adjourn at 10:44 a.m. On March 19, pursuant to a special order agreed to by unanimous consent the previous day, the House resolved itself into a committee of the whole for the purpose of paying tribute to Mr. Mulroney.

Resignations

On January 29, the Speaker informed the House of the resignation of **Carolyn Bennett** (Toronto–St. Paul’s) effective January 16. On February 1, the Speaker informed the House of the resignation of **David Lametti** (LaSalle–Émard–Verdun) effective January 31. On April 8, the Speaker informed the House of the resignation of **Daniel Blaikie** (Elmwood–Transcona) effective March 31.

Introduction of new Members following a by-election

On April 8, the Speaker informed the House that the Clerk of the House had received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election of **Jamil Jivani** (Durham). Mr. Jivani, having taken the oath

required by law, was introduced to the House by the Leader of the Opposition, and took his seat.

Appointment of a Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner

On February 29, 2024, the House agreed by unanimous consent to approve the appointment of **Konrad Winrich von Finckenstein** as Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

Take-note debates

On March 18, 2024, Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader **Kevin Lamoureux** (Winnipeg North) sought and obtained unanimous consent for a motion to hold two take-note debates: the first, mentioned above, on March 19, 2024, to pay tribute to the late Mr. Mulroney, and the second, on March 20, 2024, on the Canada-Ukraine relationship and the newly signed strategic partnership between the two countries.

Eric Glavin

Table Research Branch



The Senate

Legislation

The Senate passed five government bills during the period covered by this article. On February 29, the Senate passed Bill C-62, *An Act to amend an Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), No. 2*, at third reading without amendment, and a message was sent to the House of Commons to acquaint that House accordingly. The bill received Royal Assent by written declaration that same day. On March 19, the Senate passed Bill C-57, *An Act to implement the 2023 Free Trade*

Agreement between Canada and Ukraine, at third reading without amendment, and a message was sent to the House of Commons to acquaint it accordingly. The bill received Royal Assent by written declaration the same day. On March 22, the Senate passed Bill C-34, *An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act*, at third reading without amendment, and a message was sent to the House of Commons to acquaint it accordingly. The bill received Royal Assent by written declaration the same day. On March 22, pursuant to the order adopted on March 20, the Senate proceeded to first, second and third reading of Bill C-67, *An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024*, and Bill C-68, *An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025*, without amendment, and messages were sent to the House of Commons to acquaint it accordingly. Both bills received Royal Assent by written declaration the same day.

On March 19, in response to its message of December 7, 2023, regarding an amendment to Bill C-35, *An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada*, the Senate received a message from the House of Commons to acquaint it that the House had adopted the Senate's amendment to the bill and had made no further amendment. The bill received Royal Assent by written declaration that same day.

On February 6, a private bill, Bill S-1001, *An Act to amalgamate The Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Ottawa and The Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation for the Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall, in Ontario, Canada*, as amended, received third reading. On February 15, the House of Commons sent the Senate a message to acquaint it that the House had passed the bill without amendment. The bill received Royal Assent by written declaration on February 29.

On February 15, the House of Commons sent a message to the Senate regarding Bill S-202, *An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (Parliamentary Visual Artist Laureate)*, to acquaint it that the House had passed the bill with amendments. At the time of writing, the Senate had not yet considered the amendments.

Chamber, Procedure and Speaker's Rulings

On February 8, Senator **Donald Plett** raised a point of order regarding Bill S-241, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act (great apes, elephants and certain other animals)*,

and Bill S-15, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act*. He pointed out that, according to rule 10-9 of the *Rules of the Senate*, a senator may not introduce a bill with the same object as another bill originating in the Senate adopted or defeated during the same session. The Speaker of the Senate, Senator **Raymonde Gagné**, reserved her decision. On February 12, the Senate passed a motion withdrawing Bill S-241, which discharged the bill and its subject matter from the Senate committees conducting work on these matters. The following day, February 13, the Speaker stated that the Senate's adoption of this motion had resolved the issues that led to the point of order raised by Senator Plett and that a ruling was therefore no longer necessary.

On February 15, the Senate passed a motion to amend chapter 2:06 of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, concerning the disclosure of video footage.

On February 27, the Senate passed a motion urging the Government of Canada to implement the eighth recommendation of the first report of the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector, entitled *Catalyst for Change: A Roadmap to a Stronger Charitable Sector*, adopted by the Senate on November 3, 2020, during the Second Session of the Forty-third Parliament. The recommendation is that the Canada Revenue Agency include in certain forms questions about diversity representation on boards of directors based on existing employment equity guidelines.

On February 29, following the announcement of the death of **Brian Mulroney**, the 18th Prime Minister of Canada, the Senate observed a minute of silence in his memory as an initial tribute. On March 19, a number of statements were made, and a minute of silence was observed once again.

On March 20, the Senate adopted a motion governing the proceedings of the sittings on March 21 and 22, 2024, specifically with respect to any bill for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending either March 31, 2024, or March 31, 2025. The motion allowed for both bills to be passed at all stages in a single sitting, as noted above.

On March 20, Senator **Marilou McPhedran** raised a point of order regarding a request for unanimous consent made during the previous day's sitting. In her ruling, Speaker Gagné noted that she had not heard the denial of leave and ruled that "[a]ll senators have

a collective responsibility to assist the Speaker in ensuring the proper functioning of the Senate. Such points of order must be raised while the issue is still relevant. In particular, a point of order relating to a procedural matter should be raised promptly and before the matter is decided, which would render any objection to it out of place.”

On March 22, Senator Plett raised a point of order regarding the availability of copies of Bill C-67. The sitting was then suspended so that copies of the bill could be prepared and distributed to senators.

Committee of the Whole

On February 14, the Senate resolved into a Committee of the Whole to hear from **Mark Holland**, MP and Minister of Health, and **Arif Virani**, MP and Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, each accompanied by two officials, concerning the subject matter of Bill C-62, *An Act to amend an Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*, No. 2.

Committees

On February 6, the Senate was informed that the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying had deposited its third report, entitled *MAID and Mental Disorders: The Road Ahead*, with the Clerk of the Senate on January 29.

On February 15, the Senate adopted the eighteenth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, presented to the Senate on December 11, 2023, and containing an amendment to Bill S-244, *An Act to amend the Department of Employment and Social Development Act and the Employment Insurance Act (Employment Insurance Council)*. The bill, as amended, was placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting.

On February 27, the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration tabled its eleventh report, entitled *Financial Statements of the Senate of Canada for the year ended March 31, 2023*.

On February 27, the Senate adopted the sixth report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, entitled *Arctic Security Under Threat: Urgent needs in a changing geopolitical and environmental landscape*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on June 28, 2023, and requested a response from the government.

On February 28, the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures, and the Rights of Parliament tabled its (interim) sixth report, entitled *Summary of Evidence: Committee Structure and Mandates*.

On February 29, the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology presented its nineteenth report, which concerned Bill S-252, *An Act respecting Jury Duty Appreciation Week*, without amendment. The bill was placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting.

On February 29, the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade presented its thirteenth report, which concerned Bill C-57, *An Act to implement the 2023 Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Ukraine*, without amendment. With leave of the Senate, the bill was placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at that same sitting.

On March 19, the Senate adopted the first report of the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament, entitled *Quorum and Mandate of the Committee*, presented in the Senate on June 20, 2023.

On March 21, the government’s response to the twenty-sixth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, entitled *Cultural Diplomacy at the Front Stage of Canada’s Foreign Policy*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on June 11, 2019, during the First Session of the Forty-second Parliament, was tabled in the Senate.

On March 21, the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce, and the Economy presented its report on Bill C-34, *An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act*, without amendment. The bill was placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting.

Senators

Senator **Renée Dupuis** retired from the Senate on January 17. Senator Dupuis was appointed to the Senate on November 19, 2016, on the recommendation of Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**, to represent the Senate division of Les Laurentides, in Quebec. Before being appointed to the Senate, Senator Dupuis worked as a human rights and Indigenous rights lawyer, author, chief commissioner of the Indian Claims Commission and vice-chair of Quebec’s *Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse*. She sat on numerous committees, including the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs and the Standing

Senate Committee on Audit and Oversight, where she was deputy chair.

Senator **Pierre-Hughes Boisvenu** retired from the Senate on February 12. Senator Boisvenu was appointed to the Senate on January 29, 2010, on the recommendation of Prime Minister **Stephen Harper**, to represent the Senate division of La Salle, Quebec. Before being appointed to the Senate, Senator Boisvenu founded the Murdered or Missing Persons' Families' Association and wrote a book on surviving victimization entitled *Survivre à l'innommable*. He was the driving force behind the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights*. Senator Boisvenu sat on numerous committees, including the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs and the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, where he was deputy chair.

On February 6, Senators **Marnie McBean, Paulette Senior, Toni Varone, Mary Robinson, and Mohammad Khair Al Zaibak** took their respective seats in the Senate.

Senator McBean was appointed to the Senate on December 20, 2023, on the recommendation of Prime Minister Trudeau, to represent Ontario. Senator McBean is one of the most decorated Olympians in Canadian history, with four medals—including three gold—in rowing at the 1992 and 1996 Olympic Games. She has also worked as a motivational speaker and author, and is active in various social justice causes. Senator McBean is an Officer of the Order of Canada and has received numerous awards, as well as four honorary doctorates.

Senator Senior was appointed to the Senate on December 20, 2023, on the recommendation of Prime Minister Trudeau, to represent Ontario. Senator Senior has dedicated her life to breaking down systemic barriers and building up women and girls from diverse backgrounds, including by working to advance gender equality, combat gender-based violence, reduce poverty among women, close wage gaps and promote the empowerment of women and girls. She has served on several boards of directors and received numerous awards, including being named one of Canada's Top 25 Women of Influence.

Senator Varone was appointed to the Senate on December 20, 2023, on the recommendation of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, to represent Ontario. Senator Varone is a businessman who has managed several companies specializing in construction, land

use planning and property management. Throughout his career, he has been involved in various community and government initiatives to build affordable housing for the less fortunate. He has served on several boards of directors and received numerous awards, including the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal. Senator Varone is a philanthropist known for his contributions to the social and cultural life of the Italian Canadian community.

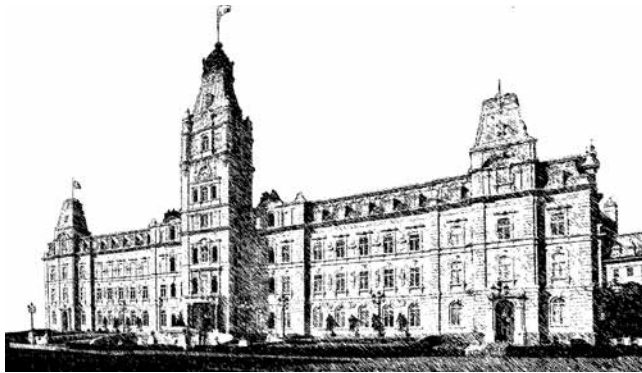
Senator Robinson was appointed to the Senate on January 22, 2024, on the recommendation of Prime Minister Trudeau, to represent Prince Edward Island. Senator Robinson works in the agricultural sector, including as Managing Partner of the Robinson Group of Companies, a farm and agribusiness. She has also been actively involved in organizations in the agricultural sector, including by serving as Vice-President of the World Farmers' Organization. Senator Robinson was the first woman to serve as president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and as chair of the Agricultural Human Resources Sector Council. She has served on numerous boards of directors and was named one of Atlantic Canada's 25 Most Powerful Women by *Atlantic Business Magazine*.

