

Canadian
Parliamentary
review



**IN
EX
C
L
U
S
I
O
N**

Inclusive Parliaments



Volume 48, No. 4

In Memorium

Neil Robert Ferguson

(January 9, 1962- December 26, 2025)

The editorial board of the *Canadian Parliamentary Review* was saddened to learn of the sudden and unexpected death of one of our longest serving members, Neil Ferguson.

Born in Edmonton, Alberta, Neil's family soon relocated to New Brunswick. Moving to Halifax for his studies at Dalhousie University, he earned his undergraduate degree in Political Science, and later his Juris Doctor in Law.

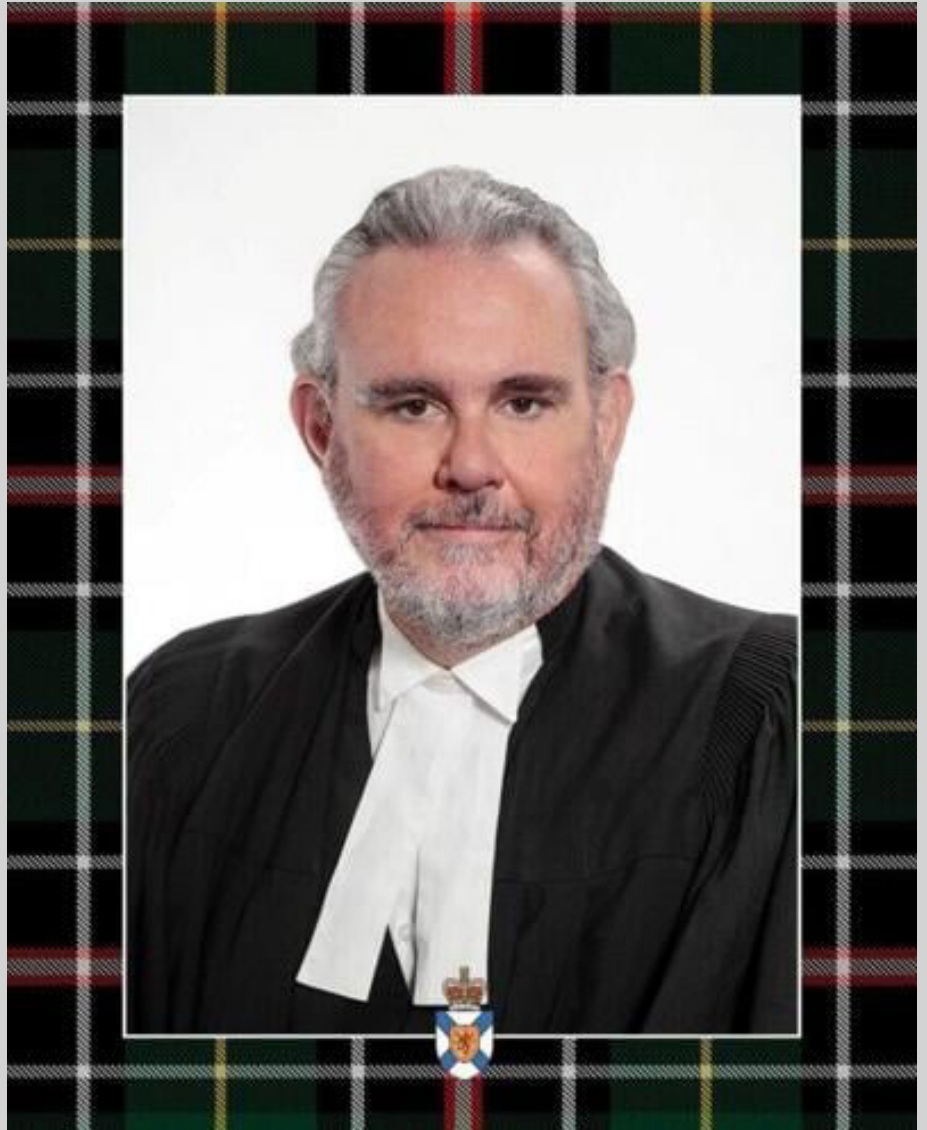
Neil had many passions in life - including cooking, scotch, poker, and Jimmy Buffet - but two of them stood out above the others: democracy and his family.

In writing their father's obituary, his children noted:

Neil was a fierce defender of democratic institutions. He knew that it was those very institutions that gave space for voices to be heard. Out of the various positions he held throughout his career, his passion for democracy shone brightest during his years as Chief Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia.

As Chief Clerk, he worked hard to give sage, non-partisan advice to the Speaker and all Members, regardless of their party. Neil saw his role as one of tempering the forces of politics - even if that meant being at odds with the government of the day. He felt strongly that the rules should be not only obeyed in law, but in spirit. He was not only a fair arbiter of the rules and someone who wanted the House to be a place for important work to be done. He espoused professionalism, trustworthiness, and cooperation in his demeanour.

Neil is survived by his wife Elizabeth, and children Jonathan and Hillary.



On behalf of the editorial board, we would like to extend our sincere condolences to Neil's family and friends. We will remember him very fondly and are grateful for having the opportunity to know him.

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

The Review is published for the Canadian Region, CPA. Any opinions expressed are those of individual contributors and should not be attributed to any Branch of the Canadian Region.

Editor

Will Stos

Layout

Frank Piekielko

Production Team

Teresa Austin	Bryony Livingston
Nicky Borland	Vicky Luu
Kim Dean	Joëlle Malo
Yasuko Enosawa	Joanne McNair
Claudette Henry	Tiffany Ribeiro
Geoffrey Hilton	Kate Sinnott
Karine Legault-Leblond	

Editorial Board

François Arsenault (Chair)
Kate Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Chair)

Mariane Beaudin	Trevor Day	Christine Ivory
Gerry Burla	Maxime Fortier	Iris Lang
Heather Close		Jeremy LeBlanc

Editorial Intern

Geneva Fuina

Subscriptions

Four (4) issues in English or French
Canada \$40.00 - International \$75.00
Four (4) issues in English and French
Canada \$75.00 - International \$125.00

Cheques should be made payable to:
Canadian Parliamentary Review

Contact

Canadian Parliamentary Review
c/o Ontario Legislative Library
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A9

E-Mail: revparl@ola.org
Web: <http://www.revparlcan.ca> (New)
<http://www.revparl.ca>

Editor: (416) 325-0231
Fax: (416) 325-3505
E-Mail: wstos@ola.org

Legal Deposit:
National Library of Canada
ISSN 0229-2548

Cette revue est aussi disponible en français



Shutterstock.com/2424781727 & 1829468570

CSPG Seminar: An Inclusive Parliament? <i>Alexie Labelle</i>	3
“An Inclusive Parliament?”: A Few Thoughts <i>Manon Tremblay</i>	7
Accessibility Measures at the Manitoba Legislature <i>Rick Yarish</i>	13
Confronting Violence and Harassment in Westminster Parliamentary Workplaces: Lessons for Canada <i>Tracey Raney</i>	18
Racial Diversity and the 2025 Federal Election: Visible Minority Candidates and MPs <i>Jerome H. Black and Andrew Griffith</i>	26
CPA Activities	34
New and Notable Titles	38
Legislative Reports	41
Representation and Collective Action: An Interview With The Founder of Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities <i>Kevin Murphy</i>	56

A Focus On Inclusive Parliaments

Parliamentarians represent people. But are parliaments reflective of the people they represent?

It's impossible to look at the composition of people in photos from past parliaments without seeing noticeable changes in the parliamentarians depicted. But the growing diversity evident in recent decades is also a stark reminder of both explicit exclusionary practices, and implicit barriers to actively participating in parliamentary politics - some of which continue to exist.

In this issue, the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, we collect a series of articles exploring themes relating to "Inclusive Parliaments." These articles not only examine the challenges members of certain diverse groups experience while seeking office, but also unique factors they encounter once elected.

Taking inspiration from a 2025 Canadian Study of Parliament Group conference, articles include:

- A summary of conference proceedings (Alexie Labelle)
- A revised version of the keynote address (Manon Tremblay)
- A review of accessibility measures at the Manitoba Legislature (Rick Yarish)
- An examination of harassment policies across four westminster parliamentary workplaces (Tracey Raney)
- An exploration of racial diversity among candidates and elected MPs in the 2025 federal election (Jerome H. Black and Andrew Griffith)
- An interview with the founding chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentarians With Disabilities group (Kevin Murphy)

Additional planned articles that could not be included

due to production delays will appear in forthcoming issues. This content includes:

- A roundtable discussion with women Speakers
- A roundtable discussion with Quebec MNAs who are parents of young children
- A roundtable discussion with LGBTQ+ parliamentarians

The *Canadian Parliamentary Review* endeavours to produce one to two theme issues per year on topics that may be of interest to our readership - particularly Canada's federal, provincial and territorial parliamentarians. If you have an idea for a future topic, please contact me at wstos@ola.org.

Will Stos

Editor, Canadian Parliamentary Review



CSPG Seminar: An Inclusive Parliament?

Public and private institutions must grapple with questions of equity, diversity, inclusion and access, and Canadian legislatures are no exception. On April 25, 2025, the Canadian Study of Parliament Group held a seminar on inclusion within legislative spaces, from the experiences of legislators to public engagement and staff participation behind the scenes.

Alexie Labelle

Opening remarks by Manon Tremblay

Manon Tremblay, Professor Emeritus at the School of Political Studies at the University of Ottawa and expert on the representation of women and 2SLGBTQ+ persons in Canada, delivered a commencement speech.

Although she highlighted some of the progress that has been made on inclusion, she referred primarily to the global backlash against diversity policies. That backlash, which disproportionately affects sexually and gender diverse individuals and communities, as well as women and racialized minorities, has spiked since the return of Donald Trump to the United States presidency and Canada is not exempt. By raising some of the blind spots in diversity policies, including about disabilities, Ms. Tremblay painted the picture of a truly inclusive parliamentary institution, detailing the criteria for real inclusion.

A revised and expanded version of these remarks appears elsewhere in this issue.

First panel: The Road to Parliament

This first panel brought together Senator Donna Dasko, professors Erin Tolley and Angelia Wagner, and researcher Valérie Lapointe, to look at the inclusion of women, sexual and gender minorities, Indigenous people and racialized people in election campaigns.

Angelia Wagner shared her research into people who choose *not* to run in elections, having investigated the reasons motivating that choice. She first turned to the financial aspect as an explanation, noting that women worry more about their ability to take a break from their current employment (and their income) to become legislators and their job opportunities after election. Turning to the parties and the role of political conviction, Angelia Wagner noted that in addition to having to support the majority of a party's platform in order to run as a candidate, racialized individuals also have to count on the party's support on issues affecting their community. Public control seems to have more of an influence over the choice by sexual and gender minorities not to run as candidates, in part because of expectations to conform to heterosexist standards. While work-life balance does not seem to explain why more women are choosing not to run, health issues offer a new explanation that is worth exploring further. Ms. Wagner's research indicates that politics is physically demanding, discriminatory against individuals with mental health struggles and represents a high risk to an individual's physical security, especially for trans people.

Senator Donna Dasko focused on her decades-long work on promoting women's involvement in politics. She offered several explanations as to why more women need to be part of our parliamentary institutions. First, above all, Senator Dasko stated that it is a matter of equity, given that women make up more than half the population. By entering the world of parliamentary politics, women can actively participate in formal political decisions, which strengthens our democracy. What is more, women offer different perspectives than men in certain areas of public policy that deserve

Alexie Labelle is a member of the CSPG board.

more attention from our political institutions. Senator Dasko suggested that there are fewer women than men in parliamentary politics because of institutional barriers, including the voting system and political parties. In fact, that is what motivated her to introduce a bill allowing the Chief Electoral Officer to collect demographic data on voter participation, including candidate nominations, and to report back on these data. The bill also requires political parties to disclose their action plan for promoting greater diversity among their candidates.

Researcher Valérie Lapointe then shared the results of research conducted jointly with professors Luc Turgeon and Benjamin Ferland on ridings where political parties run diversity candidates. Using data from the 2015, 2019, and 2021 federal elections, Valérie Lapointe noted that women, sexual and gender minorities, racialized individuals and Indigenous peoples tend to run in ridings where a party has little chance of being elected. Sexual and gender minorities were predominantly “sacrificial lambs” in that they ran in ridings where their party had little to no chance of winning. Ms. Lapointe closed her presentation by adding that the results of her research show that a diversity candidate also has less of a chance of being re-elected.

Erin Tolley concluded the panel by touching on the role that political parties can play in ensuring better political representation in Canada. She argued that political parties have the necessary tools to diversify our political institutions; they just have to choose to use them. These tools include: 1) internal processes and rules; 2) political networks; and 3) financial resources. First, the parties can adopt rules governing their members, nominations and candidate recruitment that promote the nomination of diverse candidates. Second, the parties can diversify their networks, which includes diversifying their leadership and their local associations. Last, the parties can allocate more resources to diversity candidates and distribute their funding equitably. That is especially important, according to Ms. Tolley, because her research also shows that financial resources are more of a barrier to the nomination of Black and racialized individuals.

Second panel: Parliament and Parenthood

Researcher Melanee Thomas, former federal MP David Graham, former Whitehorse city councillor Michelle Friesen, and Chief of Staff for the Independent Senators

Group Amanda McLaren discussed the obstacles that parents in politics must overcome, whether they are elected members or staff members.

In her research, Melanee Thomas focused on the politicization of parenthood, the experiences of members who are parents and Parliament as a workplace, as aspects that might affect the work-life balance of members who are parents. She highlighted that MPs politicize parenthood differently according to their gender and their political party. She added that there is a double standard for female and male MPs who are parents. For example, she explained that women are at a disadvantage if they decide not to share photos of their children. Then she shed light on how members who are parents have traditionally received little support within the parliamentary precinct even though there is some support for measures such as parental leave, childcare, etc. Nonetheless, she noted that parental status remains a systemic barrier that limits the nomination of women.

David Graham, the former member for Laurentides-Labelle, spoke about his own experience as an elected member and father of a young child. He noted that parliamentarians are expected to be “family oriented,” but also always available. However, the work of representation in Ottawa is such that many MPs who are parents must travel and be far away from their family for extended periods of time, considerably limiting the possibility for work-life balance. When Mr. Graham was a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, the committee studied work-life balance in Parliament and recommended



inclusion measures for members who are parents. Although many of those measures were not widely accepted at the time, the COVID-19 pandemic facilitated a change in perspective and made way for the implementation of various measures.

Michelle Friesen also shared her own experience as a young mother and a city councillor on the Whitehorse City council. Since she had her son after being elected to city council, she got used to having him with her during council meetings. She had to juggle her work and her family but she also felt like she had to work twice as hard to properly represent her community. After several issues came up, she was asked to find alternatives to having her son with her. Under those circumstances, access to childcare services was a major obstacle to her participation in city council, especially since the reimbursements did not fully cover the childcare expenses. In relaying her experience, Ms. Friesen underlined the double standard when councillors have to momentarily step away from meetings. For example, while others did not have to justify their absence, she would be expected to explain that she had to change her son's diaper. Nonetheless, some changes have occurred since her time on council with a young child, including when it comes to participating remotely and the reimbursement of childcare fees.

Amanda McLaren shared her view on political staff who must navigate work-life balance. She stated from the outset that the political environment is not conducive to work-life balance, but noted that it is possible to achieve balance. That possibility stems more from individual responsibility than from institutional measures. For example, to set up an organizational structure promoting flexibility within her office, she hired another person and implemented an action plan to ensure the continuity of operations in the event of an absence. Ms. McLaren expressed concern about the lack of institutional measures in support of staff who are parents and how the absence of these measures can lead to retention problems in Parliament.

Third panel: Comparative Perspective - Disability and Representation

Professor Elizabeth Evans and borough councillor for the City of Montreal, Laurence Parent, addressed the representation of persons with disabilities. While Ms. Evans shared her research on the representation of persons with disabilities in Europe and in Australia, Laurence Parent focused on her experience as an elected member with a disability.

Three questions fuelled Elizabeth Evans' research: what barriers stand in the way of candidates with disabilities; the experiences of elected members with disabilities; and how ableism shapes parliamentary institutions. To answer those questions, she met with 125 parliamentarians and activists in the United Kingdom, Australia, Finland and Czechia. Among the obstacles to electing candidates with disabilities, Ms. Evans underlined the inaccessibility of infrastructures, financial constraints, and the ableist culture underlying campaign standards and the paths to politics. As for the experience of elected members with disabilities, she raised the inaccessible, intimidating and hostile political culture of parliamentary institutions and the lack of understanding of invisible disabilities, such as autism. Finally, Ms. Evans explained how parliamentary institutions developed and continue to develop for the benefit of persons who do not have disabilities, resulting in the marginalization of persons with disabilities, who are considered inferior.

By sharing her own experience as a municipal politician, Laurence Parent echoed some of Ms. Evans' research. As the only elected official with a disability among 60 or so officials, Ms. Parent advocated for better representation of accessibility issues in discussions and debates, notably because persons with disabilities disproportionately fall below the poverty line. She noted that in addition to a lack of elected officials with disabilities in Quebec and Canada, biases continue to exist around persons with disabilities who are either reticent about disclosing their disability, or who get attacked by other elected officials or other citizens. Underscoring the pressure to work within the existing model for elected officials, Laurence Parent mentioned the importance of: having adequate financial measures in place, such as election spending avenues for accessibility needs thereby allowing more persons with disabilities to run for office; and the need to deploy the necessary financial resources to make political institutions accessible.

Fourth panel: Inclusive Institutions?

The goal of this fourth panel was to shed light on the inclusion initiatives put in place in parliamentary institutions. It brought together the Clerk of the Senate, Shaila Anwar, the Clerk of the House of Commons, Eric Janse, the chief human resources officers of the Senate and the House of Commons, Toni Francis and Carolyne Evangelidis, as well as the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, Rick Yarish.

Ms. Anwar and Ms. Francis talked about the sense of community instilled by the Senate administration through the implementation of open and respectful communication, the development of a culture of belonging, and the establishment of an accessible workplace devoid of obstacles, with equal pay for work of equal value. They then highlighted the achievements of the workplace accommodation and equity specialist, a position created in 2024, including the development of training tools and updating the duty to accommodate policy. They also underscored other initiatives promoting inclusion, such as the Indigenous Youth Internship Program (pilot project) and the continuous improvement of talent acquisition practices.

Mr. Janse and Ms. Evangelidis reiterated the House of Commons' inclusion values, noting the importance of supporting diversity and setting up a workplace where all employees can bring their whole selves to work. In addition to explaining the development of the new inclusion framework, they explained some inclusion initiatives. These included modernizing self-identification by employees, who can now share their pronouns and their preferred name, the implementation of a community of practice, the publication of a monthly inclusion calendar, and finalizing the first inclusion strategy for the House of Commons' administration.

Rick Yarish pointed out the recent changes in the composition of the Manitoba Legislature. Those changes, including those related to cultural and gender

diversity, led to the implementation of inclusion measures. Increased Indigenous representation generated a variety of reconciliation and decolonization measures at the Legislative Assembly, including: the creation of a reconciliation task force; showcasing Indigenous artwork within the Assembly; and relaxing the dress code to allow traditional Indigenous clothing to be worn. The election of non-binary and trans members generated discussions on the use of titles and salutations at the Assembly, which have since become optional. Major renovations at the Assembly have made it accessible to persons in wheelchairs. Mr. Yarish discusses accessibility initiatives at the Assembly in an article elsewhere in this issue.

Fifth panel: Gender and Representation - From Research to Practice

This last panel consisted of a discussion between the former Grand Chief of Kahnawà:ke, Kahsennenhawe Sky-Deer, Alberta MLA Janis Irwin, Senator Kim Pate, and moderator Valérie Lapointe from the Institute for Research on Public Policy. As women who identify as part of 2SLGBTQ+ communities, they discussed their journeys and shared their experiences as sexual minorities working or having worked, in political institutions. Despite their generational differences, they all stressed the importance of representation and the sense of duty that motivates them every day to be involved in their different communities.

For more information on the CSPG and its upcoming activities, consult <https://cspg-gcep.ca/home-e.html>.

“An Inclusive Parliament?”: A Few Thoughts

Invited to offer opening remarks at the Canadian Study of Parliament Group’s 2025 conference on “Inclusive Parliaments,” in this article the author offers a revised version of her introductory remarks by reflecting on three other questions: What is meant by “inclusive”? Are parliaments, including the Parliament of Canada, inclusive? If not, how can we achieve more inclusive parliaments? She concludes by suggesting that in an age when illiberalism is growing globally, proposals designed to increase inclusivity of certain marginalized populations may face increasing headwinds both in Canada and abroad.

Manon Tremblay

When asked by historian Bibia Pavard about how her lesbianism affected her career in the Upper Chamber of the French Parliament, Corinne Bouchoux, Senator (Europe Écologie Les Verts) for Maine-et-Loire from 2011 to 2017, replied: “It’s an Assembly of white men over the age of 64, somewhat paunchy, and it’s heteroland.”¹ [translation] This statement suggests that Parliament, intended as a space to represent the people, is not representative in that its elected members comprise a somewhat limited range of the various forms of diversity that make up French society. From this standpoint, the seminar “An Inclusive Parliament?”, held in Ottawa in April 2025 and organized by the Canadian Study of Parliament Group, proved both relevant and eminently bold in this era of illiberalism. I opted to respond to this invitation to reflect on the theme “An Inclusive Parliament?” through three questions: (1) What is meant by “inclusive”?; (2) Are parliaments, including the Parliament of Canada, inclusive? If not, (3) How can we achieve more inclusive parliaments?

What is meant by “inclusive”?

The theoretical backdrop underlying the idea of an inclusive Parliament is what is known as descriptive representation: Parliament should reflect the population it represents.² In this sense, Parliament should be a “mirror,” a microcosm of society. Consequently, with respect to sex and gender, 51 per cent of elected members should be women (and diverse women) and around five per cent³ should be identifying as

lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and other identities (LGBTQ+), again representing every letter in the acronym. Of course, this interpretation of political representation has been widely criticized, especially because it is virtually impossible to implement through elections (a random draw would be more appropriate in this case), but above all because it raises the question of the criteria or traits that provide access to political representation: Why does being a woman or an LGBTQ+ person qualify someone for representation, but having blue eyes does not?

In this article, I will focus mainly on the concept of an “inclusive Parliament” as it relates to sex and gender minorities. A number of feminist and queer theorists⁴ have examined the principles underlying descriptive representation, in particular, the principle of sex and gender minorities. A key idea that emerges from these insights is that a trait associated with oppression qualifies as a basis for parliamentary representation in its descriptive sense. The primary indices developed for measuring the degree of equality between women and men (such as the Gender Development Index) show that women experience less desirable living conditions than men, whether it sociocultural, economical or political.⁵ The same finding applies to sex and gender minorities.⁶

If the oppression experienced by women and LGBTQ+ people provides grounds for arguing in favour of their representation in Parliament, this raises another question: What is the intent of inclusion? In other words, when a woman or an LGBTQ+ person is elected to office, what aspect is included in Parliament? To put it another way, if the make-up of Parliament is half women and approximately 5 per cent LGBTQ+ people, is that enough to say it is inclusive “of women” and “of LGBTQ+ people”? Certainly not, since

Manon Tremblay is Professor Emeritus in the School of Political Studies at the University of Ottawa.

the women and LGBTQ+ individuals who are elected do not in any way represent diversity among women and LGBTQ+ people themselves; in fact, these women and LGBTQ+ elected officials may only represent the more privileged segments of their identity group. This is why some female authors, including Dovi,⁷ draw on an intersectional approach to argue for the election of women (and LGBTQ+ people, by extension, for the purposes of this discussion) who maintain strong reciprocal ties with the most disadvantaged and vulnerable women (ideally, these politicians themselves being among them). According to Celis and Childs, including these more marginalized women (and LGBTQ+ people) within Parliament helps ensure that claims made on behalf of women (and LGBTQ+ people) better reflect the heterogeneous interests⁸ of women (and LGBTQ+ people)—rather than just those of the segments with thriving cultural, socioeconomic and political capital. Celis and Childs view the inclusion of these precarious bodies and voices as an imperative for equality: “voices should receive equal respect and consideration.”⁹ In short, an inclusive Parliament requires acknowledging that society is not homogeneous, but is woven from multiple forms of diversity that, in a constitutional state, enjoy ontological equality and, I would add, must be able to rely on procedural fairness because equality before the law, while essential, presents a danger when understood and implemented in terms of identical treatment: the danger of reproducing inequality under the misleading appearance of equality. An inclusive Parliament calls for recognizing the equality/equity of societal diversities and implies that these heterogeneous bodies and voices participate not only in public decisions that affect them, but also in those that more broadly shape our cohesive society.

