

Canadian
Parliamentary
review



*Advice On The
Way Out*

*Exit Interviews
With Quebec MPs*



Volume 48, No. 1

Parliamentary Relatives

A Legacy of Service: The Yakeleyas' Commitment to the North

Some families pass down recipes, songs, or stories. In the Yakeleya household, one tradition stands out: public service. Sheryl Yakeleya's journey to the Legislative Assembly is part of a family legacy of advocacy and commitment to the people of the Northwest Territories.



Sheryl and Norman Yakeleya in the Northwest Territories Assembly Chambers. Sheryl is the current MLA for Dehcho. Her husband Norman served as MLA for Sahtu from 2003 to 2015.

Elected to represent the Dehcho in the 20th Assembly, Sheryl Yakeleya serves as the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole and the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, as well as a member of the Standing Committees on Social Development and Public Accounts. Her work ensures her constituents' voices are heard.

For years, she has been a strong advocate, serving on the Native Women's Association of the NWT and volunteering to empower others. This deep-rooted commitment led those around her to encourage her to take the next step—representing them in the Legislative Assembly.

Her presence in the House carries deep meaning. Her husband, Norman Yakeleya, served as MLA for Sahtu from 2003 to 2015. His dedication left a lasting impact, and Sheryl's leadership is shaped by a family legacy of service.

Her grandfather, Phillip Simba, was the first recognized chief of Fort Providence and Kakisa Lake, leading for over 20 years. His leadership, based on direct community care, shaped her understanding of service—not just through policy, but through listening and uplifting others.

While inspired by these influences, her leadership is uniquely her own. She is forging her own trail, guided by her values and commitment to her people.

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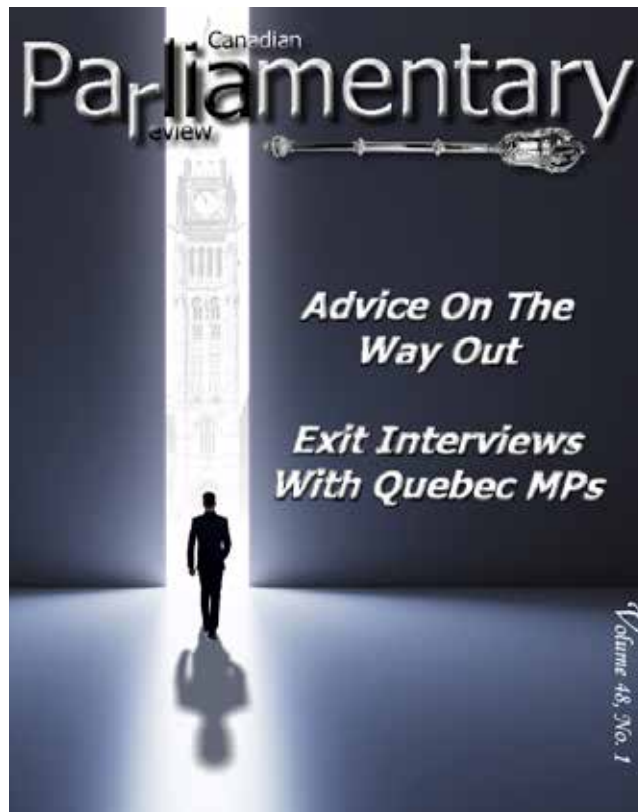
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Women First Ministers: Working To Make The Exceptional Completely Unremarkable – An Interview with Kate Graham

Canada has had only 16 women first ministers. To date, no woman first minister retained has assumed that position, or retained that position, after more than a single general election. Why is that? And why, as of the date of publication, are there only two woman first ministers currently holding office? These are questions Kate Graham has explored in research that has produced two seasons of a podcast, two books, and much discussion among audiences to whom she has spoken. In this one-on-one interview, Canadian Parliamentary Review editorial intern Annie Dowd asks this author and professor how Canadians can change the trend line and ensure the governments we elect are more representative of populations they serve.

Annie Dowd

Canadian Parliamentary Review: Can you tell us about how you conceptualized the project “No Second Chances” and how your own experience in politics, running in the 2018 provincial election and as the leader of the Ontario Liberal Party in 2020, informed this project?

Kate Graham: The project for me started on doorsteps in London North Centre during the 2018 election. I was a first-time candidate. It was my first time spending all day, every day, knocking on people’s doors and talking about politics.

It was a great experience in lots of ways and that election very much felt like a personal assessment about Kathleen [Wynne]. Should she continue to be the premier or not? What did people think? I was running for the party led by Kathleen Wynne, our first female, openly gay premier, and oftentimes people would say “you seem great, but I can’t support your leader.” I would say okay well, why is that? What is it about her that you don’t like?

Sometimes they would have a policy reason, which is fair game. Hydro, something in the education system, healthcare. But more often than I expected they would just say things like “it’s just her face. I just don’t like her face.” Or they would say “it’s just the sound of her voice.” Consent in schools was big in that election, a hot topic, and they would say “she’s just pushing her agenda on us,” in a way that I felt had homophobic undertones to it.

When the election came and went and every single candidate, new candidates including myself lost, and the party lost official party status. It was a horrific election for the party that I had just joined. More importantly, the part that I couldn’t quite shake was the highly personal nature of the attack.

I’m a political scientist. I teach. I always process these things through research. So, I started researching female first ministers. I was surprised to learn – at the time – that we had only had 12 in a country where we’ve had more than 300 first ministers, they tended to last about half as long as men, and that when they run for re-election, they lose. We re-elect candidates all the time, but we’ve never re-elected a female first minister. That was the beginning of “No Second Chances,” with this apparent, curious unrelectability of female first ministers in Canada.

Annie Dowd is a member of the 2024-2025 Ontario Legislative Internship Programme. She served as an editorial intern for the Canadian Parliamentary Review in Autumn 2024.

I approached Canada 2020 and asked them if they would support me, and we were also supported by MasterCard Canada. With a little crew, we travelled literally coast to coast to coast and sat in their [female first ministers'] living rooms and on their front porches. We did extensive interviews about the rise and fall of female first ministers with particular interest in the moment where things started to fall apart. How do they explain this concerning pattern of not seeing women in top leadership roles or with the same tenure or opportunity to contribute as men in these roles?

The beginning of “No Second Chances” was very closely tied to my own experience, but it ended up being a wonderful learning experience about how insightful the lived experiences of people in politics can be for understanding our political system.

The project has been turned into two seasons of a podcast and two books; a third one is coming out next year. It continues to be an area of curiosity for me. Until we see governments that reflect the population they serve and until we see leaders rising up who reflect the population they serve, this has to continue to be an issue for all of us. We haven't achieved the promise of democracy until that happens, and we're a long way from that right now in Canada.

CPR: As a follow up, after you pursued this project and spoke with numerous women who did successfully reach first minister positions in Canada, what did you find were commonly the greatest barriers to women's participation in governance at that level?

Your project “No Second Chances” reveals the common experience of what you call the “glass cliff” in which women achieve first minister status



Provided

Kate Graham

when the chances of success are quite low and then subsequently don't get re-elected. Can you speak also to the challenges that women face once they do achieve those senior political positions?

KG: I think we have a lot to celebrate in Canada. We've removed the formal institutional barriers for women's participation at all levels, which is good. But, I think that's kind of the easy stuff. The things we haven't addressed yet are how unconscious bias

contributes to how we think about, how we evaluate, and how we respond to people in leadership roles who don't look like the mould of who's been there before. This was a big part of what the project illuminated – the very gendered experience of these first ministers. If they were the first woman in their role, people expected things of them that maybe were not possible.

Christy Clark said it in the simplest and perhaps most pointed way that captured a lot of the perceptions that I heard: for a man you can be tough, and you can be likeable. For a woman you get to be one or the other. When you cross that bridge from being likeable to being tough, that's the beginning of the end.

For many of these women, their political demise came at the hands of those inside their own party; the party wanted a Hail Mary pass by putting the first woman in and all the fanfare that came with it. Then when it didn't turn around the electoral fortunes of the party, whether that was even possible or not, as in the Kim Campbell story, it became very much about that leader and a manufactured sense of her deficiencies.

There's a lot to be learned from those experiences and what they look like inside a party and inside government. Perhaps the bigger problem is the chilling effect that it has when we as a country, and when little girls, only see women leading when they're losing; when those rises are followed by epic falls. You know the Annamie Paul story; the first time we saw a Black woman on a federal election debate stage, she exited talking about how she didn't know that breaking the glass ceiling would mean she was cutting her feet with shards of glass on the way out.

Those kinds of observations have a really long tail to them because generations of girls and women look at those stories and think maybe that's not a place for me. That produces the candidate emergence problem; we have uneven groups of people who are interested in getting involved in politics. Then, it becomes this larger cycle.

It's a tricky web to really, fully get our heads around and we need to keep chipping away. Where there's an obvious barrier in place, moving it. Over time, I think the most significant barrier is the unconscious bias and the sexist, misogynistic views that unfortunately are still a part of our culture and our society, and the way this translates into a different experience for women in political roles.

CPR: There was a period in 2013 during which six premiers were women. At the time of this interview, there is only one. How do you explain this regression in representation? Does it or how does it reflect trends that are often seen in relation to women's participation in parliamentary politics?

KG: The place we are in Canada, unfortunately, reflects where we have been stuck for a long time. Linda Trimble would call this stalled – we've been stalled for a few decades. We haven't seen meaningful progress. We have these periodic blips where we see a number of women elected and it looks like something is changing and then it defaults back to this more consistent trend line.

So, I think a lot of the root problem is the leaky pipeline. If you think about it like a pipeline, you have a group of people who are running for office and then elected and then in leadership roles and then serve as a first minister. The percentage of women gets more acute the further you go down that pipeline as the level of bias gets more acute. So, until we see, at the emergence stage, groups of people who actually reflect the population that they hope to serve, we will not have solved this problem. What we see in Canada today is a reflection of this broader issue. We continue to see one single demographic of older, white, straight, affluent men so heavily overrepresented that there's essentially an underrepresentation of every other group. That needs to change as early in that political pipeline as possible to solve the problem of seeing leaders who look more like the population they serve.

CPR: While Canada does rank quite high among CPA Regional Rankings for Women in Parliament, it does not make the International Top 10 of Legislatures with the highest proportion of women in parliament. You explore strategies that have worked internationally to empower women to pursue top political roles throughout season two of your podcast. Can you speak to some of the strategies employed elsewhere to encourage and support women parliamentarians to run as candidates to begin with, and how these strategies might be adapted or implemented to improve the representation here in Canada.

KG: This is a problem that could be solved overnight through a quota. We could put a quota in place in a variety of ways: through parties, through nomination processes, in terms of who's elected. We could look at the New Zealand example of having reserved seats, for example, for the major population. This is a fixable

problem that has been addressed elsewhere and that we could do now. We haven't had a willingness in Canada to do that.

So, instead, I think the more likely strategy here is about looking at incentives, specifically incentives for political parties. For example, if you could only access funding as a party if you met certain objectives with respect to your candidates and the leadership of your party, I think we would see fairly rapid change in who is nominated and who's holding leadership roles. Until we're willing to do something intentional and deliberate like that, we're going to stay stuck. It's a problem that will very slowly get better over time unless we're willing to intervene and say, 'no, this is worth fixing now; in Canada, we must prioritize representation.'

The whole design of our system is based on ensuring different geographies are well represented, and I think that's a very good thing. We could broaden that, though, and think about what other forms of representation are also important. Then we could design a system that produces the sort of representation we're looking for. I'd love to see a quota. That's just my own personal political opinion. In lieu of a quota, I'd like to see incentive changes that force, in particular political parties, to make different choices.

CPR: There seems to be a general agreement around the goal of getting more women involved in politics. But there are different philosophical perspectives and approaches toward achieving that goal. Do you have any strategies or ideas about how best to manage these different perspectives toward this common goal?

KG: We haven't talked much yet about the increasing polarization within politics. Which is not experienced evenly. Some people are more comfortable with all out combat. This seems to be the case more and more, particularly in Question Period.

The way we do politics now, it's a hyper masculine, high combat sort of game. It doesn't have to be that way. I think it turns off people, more likely women potential candidates who are used to collaborating and are open to a diversity of ideas. That's not the current way we do politics in Canada. Our politics doesn't always welcome candidates who don't want to engage in those behaviours, so it can be a real turn off. That's a part of what needs to be addressed: understanding how our partisan dynamics can create this problem.

On the other side of it, underrepresentation is not a partisan issue, it's something that affects every political party and all sides of the political spectrum. Efforts to address representation would benefit all parties. Collaboration between parties, like changing the incentive structure, would be well worth it. For political parties, that would help achieve more representation on the left, right, and centre; it should be something supported across the political spectrum. Being conscious about how we do politics and how it affects the potential pool of candidates, and collaborative efforts across parties to address underrepresentation would be positive steps in the right direction.

CPR: We were interested in a point you made during an episode of your podcast, and I believe it came up earlier in this discussion as well, that a lack of gender parity and diversity in politics threatens the legitimacy of our democracy as a whole. Can you speak further on this and perhaps highlight why the issue of gender equality in politics is an issue that does affect all Canadians across party lines?

KG: I'm a big believer in the old adage that progress moves at the speed of trust. We, as citizens, need to trust our governments to give them the permission to do big things. Our collective capacity to act as a society on addressing climate change or solving inequality requires us to believe in our political institutions and to trust them. There are a lot of indicators that suggest that is falling apart around us, including trust in elected officials. Take the Edelman Trust Barometer, for example. Every year they do surveys on trusted public officials and leaders; overall, it's a really concerning picture of decline in democracies around the world, including in Canada. Other indicators are participation, people willing to run as a candidate; voter turnout is an obvious one that also showing signs of decline.

It begs the question, how low can voter turnout go before it's no longer a generally accepted mechanism to elect governments. How low can trust get before we need to really rethink what the relationship is between citizens and government. Efforts to restore and build trust in politics are absolutely paramount at this moment in time. It is of existential significance. We must find ways to restore people's faith in politics and political institutions for this model to continue to be successful, in my view.

One way of doing that is having governments reflect the people that they serve. When people look at a

government that doesn't look like them, they see that it doesn't have people who have their lived experience. There aren't enough people who've experienced poverty or homelessness, people who have a variety of different professional backgrounds.

I think it does cause people to have less trust that government is going to understand them, their life, the things that matter to them, and their family. By extension, there is less trust in the system as a whole. To me, trust and representation go hand in hand. If we want to build and restore trust in politics, then we have to start changing what politics looks like so that it's trustworthy for more people.

CPR: To expand on that, when you published your project "No Second Chances" no Black women parliamentarians had ever served as a first minister in Canada, and today that remains the case. Indigenous women first ministers have been elected exclusively in the Territories. How do we ensure that first ministers and parliamentarians reflect the diversity of the populations that they serve?

KG: I continue to think about it as a pipeline where we need to focus on the beginning of the pipe first – the candidate emergence or who is running for elected office. We know that this group of candidates is not representative of the population. Thinking about how to change that will translate into better representation in cabinets and in political leaders.

There are things that we can learn from other jurisdictions. Where they've really focused on efforts to do that is in the United States. For example, when the Democratic Party changed their nomination process, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was nominated by her brother. He said, "my sister works in a Taco shop, but she's really good at speaking to people." The party had opened themselves to say, we need to find candidates beyond the networks of our existing leaders because that's not producing the representation that we need. We have to go broader into the population and really reimagine what being qualified means. Broader lived experience is what qualifies someone for elected office. Then we need different vehicles for connecting with people who may want to serve in politics but may not have traditionally been a part of those networks – ways to reach these people and tap them on the shoulder to seek a nomination.

The nomination process to me is pivotal in addressing this entire problem, including representation at the most senior leadership level. I'd love to see parties

innovating more on that. How do we find a diverse slate of candidates? How are we reaching into communities that we know are chronically underrepresented and changing the incentives to encourage more candidates from underrepresented groups to run?

CPR: Discussions regarding safety concerns for women parliamentarians have shifted following recent incidents, including the murder of Joe Cox in the UK, and alongside the rise in threats of violence on social media. Do you believe that this impacts women's involvement in politics? How do you think we should be approaching this issue and the discourse that surrounds it?

KG: This must be all our issue. In the case of Jo Cox, of course, but even hearing that female first ministers have security details accompanying their children to school, for example. That's embarrassing to me as a Canadian. That the level of discourse has gotten to the point where stepping forward to serve as a public servant can bring with it direct physical risk to you and your family. That is totally unacceptable. Again, as a Canadian, that is something that I hope we all stand united against, whether you love or don't love the person who's being attacked and whether you support their party or not. Any form of violence or attack on someone serving in elected office or their family members by extension, should be something that we stand united in opposition to.

Now, how to do that becomes a much more challenging issue. Adding security detail seems like the Band-Aid necessary right now. Longer term, I think the understanding that political rhetoric and flags that have the "F-word" and the Prime Minister's name on them for example, aren't a helpful contribution even if you'd like to see a change in government.

It's important to think about the words we choose, who's looking at those words, what sort of example it sets for how we engage in politics, and what we expect of people who engage in politics. Holding one another to account on how we talk about political leaders, which includes people's tweets, bumper stickers on their cars, what you say in a coffee shop, and if you're an elected official, how you talk to your colleagues. All of these actions create a tone and set an example of what's acceptable and what's not.

I'm a mom of a four-year-old and I often think if we all held ourselves to the standard that we try to convey to our kids about how to treat one another, the world would be a different place. Things you wouldn't



Kate Graham speaks with former BC Premier Christy Clark for the podcast “No Second Chances.”

allow a four-year-old to say to a classmate shouldn't be allowed during Question Period. It shouldn't be allowed online when people are talking about people who step forward to serve our country.

CPR: The CPR is working on another project for this theme issue regarding the relationship between women parliamentary mentors and mentees. Can you speak about any women in politics or parliament that have directly inspired you and your work?

KG: Yes, lots. I got involved when my former MPP, who became a very good friend, Deb Matthews, asked me to run. We got to know each other way before I was in politics and the encouragement to run was really oriented around ‘what are the things that you want to see change and what are you prepared to do about it?’

To me, she really embodied this. She spent her entire life involved in politics in one way, shape, or form, with the idea that we can't just sit on the sidelines and

hope that somebody else is going to fix the things we care about. If you want to see a change you have to ask yourself, what are you personally prepared to do and ask of those around you to do. I've found that to be inspiring.

Around the world, there are lots of role models who continue to inspire me. (Former New Zealand Prime Minister) Jacinda Ardern, for instance; particularly her leadership after the Christchurch shooting and during the pandemic. I thought it was absolutely exemplary. After a shooting, she put on a hijab, sobbed with the widows, and then implemented aggressive gun legislation the next day, in that order. Expressions like that show how important it is to have people in politics who lead with empathy and lead with care.

Those are two examples; I could give you a much longer list. I'm excited about a number of people who are engaged in the American election right now. I'm sure we're all paying attention to that too. There's no

shortage of inspiration when we look at people who step forward and have a very clear idea about what they want to change, and who are prepared to go all in to make it happen.

CPR: Do you have any advice for young women who are interested in pursuing a career in parliamentary politics and who might find the current state of politics discouraging?

KG: Each of us has something that we are unusually interested in or curious about or passionate about. The thing that you talk more about than your friends do, and you still want to talk about it when everyone else is done. That's a good clue that's something that the world needs from you.

I hope that young people generally, and particularly young women and women from diverse backgrounds, really pay attention to the thing that you care a lot about and that you want to see change. Then know that we all have more power than we often think we do to make that change.

There's amazing examples around the world of people who – by using their voice or speaking up, or proposing an alternative, or running for office and winning – are making different decisions than those who came before them. Those can all be transformative paths that improve the lives of many other people.

This is a Barack Obama phrase but, progress doesn't happen on its own. It happens when we demand it. It happens when people decide that something will be different than it is now. There's lots to be concerned about as we've talked about today regarding the current tone and state of politics, but it will not change on its own. It will only change when people decide that we were going to demand better and we're going to be better.

In this upcoming generation of young leaders, I hope there not only a clarity on what people care about, what really matters to them, and what they want to change, but also the courage to say 'I'm not going to just sit and wait for somebody else to do it. I'm prepared to go all in to do whatever I need to make that change.'

CPR: One final question. Do you have any reflections on the impact of your own work, and specifically your project, "No Second Chances"? Or are there any current or future initiatives you're working on that you can share? For example, you mentioned a forthcoming book.

KG: Yes, it's an extension of "No Second Chances." I wrote a kids' book about Canada's female first ministers. It's less about them as political leaders and more about them as kids and the kind of changes they were trying to make. This latest book is an international version of that, about the change that some kids were trying to make. Kids who happened to go on and become prime ministers and presidents later in their lives.

It's been a fun experience through these books and to talk to kids about what matters to them. I'm also a mom of a four-year-old, so I get the added benefit of spending a lot of time with kids right now. I think there's something powerful about talking to children while they are young and not waiting until they're the voting age or they're in civics class.

It doesn't have to be about "capital P" politics. Instead, it's about this sense of agency and this feeling that you have the power to do the things that matter to you. You can make change whether you're four years old or 10 years old or 25 years old or a grown up. You can effect change in people around you with your voice, with your actions, with your decisions.

You have this power to change other people and other people's experiences if you choose to use that power. I'd like to see that conversation happening with kids through stories before bed, around breakfast tables and dinner tables, and in classrooms as early as possible. There's transformative power that can come from that.

That's my current writing project – kids who became presidents and prime ministers later. I'm hoping to inspire today's kids to imagine that maybe one day they can be the president or prime minister or effect change in some other positive way in the places and spaces where they are.

Power Struggles in Parliament: Testimony from Former Federal Parliamentarians

The actions of politicians have a profound impact on democracy, and the experience of Canadian MPs highlights major challenges related to hyper-partisanship and the concentration of executive power. Since 2008, the Samara Centre for Democracy has gathered testimonies from over 160 former parliamentarians, shedding light on the evolving role of MPs and the obstacles to balanced governance. Interviewed Members of Parliament in the context of the Samara Centre's MP Exit Interview Project express growing concerns about the dominance of partisan interests over their parliamentary functions, limiting their autonomy and ability to represent citizens. To address these issues, several reforms are proposed: countering toxic behavior, strengthening the role of the caucus, fostering multi party cooperation and establishing permanent constituency offices. These changes aim to create a more dynamic and inclusive democracy.

Chloë Hill and Andrea Mariko Grant

Politicians' actions have a significant impact on the growth or failure of a democracy. In Canada's current political arena, solidarity and deference are more important than debate and accountability toward citizens.

Since 2008, the Samara Centre for Democracy has been studying the experience of former federal Members of Parliament (MPs) as part of the MP Exit Interview project.¹ To date, more than 160 Members have been interviewed as part of this first-ever series of interviews with Canadian parliamentarians. Their stories have been shared in many publications and featured in two podcast series, "*Humans of the House*"² and "*Les Personnages de la Chambre*."³

In the latter podcast, former Liberal MPs Linda Lapointe, Rémi Massé and Jean-Claude Poissant, former NDP MPs Guy Caron and Matthew Dubé, and former Conservative MP Stephen Blaney share their

personal experiences and stories. When analyzing the interviews, common concerns were raised with respect to growing partisanship. The effects of hyper-partisanship and the priority given to party needs interfered with their parliamentary work.

The degree of autonomy between the executive and legislative branches

One observation shared by the former parliamentarians is that the concentration of executive power within their party had an impact on their level of autonomy. They are all concerned about how the legislative work of MPs is carried out and perceived.

Guy Caron (New Democratic Party, Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Quebec, 2011–2019) maintains that the executive branch, regardless of the party, holds too much power:

That's clear ... I don't see the point of Parliament now. We have governments that have been acting like monarchs for four years, who could not care less about the position. We have oppositions that only aim to win 24-hour cycles. There's no more reflection, no raising the level of debate, so we're assuming that citizens cannot understand more sophisticated, more reasoned

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Steven Blaney

debates. It's good that we have people who are intelligent and who are willing, but those who are and who want to make their mark through individual perspectives are absorbed or rejected. [translation]

According to Rémi Massé (Liberal Party, Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Quebec, 2015–2019), his proximity with his peers and the prime minister had a significant impact on his success:

The concentration of power is a reality in Ottawa. So, in order to break through that concentration, you obviously need to be well connected with people around the prime minister, for example, to be able to have an influence. So, it's definitely a challenge. [translation]

Stephen Blaney (Conservative Party, Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, Quebec, 2006–2021) suggested that greater autonomy would enhance cohesion between the party and constituents:

At times, I might have wished that parliamentarians, MPs, among others, had more autonomy. But at the same time, there needs to be a balance in relation to a political party's political cohesion. It's a delicate balance, but there's certainly a strong trend toward a form of centralization of executive power that somewhat reduces the scope of MPs, elected officials ... An



Guy Caron

elected official's greatest power is advocating for the interests of their constituencies to political entities, rather than the other way around ... The work of an MP involves seizing opportunities and ensuring that government policies have positive spin-offs for their constituency. [translation]

These interview excerpts highlight MPs' concerns about the way in which Parliament operates and, in particular, about how party politics has come to dominate their capacities. While MPs are mandated to represent their constituents, power struggles force them to focus largely on their party's priorities. Matthew Dubé (New Democratic Party, Beloeil—Chambly, Quebec, 2011–2019) explains how this has a detrimental effect on them:

What I find toxic is 1) The lack of decorum, because we're seeing less decorum in the House of Commons. Everyone talks about it. 2) The lack of rigour. We are no longer interested in being able to promote the truth, we just want to advance an argument that supports the party's position. [translation]

The lack of civility among elected officials has been growing, along with the level of abuse experienced by politicians online. The SAMbot project⁴ shows how online spaces have become a breeding ground for toxic behaviour. Although a telephone helpline was created



Matthew Dubé



Linda Lapointe



Rémi Massé



Jean-Claude Poissant

for local elected officials in Quebec⁵ to provide mental health support to parliamentarians and their families, calls are being made for legislative measures.