Senator Al Zaibak was appointed to the Senate on January 28, 2024, on the recommendation of Prime Minister Trudeau, to represent Ontario. Senator Al Zaibak is co-founder, president and CEO of the Canadian Development and Marketing Corporation, an information technology company. Throughout his career, Senator Al Zaibak has striven to strengthen Canada's economic, social, and cultural ties with the global community, particularly with Arab countries. He co-founded Lifeline Syria, a non-profit organization that has helped nearly 1,200 Syrian refugees get private sponsorship. He is a graduate of Harvard Business School and Alexandria University, in Egypt.

On February 13, **Manuelle Oudar** was appointed to the Senate, on the recommendation of Prime Minister Trudeau, to represent the Senate division of La Salle, in Quebec. Senator Oudar was introduced on February 27 and took her seat as a member of the Senate. She was president and chief executive officer of Quebec's labour standards board, the *Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité au travail* (CNESST), in addition to being an accredited mediator, certified corporate administrator and member of the Quebec Bar. She has served on several boards of directors and contributed her expertise to the community as a mentor to young professionals. Senator Oudar

was named one of the 100 most influential women in Canada by the Women's Executive Network, and under her leadership, the CNESST received several awards, including the United Nations Public Service Award in 2022.

François Michaud
Procedural Clerk



Quebec

Proceedings of the National Assembly

Legislative agenda

From January to March 2024, 16 bills were introduced in the Assemblée nationale, of which 10 were government bills and six were private Members' bills. During the same period, six government bills, one private Members' bill and one private bill were passed, including:

- Bill 31, *An Act to amend various legislative provisions with respect to housing;*
- Bill 37, *An Act respecting the Commissioner for Children's Well-Being and Rights;*
- Bill 42, *An Act to prevent and fight psychological harassment and sexual violence in the workplace;*
- Bill 498, *An Act to proclaim National Maple Day.*

Budget Speech

On March 12, 2024, **Éric Girard**, Minister of Finance, delivered the budget speech, and **Sonia LeBel**, Chair of the Conseil du Trésor, tabled the estimates of expenditure for 2024–2025. Interim supply and Bill 55, *Appropriation Act No. 1, 2024–2025*, were passed the next sitting day. The Assemblée began the 25-hour debate on the budget speech on March 14, 2024, and on March 28, 2024, after 22 motions stating a grievance moved by Members in opposition over the course of the debate had been rejected, the Assemblée carried

the Minister of Finance's motion that the Assemblée nationale approve the Government's budgetary policy.

Appointment of a new Lieutenant Governor of Québec

On December 7, 2023, Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** announced the appointment of **Manon Jeannotte** as new Lieutenant Governor of Québec. She was sworn in on January 25, 2024. Ms. Jeannotte was previously Director of the First Nations Leadership School at HEC Montréal, in addition to having served for 12 years as an elected Councillor, then Chief, of the Micmac Nation of Gespeg. She is the second woman, as well as the first person of Indigenous origin, to hold the office of Lieutenant Governor of Québec. She succeeds the **Michel Doyon**, who held the office from 2015.

The Student Forum celebrates its 30th anniversary

The 30th Legislature of the Student Forum was held from January 9 to 12, 2024. More than 145 students played the roles of parliamentarians or journalists. They held debates in the House and in parliamentary committee on three bills and one order of initiative. The Student Forum has been held at the Assemblée nationale every year since 1992, except for 2021 and 2022 due to the public health situation. Over the past 30 years, more than 3,000 college students have participated in the Forum and been introduced to parliamentarism.

The executive chef of the Assemblée nationale receives the Le Renaud-Cyr award

On March 18, 2024, **Sébastien Laframboise**, executive chef at the Assemblée nationale since July 2023, received the Le Renaud-Cyr award. This award is given to chefs, producers and artisans who contribute to enriching Québec's culinary culture. Chef Laframboise offers a seasonal gastronomic experience that showcases products and flavours from different regions of Québec. When designing his menus, he draws inspiration from the culinary traditions that have marked the history of the Le Parlementaire restaurant for more than 100 years.

Starting, signing, or viewing a petition at the Assemblée nationale du Québec made easy!

The Assemblée nationale has produced a new guide explaining how to present a petition to the Assemblée nationale. It gives citizens tools for writing a petition and getting it approved by the Assemblée nationale, and explains the deadlines associated with tabling

petitions and how to track their progress. The guide is available on the Assemblée nationale website, in riding offices throughout Québec and in municipal libraries.

The working group on artificial intelligence publishes its report

A working group of members from the Direction de la Bibliothèque launched a reflection on the integration of artificial intelligence technologies (ChatGPT) into the Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale's activities. The group's mandate was to assess ChatGPT's potential benefits for library work, along with the associated organizational risks and ethical issues. The group concluded that ChatGPT's general performance was still inadequate to be used by library staff. It identified two major shortcomings: ChatGPT's corpus does not go beyond September 2021, and its citation of sources is deficient. The report contains eight recommendations, including further reflection and training staff.

Committee Proceedings

Mandate conferred by statute

From February 13 to 15, 2024, the Committee on the National Assembly examined the preliminary report of the Commission de la représentation électorale (the Commission).

Under the *Election Act*, the Commission is required to make a new electoral map after the second general election following the last delimitation. The current electoral map was adopted in 2017 and was used in the 2018 and 2022 Québec elections.

The review of the electoral map began with the tabling of the Commission's preliminary report in September 2023. Between October 10 and November 15, 2023, the Commission held public hearings in certain regions of Québec. The hearings gave citizens, organizations, regional elected officials and MNAs the chance to express their point of view on the proposed delimitation, which included changes in nine electoral districts that would affect 55 of Québec's 125 ridings.

During the Committee on the National Assembly's examination of the Commission's preliminary report, each MNA who wished to do so had 20 minutes to express their point of view and discuss with the Commission. The parliamentarians' statements were grouped by region. Many parliamentarians underlined the fact that while the delimitation of the electoral divisions provided under the *Election Act* took into

account the number of voters of each riding, it did not give sufficient consideration to the number of non-voters. Some said that the new proposed ridings were far too large, while others were of the opinion that many ridings needed to be delimited in ways that would better align with municipal or regional boundaries.

Once the consultations are completed, the next stage in the electoral map review process is the tabling in the Assemblée nationale of the Commission's report indicating the boundaries of the electoral divisions. The report is the subject of a debate limited to five hours. Not later than the tenth day following the debate, the Commission establishes the boundaries of the electoral divisions and assigns names to them. The Commission then publishes the list in the *Gazette officielle du Québec*.

However, on March 28, 2024, the Assemblée nationale unanimously adopted a motion stating that a broad, non-partisan reflection on possible amendments to the *Election Act* needed to be carried out to address the concerns about representation expressed during the electoral map review. This led the Government to announce that, with the approval of the opposition groups, it intended to table a bill to suspend the current electoral map review process and postpone the redelimitation of Québec ridings until the 2030 elections.

Bills

The themes of safety and protection of children and students were at the heart of the work of several parliamentary committees. Four bills concerning these themes were examined between January and March:

- the Committee on Citizen Relations held special consultations and public hearings and undertook clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 46, *An Act to improve the protection of children receiving educational childcare services*;
- the Committee on Culture and Education did the same for Bill 47, *An Act to reinforce the protection of students*;
- the Committee on Health and Social Services held special consultations and public hearings on Bill 37, *An Act respecting the Commissioner for Children's Well-Being and Rights*. Clause-by-clause consideration of this bill is ongoing; and
- the Committee on Planning and the Public Domain held special consultations and public hearings on Bill 45, *An Act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of persons in recreation and sports*.

Order of initiative

In December 2023, the Committee on Health and Social Services adopted an order of initiative on examining ways to facilitate organ and tissue donation, particularly the establishment of presumed consent. Within the framework of this order of initiative, the Committee has held three public hearings, which have provided an opportunity to hear 14 witnesses and examine the same number of briefs. The order of initiative was ongoing when these lines were written.

Vicky Boucher

Sittings and Parliamentary Procedure Advisor

Roxanne Guévin

Parliamentary Committees Directorate



Alberta

2024 Spring Sitting

The first session of the 31st Legislature resumed on February 28, 2024. The following day **Nate Horner**, MLA and President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, introduced the province's 2024-25 budget. Budget highlights include \$2 billion to assist with unforeseen costs related to disasters and emergencies, \$724 million for municipal infrastructure, and \$1.5 billion to reduce childcare costs in Alberta to \$15 per day. The budget also includes increased funding for health care and education, mental health and addiction services, and public safety. The anticipated personal income tax cut for income up to \$60,000 is expected to begin in 2026.

Government Bills introduced during the spring sitting include:

- Bill 10, *Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024*, which would implement parts of Budget 2024 such as the Alberta Is Calling attraction bonus, which provides a \$5,000 refundable tax credit for out-of-province job seekers who move to the province, the modernization of the Land Titles office, updates to the Film and Television Tax Credit Program, and an increase to the tobacco tax rate;
- Bill 11, *Public Safety Statutes Amendment Act, 2024*, that proposes to introduce court-ordered electronic monitoring of repeat offenders and individuals on bail and to enable the Lieutenant Governor in Council to authorize the establishment of one or more independent agency police services for all or part of Alberta;
- Bill 12, *Consumer Protection (Life Leases) Amendment Act, 2024*, which proposes a 180-day payout timeline, a 10-day cooling-off period after contracts are signed, and to enable enforcement for noncompliance through the *Consumer Protection Act*.

The Assembly also passed a Private Member's Public Bill during its spring sitting. Sponsored by **Nolan Dyck**, MLA, Grande Prairie, Bill 203, *Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act*, received third reading on March 25 and received Royal Assent on March 28. The Bill provides for a 13-member Alberta Foreign Credential Advisory Committee, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, that will be charged with identifying ways to streamline processes for recognizing foreign credentials. The Committee will have one year to report its recommendations to the Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism.

NDP Leadership Contest

On January 16 **Rachel Notley**, former Premier of Alberta, and current Leader of the Official Opposition, announced that she would be resigning as Leader of the New Democratic Party of Alberta. The official leadership contest to find her successor began a few weeks later, and it will conclude following a vote on June 22. Five current MLAs from the NDP caucus announced their candidacy before the end of February, including:

- **Kathleen Ganley**, MLA for Calgary-Mountain View, former Minister of Justice and Minister of Aboriginal Relations, elected to her third term in the Assembly in 2023;
- **Sarah Hoffman**, MLA for Edmonton-Glenora, former Minister of Health and Minister of Seniors, also serving her third term in the Assembly;

- **Rakhi Pancholi**, MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud, elected to her second term in 2023;
- **David Shepherd**, MLA for Edmonton-City Centre, returned to the Assembly for his third term in 2023, withdrew from the race two days later due to health concerns; and
- **Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse**, MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford, first elected in 2023.

In March two additional candidates, neither of whom is an MLA, also announced their candidacy: **Gil McGowan** and former mayor of Calgary **Naheed Nenshi**. Ms. Pancholi withdrew from the contest and announced that she is supporting Mr. Nenshi's candidacy.

Committee Business

The three Legislative Policy Committees spent two weeks in March considering the 2024-25 main estimates. The estimates of most ministries receive three hours of consideration. However, the Standing Orders allow the Official Opposition to identify four ministries to receive six hours of consideration in exchange for reducing the time allotted for three ministries to two hours of consideration. The main estimates for Executive Council are also considered for two hours in accordance with the Standing Orders.