Are parliaments inclusive?

This is undoubtedly the easiest question to answer. Even a cursory review of the bodies that make up parliaments is sufficient to conclude that, from a descriptive perspective of political representation, they reflect societal diversities poorly and are therefore hardly inclusive. In fact, Parliament is an eminently gendered space of power, as demonstrated by the numerical over-representation of men¹⁰ and cisgender heterosexual individuals¹¹ among its members. But this is also evident in the male exclusivity that pervades legislative assemblies and relegates women to the status of strangers, even intruders.¹² The Canadian parliamentary system as a whole,¹³ and its legislative branch more specifically,¹⁴ are not exempt from this finding of heteronormativity and cisgenderism.

Why is this the case, especially since the right to stand for election – the initial threshold in the electoral process leading to legislative representation – is highly inclusive? In fact, the Parliament of Canada made several decisions in the 20th century to extend the right to run for federal office to as many people as possible. The most significant of these, in terms of the number of people impacted, was the response to suffragist movements, which extended this right to most women in 1919.¹⁵ What, then, happens between the start of the electoral race, where the right to stand for election is today highly inclusive (at least in theory) and the finish line, where the Parliament of Canada lacks diversity and is therefore far from inclusive? While a lot of complex factors are at play that cannot be adequately addressed in this short paper, it is important to highlight the role of political parties: countless studies point to political parties as the primary actors responsible for the low representation of women¹⁶ and LGBTQ+ people¹⁷ in Canada’s House of Commons. Political parties are the architects of legislative representation: they decide who will seek votes under their respective banners and therefore, indirectly, which bodies (and voices) will sit in the Lower House of the Parliament of Canada. Since parties bear much of the responsibility for the lack of inclusion in the House of Commons as far as the diversities that shape Canadian society, Parliament’s capacity to be more inclusive and show a more convincing commitment to equality also depends on them. As Williams points out, “treating people as equals means only that their group traits must not be used to deny them the legal rights enjoyed by others,”¹⁸ including the right to represent. Would a Parliament lacking inclusivity reflect the parties’ casual approach to equality?

This raises another question: What form of representation is available to those who are excluded; that is, people who do not match the “neutral representative” politico-phantsmic model, which is apparently free of any identity markers, particularly those related to sex or gender (but who, in practice, are more often than not male and cisgender)? This reopened the debate between universalism and descriptive (or identity-based) representation, which was brilliantly led in France in the 1990s as part of general activism for gender parity in politics: Why should Parliament be a reflection of the population? Or, from another perspective, why not trust those sitting in Parliament to represent those who are absent, which raises the question of the role of resemblance in political representation. Young provided a simple answer to this complex question: “To the extent that what distinguishes social groups is structural

relations, particularly structural relations of privilege and disadvantage, and to the extent that persons are positioned similarly in those structures, then they have similar perspectives both on their own situation and on other positions in the society.”¹⁹ Additionally, Williams rounds out the debate by asserting that resemblance promotes the trust that is essential to representation: “the capacity of citizens from marginalized groups to trust their representatives is greater when those representatives are also group members.”²⁰ Women and LGBTQ+ individuals must be included in Parliament on the grounds that their life trajectories are marked by privileges and oppressions that shape their respective groups’ perspectives and interests, and that they are best suited to feel, express, advocate for and promote representation. The body is anything but neutral: a close examination reveals the privileges that refine it and the oppressions that scar it – marks that permeate ideas. Nonetheless, resemblance does not guarantee representation: many female politicians and LGBTQ+ elected officials have little interest in representing women and LGBTQ+ people. Hence the imperative put forward by Dovi²¹ and outlined above: female politicians and LGBTQ+ elected officials must have close contacts and bonds of trust with the most vulnerable segments of women and LGBTQ+ people. In short, the marginalized must be included in Parliament because they are the best qualified to represent the living conditions of their identity group, as defined by sex and gender. But how does one breach the representation “fortress”?

How can more inclusive parliaments be achieved?

Research to date has identified some ad hoc strategies for overcoming the challenges that stand in the way of diversified and inclusive representation. Broadly speaking, these strategies can be divided into two groups: those aimed at taking concrete action for people belonging to groups that are underrepresented in Parliament and those that seek to transform the political process.

The first category of strategies is grounded in the theory that people who are not included in Parliament are (at least partly) responsible for this exclusion because they do not seek election. In *The Political Role of Women*, one of the first studies on women in politics, published in 1955, Maurice Duverger, a leading figure in French political science, wrote: “few women are elected because few women stand for election.”²² Consequently, strategies are needed in order to stimulate the supply (to adopt the jargon of the economic model used to discuss the parliamentary

recruitment process) of female candidates (and, for the purposes of this paper, of LGBTQ+ candidates). Here are a few examples of such strategies: female politicians and LGBTQ+ elected officials take to public forums (in the form of podcasts, public speaking or interviews with journalists, for example) to share their experiences and show that it is possible for a woman or an LGBTQ+ person to be elected to political office (two biographies serve as examples: *Pauline Marois: Au-delà du pouvoir* and *Svend Robinson: A Life in Politics*); civil society groups (or even political parties) set up training sessions designed to spark women’s and LGBTQ+ people’s political ambitions and “train” them (for instance, teaching them how to manage their public persona, talk to the media or respond proactively to everyday (hetero)sexism in politics; examples include the *Fonds Fondation Femmes, Politique et Démocratie* in Quebec, and ProudPolitics across Canada); funds are made available to cover child care costs (parties on the left such as the New Democratic Party and Québec Solidaire sometimes offer this option); and youth mentorship programs with female politicians or LGBTQ+ elected officials have been set up (at the federal level, some openly LGBQ MPs have said they mentor young members of the LGBTQ+ community).²³ These strategies are intended to help people from groups that are underrepresented in Parliament adapt to the political process; however, their training does not encompass calling these rules into question.

The second type of strategy is based instead on the theory that underrepresentation in Parliament cannot be attributed to the groups affected (i.e., women and LGBTQ+ people), but rather to the political system and its operating rules—in other words, the problem is systemic. Strategies in this category are therefore intended to change the political process. Following are two examples. The first is to adopt electoral gender quotas²⁴ aimed at candidacies (although the New Democratic Party of Canada does not refer to quotas, it has set itself a “target” of 50 per cent female candidates, as well as a more vague and informal objective for LGBTQ+ candidacies)²⁵ or, more rarely, elected officials in the form of protected seats, as in Tanzania, where the Constitution states that women must represent no fewer than 30 per cent of members of the Lower House of Parliament.²⁶ While the scenario of reserved seats cannot be considered in Canada, Bill C-237, the Candidate Gender Equity Act, sponsored by Member of Parliament Kenneth Stewart, flirted with the notion of applying electoral gender quotas to candidacies by making reimbursement of a given party’s electoral expenses conditional on the proportion of candidates (both female and male) fielded by that party in an

election.²⁷ Unsurprisingly, this private member's bill was defeated at second reading. The lukewarm support²⁸ for quotas in Canada is regrettable because (1) this strategy has been used—and was successful—in more than a hundred countries; (2) at first glance, it is fully compatible with the Canadian Charter (i.e., s. 15.2); and finally, (3) it provides a conventional but very real framework for the formation of the most sacred structure in the Westminster model: Cabinet.

The other example of systemic strategies pertains to the voting system—the narrow method used to translate ballots cast into seats in Parliament. As a rule, proportional and mixed voting systems perform better than their first-past-the-post counterparts in generating an inclusive Parliament, including with respect to sex and gender minorities.²⁹ Canada uses a first-past-the-post voting system, which is often cited as the reason for the low proportion of women and LGBTQ+ elected officials.³⁰ And yet, despite the representative injustice of sex and gender minorities under the first-past-the-post voting system, discussions on electoral reform in Canada, carried out mainly from the late 1990s onward by both the federal and provincial governments,³¹ have been decidedly disappointing in terms of their objective to increase the number of women in Parliament.³²

I would like to close this discussion on the question of “How can we achieve more inclusive parliaments?” on a positive note. In 1995, the Nunavut Implementation Commission proposed the implementation of dual member balanced-ticket ridings. Under this proposal, each of the territory's 11 ridings would have been represented by two parliamentarians—one woman and one man. In other words, the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, elected in a first-past-the-post system but with dual-member representation, would have been composed of 11 women and 11 men.³³ Although this proposal was defeated in a May 1997 referendum, two Innu communities in Quebec amended their electoral code to include the principle of gender parity: Ekuanitshit in the early 2000s and Unamen Shipu in 2013.³⁴ People who resist adopting electoral gender quotas on the grounds that they are not compatible with the first-past-the-post system are now obliged to acknowledge that the Nunavut proposal can lead to an inclusive Parliament. Unfortunately, other forces continue to hinder the emergence of a diversity-rich Parliament.

* * *

“An Inclusive Parliament?”

Starting from the observation that equality before the law (for example, the right to stand for election) does not translate into a Parliament whose composition reflects the diversity of civil society, the goal of an inclusive Parliament requires the promotion of equity. The Government of Canada defines equity as “The principle of considering people's unique experiences and differing situations, and ensuring they have access to the resources and opportunities that are necessary for them to attain just outcomes. [It] aims to eliminate disparities and disproportions that are rooted in historical and contemporary injustices and oppression.”³⁵ In the face of entities that are tangibly unequal (because they do not have the same resources, for example), equity uses strategies (such as intersectional analyses and affirmative action measures) to achieve equality of outcomes. Yet inclusion, along with its partners diversity and equity, are the prime targets of a wave of illiberalism that has been sweeping across the Western world in recent years.

According to Laruelle,³⁶ illiberalism, which at times flirts with populism and even authoritarianism, is both a critique of liberal democracies for their (alleged) excesses in valuing individual freedoms, economic globalization and tolerance of societal pluralism, as well as an argument in favour of autonomous nation-states, each governed by an omnipotent leader at the head of a strong executive that favours traditional hierarchies on the basis of biology/birth, social class, race/ethnicity and, of course, sex/gender, among others. In social terms, aside from its rejection of the principles of inclusion, diversity and equality/equity, illiberalism disparages ideas and movements (such as feminism, queer analyses or antispeciesism and ecological determinism) which have recently been described by the umbrella term “woke.” In contrast, toxic masculinity, and even muscular virilism (it takes muscle to wield a chainsaw) are indicative of this survival of the fittest mentality. Illiberalism disregards measures to redress inequalities such as electoral gender quotas or a voting system designed to reflect societal diversities.

Although comprehensive illiberalism may seem far removed from Canada (in Argentina under Javier Gerardo Milei, Hungary under Viktor Orbán, India under Narendra Modi, Italy under Giorgia Meloni or Russia under Vladimir Putin and, of course, the United States under Donald Trump), elements of this ideology have appeared here as well—albeit less

aggressively than elsewhere to date. For instance, the first Carney cabinet did not include a department responsible specifically for women and gender equality, and although the federal cabinet formed after the 2025 elections reinstated this portfolio, the funding it was allocated for the coming years was drastically reduced to a point where the Department of Women and Gender Equality could justifiably be described as an empty shell. Several provinces (including Alberta, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan) have implemented policies or laws which restrict transgender youth from accessing gender-affirming health care or using a first name or pronouns at school that apparently do not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth. The Quebec government has gone even further by prohibiting its civil servants from using inclusive writing in their communications—so goodbye *celleux, eil, toustes* and hello once again to the primacy of the masculine form, according to which “the masculine takes precedence over the feminine”! Is this grammar of exclusion a precursor of an (even more) exclusive Parliament? Only time will tell.

Notes

- 1 Pavard, Bibia. “Je suis une anomalie statistique.” Entretien avec Corinne Bouchoux, Europe Écologie Les Verts,” *Parlement[s], Revue d’histoire politique*, 19, 1, 2013: p. 132. [DOI 10.3917/parl.019.0125]
- 2 Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. *The Concept of Representation*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1967, pp. 60-91.
- 3 Percentage according to Statistics Canada, “A statistical portrait of Canada’s diverse LGBTQ2+ communities,” 2021. [https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210615/dq210615a-eng.htm]
- 4 See: Dovi, Suzanne. “Preferable Descriptive Representatives: Will Just Any Woman, Black, or Latino Do?,” *American Political Science Review*, 96, 4, 2002: pp. 729-743; Mansbridge, Jane. “Rethinking Representation,” *American Political Science Review*, 97, 4, 2003; Phillips, A. *The Politics of Presence: The Political Representation of Gender, Ethnicity and Race*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1995; Tremblay, Manon. “Representation: The Case of LGBTQ People” in Manon Tremblay (ed.), *Queering Representation: LGBTQ People and Electoral Politics in Canada*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 2019: pp. 220-239; Urbinati, Nadia, *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2006; Williams, Melissa S. *Voice, Trust, and Memory. Marginalized Groups and the Failings of Liberal Representation*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998; Young, Iris Marion, *Inclusion and Democracy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.
- 5 UNDP, Gender Development Index (GDI). [https://hdr.undp.org/gender-development-index#/indicies/GDI]
- 6 ILGA World et al. *State-Sponsored Homophobia 2020: Global Legislation Overview Update*, Geneva, ILGA, 2020.
- 7 Dovi, 2002.
- 8 Feminist researchers and activists have not reached a consensus on the concept of “women’s interests,” but space restrictions do not allow for any examination of this issue in this article.
- 9 Celis, Karen and Sarah Childs. *Feminist Democratic Representation*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 89.
- 10 Inter-Parliamentary Union. “IPU Parline: Global and regional averages of women in national parliaments,” 2025. [//data.ipu.org/women-averages/?date_month=09&date_year=2025]
- 11 Reynolds, Andrew. *The Children of Harvey Milk: How LGBTQ Politicians Changed the World*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2019: p. 283)
- 12 Gardey, Delphine. *Le linge du Palais-Bourbon. Corps, matérialité et genre du politique à l’ère démocratique*, Lormont, Le bord de l’eau. 2015; Korte, Kate, “Jackets, ties, and comparable attire: Maintaining gender norms through legislative assembly dress codes,” *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, 45, 3, 2022, pp. 2-8; Puwar, Nirmal. *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place*, Oxford and New York, Berg, 2004.
- 13 Tremblay, Manon and Joanna Everitt (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Gender, Sexuality, and Canadian Politics*, Cham (Switzerland), Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. [doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49240-3]
- 14 Raney, Tracey. “Canada’s Legislature: A (Gendered) Parliament for the People,” in Manon Tremblay and Joanna Everitt (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Gender, Sexuality, and Canadian Politics*, Cham (Switzerland), Palgrave Macmillan, 2020: pp. 167-186. [doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49240-3_9]
- 15 This inclusion did not extend to some women, such as First Nations women who were registered as “status Indians.”
- 16 Bashevkin, Sylvia B. *Women and Party Politics in English-Canada*, 2nd edition, Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1993; Cross, William P. and Scott Pruysers, “The Local Determinants of Representation: Party Constituency Associations, Candidate Nomination and Gender,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 52, 3, 1993: pp. 557-74; Pitre, Sonia. “Women’s Struggle for Legislative Power: The Role of Political Parties,” *Atlantis. A Women’s Studies Journal/Journal d’études sur la femme*, 27, 2, 2003: pp. 102-109, among others)
- 17 Ashe, Jeanette. “Canada’s Political Parties: Gatekeepers to Parliament” in Manon Tremblay and Joanna Everitt (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Gender, Sexuality, and Canadian Politics*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020: pp. 297-316; Everitt, Joanna and Manon Tremblay, “Are Openly LGBTQ2+ the New Sacrificial Lambs? Campaign Contexts and the Gendered Implications for LGBTQ2+ Candidates,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 56, 2, 2023: pp. 300-324. [DOI: 10.1017/

- S0008423923000161]; Lapointe, Valérie, Benjamin Ferland and Luc Turgeon. "Still sacrificial lambs? Yes! Minority groups in Canadian federal elections, 2015–2021," *Electoral Studies*, 87, 2024. [article 102717]
- 18 Williams, Melissa S. *Voice, Trust, and Memory. Marginalized Groups and the Failings of Liberal Representation*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 238.
 - 19 Young, Iris Marion. *Inclusion and Democracy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 143-144.
 - 20 Williams, p. 9.
 - 21 Dovi, 2002.
 - 22 Duverger, p. 84
 - 23 Tremblay, Manon, *LGBQ Legislators in Canadian Politics: Out to Represent*, Cham (Switzerland), Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, pp. 166-173.
 - 24 On quotas, see: Gender Quotas Database, 2025. [https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas-database]
 - 25 Ashe, 2020.
 - 26 Gender Quotas Database, 2025.
 - 27 Reimbursement owed to a party was reduced if the gap between the total number of female and male candidates was greater than 10 per cent. A similar practice was adopted in France, for the purpose of achieving gender parity in politics.
 - 28 See: Canseco, Mario. "Half of Canadians would support gender quotas in Parliament: new poll," *BIV: Business Intelligence for B.C.*, November 9, 2023. [//www.biv.com/news/commentary/half-canadians-would-gender-quotas-parliament-new-poll-8294053]
 - 29 See: Norris, Pippa. "The Impact of Electoral Reform on Women's Representation," *Acta Politica*, 41, 2, 2006: pp. 197–213; Profeta, Paola and Eleanor F. Woodhouse, "Electoral Rules, Women's Representation and the Qualification of Politicians," *Comparative Political Studies*, 55, 9, 2022: pp. 1471–1500, Rosenblum, Darren, "Geographically Sexual?: Advancing Gay and Lesbian Interests Through Proportional Representation," *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, 31, 1996: pp. 119-154; Rule, Wilma. "Electoral systems, contextual factors and women's opportunity for election to parliament in twenty-three democracies," *Western Political Quarterly*, 40, 3, 1987: pp. 477–498. [doi.org/10.1177/106591298704000307]
 - 30 See: Johnson, Mark. "Women's Descriptive Representation in Canadian Politics: Impacts of Electoral Reform" *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, 45, 3, 2022: pp. 24–32; Pilon, Dennis. "Electing LGBT Representatives and the Voting System in Canada" in Manon Tremblay (ed.), *Queering Representation: LGBTQ People and Electoral Politics in Canada*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 2019, pp. 124–153; Pilon, Dennis. "The Electoral System: The Gendered Politics of Institutions" in Manon Tremblay and Joanna Everitt (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Gender, Sexuality, and Canadian Politics*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020: pp. 273–295.
 - 31 For the federal perspective, see: Canada, Special Committee on Electoral Reform. *Strengthening Democracy in Canada: Principles, Process and Public Engagement for Electoral Reform*, Ottawa, Special Committee on Electoral Reform, 2016. [//www.noscommunes.ca/Content/Committee/421/ERRE/Reports/RP8655791/errerp03/errerp03-e.pdf]; Law Commission of Canada. *Voting Counts: Electoral Reform for Canada*, Ottawa, The Commission, 2004. [https://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/J31-61-2004E.pdf]; for the provinces, see: British Columbia, Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. *Making Every Vote Count: the case for electoral reform in British Columbia, Final Report*, [s. l.], [British Columbia Government], December, 2004, [//citizensassembly.arts.ubc.ca/resources/final_report.pdf]; Québec, Assemblée nationale. *Bill 39, An Act to establish a new electoral system, Quebec City*, Éditeur officiel du Québec, 2019 [//www.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-39-42-1.html], and others.
 - 32 Tremblay, Manon. "Bilan des réformes électorales au Canada: quelle place pour les femmes?" *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 43, 1, 2010: pp. 25-47. To my knowledge, underrepresentation of LGBTQ+ people in Parliament has not prompted any reflection by governments.
 - 33 Gombay, Nicole. "The politics of culture: Gender parity in the legislative assembly of Nunavut," *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 24, 1, 2000: pp. 125-148; Minor, Tina. "Political Participation of Inuit Women in the Government of Nunavut," *Wicazo Sa Review*, 17, 1, 2002: pp. 65–90; Tremblay, Manon and Jackie Steele. "Paradise lost? Gender parity and the Nunavut experience" in Marian Sawyer, Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble (eds.), *Representing Women in Parliament. A comparative study*, London, Routledge, 2004: pp. 221-235; Young, Lisa. "Gender Equal Legislatures: Evaluating the Proposed Nunavut Electoral System," *Canadian Public Policy*, 23, 3, 1997: pp. 306–315.
 - 34 Maertens, Héroïse. *L'implication politique des femmes autochtones au Québec*, Master's thesis, Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue, 2022. [//depositum.uqat.ca/id/eprint/1364/]
 - 35 Canada, Interdepartmental Terminology Committee on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. *Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology*, 2022. [https://www.noslangués-ourlanguages.gc.ca/en/publications/equité-diversité-inclusion-equity-diversity-inclusion-eng]
 - 36 Laruelle, Marlene. "Introduction: Illiberalism Studies as a Field" in Marlene Laruelle (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Illiberalism*, New York, Oxford University Press: pp. 1–40. [DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhpb/9780197639108.001.0001]

Accessibility Measures at the Manitoba Legislature

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba has made several accessibility adaptations to its work environment to meet the needs of its Members. Significant infrastructure enhancements like wheelchair ramps, procedural and technical adaptations enabling virtual participation, and measures to overcome auditory challenges have all helped to accommodate the individual needs of Manitoba MLAs.

Rick Yarish

In recent decades, society has become more attuned to and aware of the need to ensure that workplaces of all kinds are accessible and functional for everyone. The Manitoba Legislature has embraced this ethos and made a number of significant adaptations to its work environment to meet the needs of its Members.

Wheelchair Accessibility

One of the first major accessibility initiatives came in 2007 with the installation of an exterior wheelchair ramp at the north (primary) entrance of the building. Prior to this, the only fully accessible entrances to the building were the east and west loading ramps. As these entrances were not suited for general access to the building and were certainly not as dignified as entering through the front doors, a fully functional ramp was designed to fit the historic architectural style of the building. The ramp is heated to avoid ice build up in the winter and was celebrated as an impressive achievement on the path to a more accessible legislature. This measure allowed anyone requiring a wheelchair or other mobility aid to enter the building through the front doors.

Alongside the discussion (and eventual construction) of an exterior wheelchair ramp, questions of wheelchair accessibility inside the building had also been considered for several years. There are three modern elevators in the building allowing full access to all four floors, however the central feature of the building – the Legislative Chamber – was not fully accessible. This problem came to a head in 2016 with the election of former MP Steven Fletcher, a quadriplegic who uses a wheelchair for mobility.

Rick Yarish is the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.



The Assembly's exterior wheelchair ramp.



A renovation project in the summer of 2017 saw the Chamber, as configured above, completely disassembled and reconstructed.