Political charades from the parliamentary machine

In theory, committees are a place where titles and party membership are left at the door and where true collaboration can flourish. In practice, the parliamentary system has changed significantly over time, and this is no longer the case. According to Caron, some prescribed duties undermine parliamentary democracy:

My biggest disappointment was the committees and seeing how much the committees have been distorted ... The committees' role is to ensure government accountability, regardless of the political parties represented. This is no longer the case. It has become an extension of the partisanship of the House of Commons. And for me, this is one of the things that fundamentally undermines parliamentary democracy ... I feel that I have wasted a lot of time on matters that were essential. Question Periods, committees, although the committees are so partisan that even if we had important issues to address, they were bypassed. It was ridiculous. I would like to see all the issues that fall within hyper-partisanship ... for me, it was a waste of time. [translation]

He is not alone in saying that he has wasted a lot of time on these issues that were essential. Similarly, Rémi Massé agreed that, in its current form, the Question Period does not work:

It's the most visible period to show Canadians what democracy is, and it's a sorry and highly unproductive spectacle. Nothing forces the questions to be relevant and nothing forces the answers to be related to the questions asked. [translation]

Meanwhile, Stephen Blaney explained that what surprised him "is that we do realize that the work of a parliamentarian is carried out within a rather imposing structure." [translation] He mentioned that parliamentarians are expected to be fully up to speed on day one. Mr. Blaney listed the elements he believed were so imposing:

... The legislative process, the work of parliamentary committees, the adoption of policies and the barrage of news that sometimes drives the political agenda, and at the same time, the implementation of these political measures by the bureaucratic apparatus of course requires the adoption of laws and regulations, and then the machines, the departments, the various departments concerned need to respond. It's a machine, an apparatus that is, I would say, extremely quick and efficient and at the same

time extremely slow and somewhat, or perhaps not, ossified. [translation]

The system's impact on parliamentarians' commitment to their constituencies

The pressure placed on MPs to remain loyal to the party creates tension between their responsibilities to their constituents and their party. An important yet imposing duty for parliamentarians is managing their local offices. The former MPs described the difficulties encountered setting up constituency offices and getting them up and running after being elected for the first time, including location and hiring staff.

Matthew Dubé believes that “a lot of the work done by Members goes unnoticed” [translation] in terms of managing constituency offices. Not only is this task underestimated, but the level of support also varies from one constituency to another. Given the size of his riding, Rémi Massé had three regional offices. According to Stephen Blaney, “every elected official has a lot of latitude in how they manage their constituency office. And there is no real standard for how a constituency office should operate, or for relations with constituents.” [translation] The absence of strong central coordination or directives to ensure the transition between incoming and outgoing MPs reflects the fact that these offices are simply not equipped to provide equitable public service.⁶

The former MPs interviewed were engaged, thoughtful and public-minded representatives. Their thoughts on the flaws in the parliamentary system need to be examined. Canadians are bearing witness to the effects of those practices on declining voter turnout rates⁷ and the erosion of trust in government institutions.⁸

Moving toward a better policy

Parliamentarians must serve as a reliable, dynamic and bidirectional link between citizens and their governments. There are ways to achieve this.

- **Countering toxic behaviour:** Any abuse against a political leader must be considered an attack on Canadian democracy and should not be tolerated. Such behaviour disrupts political conversations and prevents people from entering politics.
- **Strengthening caucus rather than the leader's office:** Members want to see the centre of power

move from the political parties to the MPs themselves. They want the parties to have less control over parliamentary functions such as the Question Period and committees.

- **Creating multiparty opportunities:** Formal opportunities to establish multiparty cooperation, such as committees, are likely to be tarnished by partisanship and serious competition in rare cases.
- **Creating permanent constituency offices:** The establishment of permanent offices could address the issues raised by the MPs interviewed. These offices would be centrally managed by the non-partisan House of Commons, rather than MPs receiving budgets from the House of Commons and having to open offices themselves.

Canadians have to believe that politics is worth their time. What message does it send if MPs are questioning the value of the time spent on the prescribed duties of their work?

Notes

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Parliament (Un)plugged: Virtual Practices and Procedures Across Canadian Jurisdictions

Beyond the immediate public health impacts, the COVID-19 pandemic challenged parliaments and parliamentarians to consider new measures to fulfil their parliamentary responsibilities. Introducing virtual practices in chambers across Canada provided opportunities to consider how these technologies could sustain, but also adapt, the functions of legislative bodies: to legislate, debate, scrutinize, and represent. In light of these changes to procedures across Canada, it is important to document how different jurisdictions have modified their practices to utilize virtual communication technologies. This article outlines what virtual practices were implemented during and following the pandemic across Canada in many provincial and territorial legislatures, as well as the House of Commons and Senate of Canada.

Megan Ryan-Lloyd

The global COVID-19 pandemic affected Canadian democratic institutions in complex and unprecedented ways. Throughout the pandemic, all levels of government addressed immense challenges in overseeing public health measures and making institutional changes to limit the size of in-person gatherings and to introduce new workplace public health protocols. To support elected officials and staff while adhering to these protocols, many jurisdictions across Canada adopted digital technologies that permitted them to continue exercising core functions of legislating, examining public expenses and policy issues, scrutinizing governments, and representing constituents.¹ While legislative bodies have largely shifted the focus of legislative efforts from pandemic-related concerns, the practices adopted during the pandemic remain important due to various considerations. In some cases, legislative institutions chose to adopt virtual proceedings permanently to make parliament more accessible for Members and to

support institutional business continuity. This article provides an overview of such changes and outlines the modifications that, to date, remain permanent features in some legislatures. This early 2025 scan covers a snapshot of 11 provincial and territorial legislatures, the House of Commons, and the Senate of Canada. The Legislative Assembly of Nunavut and the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan did not implement virtual practices and are thereby not included in the jurisdictional scan.

Key Themes and Preliminary Discussion

Legislative institutions implemented virtual practices through diverse means, including legislation, sessional orders, and permanent amendments to Standing Orders. While jurisdictions have varying degrees of virtual proceedings, all jurisdictions that implemented these changes did so in a manner affording any Member participating remotely the same rights and privileges as if they were physically present in the Legislative Chambers. There is an expectation that Members joining virtually will participate from within their respective area of legislative jurisdiction whether that be their respective province or territory, or Canada. Such requirements are prudent to ensure that the parliamentary proceeding and those Members participating in it align with the constitutional and legal authorities of the jurisdiction.

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To understand the differing approaches to virtual proceedings across jurisdictions, it is helpful to understand these differences as answers to a set of questions. First, should remote participation be available to Members for any reason or under specific circumstances? Also, if practices for remote participation are provided, should they apply differently in the Chamber and Committee? Another consideration across jurisdictions emerges in response to which entity or position holds the authority to make decisions related to initiating, facilitating or overseeing virtual proceedings. For example, some jurisdictions mandated that the Speaker approve how or when a Member could join a proceeding virtually. Others required a Government House Leader or a Caucus Whip to play a determining role or some combination of agreement between recognized parties. This last question promotes subsequent questions about how legislative bodies may decide which crucial activities are maintained during a public health crisis and how these decisions should be authorized.

Northwest Territories

Parliamentary committees of the Northwest Territories' Legislative Assembly have been able to meet via video and phone conferences under the "Committees' Policy on Attendance and Participation by Video and Phone Conference" since November 22, 2019.² However, following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, procedural changes in the Northwest Territories were initiated by legislation passed on June 10, 2020. *An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act* permitted the Legislative Assembly to conduct all or a portion of a session via teleconference or videoconference.³ During the debate on the proposed amendment, substantial questions about the new practices arose, including the circumstances under which conducting a sitting via videoconference is warranted. The questions raised during the debate were addressed in the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures' Report on Remote Sitings. On November 5, 2020, the House adopted each of the 16 recommendations of the committee's report.

The nature of these procedural changes, elaborated upon by the committee's report, considers not only the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic but other potential scenarios, including severe weather, the loss of use or access to the Assembly building, and declared states of emergency. Instead of creating an exhaustive list of such scenarios, the Standing Orders provide that the Speaker, in consultation with the Executive Council and Members, may decide when the house

will be summoned virtually if the health, safety or well-being of Members would be at risk by meeting in person. Additionally, the Speaker may allow a Member to attend remotely upon request. However, the committee's report recommended that a Member should only be able to attend remotely on reasonable grounds, such as a state of emergency in the Member's home community that prevented travel. The Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures recommended that whenever a Member attends a session remotely, all votes on Readings of Bills or any motion requiring notice are conducted as a recorded vote instead of a visual count.

Yukon

Yukon has a longstanding practice of permitting committee Members to participate by teleconferencing, with videoconferencing being a recent addition. On October 1, 2020, the Yukon Legislative Assembly adopted three sessional orders related to COVID-19 that were in effect for the duration of the sitting. These motions, among other items, empowered the Government House Leader to request that the Legislative Assembly meet virtually, with all the Members of the Legislative Assembly being able to participate remotely if the Assembly stood adjourned for an indefinite period. Similar sessional orders to permit participation by teleconference due to public health reasons were passed in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

On March 7, 2024, the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections, and Privileges presented its report containing a proposed new chapter for the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly to create permanent provisions for remote participation in sittings. The proposed additional chapter was added to the Standing Orders on March 11, 2024. This new chapter includes guidelines for Members' participation in video conferences and other guidelines for interpreting Standing Orders in a virtual context.⁴ These new rules allow the Speaker to direct that sitting days occur remotely when a state of emergency has been declared, if unusual circumstances make it unsafe or unfeasible for the Assembly to meet at its regular location, or when the health and safety of Members would be at risk by meeting in person.

British Columbia

Though teleconference committee proceedings had been used from time to time, British Columbia parliamentary committees began meeting fully virtually on Zoom as of 2020, the first of these meetings

being of the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts on March 30, 2020. Following a short period of adjournment in spring 2020, on June 17, 2020, the Speaker and House Leaders signed a written agreement providing Zoom videoconferencing technology for Members to participate remotely in proceedings. The House reconvened on June 22, 2020, and the agreement was tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Two sessional orders allowing for remote proceedings were subsequently adopted. A similar sessional order was reintroduced for the final time on February 20, 2024, as the Standing Orders were amended to implement hybrid practices permanently on March 13, 2024.

These new additions to the Standing Orders acknowledge that the Speaker is authorized to intervene on any matter of decorum related to virtual sittings, such as muting a Member's microphone and excluding a Member from sitting in the House in cases of serious misconduct. In consultation with the House Leaders or the Whips, the Speaker may also use discretion to interpret any provision of the Standing Orders that may require leniency to allow a Member to exercise their duties fully while participating virtually. One unique aspect of the Standing Orders related to virtual sittings can be seen in Standing Order 8(1), which notes that the expectation of in-person attendance is higher for Members of the Executive Council, particularly during Question Period, and when a Minister is to answer questions on any assigned votes within the Estimates in the Committee of Supply, or answer questions on a Bill in a Committee of the Whole House.

Alberta

Since 1983, the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, through a provision of its *Legislative Assembly Act*, has provided for participation in committee meetings by "telephone or other communication facilities." However, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, individual committees adopted motions explicitly permitting videoconference participation in committee proceedings. On May 25, 2021, Government Motion 79 allowed for remote voting for divisions. The virtual rules expired after the 2021 Spring Sitting, Second Session of the 30th Legislature, on June 16, 2021.

The virtual proceedings in Alberta were only permitted for recorded division votes and to clarify committee process. The first hybrid committee meeting occurred on April 27, 2020, with the Standing Committee on Public Accounts meeting using Skype for Business videoconferencing. When the virtual division votes were in place in Alberta, participating Members

were required to join a Microsoft Teams meeting via a link sent out to all Members before each sitting of the Assembly. When a division is called, the Journals unit of the Legislative Assembly Office will send out an e-mail to all Members indicating a division has been called, the subject matter of the division, and the time at which the division is to take place.

Manitoba

The Manitoba Legislative Assembly first adopted provisions to enable virtual proceedings in October 2020. Since the initial addition of virtual participation options, Manitoba has worked to implement virtual infrastructure into the operations of the Legislature, consistently renewing the sessional order with occasional modifications to make virtual practices more expansive. The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba adopted several further changes to its Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings in May 2024 to take effect at the commencement of the 2nd Session of the 43rd Legislature. Most of these changes involved codifying the provisions of the Sessional Order passed in October 2020 that first enabled Members to participate virtually in sittings of the House and Committees.

One unique aspect of the newest addition to the Manitoba rule book was highlighting that the election of the Speaker is explicitly exempt from virtual proceedings. However, in the case of an emergency requiring Members to participate virtually, the Clerk will be authorized by the House Leaders to develop unique guidance to conduct the secret ballot election of the Speaker via virtual means as provided by Standing Order 8(2).

Ontario

On May 12, 2020, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario adopted a motion authorizing committees to resume meetings electronically, with Zoom as the hosting platform. This motion contained many requirements, including that the committee chair and Clerk attend in person and that Members participating virtually must indicate they are participating from a location in Ontario. On September 14, 2020, the House passed another motion continuing the practice, adding that it would expire at the end of the 42nd Parliament or until a date to be indicated by the Government House Leader. These provisions were officially rescinded on March 1, 2022.

Since the beginning of the 43rd Parliament in 2022, Members have no longer been able to participate

in committees via electronic means, and they must be present in person to participate in committee proceedings. Witnesses may still participate remotely, reflecting pre-pandemic practices. Throughout the pandemic, Chamber proceedings continued in person with modifications to voting procedures and the number of Members present.

Quebec

The National Assembly of Quebec's Chamber proceedings remained in person throughout the pandemic, with modifications ensuring physical distancing between Members. However, during the pandemic, practice alterations were made to support the work of committees. On March 17, 2020, the four parliamentary caucuses and the independent Members agreed that the National Assembly's work should be adjourned until April 21 to comply with public health instructions to permit Members to be present in their respective constituencies. From April 24 to May 22, 2020, 12 virtual hearings were held by parliamentary committees. Currently, the Committee on Public Administration proceedings may proceed to meet virtually, by decision of its steering committee. For all other committees that may meet outside the sessional periods formally defined by Standing Order 19, members may participate in committee hearings by video conference at the leave of the committee; however, the chair and committee secretariat staff must be present in person.

New Brunswick

Hybrid proceedings at the New Brunswick Legislative Assembly began on December 4, 2020. Members could participate virtually in House proceedings in emergencies after Motion 60 was passed on May 11, 2021. The Special Order expired on July 30, 2021, and was renewed that November but was not subsequently renewed after the emergency period ended.

The use of virtual proceedings in New Brunswick was focused on temporary changes to the practice of responding to the immediate nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. Under Motion 60, Members could participate in proceedings using the Zoom platform in specific emergencies or extraordinary circumstances, at the discretion of the Speaker, following consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and with the agreement of all House Leaders. Similar to practices in other jurisdictions, Members participating virtually could take part in recorded divisions by roll call, and the Speaker or Chair could exercise discretion to

make any necessary alteration to allow all Members to participate fully.

Nova Scotia

On March 22, 2020, the Province of Nova Scotia declared a state of emergency to contain the spread of COVID-19, and the Nova Scotia Legislature did not sit during the state of emergency. While the Nova Scotia Legislature no longer permits virtual House participation, temporary rule amendments were adopted for all or part of the sittings throughout spring 2021, fall 2021, and spring 2022. The hybrid format was implemented during the spring of 2021; Members agreed to meet in this format to allow for physical distancing inside the Legislative Chamber. According to the plan, the maximum capacity for in-person attendance inside the Legislative Chamber was 12 Members, proportional to party representation in the House; the remaining 39 Members could join the sittings virtually via Zoom. During a brief summer 2022 sitting, virtual participation was authorized for a specific Member as an accommodation. Additionally, by fall 2020, all Standing Committees were enabled to meet virtually, though these practices have now been discontinued.

Newfoundland and Labrador

On May 5, 2020, the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador passed a resolution to establish a Select Committee of Rules and Procedures Governing Virtual Proceedings of the House of Assembly. The Committee was tasked with determining how the House may conduct virtual proceedings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Provisions have been in place since July 2020 to allow for virtual proceedings. However, they have never been used by the whole House to meet either entirely virtually or in a hybrid form. The Standing Orders continue to provide the option for the House to meet in a hybrid of virtual and in-person proceedings, per Standing Order 9.1. The Standing Order also empowers the Speaker to determine whether the House should meet virtually, following consultation with the appropriate officials and House Leaders. Should the House be required to meet in a hybrid of in-person and virtual proceedings following the Standing Orders, voting provisions would be considered and determined at that time. Committee chairs may consult with Committee Clerks to determine if a committee may meet virtually or in a hybrid format. Uniquely, Webex is the approved technology platform for the House of Assembly and its Committees, including the Management Commission.



Some of the equipment used to enable the House of Commons to create a virtual Parliament during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prince Edward Island

In spring 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island directed its Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges to consider and recommend rule changes necessary to facilitate virtual proceedings. The committee reported on November 13, 2020, and subsequently proposed adapting various rules and procedures to enable virtual proceedings and suggesting Zoom as the preferred platform. The rule changes took effect on January 1, 2021, and the new chapter of the standing orders is to be updated annually by the committee.

The new additions to the standing orders in Chapter 22, “Virtual Proceedings,” address matters such as participating remotely and quorum, tabling documents electronically, making changes to Committee of the Whole, and practices for recorded divisions. In urgent or extraordinary circumstances, the Speaker may invoke the requirements for a virtual or hybrid

proceeding for the House or for Committee meetings. Recorded divisions shall take place by roll call, commencing with Members participating in person in the usual manner, followed by a roll call for Members participating by videoconference, in alphabetical order by district.⁵ Additionally, Members participating by videoconference are required to have their video and audio functions on for the recorded division.

House of Commons (Canada)

Following the outbreak of COVID-19 in Canada, on March 24, 2020, the House of Commons recalled and authorized the Standing Committee on Health and the Standing Committee on Finance to meet by teleconference or videoconference.⁶ On April 11, 2020, the House empowered four additional committees to hold meetings virtually. On July 8, 2020, the House held its first hybrid sitting. Subsequent motions to extend the temporary measures related to hybrid sittings and committee meetings were adopted on September 23, 2020, January 25, 2021, November

25, 2021, and June 23, 2022. On January 25, 2021, the House of Commons adopted a motion to use an electronic voting application. The application was first used for a recorded division on March 8, 2021, concurrently with in-person voting. On June 15, 2023, following consideration of the continuation of hybrid proceedings by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, permanent amendments to the Standing Orders were adopted by the House of Commons.

Through these changes, Members may still participate in proceedings in person or by videoconference and be counted for quorum, provided that Members participating remotely are in Canada. The electronic voting application requires Members to confirm their identity using facial recognition technology. A live vote web page, accessible to the public, allows the electronic vote results to be displayed in real time.

Senate of Canada

Following the return from the March 2020 adjournment in response to the pandemic, on April 14, 2020, the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration (CIBA), convened virtually. It was the first committee to do so. A sessional order authorizing all standing committees to meet in a virtual or hybrid fashion was adopted on November 17, 2020, and extended several times thereafter. The Senate adopted a motion to allow hybrid sittings on October 27, 2020, with the first hybrid sitting taking place on November 3, 2020. Hybrid sitting provisions were renewed or extended several times, with the last general order expiring on June 30, 2022. The Audit and Oversight Committee and the Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators Committee were authorized to hold hybrid or virtual meetings until the end of the 1st session of the 44th Parliament. The Senate also authorized standing joint committees with the House of Commons to hold hybrid or virtual meetings until the end of the session.

While there were attempts in the Senate to extend hybrid settings and make permanent changes, the hybrid provisions no longer remain in effect. Some previous requirements included that Senators use a desktop or laptop computer and a headset with an integrated microphone provided by the Senate for videoconferences, have their video on, broadcast their image at all times except when the bells are ringing for a vote, and leave the videoconference if they leave their seat.

Final Discussion and Conclusion

Recent changes to introduce hybrid or virtual proceedings in Canadian parliamentary institutions highlight both practical and philosophical considerations regarding the evolving nature of procedure, parliamentary practices, and representation. On the one hand, virtual practices allowed Members to fulfill their parliamentary duties during times of a public health crisis, including times when Members themselves may have been unwell or unable to travel. New virtual and hybrid practices provided increased access and flexibility for Members' participation in proceedings, thereby sustaining parliamentary operations and aligning with efforts to make parliament "family-friendly" for those elected officials who may also carry caregiver or childcare responsibilities. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, parliamentary and policy research bodies called for institutional reforms of this kind, arguing that flexible models of parliamentary business could encourage more women, racialized minorities, and individuals from rural, remote and Northern regions to consider candidacy for elected office. When implemented in a vast country and geographically diverse like Canada, hybrid options can also sustain parliamentary operations through various emergencies, including extreme weather incidents or natural disasters, enabling individuals to continue working even when faced with unexpected circumstances.

On the other hand, there have been concerns that remote or hybrid proceedings may have negative effects on executive accountability and inter-party collegiality among members. The House of Commons report "The Future of Hybrid Proceedings in the House of Commons" highlighted important considerations with respect to the physical presence of Cabinet Ministers to support effective parliamentary proceedings and government accountability. Recent changes to the Standing Orders of British Columbia also outline higher expectations for in-person attendance of Cabinet Ministers, which is one way to address such situations. Moreover, in an increasingly polarized political environment, a growing dependence on virtual proceedings could detract from the interpersonal dynamics of a healthy parliamentary environment. Indeed, it would be regrettable if the practice of Members connecting virtually led to heightened antagonism and polarization within legislative bodies.

Despite where Members from different jurisdictions may land on this debate, all parliamentarians can reflect on the unique considerations around the continuation of virtual parliament in a post-pandemic era. As always, it is essential that such discussions include consideration of whether these practices strengthen or impede parliamentary effectiveness, functionality, and democratic accountability.

Most jurisdictions across Canada significantly changed their practices and proceedings in recent years, with some of the resulting changes remaining in place permanently. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the proceedings of legislative bodies is comparable to other technical advances within parliaments decades ago, such as the gradual addition of televised proceedings. When the House of Commons of Canada began televising proceedings in 1977, there were significant concerns about how it would change the way Parliament operates, encouraging performative behaviour by Members and making “TV drama” out of serious debate. As this practice became more widespread, arguments that broadcast trivialized Parliament were largely swept away, and Members realized the benefits of making their work accessible to a broader and more immediate audience outweighed the tendency to play to the camera. Just as the pandemic provided urgency for some legislative institutions to develop new ways of continuing critical parliamentary functions, future circumstances may encourage unforeseen adaptations.

Notes

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The History of Ontario's Legislative Research Office

With parliamentarians—particularly backbenchers—looking for more support in fulfilling their responsibilities to constituents as well as in lawmaking and oversight of government, demand for library research grew. Soon, it became apparent that a non-partisan research bureau focused on the needs of individual MPPs and legislative committees was the best path forward. In this article, the author examines the evolution of Ontario's Legislative Research office.

Erica Simmons

Ontario's parliamentarians—like many of their counterparts across Canada and internationally—have long relied on dedicated in-house research services. With a focus on meeting the needs of elected members and legislative committees, parliamentary research is typically provided by experts on a confidential, non-partisan basis. Whether proposing or scrutinizing legislation, preparing for House or committee duties, writing reports, or responding to constituents, Members often look to their parliamentary research offices for the information and analysis they need.