This year the ministries that received extended consideration were Education, Health, Treasury Board and Finance, and Seniors, Community and Social Services. Ministries that were identified for two hours of consideration were Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction, Infrastructure, and Transportation and Economic Corridors. The committees completed consideration of the estimates on the morning of March 21, and the vote in Committee of Supply occurred that afternoon.

This year's consideration of the main estimates also saw the introduction of new onscreen timers that are visible to participants in the room and those online. The new system allows up to three countdown timers to be displayed at once and for each of the timers to be labelled as needed for each meeting. The use of electronic debate tracking sheets was also successfully implemented for these meetings.

On January 23, the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices met to continue consideration of the budget proposals submitted by the Auditor General, Chief Electoral Officer, Child and Youth Advocate, and Ethics Commissioner. The Committee reduced all

four budget submissions and instead approved a 2.1 per cent increase over the 2023-24 budgets for three of the offices. Meanwhile, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, which has a four-year budget cycle, had its budget submission reduced by \$438,000.

As part of its review of the *Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act*, the Standing Committee on Families and Communities received technical briefings from the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance and the Ministry of Justice as well as written submissions from stakeholders and the public. Four organizations have been selected to make presentations to the Committee.

The Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee received technical briefings on the *Act* from the Ministry of Justice and the Office of the Ethics Commissioner. It has invited stakeholders and the public to provide written submissions regarding the *Act* by April 8.

Jody Rempel
Committee Clerk



Manitoba

1st Session of the 43rd Legislature – Spring Sitting

The First Session of the 43rd Legislature resumed on March 6, 2024.

The Government introduced a number of Bills this session addressing different areas of governance. A total of 19 of these Bills were introduced in time to meet the criteria for Specified Bill status and are therefore guaranteed to have all questions put before June 3 (subject to the right of the Opposition designating five of those Bills to be delayed until the Fall).

Two days before the Specified Bills introduction deadline, however, the Official Opposition prevented

the Government from introducing its full legislative package by raising seven consecutive Matters of Privilege so that the House could not consider its regular business in Routine Proceedings during that period. The Government New Democratic Party had used these same measures in 2020 when it was the Official Opposition, raising 27 Matters of Privilege over a course of five days which also delayed the delivery of the budget at that time.

Some of the legislative agenda introduced this Spring includes:

Bill 8 – The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act creates access zones for clinics and prescribed facilities that provide abortion services and for residences of providers of those services.

Activities are prohibited within these zones. For example, a person must not

- attempt to persuade any other person to refrain from accessing abortion services;
- perform acts of disapproval; and/or
- continuously or repeatedly observe people.

Bill 9 – The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act amends to extend the length of the leave for serious injury or illness from 17 weeks to 27 weeks.

Bill 21 – The Public School Amendment Act is amended to expand who is considered to be a resident pupil to include the following:

- a pupil who lives with a parent or guardian who is a member of a visiting force or who holds a work or study permit;
- a pupil who lives with a responsible adult who is not their parent or legal guardian; and
- a pupil who is a refugee or a child of a refugee.

Beginning in the 2025-2026 school year, the compulsory school age is lowered from seven to six. The age at which a child has the right to attend school is lowered from six to five.

Bill 24 – The Intimate Image Protection Act is amended to address the distribution of fake intimate images (“deepfakes”) created by the use of technology that appear to depict identifiable people as being nude or engaged in sexual activity. The amendments enable any person depicted in a fake intimate image to sue the person who distributed that image without their consent.

Budget Debate

On April 2, 2024, Finance Minister **Adrien Sala** delivered his first budget. The Government proclaimed this budget made targeted, strategic investments to make life better for Manitoba families, with a focus on rebuilding health care; lowering costs for families; creating healthier families and safer communities and growing the economy. Some of the highlights included:

- extending the Provincial fuel-tax holiday by three months to September 30;
- providing rebates of up to \$4,000 on electric vehicles and \$300 rebates for security cameras;
- raising the tax credit for renters from \$50 to \$575;
- doubling the tax credit for fertility treatment and providing free prescription birth control;
- setting aside money to establish a supervised consumption site; and
- reducing education taxes on property owners of lower-value homes in comparison to those who own more expensive homes or commercial properties.

The Progressive Conservative interim Leader of the Official Opposition **Wayne Ewasko** moved a motion expressing non-confidence in the Government on April 3, 2024. Mr. Ewasko was voted to serve as interim Leader on January 18, 2024. Premier **Heather Stefanson** had resigned as leader earlier that week after the party established rules for the next leadership contest.

The motion stated that the budget was not in the best interests of the people of the province and that it neglected the priorities of Manitobans by:

- introducing measures that were not raised during the recent election campaign just six months ago;
- dividing Manitobans into winners and losers through taxation, thereby creating two Manitobas;
- neglecting critical areas of investment such as economic growth; urgent medical capacity; the construction of new educational and childcare infrastructure as well as roads, highways, bridges, waterways, and other critical infrastructure; environmental conservation and protection; and public safety;
- inadequately addressing the current cost-of-living crisis, the rising provincial debt load, and effect of increased interest costs;
- not fully accounting for all the costs of government decision-making and spending since October 3, 2023; and

- violating the trust that Manitobans have placed in this new Provincial Government for all of the above reasons.

Sessional Order enabling virtual sittings

The Legislature is still operating under the Sessional Order allowing for virtual participation among other things. Originally passed on October 7, 2020, and discussed in previous issues, the Sessional Order has been extended to the end of this current session, but it is expected to become part of a permanent Rules package.

Interim Supply

The Committee of the Whole considered and passed supply resolutions dealing with temporary funding for operating and capital expenditures until the 2024/25 fiscal year budget and budget processes and the main supply bills are completed later this session. The House also dealt with passing all stages of Interim Supply legislation resulting in Bill 25 – *The Interim Appropriation Act, 2024* receiving Royal Assent on March 14, 2024.

Standing Committees

In the wake of the leadership change of the Official Opposition, **Josh Guenter** of the Progressive Conservative caucus has been designated as the new Chair of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) while **Jim Maloway** retained his position as Vice-Chair (having previously served as Chair while he was in Opposition). On February 28, 2024, **Lesley Burns** of the Canadian Audit & Accountability Foundation held a full day training session for PAC which consisted almost entirely of new Members.

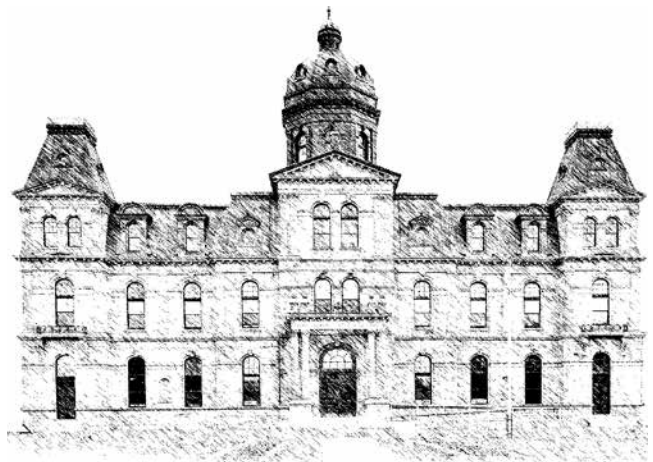
On April 4, 2024, the Standing Committee of Legislative Affairs met to consider the Report and Recommendations of the Judicial Compensation Committee dated November 21, 2023. The Committee passed a motion accepting the recommendations relating to the judicial salaries.

New Deputy Clerk

Further to our previous submission detailing the appointment of **Rick Yarish** on November 23, 2023, as the 14th Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the Assembly is pleased to announce the appointment of **Tim Abbott** as our new Deputy Clerk effective February 5, 2024. Tim describes himself as British by

birth and Canadian by choice as he was born and raised in the UK, specifically in the town of Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk, England. Tim graduated with a Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Reading and then worked for seven years with Public Sector and Government accounts for an IT Consultancy before moving to Canada in 2017. Tim began working at the Assembly in 2018, initially joining Committees Branch, transitioning briefly to Journals, then returning to Committees and settling in to become an exceptionally capable Committee Clerk.

Greg Recksiedler
Clerk Assistant/Research Officer



New Brunswick

Budget

The Third Session of the 60th Legislature adjourned on December 13, 2023, and resumed on March 19, 2024, when Finance and Treasury Board Minister **Ernie Steeves** tabled the 2024-2025 Main Estimates. This is the sixth budget delivered by the Progressive Conservative government led by Premier **Blaine Higgs**.

The 2024-2025 budget projects a surplus of \$41 million after total spending of \$13.3 billion. While revenues are projected to grow by 4.7 per cent, the Department of Finance and Treasury Board projects New Brunswick’s gross domestic product to grow by 0.7 per cent in 2024. The net debt-to-GDP ratio is projected to be 26.7 per cent by March 31, 2025.

Highlights of the budget included \$3.8 billion to the health-care system, which is the largest health-care budget in New Brunswick’s history; \$68.9 million to

the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, which is a 54.1 per cent increase over last year's budget; \$42.9 million to Education, to address enrolment growth and rising operating costs in school districts such as energy, transportation, and other services; \$58.3 million in additional support for social assistance clients; \$29.7 million in wage increases for the human services sector; and \$50 million to continue the Enhanced Energy Savings Program.

On March 21, Finance Critic **René Legacy** delivered the Official Opposition's Reply to the Budget. Mr. Legacy argued that the government chose to carry a surplus to the disadvantage of New Brunswickers and that the projected investments in health care are not bold enough, particularly for seniors. The Official Opposition also argued that there is a lack of effective measures to address cost of living increases and public housing needs; a lack of strategy to recruit workers in skilled trades; not enough funding in the education sector to address higher school enrollments; and a lack of reference to portfolios such as arts and culture, la Francophonie, and pay equity for women.

Legislation

As of April 2, 12 bills were introduced during the spring session. Certain bills of note included:

- Bill 22, *An Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*, introduced by Public Safety Minister **Kris Austin**, adds illegal tobacco sales to the list of crimes that people can report in their neighborhoods and sets 90 days as the minimum amount of time that a property can be shut down due to illegal activity, and a maximum of 120 days for subsequent offences.
- Bill 23, *An Act Respecting Renewable Gas and Hydrogen*, introduced by Natural Resources and Energy Development Minister **Mike Holland**, supports the development of the renewable gas and hydrogen industries in New Brunswick and enables integration of these fuels into the provincial energy system.
- Bill 27, *An Act to Amend the New Brunswick Income Tax Act*, introduced by Finance and Treasury Board Minister **Ernie Steeves**, provides provincial non-refundable tax credits for people who volunteer as firefighters and search and rescue workers.
- Bill 29, *An Act Respecting Cannabis Control*, introduced by Health Minister **Bruce Fitch**, aims to increase compliance, reduce the sale of illegal cannabis, and prevent young people from consuming the drug.

- Bill 30, *An Act to Amend the Tobacco and Electronic Cigarette Sales Act*, introduced by Health Minister **Bruce Fitch**, requires every retailer of electronic cigarettes and vaping liquids to be licensed, prohibits the use of vending machines for the sale of tobacco and vaping products, and requires retailers to request identification from anyone who looks 25 years of age or younger.
- Bill 32, *An Act to Amend the Residential Property Tax Relief Act*, introduced by Official Opposition Caucus Chair **Jean-Claude D'Amours**, allows family members of a deceased person to claim a property tax credit for the deceased person's principal residence for up to two years.