Following Mr. Fletcher's election, an assessment of the Chamber's lack of full accessibility led to the launch of a massive renovation project. In the original design of the Chamber, wheelchairs could only access the back row of Members' seats. The first two rows of Members' desks, and the Clerk's Table in the well of the House, were inaccessible by wheelchair.

The renovation project in the summer of 2017 saw the Chamber completely disassembled and reconstructed. To create an appropriate grade for the ramp, the floor in the well of the Chamber was raised by almost three feet. The front benches were also moved about two feet closer to the center of the room to allow better wheelchair access to those seats.

The renovated Chamber re-opened in October 2017, 16 months after Mr. Fletcher's election. The opening

attracted significant media attention and eventually earned several awards, including the 2018 Heritage Winnipeg Preservation Award for Excellence and the 2018 Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals Award of Merit.

On a side note, a few other accommodations became necessary to ensure Fletcher's ability to fully participate in Assembly proceedings. As had been done in the House of Commons when he was a Member of Parliament, our House agreed to allow Mr. Fletcher's personal Aide to sit with him during all House or Committee proceedings. Further, we arranged for a panel to be installed at his seat to allow the Aide to signal the Speaker when he wished to speak in debate. Mr. Fletcher was not re-elected in 2019, but the Manitoba Legislative Chamber remains permanently accessible for any future Members requiring wheelchair access to all areas of the Chamber.



To create an appropriate grade for the ramp, the floor in the well of the Chamber was raised by almost three feet. The front benches were also moved about two feet closer to the center of the room to allow better wheelchair access to those seats.

Hearing Issues

For many years now the Assembly made available neck loops which provided a wireless connection to hearing aids used by MLAs with hearing issues. Modern hearing aids are becoming ever more sophisticated, and some allow Members to connect directly with our Hansard audio output so that sound can be transmitted to a hearing aid.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder with Auditory Processing Delay

In 2025 the Manitoba Assembly encountered an unprecedented situation with a recently elected MLA. Since their election in 2023 the Member discovered that, while serving in the Chamber during

session, they had considerable challenges focusing in debate, especially in Question Period. The auditory stimulation in the Chamber was intense and difficult to process.

Last year the Member received a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) type 2. Specifically, the diagnosis was for a form of ADHD with Auditory Processing Delay (APD), a condition that affects the brain's ability to process and interpret sounds, even when one's hearing is normal. Individuals with APD may experience difficulty understanding speech, especially in noisy environments.

Not surprisingly, this condition created great challenges for this Member during Question



To accommodate the needs of an MLA newly diagnosed with a form of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) with Auditory Processing Delay (APD), the Assembly arranged for a tablet with real time transcription of all words spoken on the record in the Chamber. A second Member with hearing issues also now uses this kind of tablet.

Period. After their diagnosis the Member reached out to the Clerk's Office to see if there were any supports we could offer. Following some productive conversations, a collaboration developed between the Member and Assembly Staff from several Branches who were eager to help. Our exceptionally capable Information Technology, Hansard and Digital Media staff find solving such problems rewarding and they were pleased to be able to assist this Member.

After considering a range of options the solution was fairly simple:

- We purchased a tablet for the Member's exclusive use in the Chamber and positioned in on their desk.
- We connected the tablet to Hansard audio and set it to provide live transcription of proceedings.

Following some testing with recorded Chamber audio we tried the system live during session, and it was an immediate success. The tablet provides real time transcription of all words spoken on the record in the Chamber. The Member uses the tablet every day in the House, and Assembly staff maintain and test it prior to each sitting day. The Member shared that the live transcription has made a huge difference for them. They are able to process, comprehend and respond in debate without delay or confusion.

The Assembly has been pleased to develop this tool for the Member. Since implementing this measure, we have now provided a second tablet to another Member with hearing issues. They are also able to better follow and participate in House proceedings with the aid of the live transcription device. While the reason for needing the tablet is different with this Member, the tool provides an equally helpful solution.

Virtual Participation

The last accessibility measure worth noting from the Manitoba Assembly would be what I would describe as a “pandemic silver lining.” Like many legislatures around the world, during the COVID-19 Pandemic our Assembly developed and implemented the means for Members to participate in proceedings virtually. The processes for creating and executing the technical and procedural means to enable this were complicated, extensive and challenging. In October 2020 the House held its first virtual hybrid sitting, with Members participating both in the Chamber and virtually from their homes or offices.

Once the pandemic ended, Manitoba MLAs decided that they wanted to keep the virtual option permanently. In May 2024, the House adopted the procedural provisions which enable virtual participation as part of our Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceeding. In the modern Manitoba Assembly, Members may participate fully in proceedings whether they are in the Chamber, their home, their office or elsewhere.

We see virtual participation as a different kind of accessibility measure. While it is used by Members almost daily, we usually only have two or three Members participating virtually on a given sitting day. Most Members prefer to be in the building to participate in our debates. However, this accessibility option allows Members to do their jobs while attending to family needs, while recovering from medical conditions, or when they encounter other circumstances. All sides of the House approved of this measure, and it has been universally appreciated by Members.

Whether through significant infrastructure enhancements like wheelchair ramps, extensive procedural and technical adaptations like enabling virtual participation, or simpler steps like connecting a tablet to our audio system, the Manitoba Assembly has demonstrated its commitment to providing a workplace for our MLAs that is as accessible as possible. Undoubtedly we will receive more accessibility accommodation requests in the future, and I am confident that we will approach those challenges with the same determination and skill as we have applied in the past.

Confronting Violence and Harassment in Westminster Parliamentary Workplaces: Lessons for Canada

Once heralded as a leader in tackling gender-based violence and harassment in a parliamentary workplace, Canada's House of Commons (and, to a lesser degree, its Senate) have fallen behind other large Westminster parliaments when it comes to implementing strong guidelines, reporting mechanisms, and penalties for misconduct. Parliaments in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand have all taken steps to establish public-facing independent workplace reviews and to employ a broader recognition that institutional cultural change is required throughout parliament to address gender-based violence and harassment. In this article, the author traces Canada's internationally lauded pathbreaking initiatives to target harassment within parliamentary workspaces, explains why other Westminster parliaments have surpassed our federal parliament's current practices and offers suggestions for how Canada can learn from the experience of others in order to strengthen the systems in place on Parliament Hill and in parliamentary spaces beyond.

Tracey Raney

Introduction

While the 2025 federal campaign resulted in some surprises on election night, one aspect of Canadian politics remained unchanged: the representation of women in the House of Commons.¹ Canada's 45th general election resulted in no seat gains for women or gender-diverse candidates, with gender representation in the House of Commons remaining stagnant at approximately 30 per cent. With this result, Canada now ranks 70th globally for women elected to a lower house, trailing behind the United Kingdom (41 per cent), New Zealand (45 per cent) and Australia (46 per cent). In terms of upper houses, the Senate of Canada compares much more favourably, with 55 per cent women senators, ranking it third in the world.²

One factor contributing to the stagnation of women's representation in Canada's elected chamber is gender-based violence. In the lead-up to the 2025 election,

several women MPs announced they would not be seeking re-election, citing threats, harassment, and safety concerns as key reasons for their departure from public office.³ These concerns were underscored by alarming data released by the House of Commons' Sergeant-at-Arms in 2024, indicating that threats against MPs from members of the public had risen by nearly 800 per cent over the last five years.⁴ While many of these safety concerns come from members of the public, women politicians have also shared their experiences of sexism, racism and harassment inside parliament. Former MPs Mumilaaq Qaqqaq and Celina Caesar-Chavannes, for example, have spoken out about their experiences of racism and tokenism inside parliament. In response to growing political incivility and toxicity, in 2024 the Canadian Association of Feminist Parliamentarians (which includes MPs and Senators), developed a cross-partisan "Civility Pledge" intended to end workplace harassment and foster greater civility in parliament. After the 2025 federal election, the pledge was relaunched with more politicians signing on to it.

The goal of this article is to examine how four Westminster parliaments (Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia) have confronted the problem of gender-based violence in

Tracey Raney is a professor in the Department of Politics and Public Administration at Toronto Metropolitan University.

the parliamentary workplace. I ask two questions: first, how has gender-based violence been addressed in Westminster parliaments and second, what comparative lessons can the Canadian Parliament draw on to strengthen its response to this problem? Although Canada's lower house was a global pioneer in developing an MP code of conduct on sexual harassment in 2015, this comparative research demonstrates that it now lags other Westminster parliaments in tackling this issue. To prevent falling further behind, I argue that the Canada's response to gendered violence and harassment in the parliamentary workplace can be strengthened by examining, and potentially adopting, similar measures implemented in other Westminster-style parliaments.

First, I provide an overview of the problem of gender-based harassment and violence in politics, with a focus on the parliamentary workplace. This overview is followed by a comparison of how these four Westminster parliaments have responded to this problem. The article concludes by offering some recommendations on how parliamentarians in the 45th Parliament can better address this issue in Canada.

Gender-Based Violence in the Westminster Parliamentary Workplace

Violence against any political actor is a threat to the democratic process, but when it targets women specifically because of their gender, its impact is particularly harmful. Women's low representation in the political realm is reinforced by violence and harassment, which serve to silence and punish those who challenge traditional gendered (and racial) expectations about who should hold public office.⁵ Indigenous, Black, racialized, and 2SLGBTQ+ political actors—including elected officials, political employees, and volunteers—face disproportionately higher levels of threats, intimidation and harassment.⁶

In 2024's *Gender-Based Violence in Canadian Politics in the #MeToo Era*, my co-editor Cheryl N. Collier and I define gender-based violence in politics (GBV-P) as: "harmful actions that are directed at an individual because of their gender, gender expression, gender identity, or perceived gender and which are designed to discourage or restrict them from being active in informal (for example, movement, advocacy, online) or formal (for example, elections, political parties, legislatures) political spaces."⁷ Academic research demonstrates that GBV-P is harmful to women's political representation and democratic processes. When confronted with threats and violence, women

are more likely than men to alter their political speech, to spend more time and resources on security and to contemplate leaving politics.⁸ While violence and harassment in politics are not exclusively about gender and race, their effects are deeply shaped by both. Therefore, solutions to this problem must place gender, race and other intersecting factors at their core.

Comparing Parliamentary Rules on Gender-Based Violence

How have Westminster countries dealt with this problem in the parliamentary workplace thus far? To begin with, over the last decade all four parliaments have introduced new rules on violence and harassment inside their legislatures within a relatively short timeframe. The Canadian House of Commons led the way in 2014, followed by the British House of Commons in 2018, New Zealand's Parliament in 2019, and the Parliament of Australia in 2021. The fact that each parliament acknowledged this issue through various new rules and policies signals, at a minimum, a collective symbolic acknowledgment that the Westminster model must become more inclusive and that meaningful reforms were required beyond any pre-existing policies or rules.

At the same time, there are significant differences across the Westminster world, with Canada's Parliament being a notable outlier. A key distinction lies in how the bicameral legislatures have addressed the problem. In the British and Australian parliaments—both bicameral legislatures—decisionmakers have taken a more integrated, "whole-of-parliament" approach, engaging both houses through shared policies, joint bodies, or task forces. In contrast, the Canadian House of Commons and the Senate of Canada have developed separate, independent responses.

In 2015, Canada's House of Commons was lauded internationally when it became the first legislature in the world to adopt and append a *Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Commons: Sexual Harassment Between Members* to its standing orders. The code lays out a process for members to file a complaint of non-criminal sexual harassment against another member, and it includes provisions for mediation and resolution processes as well as for independent investigations. A key strength of the code is its focus on prevention, as all members are required to sign a pledge committing themselves to contributing to a work environment free of sexual harassment.

After a 2017 review, some changes were made to the code. Among other things, these include an update to the definition of sexual harassment to align it with a house policy discussed below, allowing the Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) of the House of Commons to screen out complaints when the alleged conduct does not clearly meet the definition of sexual harassment, allowing complainants/respondents access to legal counsel/support person, and the addition of an explicit provision that prohibits retaliation.⁹

In 2014, a year before the Code of Conduct was appended to the standing orders, the House of Commons' Board of Internal Economy approved the *House of Commons Policy on Preventing and Addressing Harassment*. This policy applies to all Members of Parliament, staff employed by members, house officers, research offices and parliamentary interns and volunteers. In 2021, the policy was updated (and renamed) to comply with the regulations of Bill C-65; it now covers all instances of harassment and violence in the workplace as defined by law.¹⁰ Although the MP code was updated in 2017, similar updates (i.e. aligning it with Bill C-65) were not made, and it continues to cover sexual harassment only (and not other forms of violence or harassment) between members.

In 2024, the Board of Internal Economy updated the policy again. The most recent updates include the addition of language that encourages employees, interns and volunteers to report any occurrences of violence and harassment, and the scope of the workplace was broadened to include work-related communication platforms like email, videoconferencing, social media and telework. The roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Sergeant-at-Arms and Corporate Security were also added to policy; these include assisting members and their staff in navigating risks in the office, fostering physical safety and addressing incidents or threats of violence and providing security awareness training. Like the code, a strength of the policy is its emphasis on prevention, with provisions for workplace assessments to be conducted to help identify risk factors that might contribute to violence or harassment in the parliamentary workplace, including in members' offices. The policy also requires all new members and employees to receive training within three months after the day they start their position, to be updated once every three years.

Separately, the Senate of Canada has its own policy, the *Senate Harassment and Violence Prevention Policy*, which came into force in March 2021. This policy was updated from an earlier, 2009 policy that covered a

narrower range of misconduct (harassment, sexual harassment and abuses of authority). The updated policy aligns the Senate's response to Bill C-65 and covers non-criminal violence and harassment more broadly; it applies to all senators, Senate employees, people employed by senators, and to students, interns and volunteers. Compared to the 2009 policy, the updated policy offers more impartiality as it allows for the appointment of an impartial third party (ITP) to receive complaints and negotiate a resolution between the complainant and respondent, rather than involve partisan actors. If a complainant or responding party do not agree to a conciliation process, the ITP is to select from a list of investigators who must have previous training and experience in handling such cases. The Senate also added a new provision in its *Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code for Senators*, which explicitly prohibits harassment and violence (section 7.3).¹¹

When compared to Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand have anchored their efforts to confront violence and harassment with public-facing independent workplace reviews and a broader recognition that institutional cultural change is required throughout parliament. Following the "Pestminster" sexual misconduct scandals in late 2017/18, the British Parliament established a working group comprised of members from both houses, as well as representatives from various parliamentary groups and staff associations. Tasked with responding to the problem of sexual violence in British politics, the working group concluded that a broader change in workplace culture was both "urgent and essential" to effectively addressing the problem.¹² A new behaviour code was subsequently adopted by the House of Commons and the House of Lords.¹³ The code sets out guidelines on how people should be treated in the parliamentary workplace, including the need to respect and value everyone, to always act professionally towards others and to speak up about any unacceptable behaviour when you see it. It applies to everyone who visits or works in parliament.

In 2018, the British Parliament further introduced an independent mechanism to address a range of misconduct in the parliamentary workplace. The Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS) allows for any member of the parliamentary community, including current or former MPs, Lords, employees and witnesses, to file a complaint that relates to bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. These developments arose in conjunction with three independent reviews into violence and harassment in parliament, with one focused on the bullying and

harassment of House of Commons staff (the “Cox” Report, 2018), one on the bullying and harassment of past and present MPs (the “White” Report, 2019), and another on bullying and harassment in the House of Lords (the “Ellenbogen” Report, 2019). Since its introduction, the ICGS has similarly undergone three independent reviews that rely on internal and external benchmarking data, with the latest review conducted in 2024. All of these reviews are publicly available on the parliamentary website.¹⁴ Unlike the Behaviour Code which applies at all times to all members of the parliamentary community, the ICGS does not apply to the formal proceedings of either house.¹⁵

In the Parliament of Australia, a 2021 independent review (“*Set the Standard*”) led by Kate Jenkins (Australia’s former Sex Discrimination Commissioner), identified systemic issues related to bullying, harassment and sexual assault in commonwealth parliamentary workplaces. In response to the *Set the Standard* review, Australian parliamentarians in the House of Representatives and the Senate committed to implementing all 28 recommendations, with a cross-party, joint body established to lead the implementation, the Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce. In 2021, three Behavioural Standards and Codes endorsed by both houses of parliament were introduced. They are intended to create “long-term cultural transformation” in parliament.¹⁶ They include the *Behaviour Standards for Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces*, the *Behaviour Code for Australian Parliamentarians* and the *Behaviour Code for staff employed under the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984*. The codes cover a comprehensive range of misconduct, and include that everyone must: act respectfully, professionally and with integrity, recognize their power, influence, and authority and not abuse them, uphold laws that support a safe workplace. They also state that bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, assault or discrimination in any form based on race, age, gender identity, disability, sex or religion will not be tolerated, condoned or ignored.¹⁷ Together, the Behavioral Standards apply to all parliamentarians, staff and anyone who enters the parliamentary space.

Similarly, a 2019 independent review of New Zealand’s unicameral legislature noted systemic bullying and harassment in the parliamentary workplace and provided 85 recommendations for change (the “Francis” Report, 2019). Among other things, its recommendations included stronger sanctions for poor conduct by members, a more streamlined human resource structure, improving workforce diversity, and the adoption of a new

Parliamentary Workplace Code of Conduct.¹⁸ As part of its response, New Zealand’s Parliament subsequently developed several “Behavioural Statements.” These statements include that all people working in parliament must show that bullying and harassment are unacceptable, foster an environment where people feel safe and valued and use their positions of power to help others and avoid harm. However, these statements have not been codified in the standing orders and are voluntary.¹⁹ In a follow-up review of the parliamentary workplace in 2022, Debbie Francis noted that while the cultural health of New Zealand’s parliamentary workplace had improved significantly since her first review, there had been resistance to a more transformative approach.²⁰

Impartial/Non-Partisan Resolution and Sanctioning Processes

Compared with the other three parliaments, the Canadian Parliament’s rules addressing violence and harassment offer less impartiality, particularly in the lower house. While certain aspects of independence exist in the policy and MP Code, such as the use of an external investigator, partisanship is embedded both formally and informally in both, reducing their overall effectiveness.²¹ While the 2024 policy no longer requires that party whips receive complaints (as the 2014 policy once did), the updated policy does not establish a fully impartial resolution and sanctioning process. Under the policy, when a members’ employee experiences harassment or violence, they may report the occurrence to either their employing member or to a designated recipient within the House Administration. Under either option, when a claim is filed the relevant party whip is to be informed of any complaint concerning members or employees of their own caucus. While mainly confidential, whips can further be informed of a complainant’s identity if it is deemed necessary for them to take “appropriate measures”.

Although this process is intended to allow members’ employees a pathway to report to a non-partisan office (for example, the Chief Human Resources Officer of the House of Commons), the partisan nature of the House of Commons is likely to discourage members’ staff from filing a formal complaint with an external actor, where their party may become aware of their complaint (and potentially, their identity) anyway. In some instances, the House’s highly partisan context may prevent members’ employees from formally reporting to anyone at all. This reality is particularly relevant when the respondent belongs to the complainant’s own party and when reporting the misconduct could harm either

the MP or the party's reputation generally. Reporting could also be detrimental to a political staffer's career, should they be labelled a "trouble-maker" by their party. Unlike other workplaces, job security is an especially acute concern for political staffers, whose employment is contingent on maintaining a good relationship with their employer (their hiring MP) and on the MP winning the next election.

Sanctioning procedures are also not fully impartial in either the Canadian House of Commons or the Senate. Under the policy, in the event that an alleged occurrence is either fully or partially substantiated, the CHRO is to present a redacted full report to the Board of Internal Economy to determine whether further action is needed. Such actions may include referring the matter to an appropriate parliamentary body for consideration of remedial or disciplinary measures. Although the House retains ultimate authority over disciplining its members, it is important to note that these decisions are being made by members judging the conduct of their partisan peers, the majority of whom are white men. As discussed below, other Westminster parliaments have chosen to remove full decision-making authority in cases of violence and harassment from politicians' hands, delegating it instead to third-party, independent actors.

The code similarly does not sufficiently address the House of Commons' partisan context. In cases of member-to-member sexual harassment, a complainant may report the allegations to the CHRO or, if the complainant and the respondent are members of the same caucus, to the whip of their caucus. If brought to the whip, it is the whip who is responsible for facilitating any initial discussions about the allegations or for "encouraging" mediation between the parties. In cases where a sexual harassment complaint has been substantiated, the respondent's whip is to propose a course of disciplinary action, with the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs (PROC) serving as an appeals body and the House as the final authority on whether to impose any sanctions (by concurrence in the PROC report). Since the PROC committee and the House are comprised entirely of partisan actors, this sanctioning process means that members are essentially "policing" themselves in cases of sexual harassment. Further problematic is that the code stipulates that if a complaint is found to have been made vexatiously or in bad faith, the whip can propose disciplinary action against a complainant. Together, these provisions do little to address the partisan environment of the House of Commons and are likely to reduce the likelihood that an MP will choose to report

to a third party or to their party whip. The possibility of being punished for filing a vexatious/bad faith claim is an added disincentive to file a report.²²

Concerns that partisanship could deter complainants from reporting harassment and violence were raised in PROC in 2024, when a woman MP committee member highlighted potential issues with the *Reform Act, 2014*. Under the *Act*, if a party chooses to adopt its provisions after a general election the caucus can hold a secret ballot to expel a member, provided that a majority of caucus members approve. The MP queried whether this provision might amplify harassment in parliament or prevent a member from coming forward out of fear of reprisal and potentially being thrown out of their own caucus.²³ Another woman MP serving as a committee witness suggested that whips and deputy whips require specialized training to address these issues, which they currently do not receive.²⁴

In the Canadian Senate's formally non-partisan context, party whips are not referenced in the 2021 policy. At the same time, senators are the final arbiters of sanctioning decisions in instances when the responding party is either a senator's employee or another senator. In cases where the responding party is a senator's employee, when an investigation is required, the investigator is to prepare two reports: a summary and a final report. The summary report is used to prepare recommendations on how to eliminate or reduce risks of a similar occurrence, which is helpful for prevention. The final report provided to a Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets, and Administration (CIBA) steering committee is used by senators to determine whether any remedial, corrective or disciplinary action is required. The steering committee has also been given the authority to "accept or reject the investigator's final report in whole or in part."²⁵

In cases where the responding party is a senator, the Senate Ethics Officer (an independent, non-partisan officer of the Senate) is to receive a copy of any final report detailing the nature of the allegations. While the SEO may recommend disciplinary measures to the Senate's Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflicts of Interest (CONF), they are not empowered to impose such measures. Instead, CONF, which is comprised of senators, is to determine whether (or if) it will recommend any disciplinary measures for consideration by the Senate, such as suspension or expulsion. CONF may also confidentially refer the matter to a subcommittee to consider the imposition of remedial or corrective measures.

In contrast to the Canadian Parliament, all three other Westminster parliaments have established independent standards bodies to manage grievance procedures and impose sanctions in cases of violence and harassment. In 2018, the powers of the existing British Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (for the House of Commons) were expanded to impose lower-level sanctions against MPs, such as informal resolutions or giving words of advice. In 2020, the House of Commons created an Independent Expert Panel (IEP) to determine appeals and sanctions in cases where complaints of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct are brought against an MP. The IEP is comprised entirely of lay members and can recommend the withdrawal of services or facilities that affect an MP's "core functions" to the House.²⁶ The IEP can additionally recommend that an MP who has engaged in bullying or gendered violence be suspended.²⁷ In 2024, the British House authorities were given additional powers to exclude an MP who has been arrested on suspicion of committing a violent or sexual offence from entering the parliamentary estate or accessing domestic or foreign travel funded by the House. This measure was established after concerns were raised, primarily by parliamentary staff, that MPs who are under investigation for sexual misconduct were continuing to attend parliament.²⁸

In 2024, Australia established a new Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission (IPSC). The IPSC will conduct independent investigations and, if a respondent has engaged in conduct that breaches the behavioural requirements, an IPSC decisionmaker will decide whether to impose or recommend a sanction. Sanctions might include a written reprimand or a requirement to undertake training. In more serious cases, the IPSC decisionmaker can refer a finding to the Privileges Committee of the relevant House of the Parliament. Although not fully independent, the Privileges Committee may recommend to the House a range of sanctions, including suspending the member for a period of time, discharging them from a parliamentary committee, or imposing a fine of between two to five per cent of their annual base salary.