The Congressional Research Service in Washington, DC (established in 1914) and the research office of the UK House of Commons Library (established in 1945) are perhaps the oldest such services, while Canada's Library of Parliament established its research service in 1965.¹ A relative latecomer to the scene, Ontario's Legislative Research office was launched in 1979.²

The history of the Legislative Research office is inextricable from that of the Legislative Library from which it emerged. For many decades, Ontario's Legislative Library provided reference and research support not only for elected Members and the rest of the Legislature but also for government departments,

the press gallery, universities, and the public.³ Nearly every MPP visited the library regularly to consult its impressive collection of 225 newspapers from "every constituency in Ontario" as well as from across Canada and overseas.⁴ By the 1970s, the Library's services were in heavy demand, with librarians responding to over 11,000 requests annually.⁵

At the time, there was a growing awareness that the Library, and the Legislature as a whole, needed to modernize. And there was also concern that the Province's parliamentarians—particularly backbenchers—could use more support of all kinds to help them fulfil their responsibilities to constituents as well as in lawmaking and oversight of government.

"The simpler days when representing provincial electors was a part-time occupation have largely passed," Parliamentary Librarian of Canada Erik Spicer observed at the time. "As the services of Government to society have multiplied and become more complex the demands on legislators have increased and intensified."⁶ This meant, he explained, that "accurate, pertinent and timely information is essential to an active and effective legislature."⁷

In the House, MPP Elie Martel put it plainly:

If we want a Legislature that makes sense, we have to have informed members. If we are to get away from the petty jockeying, the cheap shots, and get down to doing what we are here to do, and that is to bring in responsible legislation and have responsible criticism of that legislation, or offering of better alternatives. We cannot do it if you don't have the research.⁸

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The history of the Legislative Research office is inextricable from that of the Legislative Library from which it emerged.

The importance of bolstering research support for Ontario's legislators came up repeatedly during discussions of modernizing and strengthening the Legislature and its operations. In 1960 and 1969, Committees of the House recommended (among other things) the establishment of a specialist research service in the Legislative Library, as did the 1973 Ontario Commission on the Legislature, chaired by Dalton Camp (Camp Commission); the Select Committee on the Fourth and Fifth Reports of the Camp Commission, chaired by MPP Donald Morrow (Morrow Committee) in 1975-77; and Parliamentary Librarian of Canada Erik Spicer in his report to the Morrow Committee (Spicer Report).⁹

In its preliminary assessment of library operations, the Camp Commission found that "as presently constituted, the Legislative Library is really not a legislative library" but "has been... an 'adjunct' to a series of ministries over the years."¹⁰ This was not criticism but rather an acknowledgement of the Library's status under the administration of

various government departments for over half a century. In 1921, the Library was run by the Department of Education; in 1964, it was transferred to the Department of the Provincial Secretary before moving to the Ministry of Government Services in 1972.¹¹

"An improved Legislative Library is essential," the Camp Commission urged, "and as soon as possible."¹² With this goal, the Commission recommended that the Library be moved under the administration of the Legislative Assembly and that it "be oriented toward serving Members in a more aggressive spirit."¹³ (In 1976, the Legislative Library became a branch of the Office of the Assembly under the authority of the Speaker.¹⁴)

The Camp Commission also recommended (among many other things) that "a research capacity ... be added to the Library."¹⁵ Like other parliamentary research offices, Ontario's service should be non-partisan. Looking ahead, the Commission said:

In the long term, we anticipate a larger research establishment composed of a number of specialists who could pursue subject areas in more depth for Members. ...What we are counting on is that the creation of a substantial cadre of people dedicated to analysis, and research of quality... will make a marked contribution to a livelier political institution at the centre of the Province.¹⁶

It was widely believed that additional research support was vital to redressing the power imbalance between opposition and government Members. The Camp Commission argued that “it is in the interest of the legislative process and in the general public interest that the research capacity of Opposition Members be improved.”¹⁷ As MPP Michael Cassidy explained in the House:

At present, with the research assistance provided, it is impossible for members to effectively scrutinize government expenditures in legislation, defended by a minister with the assistance of his entire ministry. Also, it is becoming ever more important, and correspondingly more difficult, for members to develop expertise in their areas of responsibility or particular interest. ...

We’re up against a minister who normally has an executive assistant, a special assistant, the services of a speech writer, perhaps a couple of secretaries and the resources of his department, which can in many cases mean hundreds of high-level policy and research-type people.¹⁸

Charged with examining the fourth and fifth reports of the Camp Commission, the Morrow Select Committee “looked at the legislative process as a whole,” chair Donald Morrow explained in the House, “with the goal of improving the efficiency of both the House and the back-bencher.”¹⁹

With this aim, the Morrow Committee asked Erik Spicer, Parliamentary Librarian of Canada, to tackle the “urgent” question of preparing the Library for the future.²⁰ After surveying Members, Spicer confirmed that many of them were pleading for more research help. “It’s my very strong feeling you cannot have too much research,” said one.²¹ A former Member explained:



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You have no idea what it’s like to want desperately to get into a debate with solid material and not have the time or resources to prepare it ... generally one had to ‘wing it’.²²

In Spicer’s view, a major stumbling block for the library was that its “zealous and competent” librarians were stretched thin as they responded to requests not just from the Legislature, but also from the civil service and the public.²³ With the number of MPPs set to increase and a concurrent expansion of the size and number of standing and select committees, Spicer believed that it was essential for the library to restrict itself to serving the Legislature and not those he called “parliamentary strangers.”²⁴

Many Members told Spicer they wanted their own researchers, an idea endorsed by the Morrow Committee. At first, Spicer agreed that “in view of the increasing pressure on legislators’ time and their need to give calm thought to complex

and often baffling problems, having a competent researcher on staff could greatly increase an MPP's effectiveness."²⁵ But Spicer quickly realized that if every MPP had their own researcher, the Library would soon be overwhelmed by an "influx" of researchers making "demands on librarians' time and resources."²⁶

In any case, the House rejected the Morrow Committee's recommendation to supply a researcher for each MPP.²⁷ Spicer responded that since "the need for research is everywhere recognized, it is more urgent than ever that research assistance, available to all MPPs, be added to the Library" in the form of a "small research unit."²⁸

Like the Camp Commission, the Morrow Committee "believe[d] that corrective measures must be taken to build the Legislative Library into a powerful instrument to effectively serve Ontario's hard-pressed legislators."²⁹ This would require a fundamental reorientation of the Library's mandate. Namely, librarians "should be the chief legislative source of information and supplying it to the legislators should be the Library's main activity."³⁰ The Committee recommended starting with the immediate appointment of a new director of the Library with an expanded mandate encompassing research and information (as also recommended by Erik Spicer).³¹

After consideration in the House, these proposals were accepted. In 1978, the Library was renamed the Legislative Library, Research and Information Services, under a new executive director. Going forward, the Library's "primary responsibility" was to "meet the information and reference needs of Members."³²

The Legislative Research Service was established a year later. Based in the Legislative Library, with its own manager (or "chief," as he was called) under the Library's executive director, the service soon had five research officers and two support staff, serving members of all three parties then represented in the Legislature and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.³³ This service was restricted to Members and committees and was "not available to public servants."³⁴

At a committee meeting in 1981, a senior research officer described the research service in terms that reflect both the vision of its original

architects and its current mandate. The service had "only one allegiance," she said, "namely to the Legislative Assembly." It was non-partisan, providing "objective and impartial analyses" that were "available on an equal basis to each and every member of the House" and to standing and select committees. She elaborated:

We do not recommend a course of action. That is, and must always be, the prerogative of the elected member. We do, however, assess the strengths and weaknesses of various arguments and options and make professional judgements based on available evidence, evidence that includes the work of experts in the field, legal precedents or whatever other documentation is required to respond satisfactorily to the request.³⁵

Variouly combined and separated over the years, the Legislative Library and Legislative Research are now two distinct offices, with their own directors. Both continue to collaborate closely to provide customized research to MPPs, legislative committees, and other clients at the Legislature.

From the beginning, research demand quickly outstripped supply. As the Camp Commission and others anticipated, the Legislative Research office has expanded and professionalized while keeping a sharp focus on serving legislators. Working under a director and two managers and supported by two administrative staff, a complement of 15 research officers includes lawyers, economists, and political scientists, as well as experts in public administration and finance, public policy, healthcare and social services, environmental issues, education, planning, and history—covering all the major policy areas.

The office adheres to its founding mandate of providing confidential, non-partisan research and analysis to Members, their staff, legislative committees, and Legislative staff. And Members and legislative committees alike now count on Legislative Research for hundreds of memos, reports, and publications comprising thousands of pages of research and analysis each year.

While the Office of the Assembly celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2024, Legislative Research is gearing up for its own 50th in 2029 while exploring and embracing the new research tools and technologies of the future.

Notes

- 1 Erik J. Spicer, "The Ontario Legislative Library, A Study by the Parliamentary Librarian," in Donald H. Morrow, Chair, *Select Committee on the Fourth and Fifth Reports of the Ontario Commission on the Legislature: Final Report*, 30th Parliament, January, 1977, Appendix B (Spicer Report), p. 7; Congressional Research Service, "History and Mission," Library of Congress; UK, "The House of Commons Library," Factsheet G18, September 2010; Dalton Camp, Chair, Ontario Commission on the Legislature (Camp Commission), "The Legislative Library," *Second Report*, December 1973, p. 61; Philip Laundry, *Parliamentary Librarianship in the English-Speaking World*, London, 1980; June R. Verrier, "How to establish a parliamentary research service: does one size fit all? " 66th IFLA Council and General Conference, Jerusalem, Israel, August 13-18, 2000.
- 2 Legislative Library, Research and Information Services, *Annual Report of the Director*, 1980/81, p. ix.
- 3 Camp Commission, *Second Report*, p. 56.
- 4 Camp Commission, *Second Report*, p. 56.
- 5 Camp Commission, *Second Report*, p. 56.
- 6 Spicer Report, p. 8.
- 7 Spicer Report, p. 8.
- 8 Ontario Legislature, "Consideration of the March 29, 1977, Report of the Select Committee on the Fourth and Fifth Reports of the Ontario Commission on the Legislature," House *Hansard*, December 1, 1977 - 31st Parliament, 1st Session.
- 9 Brian Land, "Legislative Reference and Research Services in Canada," in *Rothstein on Reference, with Help from Some Friends*, ed. William A. Katz, Charles A. Bunge and Samuel Rothstein (Haworth Press, 1989), pp. 577.
- 10 Camp Commission, *Second Report*, p. 55.
- 11 Spicer Report, p. 6.
- 12 Camp Commission, *Second Report*, p. 64.
- 13 Camp Commission, *Second Report*, p. 56, p. 61.
- 14 Legislative Library, Research and Information Services, *Annual Report of the Director*, 1980/81, p. ix and Board of Internal Economy (BOIE) Minutes, Jan. 13, 1976.
- 15 Camp Commission, *Second Report*, p. 51.
- 16 Camp Commission, *Second Report*, p. 63-4.
- 17 Camp Commission, *Second Report*, p. 51.
- 18 Ontario Legislature, "Notice of Motion No. 10" [re: the Second Interim Report of the Select Committee on the Fourth and Fifth Reports of the Ontario Commission on the Legislature], House *Hansard*, December 16, 1976 - 30th Parliament, 3rd Session.
- 19 Donald H. Morrow, Chair, *Select Committee on the Fourth and Fifth Reports of the Ontario Commission on the Legislature: Final Report*, 30th Parliament, January, 1977; Ontario Legislature, "Notice of Motion No. 10," House *Hansard*, December 16, 1976 - 30th Parliament, 3rd Session.
- 20 Morrow Committee, *Final Report*, p. 24.
- 21 Spicer Report, p. 11.
- 22 Spicer Report, p. 12.
- 23 Morrow Committee, *Final Report*, p. 7.
- 24 Morrow Committee, *Final Report*, p. 8.
- 25 Spicer Report, p. 11.
- 26 Spicer Report, p. 11.
- 27 Ontario Legislature, "Notice of Motion No. 10" [re: the Second Interim Report of the Select Committee on the Fourth and Fifth Reports of the Ontario Commission on the Legislature], House *Hansard*, December 16, 1976 - 30th Parliament, 3rd Session. ["47. It is noted that the government does not support, at this time, the recommendations of the select committee concerning research assistants for all members."]
- 28 Spicer Report, p. 12. (The House rejected the proposal on December 16, 1976.)
- 29 Morrow Committee, *Final Report*, p. 7.
- 30 Morrow Committee, *Final Report*, p. 8.
- 31 Morrow Committee, *Final Report*, p. 22.
- 32 Legislative Library, Research and Information Services, *Annual Report of the Director 1980/81*, p. 1.
- 33 Brian Land, "Legislative Reference and Research Services in Canada," pp. 577-78.
- 34 Brian Land, "Legislative Reference and Research Services in Canada," p. 578.
- 35 Ontario Legislature, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Proceedings, "Library Research," November 19, 1981.

Canadian Study of Parliament Group Seminar: Parliament and the Media

The media landscape is changing rapidly as Canadians obtain their news and information in ways one couldn't conceive of just a few years ago. The relationship between Parliament and the media is also evolving, as parliamentarians leverage social media and other direct communications tools. On February 21, 2025, the Canadian Study of Parliament Group held a seminar to explore the relationship between Parliament and the media - past, present, and future.

Adam Lauzon

Panel One: Institutional Context

The first panel brought together Miriam Fleury and Olivier Duhaime from the House of Commons and Mélisa Leclerc from the Senate of Canada to provide an overview of the institutional framework.

Miriam Fleury and Olivier Duhaime presented on the role the House of Commons' Corporate Communications team and the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons play in supporting the House of Commons. Their work is guided by four principles: 1) protecting the reputation of the organization and its members, 2) establishing a constructive dialogue of good faith with the media, 3) ensuring that the public has access to accurate and timely information, and 4) fostering integrity and impartiality. To uphold these principles, Fleury and Duhaime rely on an internal network of subject matter experts who assist in drafting responses to media inquiries. They follow a strict approval process to ensure the accuracy of the information provided.

Fleury and Duhaime then described their efforts to engage with traditional and social media. For traditional media, there is a page on the House of Commons website that provides non-partisan media products issued by the House of Commons Administration. Media enquiries are directed to

Duhaime, who serves as the Director of Outreach and Media Relations in the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons. When responding to media requests, Fleury and Duhaime emphasized the importance of providing accurate responses within reasonable timelines, while preserving the credibility and transparency of the House of Commons. They also take great care to catalogue all media requests and responses, which ensures consistent messaging. The House of Commons maintains a presence on X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram, with multiple accounts on both platforms to promote the Speaker's Office, the House Administration and procedural services, including work done by various House of Commons committees and in the chamber. Fleury and Duhaime explained that with their traditional and social media efforts, they are able to ensure that everyone has the tools and services they need to communicate with various target audiences, such as members of Parliament and their staff, the media, and Canadians. They stressed their commitment to being as generous as possible with the information provided, ensuring it remains non-partisan.

Next, Mélisa Leclerc discussed the Senate's relationship with the media. Leclerc explained that her primary focus has been to increase media coverage of the Red Chamber. She described the challenges the Senate has faced with getting media coverage, including a stronger interest in the proceedings of the House compared to that of the Senate and skepticism as senators are appointed rather than elected. Leclerc also pointed to challenges in the media landscape, with shrinking newsrooms and tighter deadlines, which have limited the media's research capacity.

Adam Lauzon is a member of the CSPG Board.



CSPG board member Hugues La Rue (left) moderates the first panel, with guests Olivier Duhaime, Miriam Fleury, and Mélisa Leclerc (left to right).

In feedback sessions held with various media outlets to find out how to increase Senate coverage, Leclerc was told to be strategic with the timing of news releases. For instance, a report released on Wednesday afternoons will likely compete with coverage of the Prime Minister's regular attendance for Question Period in the House of Commons. Leclerc was advised to provide reports under embargo, giving media outlets sufficient time to conduct any needed additional research and write their stories. While this suggestion raised concerns, Leclerc noted that sometimes senators themselves would advise the media in advance to attract coverage of forthcoming committee reports. She also mentioned the importance of packaging releases or reports in a way that assists the media. As many outlets lack the resources for extensive research, providing comprehensive context and supplementary sources increases the likelihood of receiving coverage on a particular report or issue.

To better promote the Senate, Leclerc and her team have focused on bringing attention to Senators' efforts outside of Ottawa to advance different initiatives. Leclerc explained that Senate travel outside the National Capital Region is generally referred to as "fact-finding missions." These missions include extensive communications plans, with at least one member from Leclerc's team accompanying a delegation to engage local media and secure coverage for the issue(s) being advanced.

Similar to her colleagues in the House of Commons, Leclerc and the Senate have used social media platforms to connect with key audiences. They post live updates of Senate debates on X to reach media, consultants, stakeholders, and Canadians. The Senate also uses X to promote committees and key witnesses. For example, when ministers appear before a committee, their participation is promoted on social media. Leclerc also noted that LinkedIn has been particularly useful in connecting with young professionals, politicians, and other stakeholders. These refined approaches to traditional media and social media engagement have helped Leclerc increase Senate coverage, particularly maximizing coverage of Senate committee reports.

The first panel concluded with a brief discussion on the impact of a change in government on the House of Commons and Senate Communications teams. Fleury, Duhaime and Leclerc indicated that they did not expect significant challenges. In the House of Commons, the focus would be on preparing for the upcoming sitting, including the election of the Speaker, while Leclerc mentioned that efforts will be spent preparing for the Speech from the Throne and developing communications products that explain why the speech is delivered from the Red Chamber instead of the House of Commons.



The second panel highlighted current research on interactions between Parliamentarians and the media and included panellists Kat Sullivan (above), Anne-Marie Gingras and Alex Marland (below).

Panel Two: The State of Research

The second panel highlighted current research on interactions between Parliamentarians and the media. Panelists included Anne-Marie Gingras from the Université du Québec à Montréal, Alex Marland from Acadia University, and Kat Sullivan, an analyst with TACT, a public relations and government relations agency.

Anne-Marie Gingras spoke first, describing how political actors sometimes use the media to attack their opponents. This strategy attracts public attention to an issue, and because the media report on it, the issue gains more legitimacy than if a politician were to criticize their opponents directly. Gingras cautioned the media to avoid becoming entangled in political disputes, as their role is to operate in a public space and serve as a critical check on political leaders to protect democracy.

Gingras's remarks also highlighted the importance of having institutional rules. Noting that without safeguards, dictatorships can take hold. She pointed to the early days of the Trump administration as a cautionary example and wondered who would stop the President - whether it would be the Supreme Court, Republican politicians, or the American people.





The third panel, which invited parliamentarians and journalists to speak about their experiences, included (left to right) moderator Adam Lauzon and panelists Erin O’Toole, Marie Vastel, Aaron Wherry, and Senator Paula Simons (top).

Alex Marland highlighted some detailed findings from his forthcoming book, *No I in Team: Party Loyalty in Canadian Politics* (co-authored with Mireille Lalancette and Jared Westley, due to be released in 2025). Marland observed that elections have shifted from being about how officials vote in legislatures to being about their personal views and outside behavior. He noted that party discipline has been replaced by message discipline, with politicians now serving as brand ambassadors. Additionally, there is increased pressure on backbenchers to toe the party line. Marland noted the lack of training for representatives on how to advocate for their constituents. He emphasized the importance of civic education for those wishing to engage in politics.

Marland also discussed a change in power dynamics within political parties, with power shifting from backbenchers and ministers to the Prime Minister’s Office and political staffers. He coined this trend “executive creep,” pointing out that it has become easier to expel someone from caucus for relatively minor infractions. This has led to an increase in independents, but not by choice. Marland also noted the rising presence of party staff in caucus meetings and how leaders seek to control the message.

Kat Sullivan was the final speaker on the panel, sharing findings from their PhD research on Canadian mayors, focusing on gendered variation in their social media use, their motivation to use these platforms and their digital gendered visual performance. Sullivan’s research showed that a gender divide exists in politics at both the municipal and federal levels, and emphasized the importance of understanding how gender impacts power dynamics in Canadian political institutions.

Their research shows that gender continues to play an important role in politics, particularly in terms of female mayors’ motivations for using social media and the gendered barriers limiting women’s participation. Indeed, Sullivan’s work shows that the political experience remains gendered, and that female politicians tend to experience more online harassment, receive unwanted comments about their appearance and have to manage a greater mental load. Sullivan thus insists on the need to understand the impact of gender on power dynamics in Canadian political institutions.

Sullivan added that the news media help perpetuate gendered roles in the public sphere, for example, by

focusing on the exceptionality of women in politics. Thus, Sullivan recommends that news media and political institutions adopt gender-neutral language, develop and integrate digital etiquette to reduce gender trolling, and aim to change political philosophy, including through training opportunities aimed at equal and inclusive access to political roles.

Panel Three: Experience of Parliamentarians and Journalists

The third panel brought together a sitting senator, a former party leader, and two journalists for a direct discussion on the challenges and realities of their collaboration. Erin O'Toole, former leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, and Senator Paula Simons were joined by Marie Vastel of *Le Devoir*, and Aaron Wherry of the *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)*.

Erin O'Toole began the third panel by discussing the media's role in contributing to political polarization. He referenced the term "fourth estate" coined by Edmund Burke to signify the power of the media in society. O'Toole expressed concern with the decline in traditional media consumption and the rise of digital and social media, which often spread misinformation. He urged people to be mindful of where they obtain their information.

O'Toole emphasized the importance of maintaining a presence on social media platforms to ensure diverse perspectives are heard. He suggested following people with differing views to gain a broader understanding of opposing perspectives.

Senator Paula Simons began her opening remarks by describing an existential crisis in the information age and pointed to how President Trump has banned the *Associated Press* from the White House and from being on Air Force One. Canada is also in a dire situation with traditional media outlets like CBC, *Global*, and *CTV News* still hanging on, while *Postmedia* newspapers are featuring less local journalism. This makes it very difficult for politicians to reach audiences outside of the Ottawa bubble. Senator Simons stressed that more than ever, there is a need for a free and outspoken press. Politicians have a role in this too as they can support the media with openness and transparency.

Simons, a former journalist now with her own podcast, then shifted to describing her experiences with

social media, explaining that she was an early adopter and has enjoyed the ability to engage with the public. However, in February 2025, Senator Simons posted on LinkedIn, "with a mixture of regret and relief" she was letting her Senator Facebook page go dormant and was taking down her senatorial Instagram account. In explaining the move, she said that she grew tired of fighting with bots and that legacy social media platforms have become quite toxic.

Marie Vastel began by stating that there is responsibility between media and politicians to restore confidence in Canada's political institutions. She acknowledged that there is room for improvement with the media and that they need to admit when mistakes are made and include context in the explanation. Vastel explained that politicians sometimes are evasive when answering questions and the public picks up on this. Echoing a point heard in Leclerc's presentation, Vastel shared that journalism has become surface-level because journalists do not have the staff or time they used to have, particularly to support research.

Vastel shared that she has largely disengaged from social media because there is uncertainty about with whom she would be interacting - be it bots or trolls in other countries. In a Parliamentary context, she argued that Question Period and committees have become a spectacle for social media clips, rather than substantive debate. Committees need to be protected because they can do meaningful work and improve legislation.

Aaron Wherry expanded on Vastel's point in describing how Parliament has become a studio for recording social media clips, especially Question Period. Because of this, he said it is hard to see Parliament as worth covering. He emphasized the need for more substantive coverage, which requires clear answers from both the government and opposition. Wherry added that journalists face a lack of information and disclosure, and politicians should work to share more context and knowledge with the press.

The seminar was the second of the Canadian Study of Parliament Group's 2024-2025 cycle, the first being "Parliamentary Privilege in Practice" held on November 19, 2024. It was followed by an event entitled "An inclusive Parliament?" on April 25, 2025. More information on the group and its activities may be found at: <https://cspg-gcep.ca/>

New and Notable Titles

A selection of recent publications relating to parliamentary studies prepared with the assistance of the Library of Parliament (August 2024 – February 2025).

“Britain - Oratory - Rhetoric and reality.” *Economist* 454 (9434): 22, February 8, 2025.

- The puzzle of Parliament’s shrinking speeches.

“Use cases for AI in parliaments.” Inter-Parliamentary Union - Geneva. 139p: January 2025.

- “The Guidelines for AI in Parliaments” are complemented by a series of “Use cases for AI in parliaments,” which offer potential roadmaps for parliamentary AI adoption. A “use case” describes how a system should work. It is used to plan, develop and measure implementation. Use cases translate the abstract potential of AI into practical applications for parliamentary operations. The use cases cover how to use AI tools to support bill drafting and amendments, to improve the production of verbatim reports or subtitles for video content, and to support public engagement, particularly the analysis of large volumes of public submissions, as well as cybersecurity AI tools that support the development of secure parliamentary systems.

Blore, Kent. “The first ‘caretaker’ government.” *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 39 (2): 150-66, Spring/Summer 2024.

- This article attempts to trace the origins of the caretaker convention. Most commentators look back no further than Sir Winston Churchill’s caretaker government formed in the extraordinary circumstances that existed in the final days of World War II. The wartime coalition had broken up, leaving Churchill to form a new government, promising to act with restraint pending the first general election in Britain in nearly a decade. But the story neither begins nor ends there. Churchill’s government was not the first to be called a ‘caretaker’ government and even his caretaker government did not align with the modern concept. Searching for the first ‘caretaker’ government reveals a complex interaction between the label and the convention that played out over

a century from 1885 to 1987 and beyond. The full story also suggests there may be a deeper rationale for the caretaker convention than the need for restraint while a government is not responsible to Parliament—the need for restraint while a government has impaired legitimacy.