Committee Activity

Committees were active throughout the month of February. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts, chaired by **Chuck Chiasson**, reviewed two volumes of an Auditor General report and the annual reports of various government departments, Crown corporations, and other provincial entities. The Standing Committee on Procedure, Privileges and Legislative Officers, chaired by **Ross Wetmore**, met to review the annual reports of the legislative officers, including the Chief Electoral Officer, who discussed certain expenditures made in anticipation of an early provincial election in 2023 which did not occur. The Standing Committee on Economic Policy, chaired by **Michelle Conroy**, also remained active in February, considering Bill 16, *Consumer Protection Act*.

The Select Committee on Accessibility in New Brunswick, chaired by the Minister responsible for Seniors, **Kathy Bockus**, met with various stakeholders in February to solicit feedback on the Department of Postsecondary Education, Training and Labour's framework for accessibility legislation. The Committee met again in March to prepare its final report with recommendations. It was tabled in the House on March 28.

Resignation

Arlene Dunn resigned as a Member of the Legislative Assembly on February 8. At the time of her resignation, Ms. Dunn served as the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, and the Minister responsible for Immigration. She previously held the positions of Minister responsible for Economic Development and Small Business (2020-2023) and Minister responsible for Opportunities NB (2020-2023). Prior to being elected

as a Member for the riding of Saint John Harbour in September 2020, Ms. Dunn had a successful career in the labour relations industry.

Renovations

Substantial renovations to modernize the office space of the Legislature's Departmental Building were completed in March. The building, constructed in 1888, houses Members and staff of all caucuses as well as the press gallery.

Standings

The standings in the House are 28 Progressive Conservatives, 16 Liberals, three Greens, and one independent. There is one vacancy.

Shannon Armstrong
Research Officer



Ontario

1st Session 43rd Parliament (Spring Meeting Period)

This update covers the period from January to March 2024, starting partway through the winter adjournment and carrying into the beginning of the spring meeting period. Several committees took advantage of the winter adjournment period by travelling to conduct public hearings for their ongoing studies. The House resumed meeting on February 20, 2024.

Composition of the House

On February 20, 2024, MPP **Aislinn Clancy** (Green Party of Ontario) was introduced in the House and took her seat for the first time. The Green Party now has a caucus of two Members, which is below the threshold for recognized party status, and therefore MPP Clancy is the 16th independent Member. Consequently, the Speaker updated the allotments for the participation of independent Members, providing for MPP Clancy's

regular participation in the Question Period and Members' Statements proceedings.

On the same day, the Speaker also informed the House of a vacancy following the resignation of MPP **Parm Gill**, Member for Milton, on February 16, 2024. The Speaker has issued his warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

Condolences

On February 20, 2024, the House expressed its condolences on the passing of several former Members:

- **Andrew S. Brandt**, Member for the electoral district of Sarnia from March 19, 1981, to September 5, 1990.
- **Albert Kolyn**, Member for the electoral district of Lakeshore from March 19, 1981, to May 1, 1985.
- **William Darcy McKeough**, Member for the electoral districts of Kent West and Chatham—Kent from September 25, 1963, to August 16, 1978.
- **John Keith Riddell**, Member for the electoral districts of Huron—Middlesex and Huron from March 15, 1973, to September 5, 1990.

On March 6, 2024, the House also expressed its condolences following the death of **Brian Mulroney**, who served as Prime Minister of Canada from September 17, 1984, to June 25, 1993. The Canadian and Ontario flags on the grounds of the legislative precinct were flown at half-mast until the sunset on the day of the funeral, March 23, 2024.

Concurrence in the Supply and the Supply Bill

On March 6, 2024, the Deputy Government House Leader moved a motion for Concurrence in Supply for the Estimates of each of the Ministries and Offices that had been considered by committees and reported to the House. The Orders for Concurrence all carried on division, and on March 18, 2024, Bill 174, *An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024* (the Supply Act), was introduced in the House. It was debated and passed the next day and received Royal Assent on March 21, 2024.

Standing Order Amendment

On March 26, 2024, the House adopted an amendment to the Standing Orders that allows Members to address the House in an Indigenous language. Newly elected MPPs must provide notice to the Clerk of the language they intend to speak prior to taking their seat for the first

time to enable the Speaker to arrange for interpretation and translation. A provisional Standing Order was also adopted, affording current MPPs the same opportunity to notify the Clerk of their intent.

A motion to make additional amendments to the Standing Orders was moved on March 27, 2024, and is still before the House at the time of writing.

Committee Activities

The winter adjournment marked a busy time for committees, including significant travel.

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs continued its 2024 Pre-Budget Consultations, travelling to 15 cities in total, including: Oshawa, Markham, Mississauga, Oakville, Hamilton, Welland, Chatham, London, Cambridge, Brockville, Ottawa, Cornwall, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, and Dryden. The committee received over 100 written submissions and heard from over 250 witnesses during the public hearings. The final report was presented to the House on March 18, 2024.

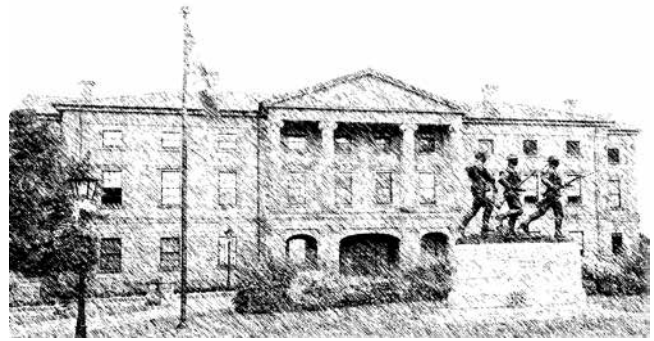
The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy travelled to St. Catharines, Burlington, Brampton, Ajax, Vaughan, and Kitchener to continue public hearings for its Study on Regional Governance.

The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs continued its study on the renovation and restoration of the Legislative Precinct, receiving a closed session briefing from **Paul Calandra**, Minister of Legislative Affairs, on February 12, 2024. In March, the committee heard presentations from Legislative Assembly staff on the heritage of the grounds and toured the precinct to learn more about the lifespan of various building systems and their deficiencies.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts tabled its report on the Value-for-Money Audit: Conserving the Niagara Escarpment, which the committee had selected for review from the 2022 Annual Report of the Auditor General.

The Committee also met with the newly appointed Auditor General of Ontario, **Shelley Spence**, on February 26, 2024, for a closed session briefing on the Auditor General's 2023 Annual Report.

Isaiah Thorning
Committee Clerk



Prince Edward Island

First Session, Sixty-seventh General Assembly

The First Session of the Sixty-seventh General Assembly resumed for the Winter-Spring sitting on February 27, 2024, and continues as of this writing. The First Session began in May 2023.

By-election and New Member of the Legislative Assembly

On February 7 **Matthew MacFarlane**, of the Green Party, was elected in a by-election for District 19, Borden-Kinkora. The by-election was held due to the resignation of former MLA **Jamie Fox** on November 10, 2023. Mr. MacFarlane received 49 per cent of the vote, defeating candidates from the Progressive Conservative, Liberal and New Democratic parties. Voter turnout was just under 59 per cent. Prior to being elected, Mr. MacFarlane practiced law for 20 years, and he has been active in healthcare advocacy. He was sworn in on February 21 and took his seat in the Assembly on February 27. The distribution of membership in the Legislative Assembly is now 21 Progressive Conservative Party members, three Liberal Party members, and three Green Party members.

The by-election was originally scheduled for February 5 but was twice postponed due to a snowstorm.

Operating Budget

On February 29 Minister of Finance **Jill Burrige** gave the 2024-25 Budget Address, announcing a \$3.2 billion budget and an \$85 million deficit. Healthcare remained the largest area of expenditure, with \$963 million allocated to Health PEI, followed by education, with \$432 million allocated to the Department of Education and Early Years and PEI's two public education authorities. The government focused on

healthcare, housing and affordability measures in the budget. Highlights included further spending on new and existing Patient Medical Homes, which are collaborative-care centres intended to serve Islanders without existing access to primary care; and a new Community Housing Expansion Program to support near-market affordable housing by collaborating with non-profits and co-operatives. Tax adjustments, a new PEI children's benefit, increases to non-profit and community organization operational grants, and additional investment in home energy efficiency programs and public transit are some of the measures intended to increase affordability for Islanders. As of this writing the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure remain under debate.

Bills

As of the first sitting week in April, there were 17 Government bills on the Order Paper. Of these, five were ordered for Third Reading; while debate is possible at Third Reading, most debate on bills in PEI occurs during the Committee of the Whole House stage, and bills recommended at that stage tend to subsequently pass Third Reading and receive Royal Assent. The five bills in question were Bill 35, *An Act to Amend the Off-Highway Vehicle Act*, which addresses the appropriate use of trails and the retention of license plates when off-highway vehicles are sold; Bill 41, *Benevolent and Community Crowdfunding Act*, which clarifies the rights and responsibilities of persons who organize, administer, or benefit from informal fundraising campaigns and provides a default set of rules to govern informal fundraising campaigns based in PEI; Bill 42, *Reviewable Transactions Act*, which replaces legislation from the 1930s and updates remedies available to creditors; and bills 49, *An Act to Amend the Drug Cost Assistance Act*, and 50, *An Act to Amend the Health and Dental Services Cost Assistance Act*, both of which allow for the coordination of benefits between different levels of government.

Five private members' bills were on the Order Paper at the start of April, but none had proceeded beyond the committee stage.

Speaker's Ruling on Official Opposition Status

The result of the February 7 District 19 by-election brought the Green Party (recognized as the Third Party) into a tie with the Liberal Party (recognized as the Official Opposition) at three seats each, a scenario which has never occurred in PEI before. The *Legislative Assembly Act* defines the Official Opposition as the

largest caucus sitting in the Legislative Assembly in opposition to the Government. Since the Green and Liberal caucuses had become equal in size, it fell to Speaker **Darlene Compton** to determine which one would be considered the Official Opposition. Both caucuses submitted letters to the Speaker arguing their case to be the Official Opposition; the Liberal position was that it was the Official Opposition prior to the February 7 by-election and therefore should continue to hold that status based on incumbency. The Green caucus argued that they had been the Official Opposition until the 2023 general election, only 10 months prior; that since the General Assembly was still fairly new, a change in caucus statuses would cause minimal disruption; and that share of the popular vote, which favoured the Green Party, had been used as a supplemental factor by other jurisdictions facing similar decisions.

Speaker Compton ruled on the matter on February 27, concluding that the Liberal caucus would remain the Official Opposition. She drew upon decisions made by New Brunswick Speaker **Shirley Dysart** in 1994, House of Commons Speaker **Gilbert Parent** in 1996 and Alberta Speaker **Gene Zwozdesky** in 2014. All these decisions agree that a tie in seats is not a sufficient reason to displace the incumbent. Speaker Compton emphasized the Speaker's aim of ensuring that business of the House is conducted according to rules, precedent and established practice, and that consideration of organizational disruption was not a factor in her decision. As for the popular vote argument, she found it to be irrelevant, as electoral performance is not a parliamentary consideration; all members are equal in the House, whether "elected by one vote or a landslide." She noted that though popular vote share was considered in an Alberta Speaker's decision in 1983, all other comparable decisions since then have not taken it into consideration.