In New Zealand, a new independent Commissioner for Parliamentary Standards was appointed in 2023. The Commissioner's role is to receive, investigate, and resolve complaints that MPs have breached the Behaviour Code.²⁹ One potential barrier to reporting in New Zealand is that a complaint can be made with the Commissioner only after other avenues of recourse are exhausted. The Commissioner has the

added function of reporting to the House matters that come to their attention which include those that relate to a specific complaint or in respect of a pattern of complaints. To oversee implementation of the new rules, the New Zealand Speaker further established a Parliamentary Culture Subcommittee which includes "party champions" to help ensure cross-party support.

In contrast, the Canadian House of Commons' approach to sanctioning violence and harassment lacks a clearly defined range of disciplinary measures that are proportionate to the severity of the misconduct, especially in more serious cases. Canada also has no independent standards body to oversee sanctioning processes and instead, has allowed committees of MPs (or senators) to review investigator reports, with either house serving as the final decisionmaker. The rights of either house to regulate their own internal affairs and discipline their members derive from their parliamentary privileges, which ensure parliament's fundamental rights and immunities to exercise its legislative duties free from external influence. However, as this comparative study reveals, both the House of Commons and the Senate could move away from self-regulation to shared or even full external regulation to better address violence and harassment in the parliamentary workplace, closer to what other Westminster parliaments have enacted.³⁰

In the absence of external oversight, Canadian MPs (and to a lesser extent, senators) continue to be responsible for overseeing disciplinary measures against their members, effectively allowing them to "grade their own homework." Since women have never comprised more than 31 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons, disciplinary decisions related to violence and harassment in the parliamentary workplace are being made by a decision-making body dominated by (white) men acting as "adjudicators," raising additional concerns about equity and procedural fairness in this chamber.

Key Lessons for Canada's 45th Parliament

This comparative study reveals how four Westminster parliaments have addressed the problem of violence and harassment in the parliamentary workplace. Once considered a global leader on how to address sexual harassment in politics, Canada's response to GBV-P is now outdated compared to other Westminster parliaments — its closest institutional peers. One immediate step parliamentarians can take is to continue the work of the Procedure and House Affairs Committee in its review of the *Members of the*

House of Commons Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Policy from the preceding parliament, when committee witnesses also addressed potential changes to the code. Like other Westminster parliaments, this review should be expanded to include a comprehensive examination of parliamentary workplace culture, and undertake an analysis of how gender, race and other intersecting factors amplify the experiences of harassment and discrimination in both houses. Drawing on lessons from other Westminster parliaments, Canada's House of Commons in particular should consider adopting a new behavioural code for MPs that addresses a wider range of behaviours, including incivility, bullying, harassment and sexual harassment. A new, independent body to enforce a new behavioral code, with a range of meaningful and proportionate sanctions, should also be put in place.

While this article focuses on violence and harassment inside parliament, the wider external threat environment faced by parliamentarians also requires urgent attention. Parliament should consider introducing new tools or legislation to protect political actors from harmful behaviour that does not meet the Criminal Code's threshold for harassment, as was suggested by the RCMP Commissioner in 2024.³¹ Decisionmakers could look at countries like Bolivia and Mexico for potential legal remedies. The ongoing threat of violence on social media must also be dealt with through legislation that tackles online harms. Collectively, these actions would signal to concerned Canadians that politicians are committed to protecting our parliamentary institutions and those who work inside them. Combined with stronger measures that curb violence and harassment inside parliament, such measures might encourage more women and gender-diverse individuals to step forward and run for public office in the future.

Notes

- 1 My thanks to the anonymous reviewers of the editorial board and parliamentary staff who provided additional information and commentary on an earlier draft of this article.
- 2 Inter-Parliamentary Union monthly ranking of women in national parliaments as of October 1 2025: URL: <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/>
- 3 These include MPs Jenica Atkin, Pam Damoff, Jennifer O'Connell, and Carla Qualtrough.
- 4 Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs (House of Commons). Witness Testimony. May 28, 2024. URL: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/PROC/meeting-115/evidence>

- 5 Krook, Mona Lena. *Violence Against Women in Politics*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).
- 6 Rebecca Major and Cynthia Niiioo-Binee-Seh-Kwe Stirbys. "Blurred Lines: Boundaries and Consequences for Indigenous Women in Politics in the Era of #MeToo," in *Gender-Based Violence in Canadian Politics in the #MeToo Era*, ed. Tracey Raney and Cheryl N. Collier. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2024), 151–69.
- 7 Raney, Tracey and Cheryl N. Collier. *Gender-based Violence in Canadian Politics in the #MeToo Era*. (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2024), 7.
- 8 For example, see Sandra Håkansson. "The Gendered Representational Costs of Violence against Politicians." *Perspectives on Politics*, (July 2023): 1–16. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592723001913> and Karina Kosiara-Pedersen. "Single Ladies and Freedom of Speech: Gendered Explanations for, and Effects of, Violence in Politics." *European Journal of Politics and Gender* 7, no. 2 (2024): 221–38. <https://doi.org/10.1332/251510821X16777808903018>
- 9 House of Commons (Canada). Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. 2018. Report 64: Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Commons: Sexual Harassment between Members. URL: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/committees/en/PROC/StudyActivity?studyActivityId=9651001>
- 10 Bill C-65 strengthens provisions to address harassment and violence in all federally regulated workplaces, including Parliament. The policy was updated again in 2024 to apply to work-related communication platforms, such as email, videoconferencing, and social media.
- 11 For a more detailed explanation of the Senate's policy, see my chapter, "Fixing the Upper House: A Gender and Intersectional Analysis of the Canadian Senate's 2021 Harassment and Violence Prevention Policy," in Raney and Collier (2024).
- 12 United Kingdom Parliament (Independent Complaints and Grievance Policy Programme Team). 2018 (July). *Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Delivery Report*.
- 13 United Kingdom Parliament. 2025. *Behaviour Code*. URL: <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/conduct-in-parliament/ukparliamentbehaviourcode.pdf>. The behaviour code is in addition to codes of conduct that were already in place in both houses.
- 14 Kernaghan, Paul. 2024 (May 13). Independent Complaint and Grievance Scheme (ICGS) – Independent Review of the ICGS. URL: <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/icgs-review-2024---final-copy.pdf>
- 15 There are exceptions where matters that take place in the House or a Committee would not be exempt from the ICGS. For example, these include bullying/harassing another person via whispering or passing notes, or sexual misconduct in the form of unwanted touching of another member, clerk, employee, witness or visitor. See United Kingdom Parliament. "Parliamentary privilege and the ICGS." URL: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/independent-complaints-and-grievance-scheme/parliamentary-privilege-and-the-icgs/>.

- 16 Jenkins, Kate. 2021. *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces*. Australian Human Rights Commission. See also Marian Sawyer, "Dealing with Toxic Parliaments: Lessons From Elsewhere." *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 36, no. 1 (2021): 7-22.
- 17 Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (Australia). 2025. *Behaviour Code for Australian Parliamentarians*. <https://www.pwss.gov.au/hr-advice/safe-and-respectful-culture/behaviour-codes-and-standards/behaviour-code-for-australian-parliamentarians>
- 18 Francis, Debbie. 2019 (May). *External Independent Review. Bullying and Harassment in the New Zealand Parliamentary Workplace*. URL: <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2019-05/apo-nid239146.pdf>
- 19 Marian Sawyer and Maria Maley. *Toxic Parliaments and What Can Be Done About Them*. (London, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2024), 93.
- 20 Francis, Debbie. 2023 (June). Culture in the New Zealand Parliamentary Workplace. A future excellence horizon. URL: <https://www3.parliament.nz/en/footer/about-us/parliaments-workplace-culture/culture-in-the-new-zealand-parliamentary-workplace-a-future-excellence-horizon>
- 21 As specified in the policy (but not the MP Code), independent investigators must also have knowledge, training, and experience relevant to workplace harassment and violence and have knowledge of the *Canada Labour Code* and *Canadian Human Rights Act*, as well as any other legislation related to workplace harassment and violence.
- 22 See Cheryl N. Collier and Tracey Raney. 2018. "Canada's Member-to-Member Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment in the House of Commons: Progress or Regress?" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 51(4): 795-815.
- 23 Canadian House of Commons. Procedure and House Affairs Committee. 2024 (May 28). No. 115
- 44.1 Parliament. URL: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/PROC/meeting-115/evidence>
- 24 See discussion in the PROC committee on October 22, 2024, URL: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/PROC/meeting-128/evidence>
- 25 Senate of Canada. 2021. Senate Harassment and Violence Prevention Policy, 13. URL: https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/432/CIBA/reports/CIBA_RTP5_POL_HVP_E.pdf
- 26 The House of Lords maintains its own standards system which is overseen by the House of Lords Commissioners for Standards.
- 27 If a recommended sanction of over 14 days is approved by the House, a recall election is triggered in the MP's riding. For example, after MP Peter Bone was found to have engaged in bullying and sexual misconduct in 2023, the IEP recommended, and parliament voted in favour of, a suspension of six weeks thus triggering a by-election in the riding.
- 28 House of Commons Library (United Kingdom). 2025 (January 7). *Risk-based exclusion of MPs*. URL: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9812/>
- 29 Sawyer and Maley, 93.
- 30 For a discussion about external oversight in the context of parliamentary privilege and gendered violence, see Tracey Raney and Cheryl N. Collier. "Privilege and Gendered Violence in the Canadian and British Houses of Commons: A Feminist Institutional Analysis." *Parliamentary Affairs* 75, no. 2 (2021): 382-99, URL: <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsaa069>.
- 31 Bronskill, Jim. 2024 (May 12). "Politicians keep getting more threats. The head of the RCMP says new tools might be needed to protect them." CBC News online, URL: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/rcmp-new-law-possible-politician-security-1.7202016>

Racial Diversity and the 2025 Federal Election: Visible Minority Candidates and MPs

The April 28, 2025, federal general election marked the fifth consecutive election to set a record for visible minority representation in Parliament. Sixty-two visible minority MPs were elected, a notable increase from the 53 elected in 2021. As a proportion of the House of Commons, their share rose from 15.7 to 18.1 per cent. However, there was a shift in candidate patterns: while the three largest national parties consistently nominated more visible minority candidates in each election from 2011 to 2021, in 2025 only the Conservatives continued this trend. This article also considers comparisons with the broader visible minority population, highlights first-time candidates, explores the competitiveness of the ridings where visible minority candidates ran, and considers the overall diversity of those constituencies.

Jerome H. Black and Andrew Griffith

How did racialized minorities – or, in government parlance, visible minorities – fare in the federal election of 2025?¹ The numbers themselves are straightforward: 62 such individuals, comprising 18.1 per cent of all MPs in the House, were elected. But how do we put these numbers into context? Guided by the view that it is both important and consequential that Canada’s Parliament reasonably mirrors significant dimensions of the population at large, including women, Indigenous peoples, and, certainly, visible minorities, we suggest these results are encouraging, on the whole, but identify elements of potential concern.

The 2025 election resulted in a high-water mark in the representation of visible minorities in both absolute and relative terms. The previous election, held in 2021, witnessed the election of 53 visible minority MPs who made up 15.7 per cent of the House’s membership.

That, in itself, constituted a record at that time. Even more impressively, the 2025 election marked the fifth consecutive election to produce an increased number of visible minority MPs. The nine additional visible minority MPs in the new parliament also constitute a significant bump in absolute terms. Each of the previous two elections saw the total number of visible minority MPs increase by only three.

Employing population data to calculate simple “ratios of representation” offers another way to evaluate the results. If we compare the number of visible minority MPs to Canada’s visible minority population as a whole, the election results are somewhat discouraging. But, if only citizens are counted, the outlook is not as negative.

The population approach compares the incidence of minority MPs against their corresponding population numbers overall. It takes a broader view of representation – one in which visible minority MPs associate themselves with communities as a whole, making them feel represented without distinction to age or citizenship considerations. The representative connection can be both in symbolic terms (for example, MPs serve as role models and help foster a sense of inclusion in a multicultural society), and in substantive terms (for example, MPs can address issues of disproportionate concern to community members). More MPs relative to the population means more representation.

Jerome H. Black is a retired former Chair of McGill University’s Department of Political Science. Andrew Griffith is a former director general of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and is a fellow of the Environics Institute.

Table 1
Visible Minority MPs, 2011-2025

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2025</u>
Party					
Bloc Québécois	1	--	--	--	--
Conservative	12	6	10	6	19
Liberal	2	39	37	43	42
NDP	14	2	3	3	1
(N)	(29)	(47)	(50)	(53)*	(62)

*Includes one Independent.

Source: For 2011-2021 data, see Jerome H. Black, “Racial Diversity and the 2021 Federal Election: Visible Minority Candidates and MPs,” *Canadian Parliamentary Review* Vol. 45, No. 2, 2022, pp. 19-25. MP data for 2025 assembled by the authors.

In practical terms, this comparison employs the visible minority population enumerated in the most recently available population data available (26.5 per cent of the Canadian population according to the 2021 census), as the denominator and the incidence of minority MPs (18.1 per cent) as the numerator to produce a ratio. At roughly two-thirds, it is noticeably short of parity, but it is not substantially different from the result in three previous elections (though the 2025 two-thirds calculation presumably overstates representation since the post-2021 visible minority population growth is not being taken account). Therefore, a conclusion reached in a study of the representation of visible minorities following the 2021 election might still hold true in 2025: “... enough visible minority MPs are being elected to keep pace with their general population growth, but in insufficient numbers to diminish the disparity in their parliamentary representation.”²

On the other hand, if the representation ratio is restricted to include only the visible minority population who are citizens, we see a ratio edging closer to parity. There is merit in considering this narrower legal perspective when gauging representation among

MPs as only citizens can run as candidates and be elected as MPs. With such individuals comprising 19.5 per cent of the Canadian population according to the same census, this calculation produces a somewhat less negative picture of representation.³

A further way to gauge how well visible minorities did in terms of representation in the 2025 election would be to contrast their results relative to other key diversity groups such as women and Indigenous peoples. Unlike visible minority MPs, these groups’ numbers have essentially stalled. The percentage of Indigenous MPs barely increased from 3.3 per cent in 2021 to 3.5 per cent in 2025, while the presence of women MPs actually dropped, if only slightly so (from 30.5 to 30.3 per cent). From this angle, the achievement of visible minority representation does stand apart.⁴

Visible Minority MPs

Table 1 displays the number of visible minority MPs according to party affiliation for the 2025 election and, to show trend lines, the four previous contests as well. In absolute terms, aside from a particularly poor showing and third-place finish in 2011, when only

two visibly minority MPs were in the party's caucus, the governing Liberals have been the party with the largest number of visible minority MPs during the past 10 years. In comparison to the previous election, the number of visible minority MPs elected as Liberals remained about the same. However, while that party could claim the affiliation of 81 per cent of all visible minority MPs elected in 2021, they could only claim 68 per cent in 2025. This difference is entirely due to a tripling in both the number and percentage of visible minority MPs elected under the Conservative banner. Visible minority MPs elected to the Conservative caucus rose from six in 2021 to 19 in 2025. Never before has that party elected so many minority MPs. For its part, the collapse of the NDP in 2025 is seemingly reflected in only a single visible minority MP being elected (though that is only down from three in 2021).

It is unlikely any simple account could explain these partisan patterns, nor the moderate but increasing number of minority MPs elected in total over time. There are many factors that have a bearing on how well visible minorities fare in getting elected and many are offsetting in their impact. Some operate to constrain or limit visible minority representation from what it might be otherwise. These include the same obstacles that other outgroups, such as women, have had to contend with as they attempt to move with purpose from the periphery of parliamentary politics to a more enduring and substantive presence; these include the prevailing traditional views of the "ideal" politician, discrimination (both subtle and more apparent), and certain institutional factors such as incumbency.

On the other hand, visible minorities are embedded in a social and political context that is not static. Forces that work in favour of facilitating their representation include: evolving societal values combined with the electoral realities that, at least in some quarters, lead to a positive emphasis on promoting diversity and recognizing the political benefits associated with the slates of diverse candidates.

Visible Minority Candidates

National parties may be incentivized to deliberately seek out visible minority candidates to highlight their credentials as inclusive entities in a multicultural society. However, it is the constituency associations or local parties, especially those in urban areas with significant minority populations, that are probably most attuned to the competitive status of their districts and the potential political relevance of candidate diversity matching riding diversity.

According to the 2021 census, there were no less than 173 electoral districts where visible minorities formed more than 20 per cent of the population (about 50 per cent of all ridings), and 130 where they comprised more than 30 per cent of the population (38 per cent of all ridings). In 51 ridings (15 per cent of all ridings) visible minorities constituted a majority of the population. This latter figure is also indicative of the ongoing impact of immigration on increasing visible minority settlement: there were 41 "minority-majority" constituencies according to the 2016 census and 33 such districts according to the 2011 census.

More to the point, the constituency parties have seemingly tracked this upward pattern by nominating more visible minority candidates from one election to the next. It is reasonable to infer that this behaviour is driven by rivalry among the parties as they campaign for votes in districts that are often competitive and play an important role in deciding the outcome of the election.

Did the parties nominate even more visible minority candidates in 2025 than in the previous election? Table 2 provides appropriate data. Its first row sets out the percentage of visible minority candidates that ran for the four largest parties in the House of Commons, the Bloc Québécois, Conservatives, Liberals and NDP. In 2011, visible minority candidates comprised 9.7 per cent of all candidates running for these four parties. By 2021 that percentage had more than doubled to 21.7. This upward trend now includes the 2025 contest, with a record level of 22.6 per cent. However, the incremental growth from past elections is modest (at one per cent) compared to previous inter-election increases which tended to be in the range of three to four per cent.

Idiosyncrasies across multiple nomination contests may very well underlie this levelling out, but a breakdown by party for the three largest national parties (the next three rows) reveals some important deviations. All three show the same general pattern of growth across the 2011-2021 period. There were consistent and sometimes quite large increases in the numbers of visible minorities nominated as candidates. There was particularly significant expansion for the Liberals across the 2011-2015 and 2019-2021 pairings. The 2015 to 2019 period stands out for the NDP as it increased its minority team remarkably from 13.4 to 22.4 per cent. In contrast, the growth for the Conservatives, especially across the 2015-2019 and 2019-2021 dyads, is noticeably smaller.

Table 2
Visible Minority Candidates, 2011-2025

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2025</u>
All Candidates* (%)	9.7	13.9	18.2	21.7	22.6
By Party (%)					
Conservative	10.1	14.2	16.6	17.2	23.4
Liberal	9.1	16.9	18.6	24.0	22.8
NDP	10.4	13.4	22.4	26.9	23.7
New Candidates (%)					
Conservative	13.4	18.0	19.7	22.6	31.6
Liberal	9.1	17.5	18.4	24.5	21.3
NDP	12.0	14.3	24.6	25.4	24.6

*Includes Bloc Québécois, Conservative, Liberal, and NDP parties.

Source: For 2011-2021 data, see Jerome H. Black, “Racial Diversity and the 2021 Federal Election: Visible Minority Candidates and MPs,” *Canadian Parliamentary Review* Vol. 45, No. 2, 2022, pp. 19-25. Candidate data for 2025 assembled by the authors.

This pattern changed significantly in the 2025 election. Atypically, both the Liberal and the NDP failed to further increase their contingent of visible minority candidates relative to the previous election. There is actually a decline, albeit a modest one, for the Liberal party, from 24 per cent in 2021 to 22.8 per cent in 2025. Similarly, the NDP’s promotion of minority candidates experienced a somewhat steeper decline from 26.9 to 23.7 per cent.

In contrast, the Conservatives not only increased the proportion of minorities in their candidate team, but they also did so by a strikingly large margin. In 2021, the party could claim that visible minorities made up 17.2 per cent of their slate of candidates; but in 2025 they could boast that the number was 23.4 per cent – more than six percentage points of growth. These data would seem to suggest that were it not for the Conservative’s promotional efforts, the 2025 election might have witnessed an overall decline in visible minority candidacies.⁵

First-Time Visible Minority Candidates

However, there is an additional and arguably better way to gauge the promotion of visible minority candidacies by the political parties in the 2025 election. By exclusively considering their nominees who ran for the first time in this election, we can judge a party’s contemporary commitment to the promotion of visible minorities as an election is looming. This focus, therefore, excludes efforts made in past elections. Relatedly, it cancels out any incumbency effects associated with the tendency of previous candidates to be re-nominated.

The result for the four largest parties combined (25.4 per cent) indicates that there was a small increase in the percentage of new candidates in 2025, up from 24.1 per cent in 2021 (data not shown).⁶ Table 2, which shows upward trends among the three largest national parties individually since 2011, reveals a clear highlight in 2025 – an even greater divergence between

the Conservative and Liberal parties' advancement of their new candidates. In a break from past patterns, the Liberals recruited noticeably fewer new visible minority candidates in 2025 (21.3 per cent) than in 2021 (24.5 per cent).

In contrast, the Conservatives dramatically increased their share of first-time visible minority candidates between 2021 to 2025 by nine full points, from 22.6 to 31.6 per cent. By itself, the latter figure is striking – almost one-third of the party's newly recruited candidates were visible minorities!

What could explain this divergence between Canada's two largest national parties? For the Conservatives, amped up promotion of visible minority candidates likely reflected current electoral calculations. However, the emphasis on recruiting visible minority candidates is likely built upon the legacy of extensive outreach among these communities dating from the Stephen Harper era. Jason Kenney, Harper's immigration minister, notably argued that visible minorities were a natural conservative constituency and systematically engaged visible minority groups by appearing at 10 to 15 events each weekend.⁷

On the other hand, several factors could explain the Liberals' recruitment decline. Over the six months leading up to the election, the party's electoral prospects underwent a dramatic turnaround. According to published opinion polls, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's personal popularity had ebbed and his party's odds of being re-elected were very low. A change in Liberal leadership, combined with significant emerging concerns about Canadian sovereignty in the wake of comments by American President Donald Trump, reversed the party's decline in the polls. Is it possible that recruitment was sluggish when Trudeau was at the helm and then picked up later when Mark Carney won the party's leadership? Data confirm that the Liberals nominated their candidates later than the Conservatives.⁸ With an election called just weeks after Carney took office, subsequent recruitment would have occurred within a shorter time frame. A key question for further investigation, then, is whether this condensed recruitment period had any effect on the number of visible minority candidates they put forward.⁹

Whatever the underlying explanation(s), at this point there is no reason to believe the small declines experienced by some parties are anything more than a blip. The competition hypothesis (demographic

changes drive visible minority candidacies) still has more, rather than less, evidence to commend it. For example, the three major national parties (along with the Bloc) generally run visible minority candidates against each other in ridings with significant visible minority populations. In constituencies with a visible minority population of more than 70 per cent, visible minorities comprised over 80 per cent of the candidates for these parties; in constituencies with population numbers between 50 and 70 per cent, they made up over 40 per cent of the candidates. Inter-minority competition in such ridings can be identified as a positive factor that helps keep minority MP representation at least steady – defeated visible minority incumbents are usually replaced by their minority competitors. In other words, this multiple candidacy competition helps establish a sort of "floor" of representation. Moreover, an ever-growing minority population in the country will likely prevent a hard ceiling on the number of visible minority MPs elected.