Cappe, Mel, Campagnolo, Yan. “Les débats sur le secret ministériel sont loin d’être clos / Debates about cabinet secrecy are far from over.” *Ottawa Law Review / Revue de droit d’Ottawa* 56 (1): 9-24, 2023-2024.

- In February 2024, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed that Premier Doug Ford’s mandate letters to his ministers are protected by Cabinet secrecy and therefore exempt from the disclosure requirements of the provincial access to information regime. While this decision rightly recognized the importance of Cabinet secrecy to maintaining effective government, it raises concerns about the scope of this protection and its impact on the transparency and accountability of public institutions.

Chaplin, Steven. “The Canadian Prime Minister’s request for prorogation was neither ‘illegal’ nor unconstitutional.” *Constitution Unit* 5p., January 24, 2025.

- On 6 January, the Governor General of Canada granted a request for a two-month prorogation of parliament. A legal challenge was soon launched to have it declared unlawful. The author argues that the prorogation is perfectly proper, that it is highly unlikely that a Canadian court will rule it to be unlawful, and that comparisons with the Boris Johnson prorogation request in 2019 and the subsequent *Miller 2* case do not hold up.

Ecker, Janet L. “Artificial intelligence in the legislature.” *The Parliamentarian - Journal of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth* 105 (3): 260-61 2024.

- A former Member of the Ontario Legislature explains how AI is impacting Parliaments.

Gaspard, Valere. "Debating the voting age: how Canadian legislators grapple with the federal voting age." *American Review of Canadian Studies* 54 (2): 161-79, 2024.

- Choosing a minimum voting age for an election is a decision that democratic countries make at some point in their history but remains an issue that is periodically revisited. And yet, we know too little about how legislators frame support or opposition to changing the voting age. This article uses frame analysis to explore the arguments made by Canadian legislators to support or oppose changes to its federal voting age. This article poses three research questions and examines two periods of parliamentary debates (1901–1972 and 1972–2022). The analysis finds that the arguments used by legislators in both periods changed very little and that Canadian legislators used changing the voting age as a tool to encourage young citizens to participate in formal institutions of the political process (such as voting) and to discourage youth from protesting or from taking political actions outside of formal institutions.

Grant, Andrea Mariko. "Measuring online abuse faced by Canadian politicians." *The Parliamentarian - Journal of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth* 105 (4): 318-19, 2024.

- The Samara Centre for Democracy in Canada has examined the online abuse faced by MPs.

Jain, Anvesh. "'Like the Fox Guarding the Henhouse': the gradual cession of parliamentary authority over national security affairs in the post-ATA [Anti-Terrorism Act] era." *Journal of Parliamentary and Political Law / Revue de droit parlementaire et politique* 18 (3): 779- November/novembre 2024.

- Maintaining essential security within an open society necessitates certain contradictions and uncomfortable compromises, which are at the root of navigating national security law. In Canada, the governance of national security matters implicates a wide range of constitutional and juridical concepts, not least of which include explorations of the Crown prerogative, Parliamentary supremacy, Parliamentary privilege, the confidence convention, and *Charter* values. In the 23 years since the deadly 9/11 terror attacks, Canada's national security infrastructure has witnessed a complete revolution and a radical expansion in form, function, and presence in the

day-to-day lives of Canadians. The rapid and somewhat haphazard drafting and passage of Bill C-36 in 2001, otherwise known as the *Anti-Terrorism Act*, set in motion a struggle between the executive and legislative branches of government that is still being actively fought today.

Janse, Eric. "Managing conflicting competencies between parliamentary committees." *Constitutional & Parliamentary Information / Informations constitutionnelles et parlementaires* 225: 47-53, 2024.

- "Today, I am here to discuss with you the topic of managing conflicting competencies between parliamentary committees. I want to share with you some information about how parliamentary committees work in the Canadian House of Commons context – and how they sometimes do not! – and perhaps in the process reveal a secret or two about how things are done in my parliament."

Kennedy, Gerard J. "Power over parliament: the status and future of the justiciability of the legislative process." *Journal of Parliamentary and Political Law / Revue de droit parlementaire et politique* 18 (3): 557- November/novembre 2024.

- The internal affairs of Parliament have historically been strictly protected from judicial review through the doctrine of parliamentary privilege. But what occurs when other parts of a constitution are apparently offended by legally binding decisions internal to Parliament? This has become an issue of increasing importance in Canada following the constitutional entrenchment of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. In *Canada (Attorney General) v. Power*, a majority of the Supreme Court, over two forceful dissents, held that parliamentary privilege is not a complete bar to the review of the legislative process for compliance with the *Charter*, and that damages can be an appropriate remedy for both the legislative process and the enactment of legislation that does not comply with the *Charter*.

Kimaid, Luis, Fitsilis, Fotios, Lima, Joano. "Key considerations of artificial intelligence in parliaments." *Bússola Tech* 12p, October 2024.

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers both significant opportunities and challenges for parliamentary services. This brief highlights how AI can enhance parliamentary operations. It describes various AI

applications, such as legislative drafting, historical archiving, procedural guidance, *Hansard* and constituent relations, while emphasising the importance of ethical implementation.

Mortensen, Melanie J. "Power and privilege: a user's guide to parliamentary law." *Journal of Parliamentary and Political Law / Revue de droit parlementaire et politique* 18 (3): 583- November/novembre 2024.

- This is a user's guide to parliamentary law. This may be relevant to many potential users. If you must abide by Canadian laws, you are affected by what goes on in provincial legislatures and Parliament. But the author has a more specific user in mind: a new Parliamentary Counsel who is starting work in a legislative institution and needs orientation. The author hopes what she has to say will also be useful to procedural experts and other officials supporting legislative institution, members, officers and witnesses, who are protected by parliamentary privilege when carrying out their duties in support of the legislative institution and those who may make or challenge a claim of parliamentary privilege in other contexts, such as in court or an inquiry or investigation.

von Lucke, Jörn; Fitsilis, Fotios; Gagnon, Stéphane. "Using artificial intelligence in Parliament - Initial results from the Canadian House of Commons." *CEUR Workshop Proceedings 3737*: 12p, September 2024.

- Parliaments are already exploring the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technology for specific tasks. Reflecting on possible tools, application areas, usage scenarios, and requirements, it is reasonable to anticipate that AI-driven changes will manifest in parliamentary operations. Though Canada has been championing AI, additional research is necessary for its seamless integration and use in the parliamentary workspace. This research paper contributes to the bridging of this gap by presenting empirical evidence for the future use of AI-based tools and services, along with addressing open questions for their implementation within the Canadian Parliament. The data were collected during a brainstorming exercise in July 2020 and a virtual workshop in September 2023. An examination was conducted to investigate the relevance and priority of 210 applications and topics related to parliamentary AI.

The Canadian Scene



Hon. Sidney MacEwan

New Prince Edward Island Speaker

On March 25, 2025, Morell-Donagh MLA **Sidney MacEwan** was elected as the new Speaker of the PEI Assembly by secret ballot over O’Leary-Inverness MLA **Robert Henderson**. The Speakership was vacated when former Speaker **Darlene Compton** was named to cabinet.

Following the election, Speaker MacEwan told members that he was grateful to them for conferring this honour upon him. He added: “Conscious as I am of my comparative inexperience in parliamentary procedure, I would have hesitated in accepting a position involving so much responsibility were it not for the fact that I know I shall be able, at all times, to rely with confidence upon the courtesy, forbearance, and kindness of every member of this Assembly.”

Born in St. Peter’s Harbour, PEI, Speaker MacEwan graduated from Dalhousie University



Hon. Donna Skelly

with an Industrial Engineering degree. Prior to his election as an MLA in 2015, he worked as a Business Consultant for MSRB Consulting, Chief of Staff to former Progressive Conservative Leader Olive Crane, and was employed by the Provincial Department of Health. Speaker MacEwan has also fished lobster and tuna from Red Head Harbour since 2005.

During his time in the Assembly, Speaker MacEwan has served as Opposition Whip, Government House Leader, and Deputy Speaker and been a member of many committees, including Chair of the Committee on Committees in 2019, and Vice-Chair of Public Accounts from 2023-2025

Outside of politics, Speaker MacEwan has been actively involved in his community, including coaching minor hockey and baseball, teaching catechism, and volunteering in local schools.

New Ontario Speaker

On April 14, 2025, **Donna Skelly** became the 44th Speaker of the Ontario Legislative Assembly and the first woman to hold the position. MPPs opted for Ms. Skelly over **Jennifer French** in a secret ballot. Speaker Skelly replaces **Ted Arnott**, who had announced his retirement prior to the recent general election.

Speaker Skelly thanked MPPs for the vote of confidence and told them she was “honoured,” “privileged,” and “humbled” to become the new Speaker.

Born in Capreol (a community outside of Sudbury), Speaker Skelly was drawn to career in journalism from an early age. After graduating from Seneca College’s journalism program, she worked as a broadcast journalist in Fort Coulonge, Quebec, before returning to her home province for tenures at stations in Pembroke and Kingston. In 1988, she was hired by CHCH in Hamilton. With the exception of a two-year stint running her own news Web site around the turn of the century, she stayed with the station until 2015.

After two unsuccessful runs as the Progressive Conservatives candidate in Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale during the 2011 and 2012 provincial general elections, Speaker Skelly was elected to Hamilton municipal council in a 2015 by-election. In 2017, she was elected as the PC MPP for Flamborough-Glanbrook.

As an MPP, Speaker Skelly served as parliamentary assistant to several ministers during her first term and became Deputy Speaker in her second term.

Speaker Skelly said she aimed to bring a more professional tone to proceedings and particularly strived to achieve “less chaos” in Question Period.

“Politics is a very, very tough sport,” she told reporters. “It’s a blood sport, and especially with social media, there are a lot of attacks on our politicians. We don’t need to be attacking each other in the House. You can be passionate, but let’s not make it personal.”

New Nunavut Clerk

On November 7, 2024, **Stephen Innuksuk** became the Nunavut Assembly’s second Clerk. He succeeds **John Quirke**, who had held the position since Nunavut became a territory on April 1, 1999.

Premier **Pauloosie Jamesie (P.J.) Akeeagok** welcomed the incoming Clerk on an Instagram post: “Congratulations to Nunavut’s newly appointed Clerk to the Legislative Assembly, Stephen Innuksuk. Mr. Innuksuk was previously the Deputy Clerk and has been serving at the Legislative Assembly for over 15 years. I am filled with so much pride to see an Inuk take over this position, especially as the official announcement came on International Inuit Day.”

Regional Executive Committee, CPA*

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Donna Skelly, Ontario

FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

Nathalie Roy, Québec

SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT

Raj Chouhan, British Columbia

PAST PRESIDENT

Vacant, Saskatchewan

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Alexandra Mendès, Federal Branch

Raj Chouhan, British Columbia

Donna Skelly, Ontario

CHAIR OF THE CWP, CANADIAN REGION

(Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians)

Susan Leblanc, Nova Scotia

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY-TREASURER

Jeremy LeBlanc, House of Commons

Members of the Regional Council*

HOUSE OF COMMONS

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Eric Janse, Clerk

SENATE

Raymonde Gagné, Speaker

Shaila Anwar, Clerk

ALBERTA

Nathan Cooper, Speaker

Shannon Dean, Secretary

NOVA SCOTIA

Danielle Barkhouse, Speaker

James Charlton, Secretary

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Raj Chouhan, Speaker

Kate Ryan-Lloyd, Secretary

ONTARIO

Donna Skelly, Speaker

Trevor Day, Secretary

CANADIAN FEDERAL BRANCH

Alexandra Mendès, Chair

Andrew Lauzon, Secretary

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Sidney MacEwan, Speaker

Joey Jeffrey, Secretary

MANITOBA

Tom Lindsey, Speaker

Rick Yarish, Secretary

QUÉBEC

Nathalie Roy, President

Mélissa Morin, Secretary

NEW BRUNSWICK

Francine Landry, Speaker

Shayne Davies, Secretary

SASKATCHEWAN

Todd Goudy, Speaker

Iris Lang, Secretary

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Derek Bennett, Speaker

Kim Hawley George, Secretary

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Shane Thompson, Speaker

Glen Rutland, Secretary

NUNAVUT

Tony Akoak, Speaker

John Quirke, Secretary

YUKON

Jeremy Harper, Speaker

Dan Cable, Secretary



*As of April 15, 2025

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New Brunswick

41st Provincial General Election

New Brunswick's 41st provincial general election was held on October 21, 2024. **Susan Holt's** Liberal Party won 31 of the 49 seats, forming a majority government, while the Progressive Conservative Party led by Premier **Blaine Higgs**, who lost his own seat, won 16 seats, and **David Coon's** Green Party won two seats.

In total, 19 Members were elected for the first time. Seventeen women were elected, representing 35 per cent of the seats in the House and an increase of three seats compared to the 2020 election results.

On October 25, Premier Higgs resigned as Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. **Glen Savoie**, first elected in 2010, was chosen by caucus as interim leader and Leader of the Official Opposition.

On November 2, Members of the 61st Legislature took the Oath of Allegiance and signed the Members' Roll during a ceremony in the Legislative Assembly Chamber presided over by Lieutenant Governor **Brenda Murphy**. Later that day, Ms. Holt was sworn in as the Province's 35th Premier—the first woman to hold that office—during a swearing-in ceremony for the new Executive Council.

Her Cabinet consists of:

- **René Legacy**, Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, Minister responsible for Energy and for the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*;
- **Rob McKee**, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health Services;
- **John Dornan**, Minister of Health;
- **Claire Johnson**, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development;
- **Keith Chiasson**, Minister of Indigenous Affairs;
- **Cindy Miles**, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation;
- **Chuck Chiasson**, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure;
- **Gilles LePage**, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Minister responsible for the Regional Development Corporation;
- **Aaron Kennedy**, Minister of Local Government; Minister responsible for Service New Brunswick;
- **Isabelle Thériault**, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture;
- **Robert Gauvin**, Minister of Public Safety, Minister responsible for La Francophonie;

- **Alyson Townsend**, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, Minister responsible for the Research and Productivity Council and for the *Regulatory Accountability and Reporting Act*;
- **John Herron**, Minister of Natural Resources;
- **Pat Finnigan**, Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries;
- **Lyne Chantal Boudreau**, Minister responsible for Seniors and Women's Equality;
- **Jean-Claude D'Amours**, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister responsible for Immigration and Military Affairs;
- **David Hickey**, Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation;
- **Luke Randall**, Minister responsible for Opportunities NB, Economic Development and Small Business, NB Liquor and Cannabis NB.

Other government appointments were as follows:

- **Marco LeBlanc** as Government House Leader;
- **Jacques LeBlanc** as Government Whip;
- **Natacha Vautour** as Government Caucus Chair.

Official Opposition appointments included:

- **Margaret Johnson** as Official Opposition House Leader;
- **Bill Oliver** as Official Opposition Whip;
- **Ryan Cullins** as Official Opposition Caucus Chair.

First Session of the 61st Legislature

Election of Speaker

The first session of the 61st Legislature convened on the morning of November 19 to elect a Speaker. As only one Member allowed their name to stand for election, the Clerk declared Liberal Member **Francine Landry** elected as Speaker. She is the first francophone woman to serve as Speaker. Speaker Landry was first elected to the Legislative Assembly in 2014, representing the riding of Madawaska Les Lacs-Edmundston.

During her time at the Legislature, Speaker Landry has held several Cabinet portfolios, including Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; La Francophonie; Economic Development; Opportunities NB; the Northern Fund; and regional minister for northern New Brunswick. She has also served as Official Opposition Caucus Chair and Whip and has been a member of several standing and select committees.

Throne Speech

Lieutenant Governor Murphy opened the session on the afternoon of November 19, delivering the first Speech from the Throne of Premier Holt's Liberal government. The speech, titled "Ready For Change," outlined the new government's plans in six priority areas: health care, affordability and housing, education, economic development, environment, and trusted leadership. The speech pledged that the government intends to listen to New Brunswickers and collaborate with them to find creative solutions to their problems.

Following the speech, the House appointed Liberal Members **Guy Arseneault** and **Benoît Bourque** as Deputy Speakers.

Reply to Throne Speech

On November 21, Official Opposition Leader Savoie gave his reply to the Speech from the Throne. He outlined how the new Official Opposition intends to work collaboratively with the government where they can and to work constructively where they cannot. Mr. Savoie reviewed the Higgs government's accomplishments and encouraged the new government to continue its work in several areas. He expressed concern about how the government would afford to fulfill the commitments made in the speech.

Capital Budget

On December 10, Finance and Treasury Board Minister Legacy tabled the 2025-26 Capital Budget. The budget totals \$1.26 billion, an increase of \$70 million over the expenditure outlined by the previous government in its multi-year plan. Highlights include \$185.9 million for health care infrastructure, \$193.7 million for schools in response to growing enrolment; \$34.7 million to continue development of new public housing; and over \$500 million for roads and bridges.

Legislation

Five bills were introduced during the fall sitting and three received Royal Assent. Bills introduced include:

Bill 3 – *An Act to Amend The Residential Tenancies Act*, introduced by Minister Hickey. The bill implements a maximum annual rent increase of three per cent for residential premises effective February 1, 2025. The bill allows landlords to apply for a rent increase higher than the maximum in circumstances prescribed by regulation. Regulations included in the bill set the

upper limit to a rent increase at nine per cent if the landlord establishes they incurred capital expenditures for renovations.

Bill 4 – *An Act Respecting Petroleum Products Pricing*, introduced by Minister Legacy. This bill repeals the cost of carbon adjustor that previous amendments added to the maximum price of petroleum products set by the Energy and Utilities Board. The cost of carbon adjustor is defined as an adjustment intended to mitigate for wholesalers and retailers the effect of costs incurred by a primary supplier of liquid petroleum products to comply with the federal *Clean Fuel Regulations*.

Motions

Motions debated during Opposition Members' Business included:

Motion 6, moved by Official Opposition Health critic **Bill Hogan**, urging the government to provide free household radon gas tests and free radon gas mitigation. The motion was adopted on November 28 after amendments to instead urge the government to make free 90-day radon gas tests accessible, to engage Public Health to support promotion of tests, and to explore ways to support individuals with radon gas mitigation.

Motion 5, moved by Official Opposition Public Safety critic **Richard Ames**, urging the government to increase public awareness of the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods program, to support the closure of illegal drug operations, and to make efforts to reduce the supply of illicit drugs and address the root causes of drug-related crime, was adopted in amended form on December 12.

Committee Activity

The Standing Committee on Economic Policy, chaired by Ms. Vautour, held public hearings concerning Bill 2, *An Act to Amend The Residential Tenancies Act*, pursuant to a motion of instruction from the House. Following the public hearings and a detailed review of the bill with Minister Hickey present to answer questions, the Committee recommended the bill with amendments.

On December 10, the House referred the subject matter of Bill 4, *An Act Respecting Petroleum Products Pricing*, to the Standing Committee on Law Amendments. It is expected the Committee will meet in early 2025.

On December 11, **Kate Wilcott**, chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure, Privileges and Legislative Officers, presented the committee's report recommending amendments to the Standing Rules to create a Standing Committee on Official Languages. The proposed amendments define the Committee's mandate as including the review of and report on official languages policies and programs, including reports of the Commissioner of Official Languages and of the Secretariat of Official Languages. Following presentation of the report, with leave, the House concurred in the report and appointed the new Committee. On December 12, Mr. Bourque was elected chair of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts, chaired by **Tammy Scott-Wallace**, met on December 10 and 12 to discuss the Report of the Auditor General of New Brunswick, 2024, Volume II – Performance Audit and Volume III – Financial Audit. In the performance audit, Auditor General **Paul Martin** addressed issues including the child death investigation, inquest and review process; access to addiction and mental health services; and the government's hotel accommodations policy. The financial audit reported continuing improvement in the province's financial condition in 2024 and concerns relating to NB Power's ability to sustain its operations.

Tributes to Outgoing Lieutenant Governor

In an exceptional occurrence, Lieutenant Governor Murphy and her spouse were escorted onto the floor of the House during Ministers' Statements on December 13 so that they could be present for tributes delivered by Premier Holt, Official Opposition Leader Savoie and Third Party Leader Coon, recognizing her term in office which will end in early 2025 with the installation of a new Lieutenant Governor.

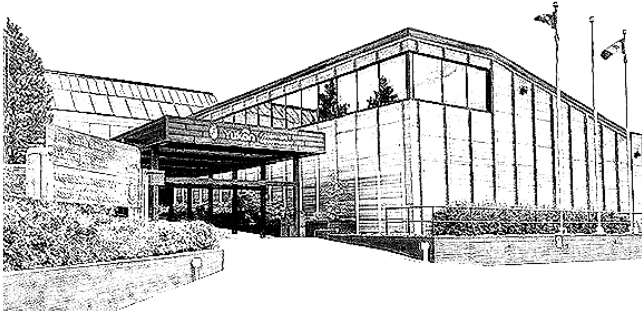
Adjournment

The House adjourned on December 13 and is scheduled to resume sitting on March 18, 2025, when it is expected that Minister Legacy will present the 2025-26 Budget.

The standings in the House are 31 Liberals, 16 Progressive Conservatives and two Greens.

Patrick Dunn

Law Clerk and Committee Clerk



Yukon

2024 Fall Sitting

The 2024 Fall Sitting of the First Session of the 35th Legislative Assembly began on October 2 and concluded on November 21, after 28 sitting days.

Bills assented to

The following eight government bills were assented to by Commissioner **Adeline Webber** during the 2024 Fall Sitting:

- Bill No. 39, *Act to amend the Forest Resources Act (2024)*
- Bill No. 40, *Act to amend the Clean Energy Act (2024)*
- Bill No. 41, *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)*
- Bill No. 42, *Act of 2024 to amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*
- Bill No. 43, *Act to amend the Business Corporations Act (2024)*
- Bill No. 44, *Traffic Safety Act*
- Bill No. 45, *Electoral District Boundaries Act*
- Bill No. 215, *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*

Electoral reform recommended

The **Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform** presented its final report to the Legislative Assembly on October 28, 2024. The citizens' assembly recommended a ranked vote system of preferential voting where each voter ranks some or all the candidates standing for election in their riding. The report also recommended randomizing the order of candidate names on ballots, an extensive elections education program, and a threshold of a simple majority for a public referendum on adopting a new electoral system.

Sara McPhee-Knowles, Chair of the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, and Yukon Citizens'

Assembly on Electoral Reform members **Dana Sundby** and **Ryan Campbell-Clarke**, appeared as witnesses before Committee of the Whole on November 7, to answer questions regarding the report.

Electoral district boundaries changed

The **Yukon Electoral District Boundaries Commission's** final report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on October 9, 2024. On October 15, Premier **Ranj Pillai** introduced Bill No. 45, *Electoral District Boundaries Act*, to bring into force the recommendations in the Commission's report. Unanimous consent was required to advance the bill during the 2024 Fall Sitting, as it was introduced after the fifth sitting day. The bill passed the House and received assent on November 21. Changes include the realignment of some rural districts and the addition of two more electoral districts in Whitehorse, increasing the total number of elected Members of the Legislative Assembly from 19 to 21.

The next general election is scheduled for November 3, 2025, pursuant to the fixed election date provisions of the *Elections Act*.

Private Member's bill on electoral districts defeated

On October 7, 2024, **Kate White**, Leader of the Third Party, introduced Bill No. 308, *Act to Amend the Elections Act*. As noted in its explanatory note, Bill No. 308 sought to "Recognize the distinct features of the Electoral District of Vuntut Gwitchin by establishing the district under [the proposed] Act" and "Establish a minimum number of electoral districts outside of the City of Whitehorse municipal boundary to ensure the influence of rural Yukoners is not diminished."

The bill passed second reading during Opposition Private Members' Business on Wednesday, October 9. Consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole took place on Wednesday, October 23, and the bill was reported to the House without amendment. Third reading debate started that day and continued on Wednesday, November 6 and Wednesday, November 20. The motion for third reading of Bill No. 308 was defeated (3 yea, 13 nay) on November 20.

Chief Electoral Officer reappointed

On November 21, 2024, the Legislative Assembly passed a motion to reappoint the Chief Electoral Officer of Yukon, **Maxwell Harvey**. The Order of the House reappointing Mr. Harvey was made pursuant to section 12 of the *Elections Act*.

Report of the Auditor General of Canada

The Office of the Auditor General of Canada presented a performance audit report on procurement and contracting to **Jeremy Harper**, Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, on November 26, 2024. The audit found “the Yukon government’s procurement and contracting activities did not demonstrate value for money as they were not always documented or monitored for results.” Pursuant to Standing Order 45(3), the report stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

2025 Spring Sitting

As per Standing Order 75(10), the 2025 Spring Sitting will begin the first week of March. The Standing Orders also provide that the Spring Sitting will be between 20 to 40 sitting days in length.