The Speaker had also been asked to rule on allocation of time for private members' business among the three caucuses in the House, but instead encouraged House Leaders and all members to continue negotiations toward an agreement, rather than impose one upon them.

Other Speakers' Rulings

The Speaker and Deputy Speaker intervened regarding parliamentary language during the Winter-Spring sitting. On February 28, Deputy Speaker **Sidney MacEwen** cautioned members on their use of puns and reminded them of the rule that no Member shall

use language or words offensive toward the House or any Member. On April 2 he asked Mr. MacFarlane to retract the phrase “come clean,” which he had used during Question Period, and Mr. MacFarlane did so. On March 13, Speaker Compton asked **Gordon McNeilly** (District 14, Charlottetown-West Royalty) to retract the phrase “misleading statement,” which he had used during Question Period, and Mr. McNeilly did so.

On March 15, Speaker Compton ruled on a matter of privilege raised by Leader of the Opposition **Hal Perry** on a previous day in objection to how Minister of Health and Wellness **Mark McLane** had characterized Mr. Perry’s support for a government program. The Speaker found that this was not a matter of privilege nor a breach of the rules but instead a disagreement on the facts of an issue.

Acting Speaker

On February 27 due to the temporary absence of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, by motion the House appointed **Zack Bell** (District 10, Charlottetown-Winsloe) Acting Speaker. Mr. Bell presided for the remainder of the sitting day.

Ryan Reddin

Director of Parliamentary Research



Newfoundland and Labrador

Spring 2024 Sitting

In accordance with the parliamentary calendar, the Assembly resumed for the Spring Sitting on March 4, 2024, adjourning on March 21 for a constituency week break, followed by a two-week break for Easter.

Of note, in the Spring 2024 Sitting to date:

The *Interim Supply Act, 2024* was introduced on March 6 and received Royal Assent on March 13.

There were several instances where established protocols in the public galleries were not respected by visiting protestors, requiring the Speaker to issue repeated warnings, to issue direction that individuals be removed and, in one instance, ordering the galleries be cleared. As a result, the Speaker issued a public statement on March 13 reminding visitors of the importance of respecting protocols for the safety of Members, visitors, and employees of the House of Assembly Service.

The 2024 Budget Speech, originally scheduled for March 20, was delayed due to an unsafe environment in which protestors were preventing elected officials and public service employees from entering the Confederation Building Complex. The conditions were deemed unsafe for employees and visitors due to threats of violence. As a result, a court injunction was sought and granted that day by the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador, ordering protestors to provide safe access to the building. While the protests continued, the Budget Speech proceeded on March 21, with additional security measures put in place to ensure the safe entry of Members and essential employees. Members of the Official Opposition, Third Party and unaffiliated Members did not attend Budget Day proceedings.

On the first day of the Spring 2024 Sitting, a Member withdrew unparliamentary comments made during the Fall 2023 Sitting. On October 19, 2023, the Speaker issued a ruling on a point of order pursuant to Standing Order 49, that remarks made by a Member in two separate instances during Oral Questions contained unparliamentary language. Following requests for the offending Member to unequivocally withdraw the comments at the time of the ruling, which were refused, the Speaker further ruled that the Member would not be recognized until such time as the statements were withdrawn. As of the adjournment of the Fall sitting on November 16, 2023, the Member had not unequivocally withdrawn the comments and had not spoken in the House since the October 19 ruling.

On March 5, 2024, a point of privilege was raised by a Member respecting reputational damage caused by the collection of court costs awarded against him following the conclusion of a judicial process commenced by the Member. The Speaker ruled there was no *prima facie* breach of privilege.

The Spring Sitting will resume on April 15, sitting for a six-week period until May 30. With the Budget

Speech delivered on March 21, the annual budget process will continue throughout the remainder of the Spring sitting with Standing Committees reviewing the Estimates and other related proceedings.

Passing of Sitting Member

On January 22, 2024, the Newfoundland and Labrador Legislature was saddened by the news that **Derrick Bragg**, Member for the District of Fogo Island - Cape Freels, had lost his battle with cancer. The following statement was issued by the Speaker:

“It is with profound sorrow and a heavy heart that I extend my deepest condolences, on behalf of all Members and employees of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador, on the recent passing of the Honourable Derrick Bragg, Member for the District of Fogo Island-Cape Freels.

At this time, we pay tribute to his memory and honour the service he gave to our province throughout his tenure as Member. First elected on November 30, 2015, to serve in the 48th General Assembly, Minister Bragg was re-elected to serve in the 49th (elected May 16, 2019) and 50th (elected February 13, 2021) General Assemblies. Throughout this time, he served as parliamentary secretary and Minister in a number of portfolios. He also served on various Committees of the House and was Chair of the Privileges and Elections Committee in the 49th General Assembly.

To his wife, Beverley; his daughter, Allison; all his colleagues, family, and friends; and constituents of the district of Fogo Island-Cape Freels, may you find strength in the memories of impactful service he gave to his community, district, and province, both as a municipal administrator and elected official. All Members of the House of Assembly join you in mourning, and our collective thoughts and prayers are with you at this difficult time.

For all Members of this House, Minister Bragg was not just a colleague, but a friend to all. His cheerful smile will be missed, and his legacy of devoted public service will forever be etched in the history of our Legislature.”

A memorial was placed at the late Member’s desk in the House of Assembly Chamber, which was open for viewing by Members, employees, and the public during the mourning period until sundown on the day of his funeral.

Vacancies and By-elections

On December 30, 2023, an election writ was issued for the District of Conception Bay East-Bell Island. The vacancy was the result of the retirement of David Brazil (Progressive Conservative), who had served as the Member for that District since December 2010. The by-election was scheduled to take place on January 29, 2024, but polling day was postponed to January 30 due to inclement weather. **Fred Hutton** (Liberal) was elected and sworn in as the Member for the District of Conception Bay East - Bell Island on February 21.

On March 17, 2024, an election writ was issued for the District of Fogo Island - Cape Freels, with the by-election taking place on April 15. The vacancy was the result of the passing of former Member, Mr. Bragg (Liberal). **Jim McKenna** (Progressive Conservative) was elected and sworn-in on May 2.

There was also a vacancy in the District of Baie Verte - Green Bay following the retirement of **Brian Warr** (Liberal) on March 1, 2024, who had served as the Member for that District since November 2015, and was also serving in the role of Deputy Speaker at the time of his retirement. A writ of election was issued on April 28, with the by-election taking place on May 27. **Lin Paddock** (Progressive Conservative) was elected and sworn-in on June 26.

Appointment of Deputy Speaker

On March 5, 2024, **Sherry Gambin-Walsh**, Member for the District of Placentia - St. Mary’s, was appointed Deputy Speaker on motion of the House. Ms. Gambin-Walsh was first elected in November 2015 and has served previously as the Minister of Children, Seniors, and Social Development; the Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities; the Minister Responsible for the NL Housing Corporation; the Minister of Service NL; and the Minister Responsible for Workplace NL, Purchasing and Procurement.

The Speaker welcomed Ms. Gambin-Walsh as a presiding officer and extended sincere appreciation to outgoing Deputy Speaker, Mr. Warr, for his dedication and commitment to the role during his tenure.

Members’ Compensation Review Committee (MCRC) Delivers Final Report

The 2024 Members’ Compensation Review Committee (MCRC) delivered its final report to the Speaker and the Management Commission on March

26, 2024. The report entitled, *How We Value Democracy*, includes 32 recommendations respecting salaries, pensions, severance and allowances paid to Members of the House of Assembly and is available at: <https://assembly.nl.ca/About/ReportsPublications/pdfs/MCRCReport2024.pdf>.

Heather M. Jacobs was appointed by resolution of the House of Assembly to conduct this review on November 2, 2023, in accordance with subsection 16(1) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* (the Act), which requires a review once during each general assembly. The House of Assembly Management Commission will now consider the recommendations in accordance with the process prescribed in subsections 16(5) and 16(6) of the Act.

On behalf of all Members, the Speaker extends sincere appreciation to Ms. Jacobs and the entire MCRC team including **Sandra Barnes, Maureen McCarthy, and Yvonne Power**, for their work and diligence in conducting this review.

Bobbi Russell

Principal Clerk of Committees,
Director of Policy & Communications



Northwest Territories

The First Session of the 20th Assembly resumed on February 6, 2024, and adjourned on February 28, 2024.

This session included a record number of interpreters. Simultaneous translation was provided in Dëne Sųłné Yatıé, Dene Zhatıé, French, Inuvialuktun, Dene Kədó, Dinii Zhu' Giniik, Inuktitut, and nēhiyawēwin.

A new formality of the House brought forward by the Speaker ensures the daily opening prayer is spoken in an Indigenous language.

Legislation

Three pieces of legislation were introduced.

- Bill 1: *An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act* provides small amendments to the *Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act*. It moved directly into the House where it was passed.
- Bill 2: *Missing Persons Act* received first and second reading in the House and has been referred to Standing Committee for review. The NWT currently has no legislation that deals with missing persons. This Bill is similar to other Canadian legislation which enhances the RCMP's ability to investigate. The Standing Committee is currently conducting public engagement.
- Bill 3: *Carbon Tax Repeal Act*, is a Private Members' Bill, brought forward by the Member for Range Lake. This bill seeks to retract the GNWT's administration of the carbon tax and restore it to the federal system while leave the rebate system intact. Bill 3 received second reading on February 28, 2024, and is now before the Standing Committee for review.

Budget

In the February Sitting, an interim estimates document for 2024 was tabled, along with supplementary estimates for 2023-2024.

The Interim Estimate, Operations Expenditures proposed \$782 million for operations between April to June 30, 2024, and \$1.3 billion in borrowing for 2024-25 fiscal year. This budget was reviewed and passed in the House on February 20, 2024.

Additionally, two supplementary estimates 2023/24 were tabled. The final supplementary infrastructure and operational estimates for 2023/24 provided:

- \$207 million in new funding to cover operational expenses from the wildfire season and evacuations during summer 2023, including \$86 million towards fire suppression,
- \$54 million in healthcare; and
- \$18 million from rising interest rates.

The capital budget was reduced by \$8.5 million due to changes in project timelines, while an additional \$8.9 million is earmarked to support the Inuvik Airport Surface Structure (fully offset by the Government of Canada).

Priorities

Members met over the course of two days and came to consensus on the Priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly. Members recognized that relations, partnerships, and effective collaboration are paramount. Members recognized that no matter the topic, the GNWT cannot achieve all that is required alone; Members recognized that *'We are Stronger Together'*. The four top priorities for the 20th Legislative Assembly address: housing, the economy, health care and trauma, and safety. To achieve action on these priorities, Members recognized that reconciliation and the well-being of residents must come first. Action on priorities will be achieved through good governance and collaboration with Indigenous governments, communities, and the public.

Petitions

Two petitions were brought forward in the first session of the Legislative Assembly. A petition demanding a public inquiry into the Hay River-Enterprise-Kakisa wildfire did not quite conform with the rules of the Assembly and was brought forward as a tabled document. This petition received nearly 400 NWT resident signatures and was tabled in the House on February 20, 2024 (TD 27-20(1)). A petition requesting the Legislative Assembly ask the Premier to call on the Government of Canada to act on establishing a ceasefire in Gaza was read into the House on February 27, 2024. This petition was signed by 645 NWT residents.