Constituency Competitiveness

The commitment parties make to advance their first-time visible minority candidates can also be evaluated by accounting for their competitive status in their constituencies. Nominating visible minority candidates in ridings where they stand a chance at winning the seat for their party would clearly indicate a party has a more serious approach to the promotion of its minority recruits than nominating them where the party has a very limited prospect of success.

Following standard practice, all the electoral districts were divided based on the constituency-level results in the previous election – regarded as a significant potential predictor of each party's prospects in 2025.¹⁰ Specifically, electoral districts where a party lost the 2021 election by more than 10 per cent of the popular vote were deemed non-competitive. There are two types of competitive ridings: ones which the party won in 2021 or ones which it came within 10 per cent of winning. Among these competitive ridings, an "open contest" in which no incumbent was running for re-election, would be generally viewed as a more desirable situation for a candidate – particularly for an opposition party. A decision to nominate a visible minority candidate in a competitive "open contest" would demonstrate a particular commitment to recruitment and promotion efforts.

The data in Table 3 provide the basis for two perspectives on the relationship between the minority-

Table 3
Visible Minority Candidates, Parties, and Constituency Competitiveness, 2025
(New Candidates Only)

	<u>Non-Competitive Constituencies</u>	<u>Competitive Constituencies Incumbent MP?</u>		(N)
		Yes	No	
Visible Minorities				
Conservative	80	8	12	(65)
Liberal	64	10	26	(42)
NDP	95	2	3	(62)
Non-Visible Minorities				
Conservative	68	18	14	(141)
Liberal	66	6	28	(155)
NDP	90	5	5	(190)

Row percentages.

See text for definition of competitive and non-competitive constituencies.

non-minority status of party candidates and their placement in competitive ridings. The first three rows focus just on the parties' visible minority candidates and reveal that the Liberals were far ahead of the Conservatives in elevating their new minority recruits. The former nominated 36 per cent of their visible minority recruits in the two categories of competitive ridings (combined from 10 and 26 per cent) while the latter placed only 20 per cent of their candidates in such ridings. This is a substantially wider gap than in 2021 when the Liberals slotted 30 per cent of their minority candidates into more electorally attractive ridings, besting the Conservatives' 20 per cent (data not shown).

Note as well, that a similarly large difference is also apparent for the subset of winnable ridings without incumbents; in the current election the Liberals' advantage was 26 versus 12 per cent over the Conservatives. For its part, the NDP was able to place far fewer of their first-time visible minority candidates in competitive constituencies (just five per cent overall, and three per cent in non-incumbent constituencies), not surprising given the party's weaker electoral

status overall.

A second perspective on the data works in the next three rows in Table 3 to provide for intra-party comparisons, the focus shifting to compare where each party placed its new visible minority candidates relative to its non-minority counterparts. These figures give an indication of whether or not the parties privileged one category of candidates over the other. In the past few elections, the Liberals have been fairly even-handed in promoting their visible minority candidates. In the 2021 election, for instance, they placed even more of them in competitive ridings (30 vs. 24 per cent for their non-minority candidates, and also promoted them more in open constituencies, 20 vs. 11 per cent).

The 2025 election saw the Liberals maintain the same stance. The party nominated 36 per cent of its first-time visible minority candidates in competitive ridings and placed 34 per cent of its non-minority counterparts in such districts. In the subset of "open contest" constituencies, the party also nominated about the same percentage of candidates in both categories (26 and 28 per cent). Overall, the NDP nominated more

non-visible minority candidates in competitive ridings (10 per cent and five per cent, respectively).

As for the Conservatives, the party's track record of generally favouring non-visible minority candidates continued in 2025.¹¹ To be sure, they were nearly equitable in the case of open constituencies placing 12 per cent of their minority candidates and 14 per cent of their non-minority contenders in these districts. However, overall, they privileged the latter, nominating 32 per cent of them in the two categories of competitive constituencies compared to only 20 per cent for their visible minority contenders

This latter result is interesting in that, while in keeping with the party's past record of privileging its non-minority candidates, it stands in contrast to the already-emphasized fact that the party recruited the most first-time visible minority candidates in 2025. This could simply have been the product of idiosyncrasies across the many different Conservative associations. That said, it does appear that a more balanced approach to the competitive placement of visible minority candidates might have led to even more of them winning their way into Parliament. Similarly, given the Liberals' better record nominating its visible minority candidates in more electorally viable districts, recruiting more of them in the first place might also have led to more visible minority MPs.

Constituency Diversity

Political parties are very much inclined to nominate their visible minority candidates in constituencies with significant minority populations. Many of these ridings are competitive ridings where candidate selection can make a difference. On the one hand, this readily squares with the idea of competition driving the local parties to recruit minority candidates to attract more votes in such heterogeneous electoral districts. On the other hand, office-seekers can also draw upon the resources and networks in their increasingly integrated communities to challenge for the party's nomination. As noted in the 2021 election study of visible minority candidates: "Likely both explanations have merit, and, in any event, probably interact with one another so that there is room in the analysis to understand that the nomination of more visible minority candidates may be due, at least in part, to the impact of competition."¹²

The 2025 data confirm that all the parties nominated more first-time visible minority candidates

in constituencies with large visible minority populations. Newly recruited visible minority candidates for the six largest parties (combined) ran in constituencies where the minority population averaged 45 per cent while their non-visible minority candidates competed in districts where minorities comprised 19 per cent of the population. Among the three larger national parties, the gap is strongest in the case of the Conservatives – as it was in 2021. In that year, Conservative visible minority candidates ran in constituencies where the minority population averaged 49 per cent, compared to 19 per cent for their non-visible minority counterparts. In 2025 the relationship was even a bit stronger: 56 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively. In 2025 the Liberals nominated visible minority candidates in areas where minorities comprised 31 per cent of the population compared to 17 per cent for their non-visible minority candidates, a gap that is narrower than in 2021 (30 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively). The percentages for the NDP (49 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively,) show a much stronger relationship than in 2021 (36 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively). Similar patterns of concentration hold for the Bloc, Greens and People's Party.¹³

Summing Up

From the point of view of appreciating increased diversity within the Parliament of Canada, the 2025 election is clearly notable for its impact on augmenting visible minority representation. This election was the fifth consecutive contest to set a new record level of MPs. Significantly, the 62 visible minority candidates who were elected constituted an above average increase in absolute numbers compared to the past several elections. Visible minorities also had relatively greater electoral success than other key diversity groups, in particular women and Indigenous peoples. As for population comparisons, this latest representation level falls quite short if the entire population benchmark is used, but less so if filtered by citizenship

The 2025 election is also notable for its departure from an established pattern evident among the three largest national parties since at least 2011. In each of the four general elections held from 2011 to 2021, these three parties consistently increased the share of visible minorities among their candidate teams, a trend line that, importantly, includes their new candidates. In 2025, only the Conservatives added more of these candidates to their line-ups, while the Liberals and NDP nominated fewer. In the wake of

other results, this one particular deviation does not entirely compromise the competition hypothesis, but clearly further exploration at the candidate level is merited.

Apart from the obvious point that candidacy is a necessary condition for MP status, greater understanding of candidate recruitment and selection by local parties is also an important focal point for gauging how open the political process is to visible minority office-seekers.¹⁴

Notes

- 1 The “official” term “visible minorities,” rather than the more commonly used “racialized minorities,” is employed here, in part as it matches the language used by Statistics Canada in the collection of census and other data; the term “minorities” is used alternatively to ease repetition.
- 2 Jerome H. Black, “Racial Diversity and the 2021 Federal Election: Visible Minority Candidates and MPs,” *Canadian Parliamentary Review* Vol. 45, No. 2, 2022, p. 20.
- 3 For a further discussion about these two alternative measures, see Jerome H. Black and Andrew Griffith, “Do Canada’s most powerful federal posts reflect the country’s diversity?” *Policy Options*, June, 2020. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/june-2020/do-canadas-most-powerful-federal-posts-reflect-the-countrys-diversity/>
- 4 Not considered here, but important to remember is the fact that not all visible minority origin groups are represented by MPs to the same degree, if at all. For such

data in the context of the 2025 election, see Jerome H. Black and Andrew Griffith, “The diversity of candidates and MPs stalled for some groups in this election,” *Policy Options*, May, 2025. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/may-2025/diversity-federal-election/>

- 5 For the sake of completeness, it can be noted that visible minorities comprised 12.8 per cent of the candidates who competed for the Bloc.
- 6 Visible minority candidates made up 17.0 per cent of the Bloc’s new candidates.
- 7 https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/more-visible-minority-candidates-ran-and-won-in-canadas-federal-election-the-conservatives-boosted-the-article_970c99b5-9c99-469a-8a07-eef975f2dd78.html
- 8 Elections Canada. <https://www.elections.ca/content2.aspx?section=can&dir=cand/lst&document=index&lang=e>
- 9 Another question is whether the same effect might help explain the Liberals’ decrease in recruiting women candidates from 2021 to 2025 (43 to 36.4 per cent).
- 10 We used the “transposed results” that Elections Canada produced (which involves mapping the 2021 results onto the 343 districts).
- 11 In 2021, for instance, the party placed 16 per cent of its new visible minority candidates in competitive ridings compared to 23 per cent of its non-minority counterparts.
- 12 Jerome H. Black, “Racial Diversity and the 2021 Federal Election: Visible Minority Candidates and MPs,” *Canadian Parliamentary Review* Vol. 45, No. 2, 2022, p. 24.
- 13 For the Bloc, 34 vs. 18 per cent, for the Greens, 40 vs. 21 per cent, and for the People’s Party, 40 vs 21 per cent.
- 14 For a brief discussion about how a focus on candidates can be just as revealing about the openness of the political process as the final visible minority MP numbers, see Jerome H. Black, “Racial Diversity and the 2021 Federal Election: Visible Minority Candidates and MPs,” *Canadian Parliamentary Review* Vol. 45, No. 2, 2022, p. 22.

The Canadian Scene



Hon. Yvonne Clarke



Hon. Paul Lane



Hon. David Joanasie

New Yukon Speaker

Yvonne Clarke was elected as the 27th Speaker of Yukon's Legislative Assembly on December 8, 2025. She becomes the second woman to hold the role and the first Filipino Canadian woman speaker in Canada.

"That milestone does not belong to me alone," she said following her election. "It belongs to every Yukoner who has ever stepped forward with courage, to every immigrant who arrived with hope in their pocket and to every person who believed that this beautiful territory in the North could be their home."

Before running for office, Speaker Clarke spent 12 years as a board member of the Yukon Learn Society, which promotes literacy, numeracy and computer skills. As a board member for the Yukon Public Legal Education Association, she co-authored the third edition of "Splitting Up," a resource for women involved in family breakdowns. Speaker Clarke also chaired the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues.

Elected in 2021 to represent Porter Creek Centre, during her first term in office she served as the Yukon Party's critic for the Yukon Housing

Corporation, Housing and Lot Development, the Public Service Commission, the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, and the French Language Services Directorate. Speaker Clarke was re-elected in the 2025 general election as the MLA for Whistle Bend North following boundary changes.

Clark told MLAs that her election "is a powerful reminder that our democracy grows stronger when more voices from more journeys, cultures and histories have a seat in decision making."

"I pledge to serve every member equally: government benches, opposition benches and every independent voice. I will uphold our standing orders, protect the rights of all members and ensure that debate, even when passionate, remains respectful, principled and worthy of public confidence," she told the Assembly.

Speaker Clarke has lived in Yukon for more than 30 years and has three adult children.

New Speaker in Newfoundland and Labrador

On November 3, 2025, Mount Pearl – Southlands MHA **Paul Lane** was acclaimed as Speaker of Newfoundland and Labrador's House of Assembly.

Speaking to reporters prior to taking the Chair for the first time, Speaker Lane said he was “very excited and honoured to take on this new role. It’s not something that I ever anticipated, to be honest with you, that I would have the opportunity to do, albeit it is something that I absolutely had an interest in doing.”

First elected as a Progressive Conservative in 2011, and subsequently as a Liberal in 2015, since 2016 he has sat in the Assembly as an Independent MHA. Speaker Lane said his time as an Independent is uniquely well-suited to a position that is historically non-partisan.

“The role of Speaker is supposed to be fair, impartial, non-partisan, and so on,” he said. “I think, for the first time in our history in Newfoundland [and] Labrador, we actually have a truly independent speaker, with no ties to any political party, which I would view as a positive thing because there is no real or perception, of any kind, of political bias one way or the other, which is the way it’s supposed to be and should be anyway.”

Lane explained that he planned to work on improving decorum and bringing more transparency and dignity to the House, while also making the Assembly more interesting and accessible to the public.

“I see opportunities for a review of standing orders and some of the legislation that governs not just the House when in session, but also committees of the House and how the House committees function when the House is not in session,” he said. “I see an opportunity to do something new and, hopefully, make some positive change that’s going to have a positive impact on our democracy and on our province as a whole.”

Before seeking elected office, Lane was employed as an occupational health and safety professional and disability claims manager. During his first term as an MHA he served as a parliamentary secretary, and from December 2015 to May 2016 he acted as Deputy Chair of Committees.

Speaker Lane, who is married with two adult children, enjoys travelling, and hunting and fishing in his spare time.

New Nunavut Speaker

South Baffin MLA **David Joanasie** was elected as Speaker of Nunavut’s seventh legislative assembly on November 18, 2025. Kugluktuk MLA **Simon Kuliktana** and Amittuq MLA **Abraham Qammaniq** also competed for the position.

Saying he was “humbled” to be taking the Chair, Speaker Joanasie said he would draw on his 12 years of legislative experience to make sure “proceedings are going as smoothly as can be.” He also expressed a desire to help new members as they learn about their roles.

Speaker Joanasie, who was first elected as an MLA in 2013, re-elected in 2017, and acclaimed in 2021 and 2025, has previously served as Co-Chair of the Regular Members’ Caucus, was member of the Management and Services Board, and held several Ministerial portfolios, including Government House Leader.

Before seeking elected office, Speaker Joanasie was employed as communications manager of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association and previously held positions with the Government of Nunavut’s Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

He holds a certificate in business communication from Saint Mary’s University, a diploma from Algonquin College, and attended the Nunavut Sivuniksavut program in Ottawa.

Speaker Joanasie is married and has five children and one grandchild. Outside of politics, he enjoys hunting, fishing, hockey, travelling, traditional land activities and Inuit language multi-media projects.

Regional Executive Committee, CPA*

PRESIDENT

Nathalie Roy, Québec

FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

Raj Chouhan, British Columbia

SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT

Francine Landry, New Brunswick

PAST PRESIDENT

Donna Skelly, Ontario

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Sidney MacEwen, Prince Edward Island

Rosemary Moodie, Federal Branch

Raj Chouhan, British Columbia

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

Francis Scarpaleggia, Speaker

Eric Janse, Clerk

SENATE

Raymonde Gagné, Speaker

Shaïla Anwar, Clerk

ALBERTA

Ric McIver, 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

Paul Lane, Speaker

Kim Hawley George, Secretary

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Shane Thompson, Speaker

Glen Rutland, Secretary

NUNAVUT

David Joanasie, Speaker

Stephen Innuksuk, Secretary

YUKON

Yvonne Clarke, Speaker

Dan Cable, Secretary

*As of December 31, 2025

Canadian Region
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Alberta

Office of the Clerk
3rd Floor, 9820-107 Street
Edmonton, AB T5K 1E7
780 427-2478 (tel)
780 427-5688 (fax)
clerk@assembly.ab.ca

Newfoundland and Labrador

Office of the Clerk
Confederation Building
P.O. Box 8700
St John's, NL A1B 4J6
709 729-3405 (tel)
709 729-4820 (fax)
kimhawleygeorge@gov.nl.ca

Ontario

Office of the Clerk
Room 104,
Legislative Bldg.
Toronto, ON M7A 1A2
416 325-7341 (tel)
416 325-7344 (fax)
clerks-office@ola.org

British Columbia

Office of the Clerk
Parliament Buildings
Room 221
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
250 387-3785 (tel)
250 387-0942 (fax)
ClerkHouse@leg.bc.ca

Northwest Territories

Office of the Clerk
P.O. Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9
867 767-9130 (tel)
867 873-0432 (fax)
glen_rutland@ntassembly.ca

Prince Edward Island

Office of the Clerk
Province House
P.O. Box 2000
Charlottetown, PE C1A 7N8
902 368-5970 (tel)
902 368-5175 (fax)
jajeffrey@assembly.pe.ca

Federal Branch

Executive Secretary
131 Queen Street, 5th Floor
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
613 992-2093 (tel)
613 995-0212 (fax)
ccom@parl.gc.ca



Québec

Direction des relations inter-
parlementaires
Assemblée nationale
Québec, QC G1A 1A3
418 643-7391 (tel)
418 643-1865 (fax)
melissa.morin@assnat.qc.ca

Manitoba

Office of the Clerk
Legislative Building
Room 237
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8
204 945-3636 (tel)
204 948-2507 (fax)
Clerkla@leg.gov.mb.ca

Nova Scotia

Office of the Clerk
Province House
P.O. Box 1617
Halifax, NS B3J 2Y3
902 424-5707 (tel)
902 424-0526 (fax)
James.Charlton@novascotia.ca

Saskatchewan

Office of the Clerk
Legislative Building
Room 239
Regina, SK S4S 0B3
306 787-2377 (tel)
306 787-0408 (fax)
cpa@legassembly.sk.ca

New Brunswick

Office of the Clerk
Legislative Building
P.O. Box 6000
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1
506 453-2506 (tel)
506 453-7154 (fax)
shayne.davies@gnb.ca

Nunavut

Office of the Clerk
Legislative Assembly of Nunavut
926 Sivumugiaq Street
Iqaluit, NU X0A 3H0
867 975-5100 (tel)
867 975-5190 (fax)

Yukon

Office of the Clerk
Legislative Building
P.O. Box 2703
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6
867 667-5494 (tel)
867 393-6280 (fax)
clerk@gov.yk.ca

New and Notable Titles

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

“Maturity Framework for AI in Parliaments.” Inter-Parliamentary Union - Geneva. A toolkit for parliamentarians: 38p, 2025.

- The *Maturity Framework for AI in Parliaments* has been developed to help parliaments adopt AI – and Generative AI (GenAI) tools in particular – with confidence and control, supporting them in connecting and managing a diverse range of complex projects. It is also intended to be used as a tool for communicating AI readiness and strategy across senior management.

“Welcoming new parliamentarians - Good practices for onboarding and offboarding MPs.” Inter-Parliamentary Union - Geneva. A toolkit for parliamentarians: 36p, 2025.

- Moving into parliamentary life is a pivotal moment for any MP. The way in which institutions prepare, welcome and support their new members can have a lasting impact on parliamentarians’ experience. For parliamentary administrations, the onboarding process is not just about guiding new members through the mechanics of parliamentary procedure. It is also about fostering relationships, building capacity and creating an environment in which parliamentarians can thrive from the very beginning of their term.

Brown, Ian. “Indigenous Laws: A Novel Form of Legislation in Canada (A Drafter’s Perspective).” *Journal of Parliamentary and Political Law* 19 (3): 529, October 2025.

- *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* (the *FNIM Act*) has affirmed the right of Indigenous peoples, that is First Nations, Inuit and Métis, to enact laws respecting child and family services. It further provides that those Indigenous laws will prevail in the case of any conflict with a law enacted by the Parliament or Government of Canada or by a province. Legislative work enabled by the *FNIM Act* has started. As of January 24, 2025, 14 Indigenous laws have come into force and 69 notices of intent to legislate have been received by the Government

of Canada...This paper is based on the author’s experience in working on a legislation project for a First Nation and on the issues encountered.

Davidson, Alistair. “Uncertainty and the Exercise of Reserve Powers: Revisiting a Governor-General’s Code of Practice.” *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 40 (2): 13-32, Spring/Summer 2025.

- This article examines the concept of uncertainty as it accompanies the exercise of the Governor-General’s reserve powers according to unwritten constitutional conventions. While such conventions offer flexibility in constitutional umpiring, their vagueness contributes to controversy, speculation and even crisis. During episodes of acute parliamentary dispute, uncertainty has the potential to undermine the Governor-General’s reputation and authority. In response, Canadian scholar Bruce Hicks has advocated for an apolitical decision-making rule for Canada’s Governor-General. The rule aims to foster greater predictability by enhancing expectation that Parliament will strive to resolve its own constitutional disputes. Building on Hicks’s proposal, this article suggests Australia should go further and introduce a Governor-General’s Code of Practice, an idea Australia’s Constitutional Commission considered in the 1980s. The proposed code would outline guiding principles for use of reserve powers, including Hicks’s rule, to buttress trust in Australia’s federal parliamentary democracy.

Dubrow, Geoff. “Reinvigorating Public Accounts Committees - Strengthening Accountability Across the Commonwealth.” *The Parliamentarian - Journal of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth* 106 (3): 28-30, 2025.

- This article draws from lessons learned to highlight five key challenges and offers a call to action for Parliaments and stakeholders to reinvigorate PACs as a vehicle for meaningful accountability.

Feldman, Charlie. “Notwithstanding the Backbench: Section 33 in Non-Government Bills.” *Constitutional Forum constitutionnel* 34 (2): 81-93, 2025.

- This article will not address the mechanics of notwithstanding clause, the arguments for and against its use, or how courts should approach its invocation — all of this has received extensive academic attention. Rather, the purpose of this article is to fill a narrow gap in the literature regarding the history of federal non-government bills introduced with a notwithstanding clause based on publicly available information. It will do so in three parts: first, it will briefly present some relevant parliamentary vocabulary and concepts; second, it will review the individual bills at issue, sorted by theme; and finally, it will conclude with brief comments and directions for future research.

Feldman, Charlie and Nag, Anushua. "Senate Public Bills in Canada: What goes up must bring something down?" *Australian Parliamentary Review* 40 (2): 91-105, Spring/Summer 2025.

- This article examines the evolving role of Senate Public Bills (SPBs) in Canada following reforms to the Senate appointment process. It documents a sharp rise in the introduction and enactment of SPBs, analyses the procedural implications of this trend, and explores its impacts on both the Senate and the House of Commons. Drawing on legislative data and committee activity, the authors assess whether the Senate's growing self-initiated legislative workload enhances its ability to serve Canadians or inadvertently displaces other parliamentary functions. The article concludes by considering whether procedural reforms are needed to maintain institutional balance.

Franceschet, Susan and Rayment, Erica. "Parliamentarians' perspectives on parenthood and politics in Canada's House of Commons." *Parliamentary Affairs*, Advance Access Publication: 1-21, August 2025.

- Canada's members of parliament (MPs) work long hours, travel frequently, and spend weeks away from home each year. Research on gender and politics finds that parliamentary work is not designed to accommodate those with caring obligations, usually women. In this paper, we leverage a survey of sitting Canadian MPs conducted in 2022 to assess whether women MPs report greater difficulty combining a political career with family life and to identify patterns of MP support for parenthood accommodations in parliament. Drawing on responses to closed- and open-ended questions, we argue that women MPs experience the challenge of reconciling work and

family more acutely than do men MPs. When it comes to support for family-friendly policies in parliament, however, we find that party is more strongly correlated with MPs' attitudes than gender. Most respondents are supportive of accommodating parenthood, but resistance appears among Conservative MPs, particularly for accommodations affecting core parliamentary operations.

Glynn, Patrick. "'We Asked, You Said, We Did': Closing the Feedback Loop in Committees' Public Engagement Processes." *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 40 (2): 52-67, Spring/Summer 2025.