Allison Lloyd

Deputy Clerk



Nunavut

House Proceedings

The fall 2024 sitting of the 2nd Session of the 6th Legislative Assembly convened on October 24, 2024, and concluded on November 7, 2024. The proceedings of the Committee of the Whole during the fall 2024 sitting were dominated by the consideration of the Government of Nunavut’s proposed 2025-2026 capital estimates.

Ten bills received Assent during the fall 2024 sitting:

- Bill 51, *Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act*;
- Bill 52, *An Act to Amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act*;
- Bill 53, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, No. 3, 2023-2024*;

- Bill 54, *Supplementary Appropriation (Capital) Act, No. 3, 2024-2025*;
- Bill 55, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, No. 1, 2024-2025*;
- Bill 56, *Write-Off of Assets and Debts Act, 2023-2024*;
- Bill 58, *An Act to Amend the Property Assessment and Taxation Act*;
- Bill 61, *Appropriation (Capital) Act, 2025-2026*;
- Bill 62, *An Act to Amend the Integrity Act*; and
- Bill 65, *An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act*.

Bill 62 was introduced as a House Bill under the authority of the Legislative Assembly’s Management and Services Board. Speaker **Tony Akoak** appeared before the Committee of the Whole on the occasion of its clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. Bill 62 amended the *Integrity Act* to require that Members’ disclosure statements be made publicly accessible on the Web site of the Office of the Integrity Commissioner. The Bill also established a requirement for copies of trust agreements entered into by Ministers to be provided to the Integrity Commissioner.

On November 4, 2024, Aivilik MLA **Solomon Malliki** gave notice of a motion of non-confidence in Premier **P.J. Akeagok**. Section 60 of the *Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act* provides that the Premier is “chosen from among the members of the Legislative Assembly and appointed by the Commissioner on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly.” The motion was subsequently moved and debated at the Legislative Assembly’s sitting of November 6, 2024. The motion was defeated by a vote of 10 to 8.

Committee Hearings

From September 19-20, 2024, the Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts held a televised hearing on the 2022-2023 territorial public accounts. Officials from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and the Government of Nunavut appeared as witnesses at the hearing.

From September 20-21, 2024, the Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts held a televised hearing on the 2020-2021, 2021-2022, 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 annual reports of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, **Karliin Aariak**. A number of Government of Nunavut officials also appeared as witnesses at the hearing.

The hearings were presided over by Standing Committee Chair and Iqaluit-Tasiluk MLA **George Hickes**.

Appointment of Chief Electoral Officer

On October 24, 2024, the Legislative Assembly unanimously approved a motion recommending that **Kiran Situt** be appointed Chief Electoral Officer for a seven-year term of office. Mr. Situt is a Chartered Professional Accountant and former Manager in the territorial Department of Finance.

Retirement of Clerk

Prior to the adjournment of the House on November 7, 2024, Speaker Akoak presided over a ceremony to mark the retirement of Clerk of the Legislative Assembly **John Quirke**. Mr. Quirke was appointed Clerk on April 1, 1999, at the first sitting of the 1st Legislative Assembly. Mr. Quirke's career in public service spanned over half a century. Prior to his appointment as Clerk, Mr. Quirke held a number of Deputy Minister-level positions in the Government of the Northwest Territories. Earlier during the sitting day, the House unanimously approved a motion recommending the appointment of Deputy Clerk **Stephen Innuksuk** as the new Clerk, effective January 1, 2025.

Alex Baldwin

Office of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut



Newfoundland and Labrador

Fall 2024 Sitting

In accordance with the parliamentary calendar, the Assembly resumed for the Fall sitting on November 4, 2024, adjourning on December 4. The following highlights are noted from the sitting:

The sitting commenced with the formal introduction of the newly elected Member for Baie Verte - Green

Bay (duly elected in the by-election of May 27, 2024), and newly elected Member for Waterford Valley (duly elected in the by-election of August 22, 2024).

The House debated and passed 19 bills throughout the sitting.

The House appointed a new Information and Privacy Commissioner in accordance with section 85 of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015*.

On December 4, the Speaker welcomed **Orion Ayesu**, infant son of **Krista Lynn Howell**, Member for St. Barbe - L'anse aux Meadows and Minister of Education, who accompanied his mom on the floor during proceedings that day. Orion is the third infant to be welcomed on the floor of the Assembly since the Standing Orders were amended in 2020 to allow infants in the care of a parent who is a Member.

Appointment of Information and Privacy Commissioner

On December 3, 2024, the House passed a resolution respecting the appointment of **Kerry Hatfield** as Information and Privacy Commissioner, effective December 5.

Commissioner Hatfield comes with extensive knowledge and experience in access and privacy issues from 20-plus years of legal practice, including 11 years providing legal strategy and advice to the Eastern Regional Health Authority, now NL Health Services. The Commissioner was made Director of Corporate Legal Services in 2022 upon the succession of NL Health Services from the previous regional health authorities. Commissioner Hatfield has expertise in regulatory compliance in privacy, security, data governance and information management within the health care sector and broad base experience in corporate governance, contracts and procurement.

Prior to working in the health care sector, the Commissioner was a partner in private practice at a St. John's law firm where she specialized in privacy, access to information, and litigation, including representing the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner at both the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Court of Appeal. Commissioner Hatfield obtained a Bachelor of Arts from Mount Allison University in 1997 and a Bachelor of Laws from the University of New Brunswick in 2001. She has been a member of the Law Society of Newfoundland and

Labrador since 2002, is past president and director of the Rotary Club of St. John's Northwest, and is a member of the Board of Directors for the Bowring Park Foundation.

Extraordinary Sitting – January 2025

Pursuant to Standing Order 8(7), the Government advised the Speaker on December 17, 2024, that the public interest required the House of Assembly to meet on an extraordinary basis in relation to the Memorandum of Understanding between Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and Hydro-Québec, which was announced on December 12. Further to this notice, the Speaker advised Members that the House of Assembly would reconvene on January 6, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.

The rules of debate for the sitting were discussed and negotiated at length by the three caucuses and the unaffiliated Members in advance. The sitting commenced with the Government House Leader, by leave, moving a motion respecting the agreed to rules of procedure, which outlined the following:

Confirmed that the House would sit from January 6 to January 9, 2025, from 10 a.m. to noon, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on each of those days, and that the Resolution respecting the Memorandum of Understanding would be the only business of the House.

Defined time allocations in debate for each Member, which were used to calculate a total allocation for each caucus. The rules of debate included a provision to allow for the deferral of time between Members.

Provided for invited guests of the Legislature to appear from Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, Power Advisory and J.P. Morgan to answer Members' questions.

Specified that Members may pose questions during debate to either invited guests or to a Minister of the Crown.

Outlined parameters respecting questions that invited guests would answer (respecting the Memorandum of Understanding, including its structure, operation, and purpose), and those they may decline to answer (commercially sensitive, subject to Cabinet confidence or solicitor-client privilege, or otherwise information that may be excepted from disclosure in accordance with *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, 2015).

Specified that the notice requirement for the Resolution to be debated would be waived.

Once the rules of debate motion passed, the Government House Leader proceeded to move the following resolution:

"WHEREAS a Memorandum of Understanding for a New Long-Term Energy Purchase and Development Initiative between Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and Hydro-Quebec was signed on December 12, 2024 (the MOU);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly support Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro proceeding with the MOU toward the Definitive Agreements, as defined in the MOU."

Debate proceeded on the resolution and continued throughout the course of the four-day sitting, with invited guests appearing as provided for in the rules of debate. When debate concluded, the Speaker put the question and a division was called. The resolution passed with 25 ayes and 0 nays. Members of the Official Opposition caucus left the Chamber and did not vote on the division. The Standing Orders do not allow for abstentions.

Inaugural Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy

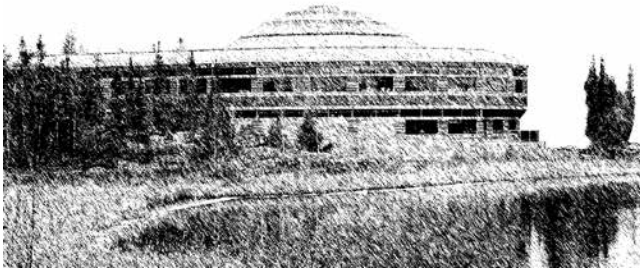
On November 25 and 26, 2024, the Assembly hosted the inaugural Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy, a partnership between the Legislature and the Departments of Education and Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation. Complementing commemorations for the 75th anniversary of Confederation, the Confederation 75 Teachers Institute provided a unique opportunity for educators to experience first-hand the inner workings of parliament and the broader structure of government, gain insight into the role of elected officials and exchange best practices with peers in the focal point of democracy in our province.

The 2024 program took place at the Assembly Chambers in Confederation Building Complex and Colonial Building Provincial Historic Site. Open to educators in grades K to 12 in the English and French provincial school systems, the program accepted 25 individuals from a total of 92 applicants. To remove participation barriers, in particular participants travelling longer distances, travel costs to attend the program were fully covered for all participants. In addition, there was support from the Department of

Education toward discretionary leave and substitute coverage for those teachers participating in the professional development opportunity.

Building off the interest and positive feedback, the Legislature is hoping to continue delivery of education and outreach initiatives such as these moving forward.

Bobbi Russell
Principal Clerk of Committees



Northwest Territories

Session

The Northwest Territories first Session of the 20th Legislative Assembly resumed on October 17, 2024, and continued to sit until adjournment on November 1, 2024. The Assembly is adjourned until February 5, 2025.

The Speaker acknowledged the passing of the late **Anthony (Tony) Wilfred James Whitford**; a moment of silence was observed in his honour. Mr. Whitford was a former Member of the Legislative Assembly. He served as a Minister, Speaker, Deputy Commissioner, and, Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. He also served as a former sergeant-at-arms and remained an honorary clerk at the table. He joined the table on many occasions to assist and witness the proceedings. It was evident this brought great joy to him, and the Clerks at the Table. His level of knowledge and respect for the Legislative Assembly was beyond compare. He was a valued asset to our institution and will be greatly missed by many.

The NWT Honours Advisory Committee recommended three inductees to the Order of the Northwest Territories for the year 2023. They are: **Helen Balanoff**, **Richard Hardy**, **Mary Teya**. **Gerald W. Kisoun**, Commissioner of the Northwest

Territories, was also invested prior to him investing the 2023 inductees. The ceremony was held on October 17, 2024, in the Legislative Assembly. The award recognizes outstanding contributions or achievements of residents or former residents of the Northwest Territories, with up to three awards presented each year.

During this sitting seven motions were moved as noted.

Motion 40-20(1) Emergency Debate on Norman Wells State of Emergency Declaration was moved to set aside the ordinary business of the House to discuss the State of Emergency declared due to the humanitarian crisis in the community;

Motion 41-20(1) Recommendations of the Integrity Commissioner respecting the Conduct of the Member for Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh was moved. A written complaint was received and upon investigation the Integrity Commissioner found the Member for Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh breached the Member's Code of Conduct. Pursuant to section 106(1)(a) of the *Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act*, the Integrity Commissioner recommended a fine of \$2500.00, this was upheld by the House.

Motion 42-20(1) Appointment of Sergeant-at-Arms. Upon the notice of retirement of then Sergeant-at-Arms, **Floyd Andrew Powder**, a competition was held. **Chris Comeau** was appointed upon recommendation by the Board of Management and approved by the Assembly. Mr. Comeau brings with him years of knowledge and service in the security and facilities management sector. Assembly Members expressed their gratitude to the outgoing Sergeant-at-Arms for his years of service to the institution and to the Northwest Territories.

Motion 43-20(1) Reappointment of the Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission. The Assembly moved the recommendation to reappoint **Nicole MacNeil** as Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission for a term of four years.

Motion 44-20(1) Performance Audit of the Management and Governance of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority. The Assembly moved to call on the Office of the Auditor General of Canada to conduct a performance audit of all aspects of the management of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority in its delivery of healthcare services, including medical

travel, the recruitment and retention of nurses, doctors, allied health professionals, and to prioritize this investigation.

Motion 45-20(1) was moved for Extended Adjournment of the House to February 5, 2025.

Legislation

During the October - December Sitting, the following bills received assent:

- Bill 7: *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*. This Bill makes minor, non- controversial administrative changes to the Act;
- Bill 8: *An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act*. This Bill increases the loan(s) amount students may access, from \$60,000.00 to \$90,000.00 from Student Financial Assistance, Government of the Northwest Territories;
- Bill 13: *Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025*;
- Bill 14: *Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025*;
- Bill 15: *Northwest Territories Indigenous-Led Conservation Fund Establishment Act*. This Bill establishes a not-for-profit body corporate to be known as the Our Land for the Future Trust; to provide sustainable and accessible funding for protected areas and Indigenous-led conservation projects;
- Bill 16: *Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), 2025-2026*
- During the October - December Sitting, the following bills received first and second reading, and have been referred to Standing Committees:
- Bill 11: *An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act*
- Bill 12: *Business Day Statute Law Amendment Act*

Standing Committees

The Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight released one report, the *Report on Committee's Statement on the Housing and Healthcare Crises in the Northwest Territories*. The Committee emphasized concerns, and called for urgent government intervention with respect to the crisis conditions in the delivery of healthcare and social services, along with affordable and available housing across the Northwest Territories. The Committee felt it was not in a position to support the Capital Plan, while these commitments were not being addressed.

The Standing Committee on Government Operations released seven reports:

Reports on the Review of the 2023-2024 *Annual Reports* of the;

- Human Rights Commission;
- Equal Pay Commissioner;
- Languages Commissioner;
- Information and Privacy Commissioner; and
- Northwest Territories Ombud.

The Committee also provided its *Report on the Statutory Review of the Cannabis Legalization and Regulation Implementation Act*. Although the review was due in the 19th Assembly it was delayed due to unforeseen circumstances. When Committee began its review on February 26, 2024, it chose to review this Act with an economic lens with a focus on the *Cannabis Products Act*. A public meeting was held in Yellowknife, and the Committee toured a local cannabis growth facility, and received presentations from two witness groups, as well as the Government of the Northwest Territories. Six recommendations were made.

The Committee submitted a *Report on Committee's Initiation of the Ten-Year Review of the Northwest Territories' Heritage Fund Act*, informing the Assembly of its intention to initiate the ten-year review. The Committee will report in the Spring sitting of 2026 with recommendations to improve the provisions and operations of the *Northwest Territories Heritage Fund Act*, as well as its ability to provide benefits to Northwest Territories' residents.

Two reports were submitted from the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges:

The *Report on the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly* with 14 recommendations, on the 20 items the Committee was tasked with reviewing.

An Interim *Report on the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2023 Territorial General Election* which included two recommendations. This report was tabled on May 21, 2024, and was referred to the Committee for review. The Committee is continuing its study into the request of the CEO to lower the age of voting to 16 years.

The Standing Committee on Social Development released two reports.

The first was the *Report on Bill 8: An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act. A Private Members Bill*. This Bill that proposed one change to the current Act, to allow students to borrow up to \$90,000 in loans from the Government of the Northwest Territories (Government)'s Student Financial Assistance (SFA) program, instead of \$60,000. Three recommendations were made.

The second was the *Report on the Statutory Review of the Mental Health Act*. The Committee was tasked with undertaking the first statutory review of the *Mental Health Act*. The Act sets the processes and rules that must be applied to the way people living with a mental disorder receive care and treatment. The Act aims to protect and support the rights of people living with a mental health disorder and those acting on their behalf. This report included 40 recommendations.

Cynthia James
Committee Clerk



Alberta

1st Session of the 31st Legislature

The First Session of the 31st Legislature resumed on October 28 and adjourned on December 4. This was the second fall sitting of the session. The following government bills were introduced during the session:

- Bill 24, *Alberta Bill of Rights Amendment Act, 2024*
- Bill 25, *Early Learning and Child Care Amendment Act, 2024*
- Bill 26, *Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2)*
- Bill 27, *Education Amendment Act, 2024*
- Bill 28, *Meat Inspection Amendment Act, 2024*
- Bill 29, *Fairness and Safety in Sport Act*
- Bill 30, *Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024*
- Bill 31, *Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2024*

- Bill 32, *Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2)*
- Bill 33, *Protection of Privacy Act*
- Bill 34, *Access to Information Act*
- Bill 35, *All-season Resorts Act*
- Bill 36, *Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2024*

All the government bills introduced during the fall sitting have received third reading and royal assent.

On December 2 the Assembly passed Government Motion 53 on division. The motion asks the Legislative Assembly to approve, under section 3 of the *Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act*, a motion expressing, among other things, the view that Alberta has exclusive legislative jurisdiction over the exploration, development, conservation, management, and production of its nonrenewable natural resources. The motion criticizes the federal government's proposed *Oil and Gas Sector Greenhouse Gas Emissions Cap Regulations (Federal Initiative)*, arguing that it would limit oil production in Alberta and lead to job losses, business closures, and loss of tax and royalty revenue. The motion argues that the Federal Initiative is unconstitutional and urges the Lieutenant Governor in Council to consider several responses, including the following:

- refraining from participating in the Federal Initiative's implementation or enforcement to the extent legally permissible;
- using legal means to oppose the Federal Initiative's implementation or enforcement in Alberta;
- classifying oil and gas facilities owned by an interest holder in Alberta ("interest holder facilities") as "essential infrastructure," as defined in the *Critical Infrastructure Defence Act*;
- restricting unauthorized access to interest holder facilities, including by employees or contractors of the federal government;
- declaring emissions data collected by interest holders at an interest holder facility as proprietary information exclusively owned by and reported to the Government of Alberta;
- working collaboratively with other governments and First Nations to increase pipeline capacity from Alberta to tidewater ports and the United States.

Lethbridge-West By-election

A by-election for the Lethbridge-West constituency, which was left vacant following the July 1 resignation of **Shannon Phillips**, was held on December 18, 2024.

Rob Miyashiro, the Alberta New Democratic Party (NDP) candidate, won the seat with over 53 per cent of the votes cast. Mr. Miyashiro served two terms as a member of the Lethbridge City Council.

Composition of the Assembly

Jennifer Johnson joined the United Conservative (UC) caucus effective October 9, 2024. Mrs. Johnson ran successfully as the UC candidate in Lacombe-Ponoka during the 2023 election but sat as an independent Member for almost a year due to remarks deemed controversial that came to light during the election campaign.

Rachel Notley resigned as the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona effective December 30, 2024. She was first elected to the Assembly in 2008 and served as the 17th Premier of Alberta for the 29th Legislature (2015-2019).

The composition of the Assembly is currently 49 Members in the UC caucus, 37 New Democrat (NDP) Members, and one vacant seat.

Committee Business

On October 30 the Select Special Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee recommended to the Legislative Assembly that **Gordon McClure** be appointed as the next Chief Electoral Officer. The Committee has now completed its mandate. Mr. McClure began his new role on November 18, 2024.

The Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund held its annual public meeting on November 6 and fielded questions from members of the public who participated in person, via e-mail, on the telephone, and through social media platforms.

On December 6 the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices met to review the budget estimates for the Officers of the Legislature. The Committee reduced the budget requests for five of the seven officers and limited four of the Officers to a year-over-year increase of approximately two per cent. The Information and Privacy Commissioner received a six per cent increase due to recent legislative changes, while the Chief Electoral Officer's budget was raised by 13 per cent as part of the Office's four-year budget cycle, and the Ethics Commissioner's budget was increased by approximately seven per cent as requested. Additionally, the Assembly assigned the

Committee the task of reviewing the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate as required by Section 21 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*. This review is expected to begin in January 2025.

The Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship met on December 9, 2024, to complete deliberations regarding its review of the *Personal Information Protection Act*. The Committee's recommendations include: amending provincial legislation to align with federal and international best practices; ensuring privacy laws are consistent across the private, public, and health care sectors; allowing the commissioner to impose monetary administrative penalties equal to or exceeding those in other jurisdictions; incorporating a definition of "significant harm" into the legislation; requiring organizations to contractually bind third-party service providers to comply with Alberta's privacy laws; and mandating organizations to notify individuals when decisions are made using automated systems. The Committee is expected to release its report in early 2025.

The Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee held its final meeting on December 11, during which it issued 19 recommendations pertaining to: narrowing the scope of individuals subject to the *Act*, clarifying investigative procedures and definitions, enhancing procedural fairness for individuals under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner, streamlining disclosure requirements for Members, reducing cooling-off periods and allowing employment with the government and the Legislative Assembly Office for those formerly subject to the *Act*, allowing Ministers to manage rental properties, requiring Members to obtain permission from the Ethics Commissioner before taking noncommercial flights, refining definitions of breaches and private interests, and improving the consistency and organization of the *Act* for greater clarity. A report detailing the Committee's recommendations, which will complete the Committee's one-year mandate, is due by January 15, 2025.

The Special Standing Committee on Members' Services met on January 9 to consider recommendations from the Members' Compensation, Benefits and Allowances Review Subcommittee. The Committee approved the creation of a transition allowance for Members serving on or after May 29, 2023, which will include any service on or after April 16, 2019. It also approved a new formula for determining annual adjustments to Member compensation, retroactive to January 1, 2025, for the first year, which will be tied to wage adjustments for public sector employees.

Members will also receive an additional \$6,000 annually in their Members' Services Allowances to address constituency office leasing and staff costs and the Caucus Budget Funding model will be adjusted to begin providing research and general funding to the Government Caucus, inclusive of Members of Executive Council at 50 per cent of the rate of private Members.

Jody Rempel
Committee Clerk



British Columbia

43rd Provincial General Election

Final voting day for BC's 43rd provincial general election occurred on October 19, 2024, per section 23(2) of the provincial *Constitution Act*. As noted in the previous issue, party standings at dissolution were 55 BC NDP, 20 BC United, eight Conservative Party of British Columbia, two BC Green Party, and two independent Members. Following the initial count, the results showed that no party had won enough seats to form a majority in the legislature. The mail-in and absentee ballots counted in the days following resulted in party standings of BC NDP 47, Conservative Party of British Columbia 44, and BC Green Party two, delivering the narrowest possible majority for the BC NDP.

The electoral districts of Juan de Fuca-Malahat and Surrey City Centre reported a difference of less than 100 votes between the top two candidates following the initial count, triggering an automatic recount in both districts. Kelowna Centre and Surrey-Guildford were both subject to an automatic judicial recount following the final count due to the difference in votes between the top two candidates being less than 1/500 of the total ballots considered. The District Electoral Officer for Prince George-Mackenzie requested a judicial recount of one ballot box, after Elections BC discovered the

contents of the box were not counted on election night. The results of the recounts did not change the outcome of the final count in any of those electoral districts.

This was the first general election in BC to use electronic vote tabulators. First results were reported within 15 minutes of the polls closing, with over 50 per cent of the results reported within 30 minutes. By 9pm, 85 per cent of preliminary results had been reported, compared to 13.5 per cent of preliminary results reported by 9pm in 2020.

Voter turnout was approximately 57 per cent, with a record 1,001,331 votes cast in advance polling. There were 43,538 mail-in and assisted telephone votes, compared to 596,287 mail-in ballots in 2020.

Of note, this was the first general election since 1978 in which a Member of the Conservative Party of British Columbia was elected. The eight Members of the Conservative Party Caucus at dissolution were all elected as Members of the BC Liberal Party (subsequently renamed BC United), before changing their party affiliations during the 42nd Parliament. Also notable is that a majority of Members elected are women, a first in BC. Additionally, 56 of the 93 Members have not previously served as an MLA.

All Members were sworn in by the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly on November 12 and 13, 2024.

Members' Orientation

Members have been participating in a comprehensive orientation program delivered by the Legislative Assembly Administration, called "MLA School." Two days of in-person courses were delivered in November, in addition to on-demand and live online courses offered to Members. Initial courses focused on administrative topics, such as security and constituency office management; a procedural orientation will be offered before the opening of the 43rd Parliament.

New Cabinet

Following the certification of election results, a new Executive Council was sworn in by Lieutenant Governor **Janet Austin** on November 18, 2024, with some further adjustments made on December 10, 2024. The cabinet is composed of 24 ministers and three ministers of state, with a majority of cabinet members being women. Six newly elected Members were given cabinet positions, and several Members who were parliamentary secretaries during the 42nd

Parliament were promoted to cabinet positions. All remaining government Members were appointed to parliamentary or caucus leadership roles or named as parliamentary secretaries.

The new cabinet reflects changes to the organization of ministries. New ministries include Energy and Climate Solutions, Housing and Municipal Affairs, Infrastructure, Mining and Critical Minerals, and Transportation and Transit. The Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions was rolled back into the Ministry of Health, with the Premier designating a parliamentary secretary for mental health and addictions. Duties formerly belonging solely to the former Ministry of Municipal Affairs were split between the new ministry and the Premier's Office.