Motions

Several motions were moved during the first session. Motion 9-20(1); *Establishing a Public Inquiry into the 2023 Wildfires*, which was moved by the Member for Range Lake, garnered significant attention.

The initial debate of this motion was postponed by way of motion from the Premier on February 22, 2024. This is the first time the Legislative Assembly has postponed debate on a motion. During debate, Members moved five motions to amend Motion 9-20(1). These included adding a representative on the public inquiry board from the Council of Leaders, reducing the total public inquiry board to three members, providing safe disclosure mechanisms in the inquiry, and directing the Government to produce draft establishment orders.

The debate demonstrated a willingness among both the cabinet and regular Members of the House to critically review the summer of 2023, to improve the emergency response from the GNWT for the upcoming season and to ensure residents are never placed in danger during an evacuation. However, the Members were unable to achieve consensus on the motion; all regular Members voted in favour of the motion, while all Executive Council Members voted in opposition.

Two motions regarding housing as a human right were also moved.

Motion 20-20(1), *Affirming Housing as a Human Right* was discussed and carried on February 28, 2024. This motion called on the GNWT to follow the international and national lead by recognizing that housing is essential to a person's dignity and wellbeing.

Motion 21-20(1), *Taking Action to Address Housing as a Human Right* was also discussed and carried on February 28, 2024. Motion 21-20(1) builds on the previous housing motion by calling on the government to formalize partnerships with Indigenous governments through the Northwest Territories Housing Forum into legislation, and to also establish an NWT Housing Advocate in legislation.

Motion 23-20(1) *Call to Uphold Human Rights in Gaza*, was discussed on February 29, 2024. This motion called on the Legislative Assembly to condemn all acts of antisemitism and anti-Palestinian racism and requested the Premier to write a letter to the Government of Canada calling for action on a ceasefire, to release all hostages, to provide funds for humanitarian aid and to uphold obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. While there were several abstentions on this Motion, ultimately the motion carried.

Assent

On February 29, 2024, the final day of session, the Commissioner provided assent to Bill 1 and the following interim and supplementary financial legislation: Bills 4,5,6. The House is adjourned until May 23, 2024, at 1:30pm.

Amy Lizotte
Manager of Research



Saskatchewan

Spring Sitting of the Fourth session of the Twenty-Ninth legislature

The Fourth session of the Twenty-Ninth legislature resumed for the spring sitting period on March 4, 2024. In accordance with the parliamentary calendar, the Assembly will sit for 40 days before adjourning on the Thursday before Victoria Day.

Budget

On Wednesday, March 20, 2024, Finance Minister **Donna Harpauer** presented the province's 2024-25 budget. The budget, titled *Classrooms, Care and Communities*, announced investments into education, health care, and municipal revenue sharing to respond to the growing needs of Saskatchewan residents, families, and communities. "This budget addresses the challenges of a growing province by reinvesting the benefits of growth in the areas that matter most to Saskatchewan people — education, health and our communities," said Ms. Harpauer, noting further that the budget contains no new taxes or increases to existing taxes. Highlights of the budget include funding announcements for targeted mental health and addictions initiatives, direct supports for classrooms, new breast cancer care and screening initiatives, and nine new schools and two renovation projects.

In response, Opposition Finance critic **Trent Wotherspoon** contended that "there's nothing in this budget to make life more affordable," and criticized it as "proof ... [that the] government is out of touch with the challenges working families are facing and the opportunities to be seized." Accordingly, on March 21, 2024, Mr. Wotherspoon moved an amendment in opposition to the budgetary policy of the government on account of its failure to provide cost-of-living relief for Saskatchewan families.

The budget motion and the proposed amendment were subsequently debated in the Assembly for five days, at which time the amendment was defeated and the budget motion was passed on March 28, 2024, both on recorded division. In accordance with the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, the estimates were automatically committed to their respective committees for consideration.

Motion of condolence

On March 4, 2024, the first day of the Spring Sitting, the Assembly passed a motion of condolence in honour of former Prime Minister **Brian Mulroney**, who passed away on February 29, 2024. The motion, which was moved by Premier **Scott Moe** and spoken to by both Premier Moe and Opposition Leader **Carla Beck**, expressed the Assembly's sorrow and regret at Mr. Mulroney's passing, as well as its appreciation for the contribution he made to both Canada and Saskatchewan. In accordance with a subsequent transmittal motion, copies of the official records of the tributes were then transmitted to the Mulroney family.

Naming of a Member

Nadine Wilson, independent MLA for Saskatchewan Rivers, was named on March 7, 2024, after using inflammatory and unparliamentary language towards the government during Question Period and refusing to withdraw and apologize when asked to do so by the Speaker. In her remarks, Ms. Wilson accused the government of "gaslighting," "lying to the public," and engaging in "misdirection" and "doublespeak." Following her repeated refusal to withdraw and apologize, Ms. Wilson was named for disregarding the authority of the Chair, suspended for the remainder of the sitting day, and removed from the Chamber by the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Summary of legislation of the Spring Sitting

At the time of writing, the Assembly has passed 11 bills during the Spring Sitting. An additional five bills specified in the 2024-25 budget have also been introduced, joining the three remaining government bills currently before the Assembly for consideration.

Resignation of MLA from Government Caucus

On January 30, 2024, the Saskatchewan Party caucus announced that Moose Jaw Wakamow MLA **Greg Lawrence** had resigned from caucus amid an active police investigation against him. The following

day, Moose Jaw police charged Mr. Lawrence with assault and assault by choking. Mr. Lawrence now sits as an independent member, bringing the composition of the Assembly to 44 Saskatchewan Party members, 14 New Democratic Party members, and three independent members.

Miranda Gudereit
Procedural Clerk



British Columbia

New Session

The Fourth Session of the 42nd Parliament was prorogued on the afternoon of February 20, 2024. The Fifth Session began later that afternoon with the delivery of the Speech from the Throne by Lieutenant Governor **Janet Austin**.

For the first time, the formal Opening Day ceremony weaved together Indigenous and non-Indigenous customs and symbolism into existing parliamentary traditions. The Vice-Regal Procession entered the Chamber accompanied by the Lekwungen Traditional Dancers, in recognition of the ongoing connection of the Lekwungen peoples with the lands on which the Legislative Precinct is situated. Following a territorial welcome and blessing by elders, the Lekwungen Traditional Dancers performed a traditional dance in the Chamber prior to the Lieutenant Governor taking her position to deliver the Speech from the Throne. The new ceremonial components reflect the evolving, modern-day relationship between the Crown, the Legislative Assembly, and Indigenous peoples in BC.

The Speech from the Throne outlined priorities including increasing housing supply and protecting renters, improving access to health care, leveraging natural resources through sustainable processes, and improving public safety.

Following the Speech from the Throne, the Legislative Assembly adopted a Sessional Order authorizing hybrid proceedings. A similar order was first adopted in June 2020, and subsequently at the beginning of each new session. The Legislative Assembly also reappointed three presiding officers, namely **Spencer Chandra Herbert**, MLA for Vancouver-West End, as Deputy Speaker, **Jackie Tegart**, MLA for Fraser-Nicola, as Assistant Deputy Speaker, and **Ronna-Rae Leonard**, MLA for Courtenay-Comox, as Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

Budget 2024-25 Presentation

The Minister of Finance, **Katrine Conroy**, presented the 2024-25 provincial budget and tabled the 2024-25 Main Estimates on February 22, 2024. The budget projects \$89 billion in expenditures and a \$7.9 billion deficit. In the budget speech, the Minister presented several initiatives to address housing affordability, including a home-flipping tax, measures to reduce first time buyers' property transfer taxes, and measures to encourage housing construction on public and underused land. The Minister also announced increases to the B.C. Family Benefit, a new Electricity Affordability Credit, and, starting in 2025, universal coverage for one round of in-vitro fertilization.

Official Opposition Shadow Minister for Finance, **Peter Milobar**, expressed concern regarding the projected budget deficit, the announcement of initiatives that only receive funding in future years, and affordability challenges for employers and first-time homebuyers. The Leader of the Third Party, **Sonia Furstenau**, spoke about the lack of accountability for achieving the commitments made in the budget and noted concerns about government's support for the liquified natural gas industry. The Fourth Party House Leader, **Bruce Banman**, focused on the ramifications of British Columbia's growing total debt and suggested the home-flipping tax would result in a reduction of available housing units.

Changes to Executive Council

Between January 5 and February 20, 2024, there were several changes to the portfolios of Cabinet Ministers:

- **Mitzi Dean**, former Minister of Children and Family Development, was appointed Minister of State for Child Care;
- **Grace Lore**, former Minister of State for Child Care, was appointed Minister of Children and Family Development;

- **Andrew Mercier**, former Minister of State for Workforce Development, was appointed Minister of State for Sustainable Forestry Innovation;
- **Selina Robinson**, MLA for Coquitlam-Maillardville, resigned as Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills;
- **Lisa Beare**, former Minister of Citizens' Services, was appointed Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills; and
- **George Chow**, MLA for Vancouver-Fraserview, was appointed Minister of Citizens' Services.

Parliamentary Committees

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services released its report titled *Annual Review of the Budgets of Statutory Offices: 2024-25 to 2026-27* on December 13, 2023. The Committee oversees British Columbia's nine statutory offices, including by considering and making recommendations on the offices' budgets. The Committee recognized several consistent themes among the offices' budget submissions, such as inflationary pressures on salaries and building occupancy costs, as well as funding for IT infrastructure updates, ongoing capital projects, and significant events and initiatives within the offices' legislative mandates. The Committee appreciated the statutory offices' interest in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce. It also encouraged the offices to strengthen forecasting of future needs and enhance collaboration with a view to identifying cost-saving opportunities.

On February 21, 2024, the Special Committee to Appoint a Police Complaint Commissioner tabled its report with a unanimous recommendation to the Legislative Assembly that **Prabhu Rajan** be appointed Police Complaint Commissioner. Mr. Rajan comes to British Columbia after decades of experience in the Ontario Public Service, having most recently served as Chief Counsel to Ontario's Chief Coroner and Chief Forensic Pathologist, as well as Chair of Ontario's Domestic Violence Death Review Committee. On the same day, the Legislative Assembly adopted the Committee's report and a motion appointing Mr. Rajan as Police Complaint Commissioner for a five-year term.

Ministerial Statements

On February 27, 2024, **Roly Russell**, MLA for Boundary-Similkameen, welcomed Doukhobors who were sitting in the public gallery and made a statement about the Doukhobor community and culture. In

response to Mr. Russell's statement, the Doukhobors attending sang a hymn, an unusual occurrence in the Chamber environment for which they had received advance permission from the Speaker. Shortly thereafter, Premier **David Eby**, delivered a ministerial statement apologizing for historical wrongs against the Doukhobor community. The Premier acknowledged the immense harm of the Province's acts, such as the forced removal of children from Sons of Freedom families, a group within the Doukhobor community. He also recognized the intergenerational trauma these acts have caused. On behalf of the Province, the Premier pledged \$10 million to support the Doukhobor community, with the funding intended to provide counselling and promote other wellness initiatives. The Official Opposition House Leader, **Todd Stone**, responded by recognizing the importance of acknowledging historical wrongs and the value in all parties working to make amends. The Leader of the Third Party, Ms. Furstenau, pointed out the long wait for the apology and brought attention to the cultural alienation within affected families, while the Fourth Party House Leader, Mr. Banman, reflected upon the harm experienced by the Doukhobors.