- Parliamentary departments are adopting more professionalised and embedded approaches to public engagement to address declining trust in democracy. A critical element of such engagement is 'closing the feedback loop'. This involves returning to participants at the end of a process to explain how their contributions influenced outcomes (such as recommendations made by a committee), or to evaluate the impact of the engagement activity. Closing the feedback loop can help foster trust and legitimacy by assuring people they have been genuinely heard. However, many parliaments do not have clear strategies or consistent processes for feeding back to participants following an engagement initiative. This article argues that feedback loops are an indispensable component of effective parliamentary engagement. It considers the advantages (and associated risks) of implementing and closing feedback loops in public engagement with committee inquiries, presents three case studies, and concludes with practical strategies and considerations for embedding feedback into committee inquiries and other types of parliamentary business.

Sarauer, Nicole. "Living Legislative Work: The Experience of a Parliamentarian." *Journal of Parliamentary and Political Law*, 19 (3) : 493, October 2025.

- The parliamentarian plays a fundamental role in the legislative process. It is the parliamentarian who takes a bill through its various stages. The considerations that influence the legislator's work throughout this process, including bringing a bill to first reading, vary depending on the position that the legislator holds. Are they a member of the government or opposition? Are they a cabinet minister or a private member? Each role brings a multiplicity of different considerations.

Serban, Ruxandra. "Prime Minister's Question Period in the Canadian House of Commons: Lessons in parliamentary reform." *The Constitution Unit*: 7p, October 8, 2025.

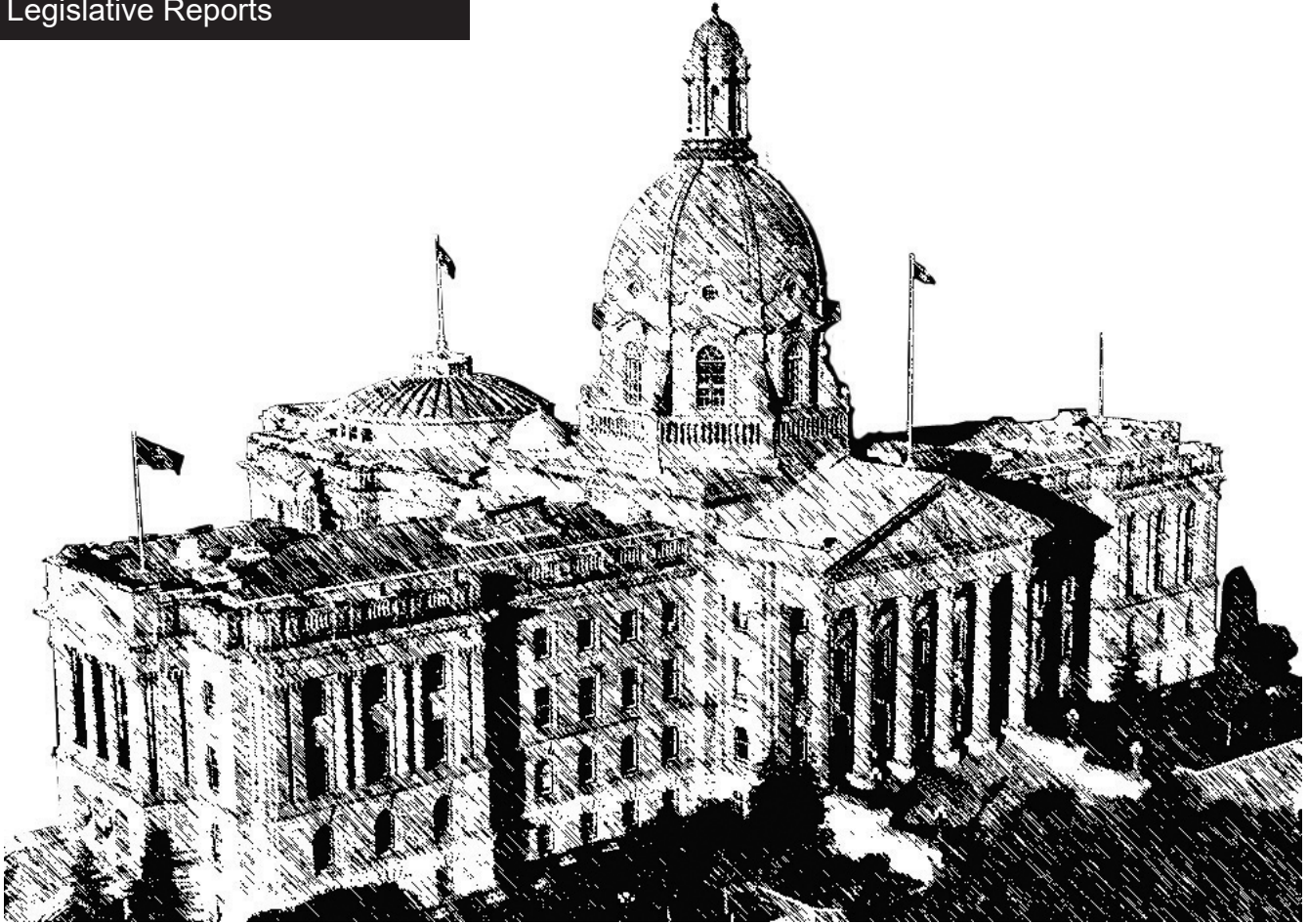
- Between 2017 and 2025, the Canadian House of Commons operated a Prime Minister's Question Period procedure, introduced by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. In a new published article summarised here, the author explores how this procedure worked, and how it differed from the traditional Question Period model.

Serban, Ruxandra. "Questions to the Prime Minister in the Canadian House of Commons: Transformation or tweak?" *Parliamentary Affairs*, Advance Access Publication: 1-24, September 2025

- Parliamentary questions are important democratic accountability instruments, but little is known

about how these procedures are reformed, and with what consequences. This paper uses the introduction of Prime Minister's Question Period (PMQP) in the Canadian House of Commons in 2017 as a case study of questioning procedure reform. Under PMQP, the Prime Minister would answer all questions once a week, diverging from the traditional Question Period where the Prime Minister answered a few questions daily alongside ministers. As this is a way in which other parliaments have reformed questioning procedures, the case has wider comparative relevance. Using quantitative analysis of prime ministerial attendance and questions, as well as interviews, this paper explores the effects of the reform. Findings indicate that PMQP is similar to other individualized questioning procedures such as the UK's Prime Minister's Questions, but retains features of Question Period such as party control, and a confrontational style.





Alberta

First Session of the 31st Legislature

The First Session of the 31st Legislature resumed on February 25, 2025, and adjourned on May 14, marking the second spring sitting of the session. To date the two-year parliamentary session has comprised 112 sitting days, during which 1,203 documents were tabled. A total of 54 Government Bills and six Private Bills were introduced and subsequently received Royal Assent. Additionally, three of the nine Private Members' Public Bills brought forward during the session also received Royal Assent:

- Bill 203, *Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act* creates a 13-member advisory committee with a two-year mandate to review Alberta's rules governing foreign credential recognition, including those set by professional regulatory organizations, and to identify and make recommendations regarding best practices.
- Bill 204, *Municipal Government (National Urban Parks) Amendment Act, 2023* gives the provincial government control over the creation and

development of national urban parks by preventing municipal councils from making agreements with the federal government to create a national urban park unless the conditions set by the Lieutenant Governor in Council are adhered to.

- Bill 206, *Child and Youth Advocate (Parent and Guardian Liaison) Amendment Act, 2024* establishes a new position called the Parent and Guardian Advisor within the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate. The Advisor provides information and referrals to families in Alberta who require assistance navigating systems such as education, health care, and social services. The Advisor serves all families, not just those accessing services through the Advocate's office.

The fall session of the Legislative Assembly was originally scheduled to run from October 27 to November 27, with a constituency week beginning on November 10. However, on September 10 the Government House Leader advised that the Second Session of the 31st Legislature would commence with a throne speech on October 23.

Composition of the Assembly

Following the June 23 by-elections three new Members of the Legislative Assembly were sworn in on July 14: **Naheed Nenshi**, Edmonton-Strathcona; **Gurtej Singh Brar**, Edmonton-Ellerslie; and **Tara Sawyer**, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. The current composition of the Assembly is now 47 United Conservatives, 38 New Democrats, and two independent Members.

Committee Business

On June 24, the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices met to consider requests for supplementary funding from Elections Alberta and the Office of the Auditor General. The Committee approved the request for \$1,903,016 from Elections Alberta to cover the cost of two unbudgeted by-elections and address the impact of the *Election Statutes Amendment Act, 2025*, which reintroduced corporate and union donations, lowered the threshold for citizen initiatives and recall votes, expanded third party advertising, and banned vote tabulators.

The Committee also approved the request from the Office of the Auditor General for an additional \$1,665,000 to respond to added responsibilities as a result of the re-organization of Alberta Health Services, the investigation into procurement and contracting processes at Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, and to address a general compensation increase announced by the Public Service Commission in March 2025.

On June 27, the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund met to review and approve the annual report on the Fund. It also confirmed that the Committee's annual public meeting would be held on October 30. The Committee met again on October 6 to review the first quarter report on the Fund's 2025-26 performance.

On September 16, the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship met to continue its review of the *Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act*. The Committee has invited stakeholders and the public to provide written submissions on the Act by October 31.

Chamber Upgrades

The Legislature Chamber and public galleries are currently closed to tours to accommodate renovations of the audio infrastructure. These upgrades include

the complete replacement of structured cabling and enhancements to all electrical outlets and circuits. The hearing assist system in the public galleries is also being upgraded, and new television displays are being installed in the galleries to provide captioned broadcasts of proceedings for visitors.

In addition, the Information Technology and Broadcast Services team is implementing a new broadcast system and replacing the existing audiovisual control system and audio system hardware. Similar systems are already in use in both Houses of the United Kingdom Parliament as well as the Scottish Parliament, the Senedd (Welsh Parliament), and the Northern Ireland Assembly. Alberta will be the first jurisdiction in North America to implement this technology. As part of the upgrade Members' desks will be outfitted with new audio equipment, including microphones and speakers.

Jody Rempel
Committee Clerk



British Columbia

Summer Recess

As noted in the previous edition, the Legislative Assembly adjourned on May 29, 2025. The Legislative Assembly is expected to resume on October 6, 2025, for a six-week fall sitting period.

Statutory Officers

On May 29, 2025, the Legislative Assembly adopted a motion to amend the terms of reference for the Special Committee to Appoint Statutory Officers. This amendment expanded the Committee's mandate—previously limited to recommending appointments for the Auditor General, Conflict of Interest Commissioner, and Chief Electoral Officer—to also include the Ombudsperson and Merit Commissioner. The change

to the terms of reference followed **Jay Chalke's** announcement that he was tendering his resignation as Ombudsperson effective January 31, 2026. Mr. Chalke was first appointed as Ombudsperson in July 2015 and was reappointed for a second term in July 2021. Merit Commissioner **David McCoy's** first three-year term is set to expire in March 2026. The Committee is now required to recommend individuals for five of the nine statutory officer positions in British Columbia and report to the Legislative Assembly on each of its recommendations as soon as possible.

Parliamentary Committee Activities

The Legislative Assembly adopted a motion on May 29, 2025, to amend the terms of reference for the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. The resolution designates the Committee as the committee referred to in section 21 of the *Economic Stabilization (Tariff Response) Act*. The *Act*, which received Royal Assent earlier on the same day, aims to address external economic pressures by improving interprovincial trade and enables the Lieutenant Governor in Council to issue regulations imposing tolls, fees and other charges. Any regulation made under specific sections of the *Act* must now be filed with the Committee for its review. The Committee must present a final report before September 1, 2027.

On August 12, 2025, the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services released its *Report on the Budget 2026 Consultation*. The Committee heard from 350 presenters at public hearings in 11 communities and received 406 written submissions. The report's 86 recommendations focus on making strategic investments towards stimulating economic activity while addressing pressing issues including affordability, health care, and public safety. This marked the first budget consultation report of the 43rd Parliament; the last report on the annual budget consultation was released on August 3, 2023, during the 42nd Parliament.

Party Standings

OneBC was officially registered as a political party on June 9, 2025, and two Independent Members subsequently changed their political affiliation to the party. OneBC was later recognized as the Fourth Party Caucus, as the threshold for official party status in the Assembly is two Members. The caucus is comprised of **Dallas Brodie**, MLA, who serves as Leader of the Fourth Party, and **Tara Armstrong**, MLA, who serves as Fourth Party House Leader. Both were previously

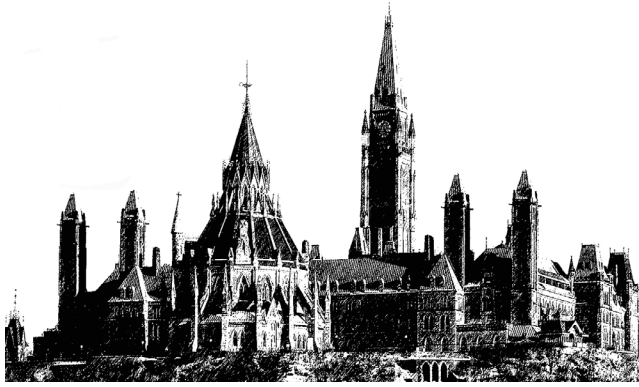
Members of the Official Opposition Caucus but later sat as Independent Members. The current party standings are: 47 BC NDP, 41 Conservative Party of British Columbia, two BC Green Party, two OneBC, and one Independent.

Cabinet Shuffle

On July 17, 2025, there were several changes to the portfolios of Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries:

- **Amna Shah**, Parliamentary Secretary for Mental Health and Addictions, was also appointed the Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives;
- **Anne Kang**, former Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, was appointed Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport;
- **Christine Boyle**, former Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, was appointed Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs;
- **Diana Gibson**, former Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation, was appointed Minister of Citizens' Services;
- **Garry Begg**, former Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, was appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Surrey Infrastructure;
- **George Chow**, former Minister of Citizens' Services, was appointed Parliamentary Secretary for the Downtown Eastside and Chinatown;
- **Jessie Sunner**, former Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives; was appointed Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills;
- **Nina Krieger**, former Parliamentary Secretary for Arts and Film, was appointed Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General;
- **Paul Choi**, former Parliamentary Secretary for Asia Pacific Trade, was appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Trade;
- **Ravi Kahlon**, former Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs, was appointed Minister of Jobs and Economic Growth (previously Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation);
- **Rick Glumac**, former Minister of State for Trade, was appointed Minister of State for AI and New Technologies (a newly established position); and
- **Spencer Chandra Herbert**, former Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, was appointed Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

Jonathon Hamilton
Committee Researcher



House of Commons

Introduction

This account covers key procedural highlights from late June 2025 to early October 2025. The House adjourned for the summer on June 20, 2025, and resumed sitting on September 15, 2025.

By-Election in Battle River—Crowfoot

Following the general election held on April 28, 2025, **Pierre Poilievre** was defeated in the riding of Carleton, Ontario, by **Bruce Fanjoy**. While Mr. Poilievre remained Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, he no longer served as Leader of the Opposition as he no longer held a seat in the House.

On May 6, 2025, **Andrew Scheer** (Regina—Qu'Appelle) was designated Leader of the Opposition by the Conservative caucus on an interim basis. Mr. Poilievre was subsequently a candidate in a by-election in the riding of Battle River—Crowfoot, in Alberta, following the resignation of **Damien Kurek** on June 17, 2025. Mr. Kurek resigned his seat to give his party leader an opportunity to get elected to the House.

On August 18, 2025, Mr. Poilievre won the by-election in Battle River—Crowfoot. According to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, 4th Edition, section 1.19. “If the leader of the party designated as the official opposition holds a seat as a Member of the House, he or she automatically becomes the Leader of the Opposition.” By regaining a seat in the House, Mr. Poilievre resumed his role as Leader of the Opposition, replacing Mr. Scheer. Mr. Poilievre took his seat in the House on September 15, 2025.

Question of Privilege

Question of Privilege Concerning Members' Access to Federal Penitentiaries

On September 15, 2025, **Frank Caputo** (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola) raised a question of privilege concerning members' access to federal penitentiaries following events during a visit to the Fraser Valley Institution on July 28, 2025. He explained that he and **Tamara Jansen** (Cloverdale—Langley City) sought to exercise their rights under section 72 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*, allowing members, senators and judges to enter and visit any part of a penitentiary, and visit any inmate. However, they were accompanied by an official acting on instructions from the warden. Mr. Caputo argued that this limited his ability to carry out his parliamentary duties, as the presence of management affected discussions with inmates and staff.

The following day, Ms. Jansen stated that she and Mr. Caputo had requested to tour the prison accompanied only by uniformed correctional officers. She indicated that the official accompanied them on the warden's instructions and that no safety concerns had been identified. Ms. Jansen added that their requests to meet with the warden were declined. She argued that this affected her ability to carry out her parliamentary duties and oversight responsibilities.

On September 18, 2025, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, **Kevin Lamoureux** (Winnipeg North), stated that there was no direct link between the members' parliamentary duties and the visit to the Fraser Valley Institution. Mr. Lamoureux argued that the members completed their tour and noted that correctional facilities may have protocols requiring escorts. He further stated that the visit was not specifically authorized by the House and concluded that the situation did not meet the threshold for a breach of parliamentary privilege.

On October 1, 2025, the Speaker delivered his ruling on the question of privilege. He explained that the right of access to penitentiaries is distinct from parliamentary privilege. He emphasized that privilege applies only when the functioning of the House itself is impeded, and that the threshold for establishing obstruction is high. As the members were admitted and able to tour the facility, the Speaker concluded that the question did not meet the threshold for a *prima facie* breach of privilege.

Other

Moments of Silence

Following the death of former ministers **Ken Dryden**, **John McCallum** and **Gail Shea** during the summer adjournment, on September 16, 2025, the House adopted, by unanimous consent, a special order providing that, on September 17, 2025, after Oral Questions, three separate moments of silence would be observed. Following each moment of silence, tributes would be delivered by a member of each recognized party, as well as by a member of the New Democratic Party (NDP) and the member of the Green Party.

The following day, the moments of silence and tributes took place pursuant to the special order.

Vicky Sedhya Maurice-Sevigny

Table Research Branch, House of Commons



Manitoba

Second Session of the 43rd Legislature

The Second Session of the 43rd Legislature resumed with the introduction of the newly elected Member for Spruce Woods, **Colleen Robbins** on October 1, 2025. The resumption also marked the first day in the House for our new Clerk Assistant/Procedural Clerk, **Tiara Anderson**, who was hired over the Summer and will be introduced below. The Session is scheduled to end on November 6, 2025, with an expected Throne Speech on November 18, 2025, to commence the Third Session. Speaker **Tom Lindsey** also commenced the proceeding by making an intentional statement on decorum noting that previous behaviour has been unacceptable and will no longer be tolerated.

These Fall Sittings will see the completion of the Estimates process in the Committee of Supply, as well

as the completion of Government Designated Bills. The House is required to complete consideration of the five Designated Bills, detailed in the Autumn edition of the *CPR*, selected by the Official Opposition in the spring for further consideration in the fall. The House completed Second Reading of these Bills on October 2, 2025. Standing Committee consideration must be completed by October 28, while Concurrence and Third Reading must be then completed by November 6, 2025, with the five Designated Bills receiving Royal Assent before the House rises that day. This is also the deadline for the completion of the Main Supply process including passage of the *Budget Implementation and Tax Statute Amendment Act 2025*.

Ethics Report Motions

October 7, 2025, was the deadline day for the House to deal with a report produced by the Ethics Commissioner pursuant to *The Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act*. The *Act*, detailed in the Fall 2024 submission, came into force on October 4, 2023, replacing *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Conflict of Interest Act*. The current report, which was tabled by the Speaker on May 21, 2025, addressed the actions of two current MLAs and two former MLAs, including former Premier **Heather Stefanson**. Through the passage of all four Ethics Report Motions generated from this report, the Assembly accepted the Commissioner's four recommendations, including the provisions that fines be imposed on the two former MLAs as well as one of the current MLAs.

On October 2, 2024, the House adopted a new procedure for this Session to accommodate the statutory requirement for the consideration of reports from the Ethics Commissioner by the Assembly. The procedure required modification due to the unique structure of this latest report, as it was not designed to accommodate a report with four recommendations and the resulting four separate motions. As the House Leaders could not agree on how to change the procedure, and as the House still needs to adopt new Rules to formalize the process, Speaker **Tom Lindsey** was required to interpret the procedure. The Speaker made a statement outlining a revised procedure, which included among other things the provision that separate motions from the same report may be considered on different sitting days.

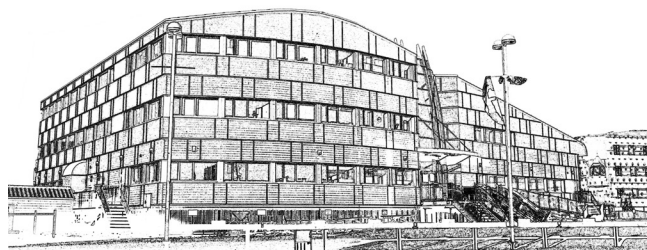
New Clerk Assistant / Procedural Clerk

In July 2025, **Tiara Anderson** was hired in the newly created position of Clerk Assistant/Procedural

Clerk. Tiara is a member of Little Saskatchewan First Nation in Treaty 2 territory, with family ties to the Métis community of Duck Bay, Manitoba. She holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Indigenous Studies from the University of Winnipeg and has worked for the two years since graduating at the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba as a Research Assistant and Ambassador for the Agowiidiwinan Centre in the Forks. She was responsible for conducting historical and policy research and assisting with public inquiries, and as an ambassador, welcomed the public into the exhibit at the Forks and provided tours and information to anyone that was interested. Tiara received intense Clerk Assistant training over the summer, and we are very excited to have Tiara as part of the team and wish her the best of luck in her career here at the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

Greg Recksiedler

Research Clerk/Clerk Assistant



Nunavut

House Proceedings

The 6th Legislative Assembly's pre-dissolution sitting convened on September 8, 2025, and concluded on September 18, 2025.

Ten bills received Assent during the pre-dissolution sitting:

- Bill 57, *An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act*;
- Bill 73, *Planning Act*;
- Bill 76, *An Act to Amend the Inuit Language Protection Act and the Official Languages Act*;
- Bill 78, *An Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act*;
- Bill 79, *An Act to Amend the Hospital Insurance and Health and Social Services Administration Act*;
- Bill 81, *Interim Appropriation (Capital) Act, 2026-2027*;

- Bill 82, *Supplementary Appropriation (Capital) Act, No. 3, 2025-2026*;
- Bill 83, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, No. 3, 2024-2025*;
- Bill 84, *Write-Off of Assets Act, 2024-2025*; and
- Bill 85, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, No. 1, 2025-2026*.

A total of 89 bills were introduced during the life of the 6th Legislative Assembly, of which 85 received Assent.

Committee Hearing

From September 4-5, 2025, the Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts held a televised hearing on the *2025 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut: Public Housing in Nunavut*.

Deputy Auditor General of Canada **Andrew Hayes** and officials from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada appeared as witnesses at the hearing. Several officials from the Nunavut Housing Corporation and NCC Development Limited also appeared as witnesses.

The hearing was presided over by Standing Committee Chair and Iqaluit-Tasiluk MLA **George Hickes**. Mr. Hickes subsequently presented the standing committee's report on the hearing to the House during its pre-dissolution sitting.

Dissolution of the 6th Legislative Assembly, Holding of the 7th General Election and Convening of the 7th Legislative Assembly

The 6th Legislative Assembly was dissolved on September 21, 2025. The Chief Electoral Officer issued writs of election on September 22, 2025.