The Official Opposition designated their critic and House leadership roles, with all Members receiving either a critic portfolio or a House leadership position. **Á'a:liya Warbus**, MLA for Chilliwack-Cultus Lake, was named Official Opposition House Leader, the first Indigenous person named to the role.

Anticipated Spring Sitting Period

The Legislative Assembly is expected to return in February 2025, for the first session of the 43rd Parliament. The first item of business for the House is to elect a Speaker. **Raj Chouhan**, MLA for Burnaby-New Westminster, Speaker during the 42nd Parliament, has been named Speaker designate. **Mable Elmore**, MLA for Vancouver-Kensington, was nominated for appointment as Deputy Speaker, and **Lorne Doerkson**, MLA for Cariboo-Chilcotin, was nominated for appointment as Assistant Deputy Speaker. The nominee for Deputy Chairperson, Committee of the Whole is **George Anderson**, MLA for Nanaimo-Lantzville. The Throne Speech is anticipated to take place on February 18, 2025, with the presentation of the provincial budget to follow on March 4, 2025.

Death of Former Premier John Horgan and Former MLA Dan Coulter

John Horgan, 36th Premier of British Columbia, died on November 12, 2024, at the age of 65, following a third cancer diagnosis. Mr. Horgan was first elected to the Legislative Assembly in 2005 in the riding of Malahat-Juan de Fuca. He became leader of the BC NDP and Official Opposition Leader in 2014, and served as Premier from 2017 to 2022. After resigning his seat in 2023, Mr. Horgan was appointed Canada's Ambassador to Germany.

Members of the public were invited to sign a book of condolences, which was placed in the Hall of Honour in the Parliament Buildings. A provincial state memorial service was held for Mr. Horgan on December 15, 2024 at the Q Centre just outside of Victoria. The memorial service was open to the public and attended by the Lieutenant Governor, Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**, Premier **David Eby**, and many current and former Members of the Legislative Assembly.

In mid-December, the BC NDP shared that former Member and interim Provincial Director of the BC NDP **Dan Coulter** died at the age of 49 following a medical emergency. Mr. Coulter served as MLA for Chilliwack in the 42nd Parliament as well as Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility and later Minister of State for Infrastructure and Transit. A public service will be held in January in Chilliwack.

Jared Brown
Committee Researcher

Mary Heeg
Committee Research Analyst



Saskatchewan

Thirtieth general election

On October 28, 2024, Saskatchewan held its thirtieth general election. The Saskatchewan Party, led by Premier **Scott Moe**, was elected to form a fifth consecutive majority government, winning 34 of 61 seats. The New Democratic Party (NDP), led by **Carla Beck**, won the remaining 27 seats and formed the opposition.

This marks a significant gain for the NDP, which secured more than double the number of seats it won in the 2020 election, including every seat in Regina and all but one in Saskatoon. Five prominent cabinet ministers were among the Saskatchewan Party incumbents who lost their seats in Regina and Saskatoon. Notably,

31 of the 61 members elected to serve in the thirtieth legislature are new.

Cabinet shuffle

On November 7, 2024, Premier Moe announced his new 16-member cabinet. In addition to being slightly smaller than the former 18-member cabinet, the new cabinet saw all ministerial roles reassigned, with no ministers retaining their previous portfolios.

Nine cabinet ministers switched portfolios:

- **Jim Reiter** became the Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance, Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister of Immigration and Career Training, and Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board;
- **Everett Hindley** became the Minister of Education;
- **Jeremy Cockrill** became the Minister of Health;
- **Lori Carr** became the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Seniors and Rural and Remote Health;
- **Tim McLeod** became the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, and Minister Responsible for the Firearms Secretariat;
- **David Marit** became the Minister of Highways, Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement, and Minister Responsible for the Global Transportation Hub Authority;
- **Jeremy Harrison** became the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation, Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission, Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated, Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Government Insurance, Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Power Corporation, Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Telecommunications, Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Water Corporation, and Minister Responsible for Lotteries and Gaming Saskatchewan Corporation;
- **Terry Jenson** became the Minister of Social Services; and
- **Colleen Young** became the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Four ministers entered cabinet for the first time:

- **Alana Ross** became the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, and Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan;

- **Daryl Harrison** became the Minister of Agriculture, Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation, and Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Water Security Agency;
- **Travis Keisig** became the Minister of Environment; and
- **Eric Schmalz** became the Minister of Government Relations, Minister Responsible for First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs, and Minister Responsible for the Provincial Capital Commission.

Finally, two ministers re-entered cabinet:

- **Ken Cheveldayoff** became the Minister of Advanced Education;
- **Warren Kaeding** became the Minister of Trade and Export Development and the Minister Responsible for Innovation.

House leadership

Alongside the cabinet changes, Premier Moe also announced the government caucus's new House leadership positions, as well as the new Provincial Secretary. Ms. Carr returns to her former role as Deputy Government House Leader, while Mr. McLeod takes on the position of Government House Leader. **Jamie Martens** has been appointed Provincial Secretary.

The opposition retains **Nicole Sarauer** as the Opposition House Leader and **Meara Conway** as the Deputy Opposition House Leader.

Election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker

Todd Goudy was the only member to submit his name for the position of Speaker, and on November 25, 2024, he was declared Speaker by acclamation.

Similarly, **Blaine McLeod** was the only member to submit his name for the position of Deputy Speaker, and on November 26, 2024, he was declared Deputy Speaker by acclamation. **Chris Beaudry**, MLA for Kelvington-Wadena, was subsequently appointed Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly.

Summary of the fall sitting of the first session of the thirtieth legislature

The first session of the thirtieth legislature began on November 25, 2024, with the election of the Speaker

and the Speech from the Throne. The Assembly sat for 10 days, during which time 12 public bills were introduced by the government. Three of these bills received royal assent, including an appropriation bill containing supplementary estimates for various ministries and agencies.

The other two bills that received royal assent included Bill No. 1, *The Saskatchewan Affordability Act*, which introduced cost-of-living relief measures by increasing personal income tax exemptions, and Bill No. 2, *The SaskEnergy (Carbon Tax Fairness for Families) Amendment Act, 2024*, which extended legislation to halt the collection of carbon taxes on residential customers' natural gas bills.

Sessional order amending rules and sitting times of the Assembly

On November 27, 2024, Government House Leader McLeod moved a sessional order proposing modifications to the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan* for the duration of the fall sitting. Specifically, the order allowed for both the Address-in-Reply motion and its amendment to be voted off on the sixth day of consideration, adjusted the daily order of business on December 5, 2024, and extended the Assembly's sitting hours on December 10, 2024 to 10:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., with a recess from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

The sessional order came into immediate effect upon its adoption and remained in force until the conclusion of the sitting on December 10, 2024.

Changes to committee composition

At the beginning of a new legislature, the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan* require the permanent membership of the various standing committees to be outlined in a report of the Standing Committee on House Services.

The committee met on December 4, 2024, and recommended that the standing committees' member ratio be set at four government members to three opposition members, in proportion to party membership in the Assembly, with the exception of the Standing Committee on Privileges, which is chaired by the Speaker and would have an equal ratio of three government members and three opposition members. The ratio would also not apply to the Standing Committee on House Services, whose membership is set out in rule 139(1).

The committee's first report containing the aforementioned recommendation was presented and concurred in by the Assembly on December 4, 2024.

Motion committing supplementary estimates to committee

On December 5, 2024, supplementary estimates were tabled by the government. The Assembly subsequently adopted a motion committing all of the supplementary estimates to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies, notwithstanding rule 148(1) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*. This rule stipulates that supplementary estimates are to be committed to designated standing committees for review and consideration, as outlined in the allocation schedule. After consideration, the supplementary estimates were approved and reported back to the Assembly.

Tamikani Nkhata
Procedural Assistant



Ontario

1st Session 43rd Parliament (Fall Meeting Period)

The fall meeting period began on October 21, 2024, when the House returned from the summer adjournment, and ended on December 12, 2024. Ten government bills, 14 private Members' public bills, and 11 private bills were passed. Before adjourning for the winter, the House adopted a motion that it would stand adjourned until March 3, 2025, which is later than provided for in the regular parliamentary calendar.

Composition of the House

On October 21, 2024, MPP **Tyler Allsopp** (PC) was introduced in the House and took his seat for the first time. MPP Allsopp was elected earlier in the fall in a by-election in Bay of Quinte following the resignation of former Minister of Energy **Todd Smith**.

Tributes

In accordance with the *Remembrance Week Act, 2016*, the House observed two minutes of silence in honour of Remembrance Day, after which Members had the opportunity to make remarks. Following the remarks, MPP **Karen McCrimmon** sought and was granted unanimous consent to move a private Member's motion expressing the opinion that members of the Canadian Armed Forces Reserve should be included in a program for free transit for veterans and members of the Canadian Armed Forces. The House adopted the motion.

On November 20, 2024, the House observed a moment of silence in honour of the Trans Day of Remembrance, as provided for in the *Trans Day of Remembrance Act, 2017*. The House also granted unanimous consent for Members to make remarks in recognition of the day.

Speaker's Statement

On December 11, 2024, the Speaker made a statement reminding Members of the rules regarding the form of private Members' notices of motion. The Speaker observed that notices of motion had become lengthy and that some contained unnecessary justifications. He explained that they should instead present a concise statement of resolve and remain focused on a single issue to enable the House to make a clear decision. They should not include preambles or arguments, as this content is best addressed in the debate itself. The Speaker noted that these rules would be applied more carefully going forward, and that notices of motion which do not comply would be out of order and would not be placed on the *Orders and Notices Paper*.

Committees

Committees were busy during the fall meeting period, and several will continue to meet through the winter adjournment as the House has authorized them to do so.

Changes were made to the membership of all eight standing committees during the course of the meeting period. Some of these changes were made by routine motion in the House pursuant to Standing Order 3. Two others were made when the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented reports to the House recommending membership changes, which were then deemed adopted by the House.

These two reports represent the first times the Committee has exercised its new authority to revise the memberships of the other standing committees pursuant to Standing Order 109.1(a).

On November 21, 2024, the policy field committees reported to the House on their consideration of the 2024-2025 Estimates. These reports were presented to the House in accordance with Standing Order 66(a), which provides that each Standing Committee shall present one report with respect to all the Estimates considered no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year.

Throughout the fall, committees conducted public hearings and clause-by-clause consideration on a number of bills. In addition to considering legislation, committees worked on both new and ongoing studies:

The **Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs** began Pre-Budget Consultations 2025. The Committee plans to hold hearings in 11 different locations across the province in December and January. As of December, the Committee had traveled to Timmins, Kenora and Stratford.

The **Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy** began report writing on its study related to land use for unlicensed event venues. The report is expected to be tabled in the spring meeting period.

The **Standing Committee on Justice Policy** resumed its study on intimate partner violence (IPV). This fall, the Committee heard presentations from ministers and associate ministers who had been invited to speak to the Committee on the programs and efforts made by their ministries to assist victims of IPV. Over the winter adjournment, the committee will meet to hear from victims and families of victims of IPV.

The **Standing Committee on Public Accounts** received a briefing from the Auditor General on the 2024 Annual report which was tabled on December 3, 2024. Additionally, the Committee presented the following reports:

Value-for-Money Audit: Management of Invasive Species (2022 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario) (Sessional Paper No. 648).

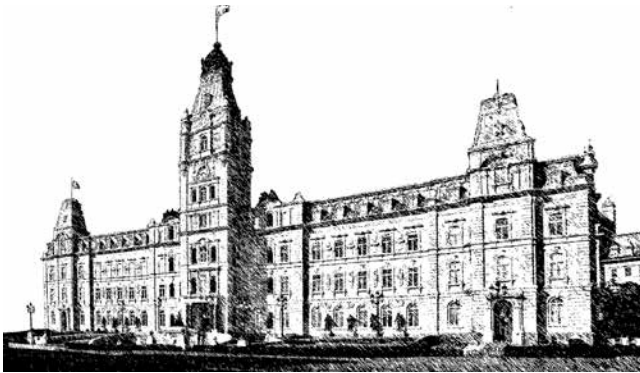
Value-for-Money Audit: Real Estate Council of Ontario (2022 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario) (Sessional Paper No. 649).

Value-for-Money Audit: Highway Planning and Management (2022 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario) (Sessional Paper No. 670).

Value-for-Money Audit: Climate Change Adaptation: Reducing Urban Flood Risk (2022 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario) (Sessional Paper No. 705).

The **Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs** completed its review of all regulations filed under Ontario statutes in 2022 and presented the ensuing report on December 4, 2024

Vanessa Kattar
Committee Clerk



Québec

Proceedings of the Assemblée nationale du Québec

Legislative agenda

Between October 1 and December 6, 2024, the final day of the sessional period, 25 bills were introduced in the Assemblée nationale, including 15 government bills, five private Members' bills and five private bills. During the same period, 18 government bills and four private Members' bills were passed, including:

- Bill 61, *An Act enacting the Act respecting Mobilité Infra Québec and amending certain provisions relating to shared transportation;*
- Bill 64, *An Act to establish the Musée national de l'histoire du Québec;*
- Bill 68, *An Act mainly to reduce the administrative burden of physicians;*
- Bill 72, *An Act to protect consumers against abusive commercial practices and to offer better transparency with respect to prices and credit; and*

- Bill 73, *An Act to counter non-consensual sharing of intimate images and to improve protection and support in civil matters for persons who are victims of violence.*

Of the 22 bills passed during this period, 15 were passed unanimously.

Rulings from the Chair

Ruling on a request for an urgent debate

On October 29, 2024, the President ruled on a request for an urgent debate from **Monsef Derraji**, Official Opposition House Leader, concerning allegations of sexual misconduct against children and young minors in foster families and youth centres involving the Director of Youth Protection (DPJ). The request was deemed receivable.

The request concerned a specific matter of special importance falling under the Assemblée's jurisdiction. Furthermore, the difficulties experienced by the DPJ at the point in time could be qualified as a crisis or the worsening of a crisis as defined by parliamentary jurisprudence. The situation seemed to be taking on considerable proportions due to the shocking and concerning revelations regarding the actions of several DPJ workers in various sectors under the DPJ's responsibility. The President used her power to interpret whether it was urgent to hold an urgent debate and allowed the Members to discuss the subject. She considered that the circumstances were exceptional and that the issue was one of such importance that it justified the holding of an urgent debate and the interruption of legislative proceedings.

Ruling on the receivability of a motion without notice

Later during the sitting of October 29, 2024, a point of order was raised by **Alexandre Leduc**, House Leader of the Second Opposition Group, on the receivability of a motion without notice moved by **Pascal Paradis**, Member for Jean-Talon and member of the Third Opposition Group, on the recent intentional blockade of the Jacques Cartier Bridge in Montréal. The House Leader of the Second Opposition Group alleged that the motion was contrary to the *sub judice* rule provided for in the third paragraph of Standing Order 35, which states that the Member speaking "may not refer to any matter that is under adjudication before a court of law or a quasi-judicial body, or that is the subject of an inquiry, where such reference may be prejudicial to the interests of any person or party."

In his ruling, **Frantz Benjamin**, Third Vice-President, underlined that in the specific case at the origin of the motion, accusations had been made against the activists who blocked the Jacques Cartier Bridge on October 22, 2024. He also noted that certain sections of the motion referred directly to elements likely to be at the heart of the upcoming trials. He drew attention to the fact that, in the *Assemblée nationale*, the application of the *sub judice* rule with regard to criminal and penal matters has been clear, consistent and unambiguous: it is applied strictly because prejudice is deemed likely to occur.

Members are expected to refrain from discussing matters that are before a criminal court, not only to protect the people who are undergoing trial and stand to be affected whatever its outcome, but also to prevent the trial from being affected by debate in the House. Strict application of the *sub judice* rule with regard to criminal and penal matters ensures that the integrity of the judicial process is respected. There can be no exceptions, as violating the *sub judice* rule can result in a stay of proceedings.

The Third Vice-President recalled that though the *Assemblée nationale* is sovereign, it must also keep in mind the rights of defendants. In such cases, it falls to the presiding officer to find balance between allowing the *Assemblée* to debate and respecting defendants' rights.

The *Assemblée nationale* asks the courts to respect the principle of the separation of state powers and it sees to it that its privileges and those of its Members are recognized by the courts. In return, the *Assemblée* must ensure that the courts' role is respected. The presiding officer therefore upholds the Members' freedom of speech yet requires them to express themselves within the limits set by the Standing Orders and jurisprudence.

Since the motion moved by the Member referred to acts for which criminal charges were laid, as well as to arguments made by the parties involved in the case, the Vice-President declared the motion out of order.

Ruling on a point of privilege or contempt

On December 3, 2024, Mr. Derraji, Official Opposition House Leader, presented a notice to the President alleging that the Minister of Transport and Sustainable Mobility had acted in contempt of Parliament by failing to table in the *Assemblée*

nationale, within the time prescribed by law, the 2023 annual management report of the *Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec*. The President heard arguments from all sides on the matter on December 4, 2024, and then ruled on the receivability of the point of privilege or contempt on December 5, 2024.

The requirement to table the report originates from section 19 of the *Act respecting the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec*, which clearly states that the *Société* must submit its documents to the Minister not later than April 30 each year. The Minister must then table the report in the *Assemblée nationale* within 15 days of receiving it.

The last annual report of the *Société* was tabled on September 26, 2023, and concerned the year 2022. The annual management report for the year 2023 should have been tabled in the *Assemblée nationale* during the month of May 2024 at the latest. It was therefore established that the report had not been tabled within the time prescribed by the Act.

The Chair has had to rule several times in the past on points of privilege relating to failure to table a document required by law to be tabled in the *Assemblée nationale*. Each time, the Chair ruled that failure to table a document within the time prescribed by law constituted *prima facie* contempt of Parliament.

The report currently at issue is essential for Members in the performance of their fundamental duty as overseers of government action. The *Assemblée* must be informed of what is happening within the state apparatus in a timely manner. The legally prescribed period is not a suggestion to government departments and agencies, but a performance requirement.

As such, there is no doubt that failure to table a document in the *Assemblée nationale* when required by law constitutes *prima facie* contempt.

The argument that the Minister was acting in good faith and had not yet received the documents is a justification that does not alter the Minister's legal responsibility to table the documents in the *Assemblée* within the prescribed time limit. Under the *Act respecting the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec*, the Minister of Transport and Sustainable Mobility is responsible for the carrying out of the Act, which includes the requirement to oversee the production and tabling of the required documents within the prescribed period.

Furthermore, doctrine consistently recognizes that, in accordance with the principle of individual ministerial responsibility, a minister is accountable to Parliament not only for their actions, but also those of the public servants in their department and of the public bodies under their responsibility. As such, the Minister's claim to not have received the document is not sufficient to absolve her of her obligation to the Assemblée.

When, for any reason, it is not possible for a government department or agency to complete a document within the legally prescribed time limit, the Assemblée is entitled to expect the minister responsible for the application of the Act to follow up and provide explanations for the delay. It is a matter of basic deference, which government departments and agencies must show to the Assemblée and its Members.

It is fundamental that Members take the legal obligations to produce and table these documents in the Assemblée nationale seriously. It is also important that each stakeholder play its role adequately so that these obligations are respected.

For all these reasons, the Chair ruled that the point of privilege raised by the Official Opposition House Leader was *prima facie* admissible.

Change of Second Vice-President of the Assemblée nationale

On November 6, 2024, **Sylvain Lévesque**, Member for Chauveau, informed the President of his resignation as Second Vice-President of the Assemblée nationale. On November 7, 2024, **Sylvie D'Amours**, Member for Mirabel, was appointed Second Vice-President of the Assemblée nationale.

Ministerial Statement

On December 4, 2024, **Sonia LeBel**, Minister Responsible for Government Administration and Chair of the Conseil du trésor, made a statement announcing the review of the process of negotiation of collective agreements in the public and parapublic sectors. As provided for by the Standing Orders, representatives of the three opposition groups commented following the statement. It was the first statement by a minister since June 7, 2024.

Committee proceedings

Bills

The Committee on Public Finance examined two bills concerning budget and taxation matters: Bill 75, *An Act to give effect to fiscal measures announced in the Budget Speech delivered on 12 March 2024 and to certain other measures*, and Bill 80, *An Act respecting the implementation of certain provisions of the Budget Speech of 12 March 2024 and amending other provisions*.

The latter bill amends certain provisions of the *Act respecting the Québec Pension Plan*. It also amends the *Act respecting the conditions of employment and the pension plan of the Members of the National Assembly* to provide that no adjustment be made to the annual indemnity paid to the Members for the 2023–2024 fiscal year. This change is in keeping with the passage of the *Act to follow up on the recommendations of the report of the Comité consultatif indépendant sur la révision de l'indemnité annuelle des membres de l'Assemblée nationale*.

From October to December 2024, parliamentary committees carried out the clause-by-clause consideration of a total of 15 bills. These included, notably, Bill 61, *An Act enacting the Act respecting Mobilité Infra Québec and amending certain provisions relating to shared transportation*, which the Committee on Transportation and the Environment considered over the course of 15 meetings. The purpose of the Act is to establish a new agency, named Mobilité Infra Québec, with the mission to plan and carry out complex transportation projects. It should be noted that the Chair of the Committee ruled on the receivability of a subamendment during the November 5 sitting. After examination, the motion was deemed sufficiently different, in terms of substance, from the other subamendments already submitted to be declared receivable.

The Committee on Citizen Relations completed its clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 74, *An Act mainly to improve the regulatory scheme governing international students*, over the course of 25 hours and five sittings. The bill contains provisions that give the Government the power to limit the number of international student applications to educational institutions on the basis of, notably, region, level of instruction, institution or program of studies.

The Chair of the Committee also ruled on the receivability of an amendment during the November

27 sitting. The amendment, which proposed adding the definition of “designated educational institution” to the *Québec Immigration Regulation*, was deemed receivable. In her ruling, the Chair underscored that the proposed motion was not contrary to an amendment previously adopted to replace section 1 of the bill but clarified it in certain ways.

Oversight

On October 10, 2024, the Committee on Public Administration heard the Tribunal administratif du logement on its administrative management, its financial commitments and the annual report of the Public Protector. The Committee had decided to hold the hearing following the examination of the Tribunal’s annual management report, which was carried out in the spring of 2024. The examination had notably revealed issues regarding access to the organization’s telephone services. The complaints collected by the Public Protector echoed similar problems. After the hearing, the Committee made four recommendations, one of which was for the Tribunal administratif du logement to immediately send to the Committee on Public Administration a copy of the action plan established in response to the Public Protector’s recommendation and to report on the action plan’s progress in its next annual management reports.

Order of initiative

On October 22, 2024, the Chair of the Committee on Health and Social Services tabled the Committee’s report within the framework of the order of initiative on examining ways to facilitate organ and tissue donation, such as through the adoption of presumed consent. At the conclusion of its proceedings, the Committee held 10 deliberative meetings to establish its observations and recommendations.

The 11 observations and 15 recommendations made by the Committee centre on six themes: the legal framework and governance, consent, the organization of the organ and tissue donation process, donations by living donors, education and awareness-raising, and the First Nations, the Inuit and cultural communities. Pursuant to the Standing Orders of the National Assembly, which state that committee reports containing recommendations must be taken into consideration and give rise to a debate not later than 15 days after being tabled in the Assemblée, the report was taken into consideration and the debate was held on October 24, 2024.

Select Committee on the Impacts of Screens and Social Media on Young People’s Health and Development

The Select Committee on the Impacts of Screens and Social Media on Young People’s Health and Development continued its work, which began in September 2024, by touring some 20 elementary and secondary schools across six Québec regions to meet with students and school staff. An online consultation was also launched on October 31, 2024, to obtain the perspectives of as many Quebecers as possible on the subject under study. The consultations will continue until January 31, 2025.

Marie-Christine Aubé

Direction de la séance et de la procédure parlementaire

Roxanne Guévin

Direction des commissions parlementaires



Manitoba

Second Session of the 43rd Legislature

The Second Session of the 43rd Legislature commenced on November 19, 2024 with the Speech from the Throne delivered by Lieutenant Governor **Anita Neville**. Consent from the Official Opposition and Independent Members was given to allow an Indigenous Youth Choir to sing the Canadian anthem from the Bar of the House following the Speech. “O Canada” was sung in Anishinaabemowin by the Giinawind Riverbend Community School Abinoojiiyag Nagamogon.

The address outlined a series of initiatives to be implemented in order to keep delivering for families by making improvements in health care and creating more good jobs, and identified the following priorities and commitments:

- Making progress on health care by improving wait times
- Lowering bills by freezing Manitoba Hydro rates for one year
- Growing the economy with a new critical minerals strategy
- Making downtowns and communities safer with the new Public Safety Strategy
- Helping kids by building on the province's universal school meal program
- Protecting the environment with a new Affordable Energy Plan
- Honouring the past while giving hope to the future with a new mother and child bison statue to be built on the front lawn of the legislative building grounds, and a new honour for veterans and other Manitoba heroes

During his contribution to the Throne Speech debate on November 20, the Leader of the Official Opposition **Wayne Ewasko** moved one of the shortest amendments in recent history expressing non-confidence in the Government:

"But this House regrets that the Provincial Government has failed to follow through on its commitments to the people of Manitoba, demonstrating a lack of credibility, integrity and competence in basic governance, and has thus neglected the needs of Manitobans."