On February 28, 2024, the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, **Mike Farnworth**, made a ministerial statement regarding the two-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Minister Farnworth discussed the tragedies which Ukrainians have faced and the government's efforts to make refugees in British Columbia feel welcome. The Leader of the Official Opposition, **Kevin Falcon**, celebrated Ukraine's repulsion of Russian forces and encouraged support for Ukrainians in BC and Ukraine. In response, the Leader of the Third Party, Ms. Furstenau, acknowledged the global costs and humanitarian catastrophes of the war. The Fourth Party House Leader, Mr. Banman, shared a recent experience meeting with refugees and called for peace.

Tribute to Former Member

On February 29, 2024, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, **Raj Chouhan**, paid tribute to **Patty Sahota**, former MLA for Burnaby-Edmonds, who passed away suddenly at the age of 54. The Speaker, who currently represents Ms. Sahota's former constituency, highlighted her community-building skills and graciousness as a colleague. **Mike de Jong**, MLA for Abbotsford West, also spoke to Ms. Sahota's tireless optimism and passionate spirit.

Working Group on Parliamentary Culture

In May 2023, the Speaker established a Working Group on Parliamentary Culture in response to statements made in the House and general commentary about the environment and workplace culture of the Legislative Assembly, particularly in relation to the resignation of **Melanie Mark**, former MLA for Vancouver-Mount Pleasant and one of three Indigenous Members at the time. The Working Group's objective was to examine Legislative Assembly programs, procedures, and practices, and determine ways to strengthen respect and support for Members from all parties, backgrounds, and identities. At the time of its establishment, the Working Group had representation from each recognized caucus, with the following Members participating: **Mable Elmore**, MLA for Vancouver-Kensington; **Elenore Sturko**, MLA for Surrey South; and Ms. Furstenau, Leader of the Third Party.

The Working Group engaged the services of an external third-party provider to conduct a listening exercise and survey to hear from current and former Members about their experiences. The survey had an approximate 91 per cent completion rate among current Members, with several former Members also taking part. The Working Group also looked at studies on the workplace cultures of other parliamentary institutions.

Reflecting on this input, the Working Group made 17 recommendations across five key themes: orientation, learning, and professional development; a welcoming and inclusive institution; a family friendly institution; a respectful workplace; and order and decorum. Amongst its recommendations, the Working Group supported:

- Changing MLA orientation to an all-party format with a greater focus on procedure, constituency office logistics, and security;
- Providing mandatory learning on diversity, Indigenous history, cultural competency, and mental wellness;
- Establishing consistent approaches for incorporating Indigenous participation into proceedings;
- Amending the Standing Orders to provide for a permanent hybrid arrangement;
- Building cross-party collegiality by providing support to all-party caucuses and groups for regular meetings; and
- Clarifying and updating guidance on unacceptable behaviour in the Chamber.

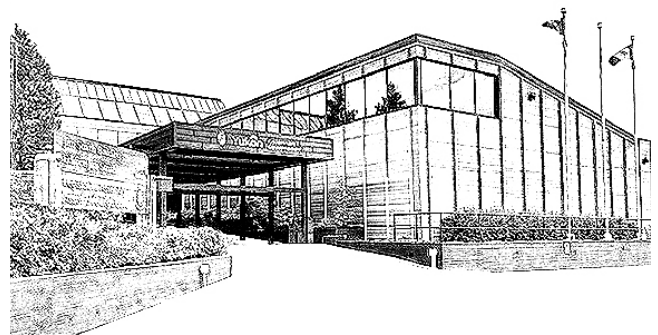
The Speaker tabled the Working Group's report on February 29, 2024. The report and its recommendations will be considered by the House Leaders and Legislative Assembly Management Committee.

Legislative Assembly Management Committee (LAMC)

At the LAMC meeting on December 13, 2023, Legislative Assembly Administration staff presented the 2024-25 Legislative Assembly budget submission. The budget coincides with the final year of the Administration's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, as well as the provincial general election, which is expected to take place on October 19, 2024. The budget includes one-time election-related costs such as funding for eight to 10 new constituency offices based on new electoral boundaries, and expenses related to transitional programs for incoming and departing Members. The submission also accounts for increases to regular expenses with the growth from 87 to 93 Members, such as additional compensation and caucus funding. Also included in the budget was funding for three ongoing large-scale projects: planning for future redevelopment of the Armouries building on the Legislative Precinct; construction and initial operation of a modular childcare facility; and implementation of an Enterprise Resource Planning system to address critical technological needs. LAMC approved the budget submission as presented.

Sean Morgado

Committees Coordinator



Yukon

2024 Spring Sitting

The 2024 Spring Sitting of the First Session of the 35th Yukon Legislative Assembly started on March 7 and concluded on May 2, the 32nd sitting day.

Bills

Over the course of the Sitting, seven government bills passed the House and were assented to. Each of these bills had been introduced by the fifth sitting day – the deadline for the introduction of government bills to be dealt with during the Sitting.

The bills were:

- Bill No. 35, *Coordinated Vaping Product Taxation Agreement Act*;
- Bill No. 36, *Exemptions Act*;
- Bill No. 37, *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*;
- Bill No. 38, *Health Authority Act*; Bill No. 212, *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*;
- Bill No. 213, *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*; and
- Bill No. 214, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2024-25*

Bill No. 38, *Health Authority Act*, received considerable debate (almost 18 hours) and was reported from Committee of the Whole with multiple amendments. The sponsor of the bill, **Tracy-Anne McPhee**, Minister of Health and Social Services, requested the unanimous consent of the House to proceed with Third Reading of the bill on the same day as the reprinted bill was tabled. Unanimous consent was denied, and Third Reading occurred instead on the following sitting day. With the Commissioner of Yukon, **Adeline Webber**, being unavailable, the newly appointed Administrator of Yukon, **Donald J. Inverarity**, granted assent to the bill after it passed Third Reading mere hours after he was sworn in to the position of Administrator.

On the final day of the Sitting, Bill No. 213, *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*, was the sole government bill still on the Order Paper. At 5:00 pm, the appropriation bill, which was still under consideration in Committee of the Whole, was identified under Standing Order 76 (“the guillotine clause”) and expedited through the remaining stages.

In addition to the government bills dealt with, one private member’s bill was considered. Bill No. 307, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, introduced by the Leader of the Third Party, **Kate White**, on March 28, passed the House and was assented to during the 2024 Spring Sitting.

Remote Participation

On the first day of the 2024 Spring Sitting, **Richard Mostyn**, Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges presented the committee’s tenth report. The report recommended the addition of a new chapter to the *Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly* regarding virtual participation in proceedings.

The new rules were adopted with a motion for concurrence in the report on March 11 (Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 10). Video conference procedures under Chapter 15 of the *Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly* were employed for the first time on April 4.

Electoral Boundaries

On May 10, 2024, the Electoral District Boundaries Commission submitted to the Speaker an interim report which, pursuant to section 415(2) of the *Elections Act*, sets out the boundaries, number, and names of proposed electoral districts and includes the Commission’s reasons for its proposals.

In its interim report, the Commission proposes the creation of two new electoral districts in Whitehorse and the amalgamation and realignment of some of the existing rural districts. The effect of the changes would be to maintain the current number of districts (19) while redistributing the seats in the Legislative Assembly to reflect the significant population growth in Yukon, especially in the capital, that has occurred since the electoral district boundaries were last amended in 2008.

The Commission is currently holding public hearings and gathering input on its interim report. The *Elections Act* requires the Commission to provide a final report to the Speaker within five months of submitting the interim report, and the final report is therefore expected by October 2024. The Speaker will then table the report in the Legislative Assembly.

The Government must introduce in the Legislative Assembly a bill to implement the Commission’s final proposed electoral districts as soon as practicable and “in no event later than the end of the sitting of the Legislative Assembly which follows the sitting in which the final report is tabled,” pursuant to section 418(2) of the *Elections Act*.

Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

On November 7, 2023, a motion to concur in the final report of the Special Committee on the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 8) was carried on division (with the Government and Third Party voting for, and the Official Opposition voting against, the motion). The Order of the House created the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, requiring it to examine electoral systems and issue a report by October 31, 2024, recommending whether the current voting system should be retained, or another model should be adopted.

On February 2, 2024, the Legislative Assembly Office announced that **Sara McPhee-Knowles** had been appointed Chair of the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform and given administrative responsibility for the Citizens' Assembly.

The selection of the 38 members of the Citizen's Assembly was announced on May 2. Two individuals from each Yukon electoral district were chosen by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics according to the terms of reference in the final report of the Special Committee on the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

Allison Lloyd

Acting Deputy Clerk, Yukon Legislative Assembly

Fifty Years of the Office of the Assembly

This year, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Office of the Assembly and is organizing various events to commemorate the milestone. Over the course of those 50 years, the Office of the Assembly has evolved from very humble beginnings to become a modern, independent organization committed to providing impartial, professional support to Ontario's Parliament.

Joanne McNair

What is the Office of the Assembly?

The Office of the Assembly is the administrative branch of the Ontario Legislature, in effect, the civil service of the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly has the power to regulate its own proceedings and internal affairs. This includes the power and right to take necessary staffing, and other, measures required to support the daily activities of Ontario's Legislature, and to protect the conduct of parliamentary business from outside interference.

The creation of the Office of the Assembly, with the Speaker as its Chief Presiding Officer, and the establishment of the Board of Internal Economy (BOIE) in December 1974, affirmed the formal independence of the Legislative branch from the Executive and Judicial branches of government.

Joanne McNair is a Table Research Clerk at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario (LAO). This article was prepared with contributions from David Bogart, Communications Officer at the LAO.



Administrative and Financial Organization Pre-1974

Traditionally, it is the parliament itself, under the authority of the Speaker, that exerts full control over its own security, its administrative organization, and its finances. For example, shortly following Confederation, the Canadian House of Commons assumed control over its administration by establishing its own governing body, the BOIE, under the authority of the Speaker.¹

The situation was very different in Ontario. From Confederation until 1974, the Speaker and the Clerk of the Assembly did not have responsibility for the Estimates (the spending requirements) of the Legislature, or the right to administer the Assembly's budget or to control staffing matters. The government controlled all aspects of personnel, pay, and policy areas such as security, office space allocation, and public information, with all staff, including the Clerk, employed by the Ministry.

Prior to 1974, the Assembly's Estimates were divided between various government departments. The Legislative Library fell under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education, which was responsible for all libraries in the province, while the repair, maintenance and upkeep of the Legislative building was included in the Estimates of the Department of Public Works. A separate "Department of Legislation"

included the payroll requirements of Assembly staff, including the Speaker and Clerk. Over time, the Assembly's Estimates and administrative functions were consolidated under the mandate of the Ministry of Government Services (now the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement) via its Legislative Services division.

When the decision was made in the 1880s to build a new parliament building — the current building — the architect, R.A. Waite was engaged to prepare plans for a “new Provincial Parliament and Departmental Building” that would include not only a Legislative Chamber, but ample accommodation for “the several departments, and their offices” of the government.² When the building officially opened in April 1893, most of the office space housed Ministry departments and staff. The Legislative Assembly itself had minimal staff, and Members did not have their own office space. As the government's office space requirements continued to grow, a separate, six-storey East Block was constructed from 1925 to 1928 to house the required offices. A southern addition to the building was completed in the early 1930s. The East Block was renamed the Whitney Block in 1966 in honour of Sir James Pliny Whitney, Premier of Ontario from 1905 to 1914.