A number of incumbents did not stand for re-election: **P.J. Akeagok** (Iqaluit-Niaqunngu), **Tony Akoak** (Gjoa Haven), **Joelie Kaernerck** (Amittuq), **Lorne Kusugak** (Rankin Inlet South), **Margaret Nakashuk** (Pangnirtung), **Karen Nutarak** (Tununiq) and **Joe Savikataaq** (Arviat South).

By the close of nominations, a total of 58 individuals submitted declarations of candidacy to stand for election in the territory's 22 constituencies. Two incumbent candidates were declared elected by acclamation: **David Joanasi** (South Baffin) and **Daniel Qavvik** (Hudson Bay).

The 7th general election was held on October 27, 2025. Returning Members were:

- **David Akeagok** (Iqaluit-Niaqunngu);
- **Janet Pitsiulaaq Brewster** (Iqaluit-Sinaa);
- Mr. Hickes (Iqaluit-Tasiluk);
- **John Main** (Arviat North-Whale Cove);
- **Alexander Sammurtoq** (Rankin Inlet North-Chesterfield Inlet); and
- **Craig Simailak** (Baker Lake)

Mr. Akeagok previously served as a Member of the 5th and 6th Legislative Assemblies for the constituency of Quttiktuq.

Newly-elected Members were:

- **Gwen Healey Akearok** (Iqaluit-Manirajak);
- **Hannah Angootealuk** (Aivilik);
- **Jamie Kablutsiak** (Arviat South);
- **Gordon Kautuk** (Uqummiut);
- **Brian Koonoo** (Tununiq);
- **Simon Kuliktana** (Kugluktuk);
- **Cecile Nelvana Lyall** (Netsilik);
- **Johnny Mike** (Pangnirtung);
- **Fred Pedersen** (Cambridge Bay);
- **David Porter** (Gjoa Haven);
- **Abraham Qamaniq** (Amittuq);
- **Steven Taqtu** (Quttiktuq); and
- **Annie Tattuinee** (Rankin Inlet South)

Mr. Mike previously served as a Member of the 4th Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Pangnirtung.

Judicial recounts were held for the constituencies of Aggu, Pangnirtung and Quttiktuq. The Aggu recount determined that the result was a tie, necessitating a new election. At the time of writing, the election was scheduled to take place on December 15, 2025.

On November 18, 2025, Members-elect gathered in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly for the convening of the Nunavut Leadership Forum. By convention, the Forum consists of all Members of the Legislative Assembly and is used to conduct the selection process for the Speaker, Premier and members of the Executive Council (Cabinet) of Nunavut. The Forum's proceedings were broadcast live.

The first item of business was the selection of the Speaker. Three Members accepted nominations to

serve as Speaker: David Joanasie, Simon Kuliktana and Abraham Qamaniq. In a secret ballot vote, Mr. Joanasie was elected as Speaker on the first round of balloting. Speaker-elect Joanasie immediately proceeded to preside over the remainder of the day's proceedings.

Two Members subsequently accepted nominations to serve as Premier: David Akeagok and John Main. Each candidate was permitted to deliver a speech. Members not standing for Premier were permitted to ask up to two questions to the candidates. In a secret ballot vote, Mr. Main was elected as Premier on the first round of balloting.

A total of nine Members subsequently accepted nominations to serve on the Executive Council. The Assembly's Full Caucus had previously announced that eight Ministers would be chosen. The following Members were elected: Gwen Healey Akearok, David Akeagok, Janet Pitsiulaaq Brewster, George Hickes, Brian Koonoo, Cecile Nelvana Lyall, Craig Simailak and Annie Tattuinee.

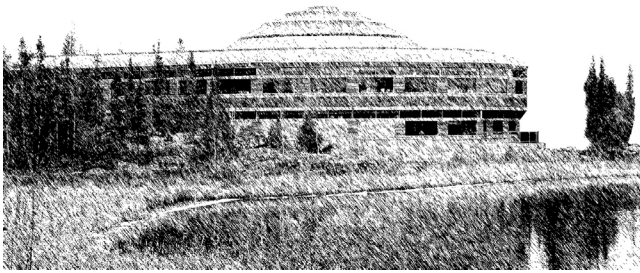
Commissioner **Eva Qamaniq Aariak** presided over the swearing-in ceremony for the Members of the 7th Legislative Assembly, which took place on the morning of November 20, 2025, in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly.

The 1st sitting of the 7th Legislative Assembly took place that afternoon. At the beginning of the sitting, Mr. Joanasie formally took the Chair. Dragging duties were performed by Ms. Brewster and Mr. Simailak, who moved and seconded the formal motion of appointment. Commissioner Aariak subsequently delivered the Opening Address. During the sitting, motions were passed to formally recommend the appointments of the Ministry. Motions were also passed to appoint Mr. Pedersen as Deputy Speaker and Messrs. Kablutsiak and Kuliktana as Deputy Chairpersons of the Committee of the Whole.

The swearing-in ceremony for the members of the Executive Council took place after the sitting of the House. Ministerial portfolios were announced during the ceremony.

Alex Baldwin

Office of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut



Northwest Territories

The first session of the 20th Legislative Assembly adjourned from May 29 to October 16, 2025. While the house was adjourned, the Standing Committees remained busy, holding numerous public briefings, hearings and reviewing legislation.

Standing Committees

Throughout the intersessional period, all Standing Committees continued to meet and advance their work and priorities, including the review of legislation.

The Standing Committee on Government Operations concluded their work on Bill 21: *An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act*, holding a clause-by-clause review in early September. Bill 21 proposes amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act* to improve and update the way long-term benefits are calculated for permanently injured workers, and parallel legislation was adopted in Nunavut prior to dissolution of their Assembly prior to their 2025 election. Committee also concluded their consideration of Bill 22: *Legislation Act*, with a clause-by-clause in September and held numerous public briefings and hearings on Bill 26: *An Act to Amend the Public Service Act*, and Bill 29: *First Responders Workers' Compensation Amendment Act*.

Both Bill 26 and Bill 29 are Private Members' Bills, respectively sponsored by **Shauna Morgan**, the MLA for Yellowknife North, and **Kieron Testart**, the MLA for Range Lake. These are the third and fourth Private Members' Bills to have been brought forward in this Assembly, marking a noted increase from recent Assemblies.

In addition to reviewing legislation, the Standing Committee on Government Operations held public hearings with the Information and Privacy Commissioner, **Andrew Fox**, and the Ombud, **Krista Carnogursky**, to review their respective *Annual Reports*.

The Standing Committee on Social Development concluded their work on Bill 28: *An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, No. 2*, with clause-by-clause review in early September. Additionally, Committee has held numerous public hearings and briefings on other legislation, including Bill 23: *An Act to Amend the Children's Law Act*, Bill 24: *An Act to Amend the Family Law Act*, and Bill 27: *An Act to Amend the Protection Against Family Violence Act*.

Standing Committees also held numerous public briefings on a wide range of topics including but not limited to: healthcare accountability and sustainability; economic diversification; renewable and clean energy; and housing as a human right.

Other items of note

The Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly was honoured to receive a contribution from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities Capital Investment Fund, which aims to raise the accessibility of Parliaments to persons with disabilities. This funding was used to complete a barrier-free, accessible walkway to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Cultural Tent, a welcoming and culturally appropriate space for Members and Staff of the Legislative Assembly as well as an important space for our outreach programs.

From September 8 to 11, 2025, the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly was pleased to host the annual Parliamentary Visitors Services Association conference, welcoming participants from across the country. Amongst other programming, the Dene Wellness Warriors lead an insightful presentation on Reconciliation, in which participants explored active ways to be ally in their journey though Reconciliation. Participants also shared educational programming and tools from their own jurisdictions and discussed their successes and common challenges.

In 2025, the Supreme Court of Canada is recognizing its 150th anniversary, and the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly was proud to play a role by hosting Chief Justice **Richard Wagner**, Justice **Nicholas Kasirer** and Justice **Michelle O'Bonsawin** for a town-hall style public event in the Great Hall on September 14, 2025.

In late September, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation hosted daily Lunch and Learn sessions to recognize Truth and Reconciliation Week. As a part of

the ongoing efforts through our Reconciliation Action Plan, staff of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly had the opportunity to come together and join these sessions virtually. These sessions provided participants with opportunities for learning and growing both individually and as an institution, as we all continue along the path of reconciliation.

Michael Ball

Manager of House and Journal Services



Ontario

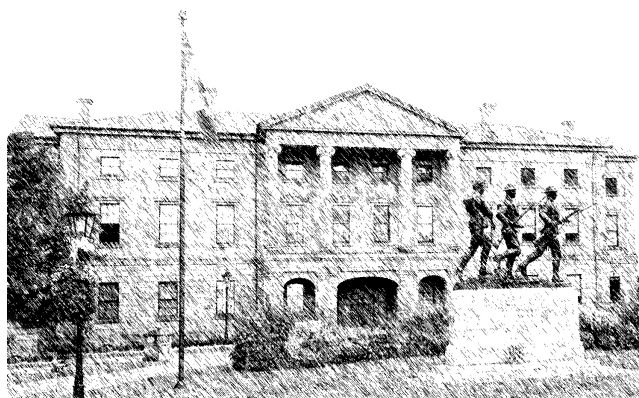
On June 5, 2025, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario adjourned for the summer. Prior to adjournment, the House adopted a motion to remain adjourned until October 20, 2025, when it will return for the fall meeting period. The House also authorized certain committee meetings and travel for the summer adjournment.

The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy met to consider *Bill 9, Municipal Accountability Act, 2025*. If passed, the bill would establish a standardized code of conduct for municipal council members and local boards and would also empower integrity commissioners to conduct inquiries which could lead to the removal of council members from office. In July, the Committee travelled to London, Niagara Falls, Whitby, Ottawa, and Thunder Bay to hold public hearings on the bill. After an opening statement from the sponsor of the bill, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing **Rob Flack**, deputations were provided by a variety of witnesses including mayors, municipal and regional councillors, integrity commissioners, and interested organizations and individuals. The Committee then met for clause-by-clause consideration on August 26, 2025, where it reviewed and made amendments to the bill. The bill, as amended, is expected to be reported back to the House when it resumes meeting in October.

Two committees traveled to attend conferences: members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs attended the 2025 Legislative Summit of the National Conference of State Legislatures in Boston, Massachusetts from August 3 to 6, 2025, and members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts attended the 2025 Annual Conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees in Regina, Saskatchewan from September 6 to 9, 2025.

Lesley Flores

Committee Clerk



Prince Edward Island

Second Session, Sixty-seventh General Assembly

The Second Session of the Sixty-seventh General Assembly will continue when the House meets for the fall sitting on November 4. The session began on March 25 and adjourned on May 16.

House Business

Upon adjournment in the spring there was one Government Bill and 47 Motions still on the Order Paper and therefore available for consideration in the fall sitting. Government typically presents its capital budget during the fall sitting.

By-elections

On August 12, by-elections were held in District 9: Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park and District 15: Brackley-Hunter River. The by-elections were necessitated by the resignations of MLA **Natalie Jameson** and former Premier **Dennis King**, respectively, in February.

In District 9, Liberal Party candidate **Carolyn Simpson** was elected, receiving 979 (48%) of the 2,049 votes cast. Ms. Simpson's prior career was in education and public service, including senior roles in the provincial department of education. In District 15, Progressive Conservative candidate **Kent Dollar** was elected, receiving 1,140 (50%) of the 2,268 votes cast. Prior to his election Mr. Dollar served as Executive Assistant to former Premier King and as a municipal councilor. Candidates for the Green Party and New Democratic Party also ran in both by-elections. MLAs Dollar and Simpson were sworn in on August 29.

The breakdown of seats in the Legislative Assembly is now 20 held by the Progressive Conservative Party, four held by the Liberal Party and three held by the Green Party.

Resignation

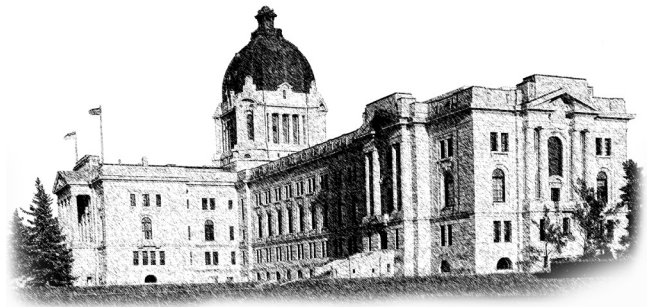
On October 2, **Steven Myers**, MLA for District 2: Georgetown-Pownal and Minister of Housing, Land and Communities, announced the resignation of his seat and role in Cabinet, effective October 3. Mr. Myers was first elected in 2011 and re-elected in 2015, 2019 and 2023. Before his most recent ministerial portfolio he served first as Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and later as Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action. While in Opposition during the years 2011-2019, at different points he served as Leader of the Official Opposition and Opposition House Leader. A by-election for District 2 has not yet been announced.

New Liberal Party Leader

At a leadership convention on October 4, the Liberal Party of PEI chose **Robert Mitchell** as its new leader. Mr. Mitchell is a former MLA who represented District 10: Charlottetown-Sherwood (later Charlottetown-Winsloe) from 2007 until his resignation in 2020 and served in Cabinet for several years. Business owner **Todd Cormier** also ran for the leadership. Neither candidate held a seat in the Legislative Assembly and the Liberal Party has been led on an interim basis by **Hal Perry** (District 27: Tignish-Palmer Road), who also serves as the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ryan Reddin

Director of Parliamentary Research



Saskatchewan

2025 Midwestern Legislative Conference held in Saskatoon

This summer, Saskatchewan hosted the 79th annual Midwestern Legislative Conference (MLC) in Saskatoon. The MLC brings together legislators from Saskatchewan, 11 US Midwestern states, and three affiliate provinces for a bipartisan, binational forum on issues of importance to the Midwest region. Saskatchewan became the first and only Canadian province to gain full MLC membership in 2019. **Lori Carr**, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Seniors and Rural and Remote Health, is currently serving as MLC Chair for 2025.

Over 450 participants took part in the expert-led policy sessions, professional development workshops, and interparliamentary exchanges. Discussions for this year's conference focused on energy security in North America, trade relations between the United States and Canada, agriculture, and artificial intelligence. Delegates also took part in site tours across Saskatchewan, including visits to the Mosaic Colonsay potash mine, oil wells and processing facilities around Lloydminster, and a local farm near Langham.

2025 CCPAC-CCOLA conference held in Regina

From September 7–9, Saskatchewan welcomed parliamentary delegates from across Canada to the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees (CCPAC) and Canadian Council of Legislative Auditors (CCOLA) conference in Regina. Hosting the annual conference rotates among provinces and territories each year. This year the Saskatchewan Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan served as co-leaders. CCPAC-CCOLA is attended by Public Accounts committee members,

provincial and federal auditors, and parliamentary clerks and researchers from across the country. The conference aims to strengthen the oversight role of public accounts committees and support further development of auditing practices in Canada. Business sessions discussed effective questioning in committee, public sector impact, performance audits, non-partisanship, and jurisdictional best practices. Delegates also had the option of visiting the Legislative Building, the RCMP Heritage Centre, and a local farm.

Partnership of Parliaments program

This fall, Saskatchewan resumed its participation in the German-based Partnership of Parliaments (PoP) program. The purpose of the program is to provide opportunities to engage in international parliamentary learning, cultural exchange, and trade and investment discussions. PoP is a multi-jurisdictional co-operative initiative, allowing delegates from Saskatchewan and other Canadian provinces to visit the parliaments of European partners and then host incoming delegates in subsequent years. This year's parliamentary exchange took place from September 7–16 and included Speaker **Todd Goudy**, Dakota-Arm River MLA **Barret Kropf**, and Saskatoon Fairview MLA **Vicki Mowat** as part of the Saskatchewan delegation. Officials from Alberta were also in attendance. Delegates travelled to Germany, the Free State of Bavaria, and the Czech Republic, meeting with European legislators, embassy officials, business leaders, and PoP executives. Canadian delegates also attended several informational tours, networking events, and formal gatherings organized by PoP partners.

2025 Hansard Association of Canada conference held in Regina

Saskatchewan hosted the 50th Hansard Association of Canada conference from August 18–22. This annual conference promotes the sharing of best practices, collaboration, and awareness of trends in parliamentary reporting. Delegates from across Canada, as well as the United Kingdom and Ireland, were scheduled to attend, but airline disruptions prevented about half the attendees from travelling. The conference team quickly adapted, offering the event in a hybrid format. Session topics included information accessibility, emerging tools and technologies, optimizing workflows, and past project successes. During their time in the province, the delegates experienced Saskatchewan's culture and world-class talent while building professional networks.

Retirement of Executive Assistant to the Speaker

After more than 12 years of service in the Speaker's Office, **Sheila Sterling** retired from her position effective August 29, 2025. Ms. Sterling began her tenure as Executive Assistant to the Speaker in 2012 under **Dan D'Autremont** and served under five consecutive Speakers of the Assembly.

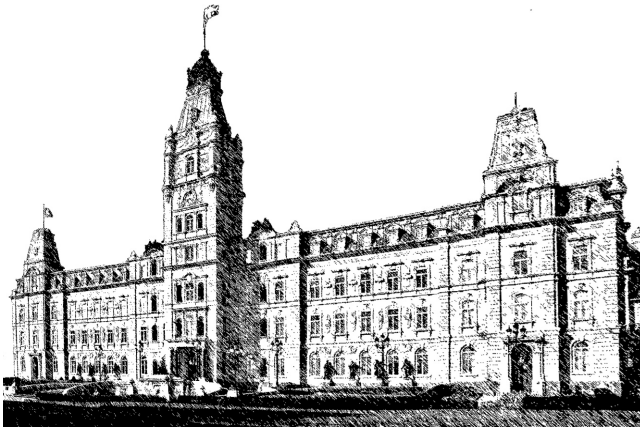
New Table Officer

Miranda Gudereit has been promoted to the position of Clerk Assistant – Committees and Table Officer. Ms. Gudereit joined the Legislative Assembly Service of Saskatchewan in 2016 as a Hansard input editor before transitioning to Procedural Services in 2021. She has since served as Procedural Assistant, Procedural Clerk, and most recently Senior Procedural Clerk. In the previous legislature, Ms. Gudereit gained experience at the Table on a rotational basis.

Prorogation and the opening of a new session

At the request of the government and pursuant to the order adopted by the Assembly on May 15, 2025, the first session of the thirtieth legislature will be prorogued on the morning of October 22, 2025. The second session of the thirtieth legislature will be opened that afternoon with **Bernadette McIntyre**, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, delivering the Speech from the Throne.

Jessica Start
Manager of Procedural Education



Québec

Proceedings of the Assemblée nationale

Composition

On August 11, 2025, the Parti québécois candidate, **Alex Boissonneault**, won the by-election in the electoral division of Arthabaska and officially entered the Assemblée nationale on September 30, 2025.

On September 4, 2025, **Andrée Laforest**, then Member for Chicoutimi and Minister of Municipal Affairs, announced her resignation and declared her intent to run for mayor of Saguenay in the municipal general elections of November 2, 2025.

On September 5, 2025, **Pierre Dufour**, Member for Abitibi-Est, was excluded from the caucus of the parliamentary group forming the Government and now sits as an independent Member.

On September 10, 2025, Premier **François Legault** appointed **François Jacques**, Member for Mégantic, as Chief Government Whip, and **Yves Montigny**, Member for René-Lévesque, as Government Caucus Chair. Then, on September 17, 2025, he appointed **Marie-Belle Gendron**, Member for Châteauguay, as Assistant Government Whip, and on September 18, 2025, **Sonia LeBel**, Member for Champlain and Minister of Education, as Deputy Government House Leader.

Lastly, on September 18, 2025, **Maité Blanchette Vézina**, Member for Rimouski, announced her departure from the government caucus to sit as an independent Member.

The Assemblée nationale is now composed of 124 Members: 83 from the Coalition avenir Québec, 20 from the Québec Liberal Party, 12 from Québec solidaire and six from the Parti québécois, along with three independent Members. The seat for the electoral division of Chicoutimi is vacant.

Ministerial reorganization

Premier Legault held a ministerial reorganization on September 10, 2025, which brought considerable changes to the composition of the Cabinet. Certain parliamentarians no longer hold ministerial offices, and five Members have joined the Cabinet: **Samuel Poulin**, Member for Beauce-Sud, **Éric Girard**, Member for Lac-Saint-Jean, **Jean-François Simard**, Member for Montmorency, **Donald Martel**, Member for Nicolet-Béancour, and **Amélie Dionne**, Member for Rivière-du-Loup–Témiscouata. It should be noted that no Member was appointed as Deputy Premier during the ministerial reorganization.

Prorogation of the first session of the 43rd Legislature and Opening Speech

On September 10, 2025, at the request of the Premier, the Lieutenant-Governor prorogued the first session of the 43rd Legislature. Proceedings resumed with the first sitting of the second session on September 30, which was devoted to the Premier's Opening Speech and concluded with the moving of a motion proposing that the Assembly approve the general policy of the Government. A debate of over 25 hours is planned for this business having precedence.

Other events

Citizenship Day Camp

The sixth edition of the Citizenship Day Camp concluded on August 8, 2025. This year, four cohorts of young people aged 9 to 15 learned about democracy by drafting bills on issues that matter to them and by debating in parliamentary committees. They also had a behind-the-scenes look at the professions of the administrative personnel and visited the Assemblée nationale gardens for fun.

Du geste à la lumière, sur les traces de Marcelle Ferron

From July 17 to August 23, 2025, the Assemblée nationale du Québec presented the exhibition *Du geste à la lumière, sur les traces de Marcelle Ferron*, by

the Amalgame artist collective, which is composed of nine women who have taken inspiration from **Marcelle Ferron**'s paintings to create a unique universe. Amalgame celebrates her memory and her works through this vibrant exhibition.

Ordre de la Pléiade: three exceptional personalities honoured in the Assemblée nationale du Québec

On September 12, 2025, **Nathalie Roy**, President of the Assemblée nationale du Québec and Vice-Chair of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, awarded the insignia of the Ordre de la Pléiade to individuals who have promoted the French language and embodied the ideals of La Francophonie. **Marie Eykel**, **Stanley Péan** and **Zahra Kamil Ali** were honoured and received the title of Knight.

Committee proceedings

Changes to the composition of committees

Many changes were made to the composition of parliamentary committees between July and September.

First, following the election of **Pablo Rodriguez** as Leader of the Québec Liberal Party, changes were made to the positions of chair and vice-chair of parliamentary committees for the parliamentary group forming the Official Opposition. The following appointments were made: **Monsef Derraji** (Nelligan) as Chair of the Committee on Public Administration; **Marc Tanguay** (LaFontaine) as Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education; and **Marie-Claude Nichols** (Vaudreuil) as Chair of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment. Further appointments include **Brigitte Garceau** (Robert-Baldwin) as Vice-Chair of the Committee on Labour and the Economy; **Sona Lakhoyan Olivier** (Chomedey) as Vice-Chair of the Committee on Institutions, **André Albert Morin** (Acadie) as Vice-Chair of the Committee on Citizen Relations, and **Linda Caron** (La Pinière) as Vice-Chair of the Committee on Health and Social Services. These changes took effect on July 7, 2025.

Then, following the ministerial reorganization of September 10, 2025, the following appointments were made: **Mario Laframboise** (Blainville) as Chair of the Committee on Public Finance; **Audrey Bogemans** (Iberville) as Vice-Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education; **François Bonnardel** (Granby) as Vice-

Chair of the Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries, Energy and Natural Resources; and **Suzanne Roy** (Verchères) as Vice-Chair of the Committee on Public Administration. These changes took effect on September 22, 2025.