On November 28, the amendment was defeated on division, while the main motion carried on a recorded vote of ayes 30, nays 20. The Fall Sittings period concluded on December 5, 2024, without any bills receiving Royal Assent. The Assembly is scheduled to resume sitting on March 5, 2025.

Rule Book changes in effect

The start of the 2nd Session of the 43rd Legislature also marked the day that changes to the Rules, adopted by the House in May 2024, came into effect. Most of the changes involved codifying the provisions of the Sessional Order passed in October 2020, discussed in previous submissions, that first enabled Members to participate virtually in sittings of the House and Committees. There were a few additional items,

including not needing leave to add names in Hansard during a Ministerial Statement or response, and increasing the length of time a Member has to speak when posing a question to a public presenter in a Standing Committee from 30 seconds to 45 seconds. Both the Rule Book and the Summary of Changes documents are available on the Assembly website: https://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/business/rule_book.html

Cabinet Shuffle

A minor cabinet shuffle occurred in November, just over a year after the government was sworn in, splitting some responsibilities, creating new departments and swapping Ministers among portfolios. The shuffle included three new faces including Assiniboia MLA **Nellie Kennedy** as the first Muslim woman to be appointed to Manitoba's cabinet. She took over from **Glen Simard** as Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, as he assumed the role of Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations.

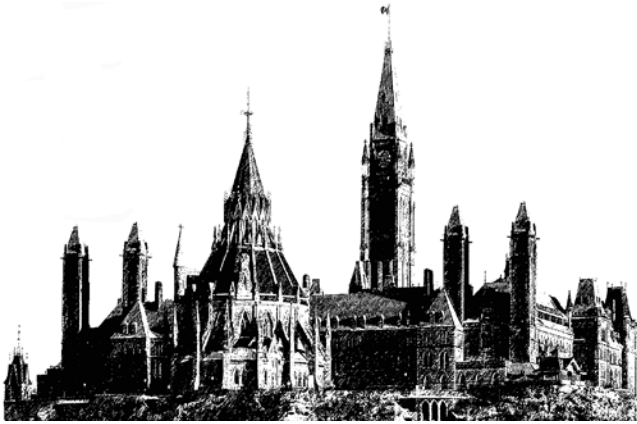
The Premier now has 17 MLAs around his cabinet table, and among the new faces is River Heights MLA **Mike Moroz**, who will be responsible for the newly created Department of Innovation and New Technology. Maples MLA **Mintu Sandhu** also joined cabinet as the Minister of Public Service Delivery.

Standing Committees

The Standing Committee on Crown Corporations is meeting on five occasions in January and February to consider the Annual Reports of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries, Efficiency Manitoba, Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation and the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board respectively. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts also met in December to consider the Auditor General Reports on Provincial Oversight of Drinking Water Safety as well as Animal Disease Preparedness. Its next scheduled meeting is in March when session resumes.

Greg Recksiedler

Research Clerk / Clerk Assistant



House of Commons

Introduction

This account covers key highlights of the period from mid-October 2024 to early January 2025. The House adjourned on December 17, 2024, and on January 6, 2025, the first session of the 44th Parliament was prorogued until March 24, 2025.

Legislation

Bill S-16, An Act respecting the recognition of the Haida Nation and the Council of the Haida Nation

On November 6, 2024, by unanimous consent *Bill S-16, An Act respecting the recognition of the Haida Nation and the Council of the Haida Nation*, was deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

Bill S-13, An Act to amend the Interpretation Act and to make related amendments to other Acts

On November 19, 2024, by unanimous consent, *Bill S-13, An Act to amend the Interpretation Act and to make related amendments to other Acts*, was deemed adopted at second reading and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to hear from witnesses. The order adopted also contained provisions that once the committee had heard from the witnesses, the bill would be deemed concurred in at report stage without amendments and deemed read a third time and passed. This provision finally took effect on November 26, 2024.

Procedure / Privilege

Question of Privilege Concerning the Failure to Produce Documents Pertaining to Sustainable Development Technology Canada

As mentioned in the previous report, the debate on the question of privilege from **Andrew Scheer** (Regina—Qu'Appelle) is ongoing. On September 16, 2024, Mr. Scheer raised a question of privilege concerning the government's failure to comply with a June 10, 2024, House order for the production of unredacted documents regarding Sustainable Development Technology Canada (SDTC). He argued that providing redacted documents breached the House's authority. Other members, including **Brian Masse** (Windsor West) and **Alain Therrien** (La Prairie), supported his claim.

On September 26, 2024, the Speaker ruled it a *prima facie* case of privilege and Mr. Scheer moved a motion to refer the issue to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. On October 2, 2024, **Luc Berthold** (Mégantic—L'Érable) moved an amendment to add an instruction for the committee to order witnesses to appear and to report by a deadline.

On October 10, 2024, **Dan Muys** (Flamborough—Glanbrook) moved a subamendment to add the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, who had respected the order of the House and submitted unredacted documents, and **Paul MacKinnon**, the former Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet (Governance), to the list of witnesses. The subamendment was later adopted on November 5, 2024.

That same day, **Tom Kmiec** (Calgary Shepard) moved a second subamendment to modify the deadline to report to the House. On November 18, 2024, the subamendment was adopted.

On November 19, 2024, **Pat Kelly** (Calgary Rocky Ridge) moved a third subamendment specifying that the committee be required to report back to the House within 30 sitting days following the adoption of the order. The subamendment further provided that this reporting requirement would be discharged if, prior to the expiration of the 30-day period, the Speaker tables a notice from the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel confirming that all government institutions have fully complied with the order adopted on June 10, 2024, by depositing all responsive records in an unredacted form.

The debate on Mr. Kelly's subamendment was ongoing at the time of prorogation.

Question of privilege concerning the failure of a witness to provide information to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

On September 17, 2024, **Michael Barrett** (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes) raised a question of privilege regarding the refusal of **Stephen Anderson**, a business associate of then Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, **Randy Boissonnault** (Edmonton Centre), to provide documents and fully answer questions before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy, and Ethics during an investigation into the minister's business dealings. Mr. Barrett argued that Mr. Anderson's actions constituted contempt of Parliament and requested a *prima facie* case of privilege.

On October 1, 2024, the Speaker delivered his ruling that Mr. Anderson's refusal to comply was a *prima facie* breach of privilege. Mr. Barrett then moved a motion to have the House find Mr. Anderson in contempt, summon him before the bar of the House of Commons for admonishment, compel him to submit the requested records and respond to further questioning. The motion also proposed referring any submitted records back to the committee for further review and possible additional actions.

On November 18, 2024, **Michael Cooper** (St. Albert—Edmonton) moved an amendment to provide a procedural framework for Mr. Anderson's appearance and questioning at the bar of the House of Commons. On November 28, 2024, **John Brassard** (Barrie—Innisfil) moved a subamendment to allow for questioning by Mr. Boissonnault.

At the time of prorogation, the debate on Mr. Brassard's subamendment was ongoing.

Question of Privilege on the Access to the Hill

On October 7, 2024, **Melissa Lantsman** (Thornhill) raised a question of privilege regarding public access to Parliament Hill. Ms. Lantsman argued that an officer from the Parliamentary Protective Service had restricted a visitor's access based on their political beliefs, specifically related to Palestinian support, and asserted that such actions could have implied a broader ideological restriction potentially affecting members of Parliament.

Later, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader, **Kevin Lamoureux** (Winnipeg North), countered that no member access had been obstructed and that, therefore, this was not a matter of privilege. **Peter Julian** (New Westminster—Burnaby) also argued that parliamentary privilege

regarding obstruction applied solely to members and did not extend to the public's access rights.

On October 29, 2024, the Speaker ruled on the matter, concluding that privilege claims required concrete evidence of interference with Members' duties and found no *prima facie* breach of privilege. He affirmed that public access had been managed per established security protocols to ensure safety.

Question of Privilege on the Refusal of Witness to Respond to Questions from Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

On November 23, 2024, **Alistair MacGregor** (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford) raised a question of privilege concerning the actions of the co-founder of Tenet Media, **Lauren Chen**, during her appearance as a witness at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security (SECU), described in the committee's 14th report presented earlier that day. The committee was conducting a study on Russian interference and disinformation campaigns in Canada.

Ms. Chen declined to answer questions by the committee. Mr. MacGregor emphasized the constitutional authority of parliamentary committees to conduct inquiries and require answers from witnesses. Other Members rose on the matter to support Mr. MacGregor's arguments.

On November 20, 2024, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, **Kevin Lamoureux** (Winnipeg North) noted that Ms. Chen is under indictment in the United States and has been advised by legal counsel to avoid testimony that might incriminate her, as U.S. courts may not recognize Canadian parliamentary privilege. He proposed that before a *prima facie* breach of privilege is declared, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs should analyze how to manage such delicate situations.

On December 3, 2024, the Speaker ruled on the question of privilege. The Speaker acknowledged that Ms. Chen's refusal to answer constituted a serious matter that touched upon parliamentary privilege, noting the established expectation for witnesses to answer committee questions. However, the Speaker also recognized that enforcing compliance from a witness outside Canadian jurisdiction presented significant procedural challenges.

The Speaker ruled that this constituted a *prima facie* question of privilege. He recommended referring the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which could examine the unique aspects of the case and propose actionable recommendations. Instead of inviting Mr. MacGregor to move his motion immediately, the Speaker explained that as the House was currently considering Mr. Scheer's and Mr. Barrett's motions of privilege, that those should be disposed of before the House could consider another matter.

Question of Privilege Alleged Intimidation During Proceedings of the House

On November 29, 2024, the Speaker addressed the House regarding disruptive behaviors that occurred the previous day during a recorded division on the motion for second reading of *Bill C-78, An Act respecting temporary cost of living relief (affordability)*, which included shouting and gestures from Members aimed at provoking reactions. At the time, the Speaker had to intervene to restore order. He reminded Members that noise or movement is prohibited during a vote to ensure orderly proceedings. The Speaker also acknowledged an oversight in not recognizing **Lindsay Mathyssen** (London—Fanshawe) for a point of order following the vote. He apologized for the procedural error and invited Ms. Mathyssen or her colleagues to raise the matter subsequently.

Later, Ms. Mathyssen raised a question of privilege concerning the situation. She argued that behaviours by other Members had prevented her from hearing proceedings despite using an earpiece. She stated that this impaired her ability to fulfill her duties. She noted that disturbances during voting and deliberate attempts to intimidate members could constitute contempt of the House. She called for robust measures to address the violations of decorum, protect members' rights, and ensure accountability for behavior she deemed as harassment and intimidation, emphasizing the need to uphold parliamentary standards.

On November 29, 2024, several Conservative Members responded, claiming that the Speaker had followed proper procedures during the vote. They alleged that Ms. Mathyssen exhibited aggressive behavior toward the Speaker and Conservative Members post-adjournalment and that there was video evidence of her actions.

Several other Members intervened on the matter. On December 11, 2024, the Speaker ruled on the question of privilege. In his ruling, the Speaker acknowledged the excessive noise during the vote, which disrupted proceedings and prompted an intervention to restore order. However, the Speaker found no evidence that any Member was unable to vote or participate in the proceedings. While agreeing that the behavior constituted a breach of decorum, the Speaker determined it did not rise to the level of a *prima facie* breach of privilege or contempt.

Question of Privilege on the Access to Parliamentary Precinct

On December 6, 2024, **Melissa Lantsman** (Thornhill) raised a question of privilege concerning access to the parliamentary precinct following a protest in the Confederation Building, which she argued obstructed Members' access to their offices and parliamentary functions. Citing parliamentary authorities, she noted that such obstruction constitutes a *prima facie* breach of privilege. She emphasized that Members' safety and unimpeded access to their offices are foundational to parliamentary privilege. She then went on to argue that some members had been involved in orchestrating the protests.

Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre) and **Heather McPherson** (Edmonton Strathcona) later responded to the allegations raised by Ms. Lantsman. Both Members refuted claims of involvement in organizing or supporting the protest and emphasized their presence was limited to listening to the demonstrators.

On December 17, 2024, the Speaker ruled on the question of privilege. While recognizing the disruption and stress caused by the protest, the Speaker concluded that Parliamentary Protective Services protocols ensured Members were not impeded in fulfilling their parliamentary duties. Redirecting members to alternate entrances was deemed sufficient to maintain access.

The Speaker also addressed allegations against NDP Members accused of aiding the protest. Accepting their categorical denials, the Speaker advised caution to all Members regarding interactions with demonstrations in parliamentary buildings. Though the protest was disruptive, it did not meet the threshold for a *prima facie* breach of privilege as it did not directly obstruct access to a parliamentary proceeding.

Motions

Motion to Welcome Canada's 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games athletes

On November 7, 2024, by unanimous consent, it was ordered that the House would resolve itself into a committee of the whole to welcome Canada's 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games athletes at a later date. On December 4, 2024, in accordance with this order, the House resolved itself into a committee of the whole and welcomed the athletes onto the floor of the House.

Speaker's Statements and Rulings

Speaker's Statement on the Length of Statements by Members

On November 21, 2024, following Statements by Members, the Speaker briefly addressed the House, emphasizing the importance of adhering to the 60-second time limit during Statements by Members. The Speaker explained that leniency had been extended to members of all parties who exceeded the allotted time. He requested greater mindfulness from Members to ensure timely starts and adherence to parliamentary decorum.

Speaker's Statement on Supply Period

On November 21, 2024, the Speaker delivered a statement concerning the ongoing supply period, ending December 10, 2024, emphasizing the procedural conflict between the debate on privilege motions and the obligations under the Standing Orders regarding supplies.

The Speaker reminded the House that the privilege motions, which take precedence over all other business under Standing Order 48(1), have dominated the House's agenda since September 26, 2024. The Speaker referenced *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, explaining that privilege motions interrupt all Orders of the Day except specific exceptions. Simultaneously, the government must designate four more allotted days and the House must dispose of supplementary estimates before December 10, 2024, per Standing Orders 81(10)(a) and 81(17). The Speaker encouraged House leaders to negotiate a balance between these conflicting priorities while maintaining parliamentary obligations.

Immediately following the Speaker's statement, **Alain Therrien** (La Prairie), raised a point of order

addressing the same questions as the Speaker regarding the final four allotted days for the supply period ending December 10, 2024.

On December 2, 2024, the Speaker ruled on the point of order raised by Mr. Therrien. The Speaker reiterated the government's responsibility under Standing Order 80(1) to designate days for the business of supply and emphasized the requirement to reconcile privilege with the granting of supply. Citing precedents from 1990, the Speaker ruled that December 5, 6, 9, and 10, 2024, would be allotted days, unless the House decided otherwise, noting the 48-hour notice required for opposition motions. Debates on questions of privilege would resume once opposition motions are disposed of.

Speaker's Ruling on Oral Questions Unrelated to the Government's Administrative Responsibility

On December 3, 2024, following Oral Questions, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, **Karina Gould** (Burlington) raised a point of order concerning the handling of questions deemed unrelated to the administration of government. She highlighted that ministers have previously been allowed to respond to such questions and sought clarity on how these matters should be addressed consistently.

Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot) argued that questions related to government confidence are tied to administration and should be allowed, as they directly impact the functioning of the government. Several other members spoke to the matter.

On December 10, 2024, the Speaker delivered his ruling. The Speaker clarified that the purpose of Question Period is to hold the government accountable within its areas of responsibility. Questions targeting opposition parties or addressing matters outside government administration are not aligned with the intended function of Question Period. Similarly, questions from opposition members addressing other opposition parties are generally out of order, as noted in prior rulings by Speaker **Peter Milliken** (2010) and the November 20, 2023, ruling.

The Speaker underscored the importance of formulating questions with a clear and direct link to government responsibility. Questions that do not meet this standard can lead to procedural challenges. Members were encouraged to consult table officers for guidance in crafting questions that adhere to parliamentary rules.

Other Matters

Emergency Debates

On October 21, 2024, **George Chahal** (Calgary Skyview) requested an emergency debate be held on the RCMP allegations concerning foreign interference from India. The Speaker granted the request, and the emergency debate was held later that day.

On November 26, 2024, **Brian Masse** (Windsor West) and the Leader of the Opposition, **Pierre Poilievre** (Carleton) requested an emergency debate be held on US tariffs on Canadian products. The Speaker granted the requested, and the emergency debate was held later that day.

Naming of Three Members in One Day

On November 19, 2024, following Statements by Members and Oral Questions, the Speaker named **Michelle Rempel Garner** (Calgary Nose Hill), **Micheal Barrett** (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes) and **Rick Perkins** (South Shore—St. Margarets) for disregarding the authority of the Chair by refusing to withdraw unparliamentary language.

Fall Economic Statement

On December 11, 2024, by unanimous consent, the House adopted a motion to allow the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, **Chrystia Freeland** (University—Rosedale) to make a statement at 4:00 p.m. on December 16, 2024, followed by statements from a member of each recognized opposition parties, as well as a member of the Green Party.

On the morning of December 16, 2024, Ms. Freeland resigned from Cabinet. At 4:00 p.m., the Speaker interrupted proceedings as required by the special order to allow the Minister of Finance to make a statement. The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, **Karina Gould** (Burlington), announced that due to events earlier in the day, there would be no statement by the Minister of Finance.

Several Members rose on points of order to criticize the government for not delivering the statement, arguing they were not in compliance with the House order and that they were depriving opposition parties from speaking to the matter. Shortly thereafter, Ms. Gould tabled the fall economic update without further remarks.

The Speaker clarified the procedural implications of the special order, explaining that without a ministerial statement, subsequent steps in the order could not occur. Points of order and procedural objections from members continued, reflecting broader concerns about parliamentary accountability and privilege. The Speaker added that the government's brief tabling of the document did not fulfill the intended purpose of the order, effectively nullifying subsequent provisions. The Speaker reiterated his inability to enforce such measures under the existing motion's constraint.

Prorogation and Resignation of the Prime Minister

On January 6, 2025, the Prime Minister, **Justin Trudeau** (Papineau), announced his resignation as Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada and consequently as Prime Minister, once a replacement is selected. At the same time, he stated that he had requested that the Governor General prorogue Parliament until March 24, 2024.

Moments of Silence

In Memory of the Victims of the October 7 Attack

On October 7, 2024, the House observed a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the attack in Israel one year ago.

Commemoration of the 10th Anniversary of the Attack on Parliament Hill

On October 21, 2024, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, **Kevin Lamoureux** (Winnipeg North) sought and obtained unanimous consent that on the following day, the House observed a moment of silence to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the attack on Parliament Hill. As per the adopted order, the moment of silence was observed the next day.

In Memory of the Late Senator Murray Sinclair

On November 4, 2024, the House observed a moment of silence in memory of the late Senator **Murray Sinclair**.

Commemoration of One Thousand Days of War in Ukraine

On November 19, 2024, the House observed a moment of silence to commemorate the 1,000 days that have gone by since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

35th anniversary of the Polytechnique tragedy

On December 6, 2024, during Routine Proceedings, under Statements by Ministers, representatives from each party made statements regarding the 35th anniversary of the tragedy at École Polytechnique in Montreal. Later, following Oral Questions, the House observed a moment of silence in memory of the victims.

In memory of former BC Premier John Horgan

On December 12, 2024, the House observed a moment of silence in memory of the late **John Horgan**, former Premier of British Columbia.

Vicky Sedhya Maurice-Sevigny
Table Research Branch
House of Commons



The Senate

Bills

The Senate passed seven government bills without amendment during the period covered by this article.

On October 1, the Senate passed Bill C-49, *An Act to amend the Canada–Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and the Canada–Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*, at third reading. The bill received Royal Assent by written declaration on October 3.

On September 25, the Senate adopted a motion governing proceedings on Bill C-76, *An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act*. Pursuant to that order, the Senate passed that bill at third reading on October 3. The bill received Royal Assent by written declaration that same day.

On October 10, the Senate passed Bill C-64, *An Act respecting pharmacare*, at third reading. The bill received Royal Assent by written declaration the same day.

On October 31, the Senate passed Bill C-20, *An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments*, at third reading. The bill received Royal Assent by written declaration the same day.

On December 12, the Senate passed Bill C-78, *An Act respecting temporary cost of living relief (affordability)*, and Bill C-40, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code, to make consequential amendments to other Acts and to repeal a regulation (miscarriage of justice reviews)*, at third reading. Bill C-78 received Royal Assent by written declaration that same day, while Bill C-40 received Royal Assent by written declaration on December 17.

Also on December 17, the Senate passed Bill C-79, *Appropriation Act No. 4, 2024-25*, at third reading. The bill received Royal Assent by written declaration the same day.

The Senate amended two government bills during the period covered by this article. Following a Speaker's ruling (discussed below), the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs presented its report on 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*, with four amendments on December 3. The Senate concurred in that report on December 17. That same day, the Senate passed the bill at third reading, and a message was sent to the House of Commons seeking its concurrence. On December 3, the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs presented its report on Bill C-26, *An Act respecting cyber security, amending the Telecommunications Act and making consequential amendments to other Acts*, with one amendment. The Senate concurred in that report on December 4. On December 5, the Senate passed the bill at third reading, and a message was sent to the House seeking its concurrence.

On October 10, the following bills received Royal Assent by written declaration: Bill S-205, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to another Act (interim release and domestic violence recognizance orders)*; and Bill C-291, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts (child sexual abuse and exploitation material)*.

On November 7, the following bills received Royal Assent by written declaration: Bill S-16, *An Act respecting the recognition of the Haida Nation and the Council of the Haida Nation*; Bill C-244, *An Act to amend the Copyright Act (diagnosis, maintenance and repair)*; Bill C-284, *An Act to establish a national strategy for eye care*; and Bill C-294, *An Act to amend the Copyright Act (interoperability)*.

Other notable bills included Bill C-280, *An Act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (deemed trust – perishable fruits and vegetables)*, and Bill S-249, *An Act respecting national action for the prevention of intimate partner violence*. In the latter case, the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology presented a report on November 7 containing six amendments to the bill, including a new long title, which was originally "An Act respecting the development of a national strategy for the prevention of intimate partner violence." The Senate passed the bill, as amended, on November 26, and a message was sent to the House of Commons seeking its concurrence. As for Bill C-280, the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy presented a report making two amendments to the bill on November 5. On December 3, the Senate negated the report by recorded division. The Senate passed the bill, without amendment, at third reading on December 10, and it received Royal Assent by written declaration on December 12.

Chamber, Procedure and Speaker's Rulings

On October 2, Speaker **Raymonde Gagné** ruled on a point of order raised by Senator **Donald Neil Plett** on September 25 regarding the requirement for a Royal Recommendation for 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*. The Speaker ruled that there were strong arguments in favour of continuing debate and that, consistent with Senate precedents and practice, the bill was in order. The Speaker's ruling was subsequently challenged and sustained by recorded division.

On October 3, Senator Plett raised another point of order regarding Bill S-15. This point of order concerned the admissibility of certain amendments to the bill proposed in the 25th report of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee. On October 10, the Speaker ruled that the amendments challenged in the point of order were not properly before the Senate as they went beyond the scope of the bill. Since other amendments contained in the report were not

contested, the report was struck from the Orders of the Day and returned to the committee, along with the bill, so that the committee could make the necessary corrections and present a new report consistent with the bill's scope.

On October 24, Senator **Claude Carignan** raised a point of order regarding the requirement for a Royal Recommendation for Bill S-230, *An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act*. On November 20, the Speaker ruled that debate on the bill could continue.

On October 29, Senator **Mary Jane McCallum** raised a point of order regarding the adjournment of debate on Bill S-274, *An Act to establish National Thanadelthur Day*. The Speaker ruled that the point of order was not established.

On December 3, Senator **Marilou McPhedran** raised a point of order regarding the Senate's proceedings during the sitting of November 28 and, more specifically, a motion to adjourn the sitting. That same day, Senator McCallum raised a question of privilege on the same topic. The Speaker reserved her decision on both points.

On October 24, in accordance with the *Access to Information Act*, the Senate approved the reappointment of **Caroline Maynard** as Information Commissioner for a term of seven years. On December 17, in accordance with the *Parliament of Canada Act*, the Senate approved the appointment of **James O'Reilly** as Senate Ethics Officer after hearing from him in Committee of the Whole.

On December 12, Senator Plett moved a hoist amendment during the third reading debate on Bill C-252, *An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (prohibition of food and beverage marketing directed at children)*. The sitting was adjourned by motion immediately after the amendment was moved.

Committees

On October 10, the government tabled its response to the seventh report of the National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs Committee, entitled *The Time Is Now: Granting equitable access to psychedelic-assisted therapies*. The response and the report were deemed referred to the committee.