During this period, the Speaker's authority did not extend beyond the Chamber. The Ministry also controlled the area that today forms the Legislative precinct — a collection of offices and areas under the jurisdiction of the Legislature at Queen's Park — with the Sergeant-at-Arms responsible for security within the Chamber only. By the 1960s, the administration and upkeep of the Legislative Building and surrounding grounds were the responsibility of the Ministry of Government Services.

The Ontario Commission on the Legislature

In 1972, the House appointed the Ontario Commission on the Legislature to study the function of the Legislative Assembly and review the services,

When the Office of the Assembly was first created in 1974, Ontario Speaker Russell Rowe (right) became Chief Administrative Officer of the Assembly. Clerk Roderick Gilmour Lewis (opposite page) became Chief Permanent Officer of the Assembly, responsible for assisting the Speaker with both procedural and administrative duties.

facilities, and benefits provided to MPPs.³ Also known as the Camp Commission after its Chair, Dalton Camp, it tabled five reports between May 1973 and October 1975. The *First Report* dealt with the matters of compensation and allowances provided to Members of Provincial Parliament; the *Second Report* considered the administration of the Legislature and services to Members; the *Third Report* examined political party financing; the *Fourth Report* looked at House rules and procedure, and the *Fifth Report* considered various other matters touching on the physical facilities and media coverage of the Legislature.



Portrait of the Honourable Russell D. Rowe by Richard Miller. Archives of Ontario / Legislative Assembly of Ontario



The Commission's *Second Report* was of the view that the administration of the Ontario Legislature "had not grown and developed along lines consistent with modern parliamentary democracy," that is, a Legislature independent in all respects from the government.⁴ In particular, the Commission contended that the independence of the Legislature would be incomplete as long as the government controlled the precincts of the Legislature. The Commission also noted the preparation of several special reports and papers dealing with the matter of the Office of the Speaker over the years. These reports contained similar proposed recommendations to what the Commission now suggested.

In researching and preparing its *Second Report*, the Commission consulted with the Speaker, Clerk, and Members of the Ontario Legislature, as well as with

dozens of representatives from both the Canadian and UK Houses of Commons, and from the National Assembly of Quebec.⁵ Its main recommendation was that the Legislature be regulated by its Members and its principal elected officer, the Speaker, and that a permanent administrative framework be established.⁶ The Legislature should be able to meet its own needs for services and resources in order to carry out its business as it saw fit. The report put forward many recommendations to achieve this goal, including:

- amending the *Legislative Assembly Act* to recognize the Speaker as the Chief Administrative Officer of the Assembly with responsibility for the preparation of the Assembly's Estimates;
- giving the Speaker the comparable rank and status of a Minister;
- putting the Legislative Building under the Speaker's authority and designating the space in the building as being under the administration of the Legislature. Subsequently, this would require all the Government departments located in the Legislative Building to vacate those offices. Ministers could retain offices in the Legislative Building, but not ministries.

The Report also called for the creation of a new administration headed by the Speaker that would include a BOIE and be responsible for policy and operations. It was recommended that the Clerk become the Chief Permanent Officer of the Assembly, responsible for assisting the Speaker with both procedural and administrative duties. The Sergeant-at-Arms, at the time a sessional appointment, should remain in charge of the security of the Chamber when the House was sitting, while a new Director of Administration should also be appointed Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, responsible for the security of the Legislative Building.⁷

In a ministerial statement delivered to the House on June 25, 1974, the Chair of Management Board of Cabinet announced the Government's decision to accept most of the recommendations put forward in the *Second Report* of the Ontario Commission on the Legislature that related to the Office of the Speaker, the Office of the Clerk, and the establishment of the Office of the Assembly, but not those that related to the security arrangements.⁸ The legislation establishing the Office of the Assembly was Bill 170, the *Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, 1974 (No.2)*. Most of the Bill, including section 3, which established the Office of the Assembly, came into force on Royal Assent, which occurred on December 20, 1974.⁹

How the Office of the Assembly has Evolved Since 1974

When the Office of the Assembly was established in 1974 as a non-partisan entity that was separate and distinct from the government, its financial and administrative policy-making functions were given to a BOIE that was also created through amendments to the *Legislative Assembly Act*. In 1974, the Board was chaired by the Speaker and composed of three Members of the Executive Council plus one additional Member representing the government party, and one Member each from the Official Opposition and the party with the third-largest membership in the House. Today, the Board is chaired by the Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Ontario



and is composed of an equal number of Members representing the government party and the other recognized parties combined.¹⁰

Control of the Legislative building was transferred from the Ministry of Government Services to the Speaker in stages, beginning with an Order in Council signed in 1975.¹¹ This was followed by another Order in Council signed in 1978, that transferred more (but still not all) of the building, including the Legislative Library, to the control of the Speaker.¹² By 1988, the Assembly was actively seeking greater responsibility for the Legislative Building and precinct, including building maintenance, custodial services, and groundskeeping. That year, the Office of the Assembly and the Ministry of Government Services signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in which the Assembly finally assumed physical control of the entirety of the Legislative Building and its precinct consisting of the building, grounds and first and second floors of the Whitney Block where its offices were also located.¹³ The MOU was amended in 1992 to expand the Legislature's control to the third floor and parts of the basement and to finalize the transfer of service delivery responsibility.¹⁴

Security Services

When the Office of the Assembly was established in December 1974, protection services for government buildings, including the Legislative building, were provided by the Ontario Government Protective Service (OGPS). In 1974, the Speaker gained authority over security for the Legislative building and was granted the power to establish security guidelines. However, authority for the operational control over the OGPS special constables and Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officers rested with the head of the OPP detachment, while the Ministry had decision-making authority over staffing of OGPS and OPP officers.

In response to a series of incidents that led to a tightening of security measures in the Legislative precincts in the 1990s, the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly reviewed the question of security and recommended that the Assembly have its own, independent, stand-alone security service.¹⁵ As a result, the security services previously contracted from the OPP and the OGPS were assumed by the Assembly, which created its own Legislative Security Service. Matters of security (e.g., policy making, policy implementation, recruitment) are now under the control of the Assembly, with the Speaker and the Sergeant-at-Arms having authority over such matters.



Today, Ontario Speaker Ted Arnott (opposite page) serves as the Assembly's Chief Administrative Officer and Ontario Clerk Trevor Day (above) serves as Chief Permanent Officer.

Branches, Divisions, and Service Delivery

The Ministry of Government Services had established a Legislative Services Division in 1972 that oversaw the delivery of supporting services to the Legislative Assembly. The transfer of the responsibility for the delivery of various services to the Office of the Assembly was a gradual process. The amendments to the *Legislative Assembly Act* adopted in December 1974 established the Office of the Assembly consisting of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the Clerk of the Assembly, the First Clerk Assistant, the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Director of Administration (which was a new position to be filled), and "such other employees as may be required" for the proper conduct of business. The new Office of the Assembly had to establish its own divisions and branches before it could assume responsibility for service delivery. By 1979, the Office of the Assembly included a Director of Administration, who oversaw the Finance Office,

the Personnel Office, Hansard, Purchasing, and the Legislative Library, which had been transferred to the Assembly in 1976.

The Office of the Assembly expanded significantly in the 1980s, with the establishment of several more divisions and branches, including Legislative Research, Information Services, Technical Services and Systems, Broadcasting, Precinct Properties, Parliamentary Public Relations, and Committees. All in all, the transfer of service delivery took almost two decades to complete, with the Ministry of Government Services maintaining responsibility for the delivery of some services into the 1990s.

The Office of the Assembly Today

Since 1992, the Office of the Assembly has continued to expand and reorganize to best serve the needs of Ontario's Parliament. As it marks its 50th anniversary,

its administration is still headed by the Speaker and the Clerk who are responsible to the BOIE. Instead of just a handful of offices though, the Office of the Assembly now consists of 16 branches consolidated under five divisions employing nearly 500 highly skilled individuals who are dedicated to serving the province's Legislature.

To celebrate and raise awareness of the anniversary, a variety of initiatives aimed at engaging both internal and external audiences were launched during spring 2024. These included the design of a 50th anniversary logo in both English and French that will appear on Office of the Assembly documentation as well as on a selection of items that will be made available through the Legislative Assembly Gift Shop and at special events. Internal activities also include the preparation of a time capsule, an anniversary-themed awards program, videos highlighting Assembly staff and their unique talents and responsibilities, and a group staff picture taken on the Legislature's south grounds. Office of the Assembly branches are encouraged to create projects and work that spearhead new directions for their areas, using the anniversary year as a benchmark towards future innovative developments.

Externally, public awareness of the history, purpose and function of the Office of the Assembly is being shared in several ways. These include via a social media campaign highlighting key moments and achievements in the Office's history, a print and digital brochure available at the Legislative Building and online at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario's website, and a poster graphic featuring pictures and a timeline of events posted in a common area of the Legislative Building. A press kit will also be available to support media interest.

The legacy of the Office of the Assembly's 50th anniversary should yield lasting memories of a milestone celebration while also serving as the starting point of a new era for the organization in its preparation for the challenges of the next half-century.

It's also hoped that the anniversary provides opportunities to raise public awareness of the office's important role in supporting Ontario's parliament in a neutral and independent way – key factors in bolstering the Province's democracy for all its citizens.

Notes

- 1 *An Act respecting the internal Economy of the House of Commons, and for other purposes*, S.C. 1867-68, c. 27.
- 2 Eric Arthur, *From Front Street to Queen's Park*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1979), p. 60.
- 3 Legislative Assembly of Ontario, *Journals*, June 9, 1972, p. 117.
- 4 Ontario Commission on the Legislatures, *Second Report*, December 1973, pp. 1-2.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 69-71.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 10-33.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- 8 Legislative Assembly of Ontario, *Debates*, June 25, 1974, pp. 3655-6. Similarly, the amendments to the *Legislative Assembly Act* adopted in December 1974 that created the Office of the Assembly included the specification that security, even in those parts of the building under the control of the Speaker, would be enforced by same personnel enforcing security in the rest of the building, the Ontario Government Protective Service (OGPS). *Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, 1974* (No. 2), SO 1974, c 116, ss 93(2) and (3). The OGPS oversaw security in the building until 1997. See the section "Security Services" for more information.
- 9 The exception was s 2 of the Act (*supra* note 8), concerning the payment of an indemnity for party House Leaders, and funding for the party caucuses, as well as the provision of a secretary or personal assistant to every Member, which applied retroactively to April 1, 1974.
- 10 *Legislative Assembly Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. L.10, s 87(1). A recognized party is a parliamentary party caucus with a recognized membership of at least 10 per cent of the total number of seats in the Assembly, as defined in section 62(5) of the Act.
- 11 Order in Council Number 131/75, dated January 5, 1975.
- 12 Order in Council 3195/78, dated November 8, 1978.
- 13 Memorandum of Understanding Transferring Service Responsibilities for the Legislature from the Ministry of Government Services to the Office of the Assembly, August 29, 1988.
- 14 Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Government Services and the Office of the Assembly, October 15, 1992. It should be noted that "control" does not mean "ownership"; the issue of ownership of the Legislative Building and the Legislative grounds is a rather more complicated question. The definition of the precinct was amended in 2022. See *Legislative Assembly Act*, *supra* note 10, s 102.1.
- 15 Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, *Report on Security in the Legislative Precincts*, March 28, 1996. The report was adopted on April 18, 1996. See *Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Journals*, April 18, 1996, p. 196.



The Grand Staircase in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.
Courtesy of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