Prorogation of the first session of the 43rd Legislature: impact on parliamentary committees

The prorogation had no impact on the composition of the standing parliamentary committees. However, it nullified all orders not fully executed, except those for the production or printing of papers, and all matters pending and bills not passed lapsed. Consequently, the prorogation ended any ongoing mandate of parliamentary committees, unless the Assemblée nationale otherwise ordered the continuation of clause-by-clause consideration during the new session. If the Assemblée so chooses, the consideration of bills presented during the previous session may continue at the stage reached at the time of the prorogation. Concretely, the prorogation of the first session resulted in the cancellation of special consultations to which individuals and organizations had already been summoned.

General consultation on planning immigration

The prorogation also resulted in the cancellation of the general consultation on the consultation document entitled "Planning of Immigration to Québec for the 2026–2029 Period", which provided for the holding of hearings on September 16, 2025. An agreement between parliamentarians was reached to continue this mandate during the second session of the 43rd Legislature. The first witnesses will be heard by the Committee on Citizen Relations starting October 1, 2025, and hearings will be held for a period of approximately one month. An online consultation was also deployed at the time of the adoption of the mandate, on June 6, 2025, and it will conclude at the same time as the public hearings.

Stéphanie Labbé

Direction de la séance et de la procédure parlementaire

Roxanne Guévin

Direction des commissions parlementaires



Senate

Chamber Business

On September 24, the Senate adopted a motion to consider the Government Representative in the Senate and up to four additional senators as a recognized parliamentary group, as defined in the Rules of the Senate, for the remainder of the current session.

Committees

On September 25, the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy presented its first report on a private bill, Bill S-1001, *An Act to authorize Gore Mutual Insurance Company to apply to be continued as a body corporate under the laws of the Province of Quebec*, without amendment. The bill was placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting.

Also on September 25, the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs presented its first report on Bill S-228, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sterilization procedures)*, without amendment. The bill was placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting.

Senators

On July 18, following the retirement of Senator **Marc Gold**, Prime Minister **Mark Carney** appointed Senator **Pierre Moreau** as the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Moreau, appointed to the Senate in September 2024 on the recommendation of Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**, represents the senatorial division of Les Laurentides in Québec. Before joining the Senate, Senator Moreau was a lawyer specializing in public and administrative law. He also served as a Member of the National

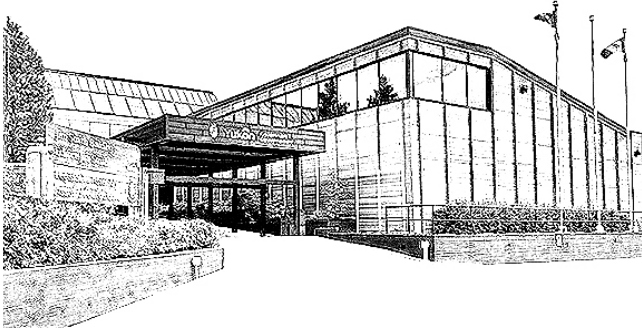
Assembly of Quebec between 2003 and 2018 and held several key Cabinet positions.

On September 1, Senator **Judith G. Seidman** retired from the Senate. She was appointed to the Senate on August 27, 2009, on the recommendation of Prime Minister **Stephen Harper** to represent the senatorial division of De la Durantaye in Québec. Before becoming a senator, she was an educator, researcher and advisor in the health care and social services sectors. In the Senate, she served as the Opposition Whip in the Senate and was a member of several committees, including the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators, which she chaired; the Standing Senate Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration; and the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying.

On September 9, Senator **Paul J. Massicotte** resigned from the Senate. He was appointed on June 26, 2003, to represent the senatorial division of De Lanaudière in Québec, on the recommendation of Prime Minister **Jean Chrétien**. Before becoming a senator, he was a businessman and chartered accountant and served on several boards of directors. He was a member of many committees during his long career at the Senate, including the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, where he served as both Chair and Deputy Chair; the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, where he served as Deputy Chair; the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy; and the Standing Senate Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration.

On September 21, Senator **Marie-Françoise Mégie** retired from the Senate. She was appointed to the Senate on November 25, 2016, on the recommendation of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to represent the senatorial division of Rougemont in Québec. Before becoming a senator, she was a family physician and university professor. In the Senate, she was a member of several committees, including the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying, where she was a Deputy Chair; the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages; and the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology.

François Michaud
Procedural Clerk



Yukon

35th Legislative Assembly Dissolved

The 35th Legislative Assembly was dissolved by Order of Yukon Commissioner **Adeline Webber**, at the request of Premier **Mike Pemberton** on October 3, 2025.

A general election will be held on November 3, 2025. This will be the first use of the fixed election date provision in section 50.01 of Yukon's *Elections Act*.

At the time of dissolution, the standings in the House were: eight Yukon Liberal Party MLAs, eight Yukon Party MLAs, and three New Democratic Party MLAs. The total number of MLAs will increase from 19 to 21 with the election, following the changes to electoral district boundaries that were passed by the Legislative Assembly on November 21, 2024.

From the governing Yukon Liberal Party, Speaker **Jeremy Harper** is the only MLA seeking re-election; no current cabinet ministers are running. **Nils Clarke**, **Jeanie McLean**, **Tracy-Anne McPhee**, **Richard Mostyn**, **Ranj Pillai**, **Sandy Silver**, and **John Streicker** all announced prior to the election being called that

they would not be seeking another term in office. **Mike Pemberton** was sworn in as Premier on June 27, 2025, and does not currently hold a seat in the Legislative Assembly.

Most current opposition members will be candidates on the ballot. All incumbent NDP MLAs and six of the eight Yukon Party MLAs are seeking re-election. **Geraldine Van Bibber**, Member for Porter Creek North and former Commissioner of Yukon, announced on January 27, 2025, that she would be serving as Yukon Party campaign chair instead of seeking re-election. On July 2, **Stacey Hassard**, former Yukon Party Interim Leader and Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, declared that he would not be seeking another term.

Plebiscite on Electoral Reform

A territorial plebiscite on electoral reform will be held in conjunction with the general election on November 3. Yukon electors will be asked to answer “yes” or “no” to the question: “Should the way members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly are elected be changed from the current system of first past the post to a different system of ranked vote?”

The non-binding plebiscite follows the 2024 report of the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. 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.

Allison Lloyd
Deputy Clerk

Representation and Collective Action: An Interview With The Founder of Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities

A serious injury sustained during a hockey game changed 14-year-old Kevin Murphy's life. But his decision to begin advocating for accessibility in his community and beyond has helped changed the lives of countless other people. In this interview, Kevin explains what inspired him to become involved in parliamentary politics and how he used his position as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia to advance an initiative to help encourage and support other persons with disabilities in Commonwealth countries to seek office.

Interview with Kevin Murphy

Canadian Parliamentary Review: You were first elected in 2013. Can you speak a little bit about what drew you into parliamentary politics and then, once elected, what sparked the idea for the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) group?

Kevin Murphy: I was injured playing hockey when I was 14. One of the first things that I had to do was to learn how to advocate for myself, for the things that I needed.

For instance, I was raised in a very small rural community. Our school was a typical two-level square brick building with steps at the front door. It was built 30-40 years prior to me going there. I know I wasn't the first person with the disability to go to that school, but I was the first person with a disability to say to the school board "Hey, I can't get in the front door in my wheelchair. There's no bathroom that I can use and it's a two-level school. How do I get to my classes on the top floor?"



Paul Vienneau

Kevin Murphy

Kevin Murphy was Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia from 2013-2021.

That was quite a conundrum for the school board, you know? So, I, together with my family, had to learn to write letters to advocate for what I needed. I quickly learned how to communicate the situation to suggest solutions and not just identify a problem and complain about it. I would say: “Hey, this is something that we can improve on and here’s what’s needed. Here’s what we can do.”

Eventually we got the proper ramp at the front door, the washroom was renovated, and an elevator was installed. I realized that these are the things that I needed at that moment, but these are legacy changes that will benefit many other people who will come after me with similar situations.

I encountered the same kind of scenario when I went to Saint Mary’s University. At the time the administration made claims to me that it was the most accessible university east of Carleton University in Ottawa. But I encountered many of the same challenges there and engaged in the same kind of process. I also realized that I wasn’t the only person with the disability in the community, but I was probably the most visible one and also probably the most active one. As I looked around at all these people in wheelchairs and walkers and with seeing eye dogs, I realized again that when I was writing letters requesting a door opener on a residence building or a washroom to be renovated it would not only benefit me, but many, many others.

That made me think about the future and what different levels of government were doing. I realized all these people are setting policies and making decisions, but people with disabilities did not seem to be a consideration in this whole process. I wondered, “Why are we still designing buildings that aren’t accessible from the get-go?” Until we get real live people with disabilities sitting in those decision-making seats, we’re not really going to make a whole lot of progress on some of the bigger issues.

When I graduated from university, I ran for municipal council in in Halifax County for my area and I didn’t win. I didn’t put myself out there as the “disability candidate” or anything. But I ran, I came second, and it was a tremendously valuable and insightful experience for me and kind of whet my appetite for possibilities to get further involved in the political system.

I have a long history of being involved in the community. For instance, I joined my local volunteer fire department. Obviously, I’m not going to be on the

fire truck fighting fires as a quadriplegic wheelchair user, but I had a commerce degree, so I became the treasurer at the fire department. I got involved in whatever I could do to contribute, and over the course of my early business entrepreneurial career, I remained an involved and highly visible person in the community.

From around the year 2000, my phone started ringing. I was heavily involved in the disability advocacy community, sitting on lots of boards and advisory committees in the metro Halifax/Dartmouth area. Probably for three elections in a row, all three parties called to see if I would be interested in putting my name on the ballot for them. But I always found some reason not to do it. I was recently married, and we had young children during that time, and busy with my business interests

One of the efforts that I had been involved with was creating what was then called the self managed attendant care program here in Nova Scotia. That effort led me to a young backbencher in the 3rd place Liberal Party, named Stephen McNeil.

He reached out to me and said he knew of someone who could benefit from this (self-managed care) program. He offered to help us try to get the legislation through. Long story short, he was able to get this bill put through to create the Nova Scotia Self Management Attendant Care Program. We kept in touch, and he invited me to some of his Liberal party gatherings. I didn’t self identify as a Liberal or anything, but when Stephen decided to run for the leadership, he called on me to help him shape his positioning on disability issues and to a certain degree, some business and economic policies.

When Stephen called ahead of the 2013 election to ask me to run, I spoke with my family, told them that this was something I wanted to do, and they supported me. I knew that it was important that I could do a good job for my community as a representative on all issues and opportunities, but also from the perspective of persons with disabilities, there was nobody in government who “looked” like me.

I put my name on the ballot, and we got elected to a majority government. Within a few short days, the premier nominated me to be Speaker of the House.

CPR: When and why did the idea for the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities group come about?



Kevin Murphy/Facebook

When Murphy decided to run in 2013 election, he explained to his family why he believed he could represent his local community well, but also why it would be important for people with disabilities because no one in the Assembly “looked” like him. With their support, he served two terms. From left to right: Rachael, Stephanie, and Jackson help Murphy during Nova Scotia’s 2017 general election campaign.

KM: When I attended my first Canadian Presiding Officers’ conference under House of Commons Speaker Andrew Scheer in January 2014, I quickly realized that I had an opportunity to have a voice on issues that mattered to me. Perhaps it was more subtle or muted voice compared to some others who are cabinet ministers, but as the leader of the legislative branch of government in Nova Scotia, I had a voice. I quickly found my comfort zone with my group of Speaker peers.

Looking across the landscape of elected representatives, both federally and provincially, there were other elected people with disabilities, but only a handful. There was Steven Fletcher federally and then provincially, and Sam Sullivan and Stephanie Cadieux on the West Coast... maybe half a dozen of us combined federally and provincially. I was able to say to my fellow Speakers that the

goal of any democratically elected government is to be representative of the population of which it was elected to serve, but I didn’t see enough people with disabilities sitting in these elected seats, in proportion to the actual population numbers.

With the support and encouragement of my fellow Speakers, we recognized this was an issue that we collectively could advance and try to make a difference.

It started with a presentation I made to that group, but then I also was able to use my direct line to the Premier’s office as Speaker to raise issues that I believed should be considered when coming up with Nova Scotia policy and legislation.

We started working on the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act*, which we passed in 2017. I know in my heart

that if I wasn't sitting at the caucus table, being that voice for persons with disabilities, it wouldn't have happened. As we developed our policy positions and government agenda, the landscape of demands competing for attention is just so crowded that it just magnifies the importance of having a lived experience voice from the disability community there. Whether it's people with disabilities, or diversity in terms of gender balance or people of colour, it's important to have these voices present to offer perspectives that differ from traditional stereotypical political process thinking of people making decisions for others without really considering the effects and outcomes on that population.

When Carla Qualtrough was elected federally in 2015 and became the first Minister responsible for persons with disabilities, she, Stephanie and Sam were all in cabinets. It seemed like we had the beginnings of a critical mass. There were enough of us that I could point to what was happening in Canada and pitch the creation of a group for parliamentarians with disabilities to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA).

I looked to the only other permanent subcommittee that was in place at CPA, and that was the Women Parliamentarians' Network. It was created to improve the gender balance in parliaments by encouraging and supporting women to seek elected office. I thought, "Why not have the same kind of group for persons with disabilities?"

I was also emboldened by visiting parliamentary delegations from other areas of the Commonwealth where, to put it politely, ideas of democratic representation were still evolving. They would come to Nova Scotia, the oldest seat of government in our country and one of the oldest in the Commonwealth, to learn our best practices. Of course, there I am as Speaker: the guy in the wheelchair.

Some of these delegations were from countries where people with disabilities are not necessarily embraced by society. So, the notion that a person with a disability would even seek elected office, never mind get elected or hold a high position in an Assembly, is just so far off their radar. We were changing minds by setting an example *by just getting elected* and being that role model. I'll only speak for myself, but that's the whole point, right? You can influence and change policy as it relates to persons with disabilities by bringing that first voice, that lived experience to the table. Other people with disabilities in Canada and

across the Commonwealth see you and say, "If Kevin can do it, maybe I can do it too..."

Not that it was all disability all the time. I knew I had a job to do as the representative of my community, to contribute to caucus discussions, to speak up at the right time on a very broad range of issues. But I know my interventions, perspective and presence led to the creation of the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act*. I know Minister Qualtrough's presence at the federal caucus table led to the creation of the *Accessible Canada Act* in 2019. We changed minds of our fellow policy makers.

The location of government announcements, the inclusion of sign language and alternate accessible forms of communications for committee hearings, the legislative broadcasts, the documents that government produces, and policies across the board. The benefits may be subtle to some, but so profound and essential to others to facilitate full participation in all aspects of government.

CPR: How receptive was the CPA to this initiative?

KM: Bringing the idea of a Parliamentarians with Disabilities subcommittee to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association was interesting because we play an important role as the keepers of democracy. Yet in a democracy, there is always a certain amount of politicking required to get things done. It took longer than I hoped to get the ball rolling because there were several other important issues and challenges, but at the end of the day, virtually everyone recognized the value of creating this network.

But it also posed some challenges that were quite different than initiatives designed to increase representation of women or people of colour. People don't always identify or voluntarily identify as having a disability. I'm a person who uses a wheelchair. Well, that's pretty obvious. But other disabilities are not so visible. This made the quantitative side of things more challenging.

We started out as an informal network. We had our first meeting, fittingly, here in Halifax in 2017 where I was host. When we sought to become a formal network within the CPA, the approach was to find a disability champion in each of the seven Commonwealth regions. If we couldn't find an elected person with a disability, we looked for an elected person who had a direct connection to someone with a disability, such as a family member. The Network was formalised in 2019.



Kevin Murphy/Facebook



Nova Scotia's Government/Facebook

Above: Kevin Murphy (followed by Neil Ferguson, former Clerk of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly) passes by the government benches as he leaves the Speaker's dias in late 2013. Below: Nova Scotia's Legislative Assembly undertook renovations to make the Speaker's dias accessible by installing a ramp and making the Speaker's chair removable so that presiding officers could use wheelchairs as needed. Opposite Page: Murphy presiding over the legislature.



In 2020 when I was still the Nova Scotia Speaker and still chairperson of the CPwD, we had plans to be a much larger part of the CPA's annual general meeting, scheduled for Halifax. However, just as we were making headway, along comes COVID-19, and everyone's time and energies were focussed elsewhere. Then our Nova Scotia provincial election happened in 2021, and I was not re-elected.

CPR: What happened when you were no longer a parliamentarian, but heavily involved in promoting a group for Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities?

KM: One of the challenges I had with advancing the CPwD was the way CPA works. I had laid the groundwork for advancing this, but when I was no longer a member of a parliament, I could only be informally loosely involved.

As soon as you're unelected, you're out and you don't have any official standing with CPA. I received an invite to observe the AGM meeting where it launched and if I still have an informal channel into CPA HQ, but, essentially, I have no official standing to continue that work within, or on behalf of CPA. The same thing happened to many other founding members who left

parliamentary politics on their own accord or when they were defeated. These were people who I got real support from that are no longer elected. Those people still have valuable institutional knowledge of what's happening locally. They can still make valuable contributions. But they aren't able to really participate. As a result, I am not as informed of the activities of the network, and a lot of the personnel with experience that went into creating it has largely now moved on.

CPR: Are you suggesting perhaps creating something like an ex officio membership where there'd be recognition that you're not a parliamentarian but still had some role where you could maintain that institutional knowledge and have that continuity?

KM: Yes. People with disabilities who have been elected are such a small group with such a unique set of circumstances and experiences, it greatly magnifies the importance of keeping in touch to ensure that we continue to grow the movement. For others yet to come. Extinction can occur easily without a very deliberate effort to sustain.

CPR: I think I get your point as well that if you have newer parliamentarians with disabilities who are elected, and if there isn't that institutional knowledge, then you are still almost starting from scratch. They may see the bare bones of this organization, but they don't know what has come before or what lessons have been learned.

KM: Exactly. And I think there still is a desire among former parliamentarians to help. I'll give you an example: Access Awareness Week here in Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission reached out to me and said, "Kevin, this is a good opportunity for us to revisit the efforts that you were making when you were in office to set up the Network. Let's do a panel discussion that's aimed at restarting the conversation here locally about the importance of having candidates with disabilities on the ballot so that we can get to a point where there is representation from the disability community in elected seats in Nova Scotia."

So, I worked with them. We put a panel discussion together with me, Carla Qualtrough, Stephanie Cadieux, and a local municipal politician named Gary Mattie from Nova Scotia who has a spinal cord injury. We discussed the importance of everything you and I just talked about - having a political system that's accessible and seen as a viable option for people with disabilities who want to get involved in policy shaping and candidacy.

CPR: When you mention an accessible system, what does that entail beyond removing physical barriers to political spaces and promoting representation as an effective way to bring meaningful change?

KM: You know, we have a party system in Canada, so I keep saying political parties should legitimately reach into the disability community in their search for viable candidates.

But it's more than just identifying people with disabilities in candidate searches. Being a person with a disability doesn't qualify you to be a good candidate for elected office. You still must do and be everything that all other strong political candidates must do and be. You've got to be electable. You've got to be a good communicator. You've got to be able to manage your time. You've got to be able to rally people to come and work with you, to support your vision.

In Nova Scotia we've had ongoing discussions to create what we're calling a non-partisan campaign school for persons with disabilities. And again, it would be aimed at attracting the interest of people with disabilities so they can find their appropriate point of entry into the political system. It's been a challenge because when we reach out to the parties, inevitably we get back their policy positions on various disability issues. "Oh, we're all for ramps and this, that, or the other thing." That's not what this is about. Those policies and positions are important, but this is about finding people with disabilities who can be good candidates for political parties across the spectrum.

That's a tough sell; tougher than you would imagine. Statistics Canada tells us 27 per cent of us, or about 8 million Canadians, self-identify as having a disability. This is the drum that I beat behind closed doors. When I talk to people in political parties, I ask, "Why would you not want to court that demographic?" And it's not just that demographic, there is a direct multiplier. I'm married. I have two voting age children. So, if you get my vote with strong disability policy or a position on a particular disability issue, you can bet it would also appeal to them or get me talking to them about why I'm supporting you. There are legitimate reasons for political parties to court that vote and to keep this demographic satisfied. But we're not there yet. I still get a lot of blank stares from people high up in political parties - all political parties - that I've spoken to. There is still a fundamental lack of political understanding that disability issues affect *everyone*.



Nova Scotia Legislature/Kelly Clarke



CPA Secretariat/Jeffrey Hyland

Above: Murphy welcomed representatives from eight of nine Commonwealth Parliamentary Association regions to a 2017 conference exploring the idea of a formal group within the CPA. Below: The Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities' Regional Champions meet at the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Ghana.

CPR: What was the campaign to bring the CPwD to CPA International like? How did you go about it?

KM: The CPA Executive Committee is made up of a representative from each of the seven regions, plus a representative from the women's side, and the past chair. I tried to garner the support of each one of those people. But I didn't get it. It wasn't a unanimous vote.

There were still some frustrating concerns from people who simply just didn't get it. That wasn't totally unexpected. But, in a democracy you just need enough votes to win. So, in order to get the support of an executive member, I reached out to people like me in those regions and asked them to speak to their representative, to educate them about the need for this group, and subsequently try to win their support for it.

You know, a very wise, tall man who became our premier once told me that when it comes to elected politics, you can't change the world unless you're nominated. You must win the nomination first. You win the nomination by getting the most votes. So, focus on getting the most votes. Make sure you get your voters out so that you win the nomination and then win the election. Then, only then, can you really work on the things you want to on behalf of the people you are representing. That playbook served me well in getting that initiative up and running.

At the end of the day, I'm thrilled that it's there and enshrined in the CPA's operations. I'm still trying to find a way, and admittedly I've planted seeds, to stay more involved, and I will always have my voice, and stay involved.

CPR: What have you been up to since leaving parliamentary politics?

KM: I had the good fortune to join the federal government. It was quite timely. I took some time, obviously to rest and regroup and try to figure out what I wanted to be when I grew up and wasn't too long. Minister Qualtrough gave me a call to see what I had on the go. She was telling me about the initiative for the Canada Disability benefit federally and that she was putting a team together to advance that piece of legislation. When she was minister, I worked closely under her leadership to help shepherd the disability benefit bill through both houses and then, of course, rolled my sleeves up and got to work with our policy team to build the program.

In the blink of an eye, four years passed, and the program is up and running. The allocation from last year's budget was \$6.2 billion over 4 years. I truly believe this will change the lives of Canadians with disabilities. This represents real progress, but there is so much more work and advocacy that still needs to happen.

There was tons of learning for me along the way as I shifted from the person in the front of cameras and microphones to a policy advisor behind the scenes. Being on the other side of the desk was really enlightening. The learning curve for me was incredibly steep. Going from the cozy little world of Nova Scotia politics where I knew everyone by first name to the much larger and deeper world of Ottawa where millions of dollars is loose change under the seat cushions. The layers of bureaucracy and processes are much deeper.

I had an opportunity to go full circle as I approach retirement by joining the Praxis Spinal Cord Institute team to ensure the voices of people with experience continue to be heard and included in their work and beyond, coast to coast. So, I find myself back at the beginning of the learning curve in many ways.

CPR: Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts on this.



As a parliamentarian (and Speaker), Murphy worked on a variety of initiatives of importance to his constituents in Eastern Shore and Nova Scotians more broadly; however, he was always delighted when he found opportunities to raise awareness of disability issues and to celebrate the achievements of people with disabilities. Above: Murphy's friendship with Canada's Man-in-Motion Rick Hansen began after his debilitating injury as a teenager and continued through his time in the Assembly and beyond. Below: Murphy greets future Senator Chantal Petitclerc at the Nova Scotia Assembly in her role as Chef de Mission for Canada's 2016 Paralympic team.