On October 25, the government tabled its response to the 21st report of the Social Affairs, Science and

Technology Committee, entitled *Act Now: Solutions for Temporary and Migrant Labour in Canada*. The response and the report were deemed referred to the committee.

On October 22, the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration presented its 15th report, which concerned the *Senate Administrative Rules* as they pertain to the *Access to Information Act*.

On November 6, the government tabled its response to the 13th report of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, entitled *Critical Ground: Why Soil is Essential to Canada's Economic, Environmental, Human, and Social Health*. The response and the report were deemed referred to the committee.

On December 12, the Special Joint Committee on the Declaration of Emergency tabled its final report, bringing its work to a close.

Senators

Senator **Diane Bellemare** retired from the Senate on October 13. Senator Bellemare was appointed to the Senate on September 6, 2012, on the recommendation of Prime Minister **Stephen Harper**, to represent the senatorial region of Alma, Quebec. Before her appointment to the Senate, Senator Bellemare was a professor and economist. Initially a member of the Conservative Party of Canada caucus, she became a non-affiliated Senator in 2016 and was named Legislative Deputy of the Government in the Senate, a position she held until 2019. Senator Bellemare was a member of the Independent Senators Group from 2019 to 2021 and a member of the Progressive Senate Group after that. She sat on multiple committees, including the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament, which she chaired, the Banking, Commerce and the Economy Committee and the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance.

Senator **Frances Lankin** resigned from the Senate on October 20. Senator Lankin was appointed to the Senate on April 1, 2016, on the recommendation of Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**, to represent Ontario. Prior to her appointment to the Senate, Senator Lankin was a social activist, union leader, Member of the Legislative Assembly at Queen's Park and minister who held multiple portfolios. Initially serving as a non-affiliated Senator, she was a founding member of the Independent Senators Group, for which she served as Legislative Liaison. In 2024, she again became a non-affiliated Senator and was appointed Government Liaison in the Senate. That same year, she resigned from

that position to return to the Independent Senators Group. Senator Lankin sat on a number of committees, including the Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament Committee, where she served as Deputy Chair, the Social Affairs, Science and Technology Committee and the Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration Committee. She was also a member of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians.

Senator **Ratna Omidvar** retired from the Senate on November 5. Senator Omidvar was appointed to the Senate on April 1, 2016, on the recommendation of Prime Minister Trudeau, to represent Ontario. Before she was appointed to the Senate, Senator Omidvar was a professor and executive director. She entered the Senate as a non-affiliated Senator before becoming a founding member of the Independent Senators Group, for which she served as Legislative Liaison and Scroll Manager. Senator Omidvar sat on multiple committees, including the Social Affairs, Science and Technology Committee, which she chaired, the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector, the Committee of Selection, where she was Deputy Chair, and the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications.

Senator **Jane Cordy** resigned from the Senate on November 19. Senator Cordy was appointed to the Senate on June 9, 2000, on the recommendation of Prime Minister **Jean Chrétien**, to represent Nova Scotia. Before being appointed to the Senate, Senator Cordy was a teacher. While she was initially a member of the Liberal Party of Canada caucus, Senator Cordy became the Leader of the Progressive Senate Group in 2020. She sat on multiple committees, including the Social Affairs, Science and Technology Committee, the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, the Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration Committee, where she served as Deputy Chair, the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, the Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament Committee and the National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Senator **Stephen Greene** retired from the Senate on December 8. Senator Greene was appointed to the Senate on January 2, 2009, on the recommendation of Prime Minister Harper, to represent Nova Scotia. Prior to his appointment, Senator Greene was a political adviser and businessman. Initially a member of the Conservative Party caucus, for which he served as Deputy Whip, Senator Greene became a member of the Independent Senators Group in 2017 and the Canadian

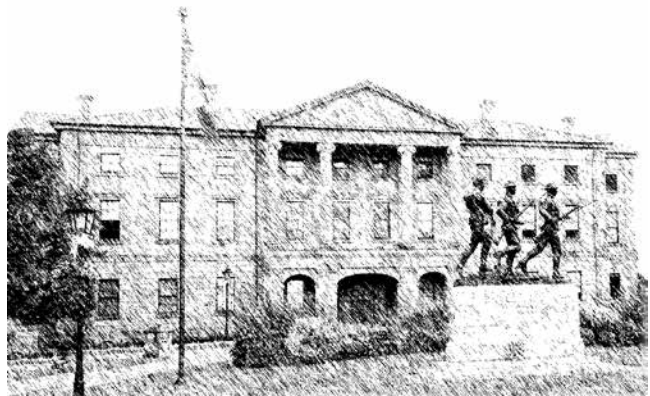
Senators Group in 2022, serving as Deputy Liaison. He sat on a number of committees, including the Special Senate Committee on Senate Modernization, which he chaired, the Transport and Communications Committee, the Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament Committee, where he served as Deputy Chair, the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Banking, Commerce and the Economy Committee and the Committee of Selection.

Senator **Brent Cotter** retired from the Senate on December 18. Senator Cotter was appointed to the Senate on January 31, 2020, on the recommendation of Prime Minister Trudeau, to represent Saskatchewan. Before he was appointed to the Senate, Senator Cotter was a lawyer, deputy minister and dean. He was a member of the Independent Senators Group. Senator Cotter served on multiple committees, including the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, which he chaired, the Standing Senate Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators, for which he was Deputy Chair, and the National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs Committee.

On October 8, **Suze Youance**, who was appointed to the Senate to represent the Senate division of Lauzon, Quebec, on the recommendation of Prime Minister Trudeau on September 25, was introduced in the Senate and took her seat. Senator Youance is a civil engineer, lecturer and research assistant at the École de technologie supérieure (ÉTS) in Montreal and a host of television programs on engineering and sustainable development. Senator Youance is of Haitian origin and came to Canada in 2006. She is Chair of the Board of the Bureau de la communauté haïtienne de Montréal and President of the Scientific Council of the UNESCO “Women and Science for Development” Chair in Haiti. Senator Youance holds a degree in civil engineering from the State University of Haiti and a master’s degree and doctorate in construction engineering from the ÉTS. She is a member of the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec.

On December 19, **Allister Surette** was appointed to the Senate to represent Nova Scotia and **Nancy Karetak-Lindell** was appointed to the Senate to represent Nunavut, both on the recommendation of Prime Minister Trudeau. At the time of writing, they had not yet taken the oath. More information on these new senators will be provided in the next summary.

François Michaud
Procedural Clerk



Prince Edward Island

1st Session, Sixty-seventh General Assembly

The First Session of the Sixty-seventh General Assembly resumed on November 5, 2024, and adjourned to the call of the Speaker on November 29, for a fall sitting totaling 16 days. The First Session began in May 2023 and now totals 81 sitting days.

Capital Budget

Minister of Finance **Jill Burrige** tabled the 2025-2026 Capital Budget on November 7. Its total for the year is \$483 million and over five years, \$1.65 billion. The largest area of expenditure under one department is in the Department of Education and Early Years, at \$113 million, though combined health-related spending under the Department of Health and Wellness and Health PEI totals \$162 million. The same applies to the five-year plan; on its own, education is the largest area of spending, at \$420 million, but health spending by the department and the authority comes to \$500 million.

Highlights of the capital plan for education involve the construction of two new elementary schools in the Charlottetown area, replacement of an existing school in Georgetown, major renovation for a high school in western PEI and an intermediate school in Charlottetown, and ongoing revitalization of schools across the Island. In health, completion of the Mental Health Campus is planned for the next three years, and other areas of major spending include construction of two new Community Health Centres, completion of a third that is already underway, and expansion of long-term care and adult day programs for seniors.

All told, 16 departments, commissions and Crown corporations have some form of capital expenditure planned for 2025-2026, as do three consolidated agencies and five government business entities.

Legislation

During the fall sitting, the House reviewed 28 bills. Twenty-three of these were Government bills, all of which passed all stages and received Royal Assent. Bill 76, a new *Employment Standards Act*, received the most debate, as it was reviewed over four days in Committee of the Whole House. The new *Act* incorporates recommendations from a comprehensive review panel that completed its work over the 2021-2023 period. Some of the changes from the old to the new *Act* include a reduction in the work week from 48 to 44 hours (lowering the point at which employees must be paid overtime wages); protection of tips and gratuities for employees; and a requirement for the Employment Standards Board, which issues recommendations on the minimum wage rate, to issue reports on the social and economic effects of the minimum wage, with consideration of factors such as measures of poverty, cost-of-living increases and reasonable return on private investment.

Five private members' bills were debating during the fall sitting; two of these received Royal Assent. Bill 119, *Prince Edward Island Cadet Day Act*, promoted by Government House Leader **Susie Dillon**, designates the third Saturday in October as Prince Edward Island Cadet Day. Bill 111, *Service Dog Act*, promoted by Government Whip **Brad Trivers**, establishes a standardized system for the registration, certification, and identification of service dog teams, and defines the responsibilities of public spaces and businesses toward accommodating service dog teams.

Dogs were somewhat of a theme for the fall sitting; in addition to the new service dog legislation, the House passed a new *Dog Owners Act* (Bill 63), which is intended to improve public safety through better enforcement of dog controls and enhanced powers for enforcement officers to deal with dangerous dog incidents. During Committee of the Whole review of the *Service Dog Act*, MLA Trivers was assisted on the floor of the House by two members of the public and their service dogs; it is common for the House to grant permission for bill promoters to be assisted by strangers, but this is likely the first time canines have appeared in that capacity!

Speaker's Ruling

On November 13, Deputy Speaker **Sidney MacEwen** rose on a point of order to ask whether it was in order to continue debate on Motion 109 given that the actions called for in its two operative clauses had already been done (Motion 109 related to a marketing contract the province had signed with the National Hockey League, and the operative clauses called for government to table the contract within 10 days of the motion's adoption). On November, Speaker **Darlene Compton** issued her ruling; drawing on passages from *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms* and *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, she found that because the Motion was asking the House to do something and that the House had not fully expressed its opinion on that action, it was in order to continue debate on the motion.

Committee Activities

The Assembly's standing committees continued to be busy in fall 2024 and each one issued at least one report on its work since last reporting in the spring.

The Standing Committee on Education and Economic Growth issued 15 recommendations in its report, on the topics of immigration, careers in the trades, cell phone use in schools, staffing in schools, supports for students, transparency of government contracts, and electrical capacity.

The Standing Committee on Health and Social Development issued 13 recommendations on the topics of legislation on strategic lawsuits against public participation legislation, reduction of barriers for private investment in housing, healthcare workforce recruitment and retention, healthcare education, mental health and addiction services, the PEI At Home Caregiver Benefit, an incentive program to encourage the transition away from oil heating in rental units, and implementation of a basic income guarantee demonstration project. The committee also issued a separate report with recommendations on appointments to the PEI Human Rights Commission, as it is mandated to do under the *Human Rights Act*.

The Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability issued 11 recommendations in its report, covering trapping and snaring, coastline protection, a new water governance model for the province, and wetland identification and mapping.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts issued three recommendations endorsing the Auditor General's recommendations in recent reports, encouraging audited entities to continue working toward full implementation of audit recommendations, and suggesting that Government seek approval for additional spending by tabling additional Supplementary Appropriation Acts rather than issuing special warrants.

All committee reports were adopted by the House and Government is expected to respond during the winter-spring 2025 sitting.

Subpoena For the Production of Records

On November 19, the Standing Committee on Education and Economic Growth adopted a motion to order Minister of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture **Zack Bell** to provide an un-redacted version of the tourism marketing contract signed by the province and the NHL and issued a subpoena to that effect.

Minister Bell had previously tabled a copy of the contract in the House with dollar values redacted, given that the contract included confidentiality provisions. The subpoena ordered that the contract, and any other documents necessary to understand and interpret it, be produced within the next two business days. The Minister complied. While it is not unusual for the Assembly's committees to seek information, the issuance of subpoenas is rare.

Cabinet Changes

On October 9, Premier **Dennis King** announced changes to his Cabinet. **Zack Bell**, previously a Government Private Member, was appointed Minister of Fisheries, Tourism, Sport and Culture. This followed the Cabinet resignation of **Natalie Jameson**, who had been serving as Minister of Education and Early Years, due to her intent to pursue the Conservative Party of Canada nomination for the federal riding of Charlottetown. As of early 2025 the nomination has not yet been decided and she remains an MLA.

At the same time that Mr. Bell was appointed to Cabinet and Ms. Jameson departed, five Cabinet members were given new portfolios, while the portfolios of the other five and the Premier remained the same.

Appointments and Retirement

During the fall sitting, the Standing Committee on Legislative Assembly Management issued three reports on the appointment of officers of the Assembly, recommending that **Judy Burke** be reappointed for an additional five-year term as Conflict of Interest Commissioner under the *Conflict of Interest Act*; that **Samantha Lilley** be appointed Clerk Assistant under the *Legislative Assembly Act*; and that **Gordon Campbell** be appointed Sergeant-at-Arms under the *Legislative Assembly Act*. All three reports were adopted by the House and Ms. Burke, Ms. Lilley and Mr. Campbell were duly appointed. The appointment of a new Sergeant-at-Arms, who also serves as Director of Security, was necessitated by the retirement of **Brian Weldon**, who had served in the role since 2017.

Ryan Reddin

Director of Parliamentary Research

To Annex or to Be Annexed? BC Parliamentarians Consider Joining Canada... And Bringing Some American States Along With Them

In 1870, some plucky parliamentarians suggested that Canada should extend its borders a little at the expense of its powerful neighbour. Hilarity – and controversy – ensued.

Forrest Pass

American proposals to annex Canada over the past 200 years have been a dime a dozen – or about seven US cents a dozen at present exchange rates. Canadian initiatives to offer the United States provincehood are considerably rarer. Yet in 1870, a visionary band of British North American lawmakers voted to purchase two integral parts of our neighbour's domain. The annexation scheme, obviously hatched solemnly and without any silliness whatsoever, provoked a media firestorm.

Dateline: Victoria, the sleepy capital of the Colony of British Columbia. The picturesque port had become a boomtown during the Fraser River and Cariboo gold rushes, but those glory days had given way to a deep recession and the fate of the Pacific Coast colony was uncertain. In 1869, a group of Victoria businessmen even petitioned President Ulysses S. Grant to annex British Columbia to the United States.

Great Britain had different ideas. The Colonial Office had appointed a new governor, Sir Anthony Musgrave, with a mission to unite British Columbia with Canada. Musgrave quietly drafted a set of proposed terms of union and discussed them with his Ottawa counterpart, Governor General Sir John Young. The stage was set.

The colony's Legislative Council opened debate on Musgrave's proposed Confederation deal on March

9, 1870. Clause by clause, the councillors considered and endorsed Musgrave's proposed terms, including a per capita subsidy, a formula for representation in the federal parliament, and a transcontinental railway.

So far, so good, until one councillor went off script. Amor de Cosmos ("The Lover of the Universe"), known to his mother as William Smith, was the eccentric founder of Victoria's *British Colonist* newspaper and a representative for Victoria District. Originally from Nova Scotia and a loud advocate of Confederation, de Cosmos would eventually serve as British Columbia's second premier.

On March 25, de Cosmos rose to add an item to the Terms. In his speech, he imagined a clean division of North America into three nations, each organized along a strict east-west axis. An admirer of the United States, de Cosmos did not oppose the Americans expanding in the south – their natural sphere of influence. He did, however, object to their 1867 purchase of Alaska from Russia: Alaska, he believed, was a natural extension of Canada. Therefore, he moved that Canada buy Alaska from the United States as a condition of British Columbia's entry into Confederation.

The representative for Cariboo, Dr. R.W.W. Carrall, eagerly seconded the motion. Carrall was a Woodstock, Ontario, boy and a fiercely proud Canadian: in 1879, as one of British Columbia's senators, he would introduce the bill that made Dominion Day (now Canada Day) a statutory holiday. Endorsing de Cosmos' modest proposal, Carrall asserted that if Americans hoped that "hemming in" British Columbia with Alaska would drive Canada to accept American annexation, they

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woefully underestimated the strength of Canadian patriotism. "It is not necessary for Canadians to get up and show their loyalty daily," observed Carrall, "they are ready and able to occupy their position of IMPERIUM IN IMPERIO," a Canadian empire within the British one.

But Alaska alone would not satisfy these Canadian imperialists. John Robson, member for New Westminster and another future British Columbia premier, suggested a friendly amendment to add the State of Maine to the legislature's shopping list. Mainers themselves clamoured to become Canadians, claimed Robson, and much of Canada's trade already passed through the state's ice-free harbour at Portland. Robson even noted that Great Britain had been "cheated" out of Maine, a reference to the so-called Aroostook War of 1839, an ultimately bloodless conflict over timber rights along the disputed Maine-New Brunswick border. Adding Maine on the Atlantic coast and Alaska on the Pacific would round out the Dominion's borders nicely, while demonstrating the superiority of Canada's "liberal and enlightened constitution" over the "very defective" institutions of the United States.

Robson's speech referred to real and longstanding irritants, but the politicians were also having fun. The member for Lillooet, Thomas Basil Humphreys, predicted that the initiative would land the Legislative Council in the pages of *Punch*, the popular British satirical magazine, and the legislative clerk recorded "(Laughter)" several times in his transcript of the proceedings. Although they passed the resolution while deliberating as a Committee of the Whole, the earnest lawmakers struck the Alaska and Maine demand later that same day when they approved the proposed Terms of Union in regular session. A dead letter before the Terms were transmitted to Ottawa, the resolution nevertheless caused a stir in the United States.

By March 28, news of British Columbia's designs on Alaska and Maine had reached California by telegram and the American press did not know quite what to make of it. San Francisco's largest newspaper, the *Daily Alta California*, interpreted the resolution as a veiled plea for American annexation, because the legislature's demands for both a railway and the purchase of American territory seemed so impractical. "The British Columbians can have both the railroad and national unity with Alaska by annexation to the United States," promised the *Alta's* editor, "and they will not get either in our time by any other means."

Topley Studio photo, 1874, LAC, a026435



LAC, e010756881, detail



Top: Amor de Cosmos, the eccentric newspaper editor and politician, proposed a Canadian purchase of Alaska during the British Columbia Terms of Union debate of 1870. Bottom: John Robson, member for New Westminster in the Legislative Council, amended de Cosmos's resolution to add the State of Maine to the proposed annexation.

As word spread eastward, more American papers tried to parse the resolution. Most took it as a joke. The *New York Times* scolded BC's legislators for "growing sharp and satirical at the expense of their neighbors," but allowed that "as an effort of humor on the part of men in the higher latitudes it is not so bad." In some cases, Americans' own sectional and partisan rivalries loomed larger than any worries about Canadian expansionism. The *Idaho World*, edited by a Missouri-raised Democrat, hoped that Canada would take the rest of the Republican-voting northeast as well. "We think the United States could afford to pay [Canada] a few millions to accept the New England States as a present, as we would be getting rid of an intolerable nuisance."

The most interesting American commentary was in the "Maine stream" media – the Pine Tree State's own papers. "To annex or to be annexed? That seems to be the question," mused the *Daily Kennebec Journal* in Augusta, the state capital. The *Journal* conceded that union with Canada might be in the state's interest, provided free trade with the United States was maintained. Otherwise, the paper predicted, an impoverished Canada would seek statehood of its own accord. The *Portland Daily Press* had more fun with the proposition. It warned that an occupying Canada would inherit a bevy of petty local disputes and could count on a steady stream of vain Maine millionaires seeking baronetcies from Queen Victoria.

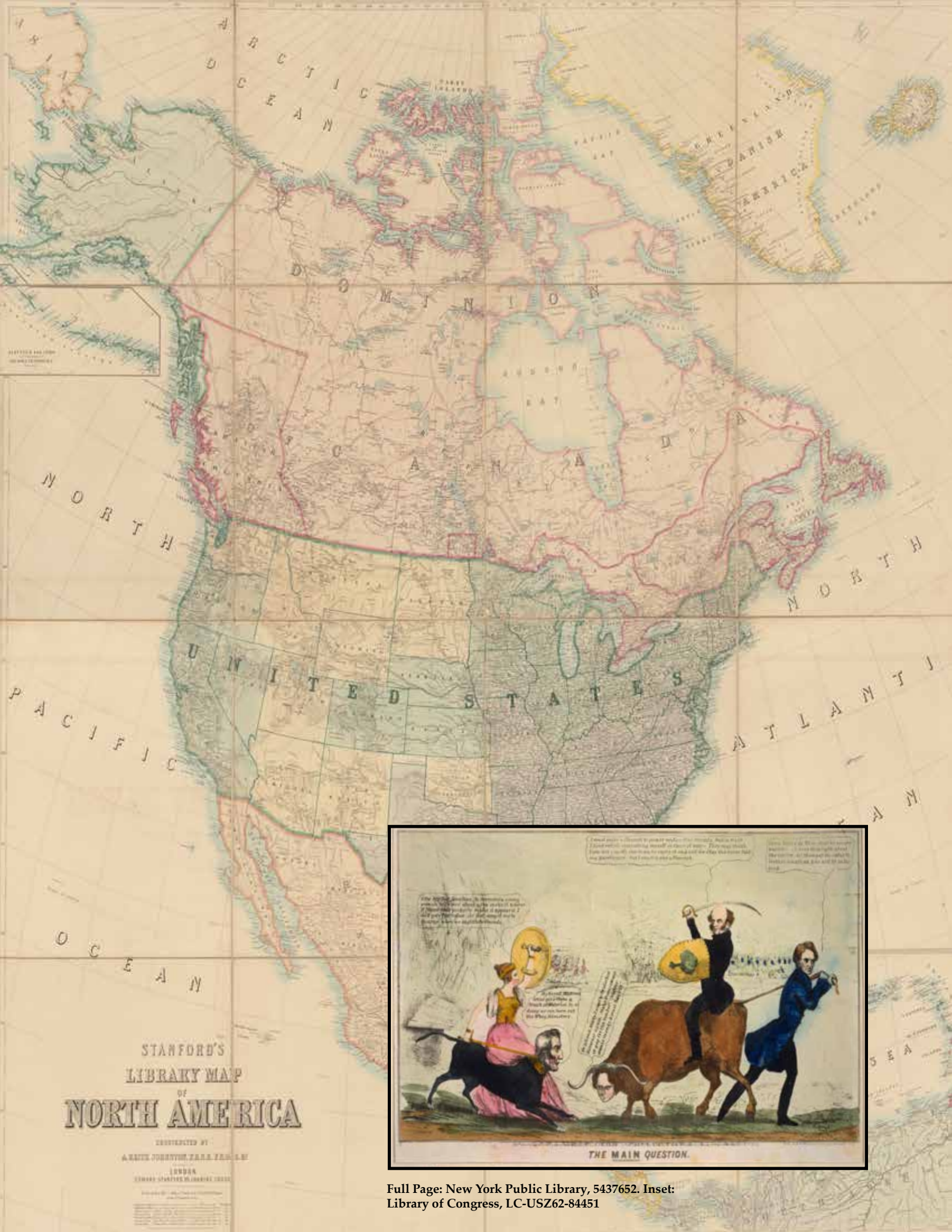
In the 1870s, before the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, news from British Columbia typically reached eastern Canada through the United States, so by the time Canadian papers reported on the Alaska-Maine resolution, the American response had become part of the story. When the *Toronto Globe* commented – on April 1, appropriately if coincidentally – it noted the "agitation" of the American press but also praised the resolution as a "good natured, but not altogether pointless" response to "the filibustering propensities" of American politicians. On the substance of the resolution, the paper's editor believed, as Robson did, that nature would eventually give Maine to Canada, but felt that Uncle Sam should keep frozen, unproductive Alaska: "We like real estate," allowed the *Globe*, which supported Canadian westward expansion, "but then we like some soil on it."

Thus fizzled the project of bringing Alaska and Maine into Confederation, but the incident is not just an amusing anecdote. The *Daily Alta California* may have correctly predicted that British Columbia would never enjoy "national unity" with Alaska, but it was wrong about a Canadian transcontinental railway, and about British North Americans' purported willingness to join the United States. Canadians might not have felt the need, as Dr. Carrall noted, to shout their patriotism daily, but when necessity called, their legislators showed that they could push back against American annexationism in creative and satirical ways.

LAC, a066554



Left: British Columbia's government buildings, nicknamed "The Birdcages", shown on a magic lantern slide from about 1890. Twenty years earlier, the Legislative Council met in the building near the top right to hatch its plan to purchase Alaska and Maine from the United States. Opposite page: An 1877 map showing BC in the Dominion of Canada, and Alaska and Maine still part of the United States of America. Inset: An 1839 American editorial cartoon parodying the prospect of war between Great Britain and the United States over the Maine-New Brunswick boundary. The Aroostook "War" was on John Robson's mind during the BC Legislative Council's short debate on annexing Alaska and Maine.



Full Page: New York Public Library, 5437652. Inset: Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-84451

