

# canadian Parliamentary review

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*Constituency  
Offices in Focus*

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# canadian Parliamentary review

Constituency offices, virtually absent from the landscape 10 to 20 years earlier, became a more common sight in the 1970s. Here we present archival photos of former Ontario MPP John MacBeth, who served in cabinet as Solicitor General, Minister of Correctional Services and Minister of Labour, at work in one of his constituency offices. Photos courtesy of Wendy MacBeth.



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

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## Letter from the Editor

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In this edition of the *Canadian Parliamentary Review* we turn our eye to what one contributor calls “the country’s most dramatic, if accidental, parliamentary reform”: constituency offices. With well over 1,000 constituency offices at the federal, provincial and territorial levels combined, many people across the country will have at least some familiarity with these institutions – whether simply passing by on a street or actively seeking assistance from their constituency office in person, by phone or by mail.

But, likely reflecting the heterogeneous country in which they reside and the members which they serve, there is great diversity amongst these offices. In a series of interviews and roundtables, we present some of the unique ways in which parliamentarians have organized these offices, how yet others fulfill their representative roles without them, and the particular challenges presented by geography and population density.

Many of these offices, with their diverse forms and functions, seem to have evolved (or perhaps devolved) into the de facto front line for certain ministries or the bureaus of last resort for constituents

who have hit bureaucratic roadblocks and hope their parliamentarian can act as their champion or ombudsperson. Some members of the scholarly community use articles in this issue to note that these developments make constituency offices an excellent place for experiential learning for young political scientists, but perhaps signal some greater malaise in our political system. Is constituency work alone the best use of parliamentarians’ time? Why is it that so many parliamentarians get so much satisfaction from adopting the “fixer” role in their constituency offices while the public’s perception of MPs as being detached and unresponsive to community needs has grown? Should parliamentarians re-imagine constituency offices as spaces for civic engagement to deepen and enrich the country’s political conversation?

While this edition will offer a few entry points for discussion, the *Canadian Parliamentary Review* welcomes and encourages parliamentarians to publicize other innovations within the country’s political system occurring at the local level, outside of the legislative assemblies. Please consider submitting a letter to the Editor or a future article to apprise your colleagues of these types of developments.

**Will Stos**  
Editor





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# Changing Partisan Representatives While Maintaining Office Staff

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## Interview with Elizabeth Witmer, former MPP

*Upon replacing long-time Liberal Herb Epp as MPP for the riding of Waterloo North in 1990, Progressive Conservative Elizabeth Witmer hired two of her predecessor's constituency office staff. In this interview, Witmer notes that although such arrangements are uncommon between politicians with different partisan affiliations, adopting a firmly non-partisan approach to hiring staff for constituency work served her and her community well.*



**CPR:** Can you tell us how you became involved in politics and the path that took you to your election as an MPP?

**Elizabeth Witmer:** I had developed an interest in politics while I was in high school. When I was 18 I had gone to a rally with my Member of

Provincial Parliament in Huron County, and member of cabinet, Charles McNaughton. He invited me to attend a rally with him and his wife. I remember coming home and thinking that I would like to be an MPP just like him. Mr. McNaughton was a very caring person who, regardless of your station in life or your political affiliation, respected and treated everyone the same. I was very impressed with the way he served and worked for his constituents. After graduation from high school I went to Western to become a secondary school teacher. After 12 years teaching I made a decision to leave the teaching profession and seek public office. I decided to run for election as a school board trustee, as opposed to municipal council, because I felt I had the educational experience that would serve me

well. I ran for the board in 1980 and was successful. I became Chair of the Board in 1985. I was invited to run for the PC Party in 1987 and despite the fact that I knew that I could not defeat Herb Epp, because he was a well-respected, people-oriented representative, I decided to become the PC candidate. Sometimes you have to run and lose in order to learn how you can win the next time around. I ran again in 1990 and was successful at a time when the province voted NDP. My riding switched from Liberal to Conservative. It was very much, I believe, based on people voting for a person with a track record as opposed to my political affiliation.

**CPR:** When new parliamentarians are elected they are allowed to use some of the office budget to set up a constituency office. Sometimes when they are replacing someone from the same party they'll hire members of their former staff. But it's extremely rare for a new member to hire the staff of the former member if they represented a different party. Why did you opt to do this?

**Witmer:** I found out that it was extremely rare only after I had done it. I made the decision that my job was to represent the people of my riding and that I needed to represent all of the people in my riding regardless of whether they had supported me or my party. I came to the conclusion that the people who had worked for Herb Epp knew the riding and had served the people extremely well, so I offered two of his constituency staff positions. One of them worked for me until she retired and the other worked for me for the 22 years I was an MPP. Their focus was on putting people first – ours was not a political office. We focused on serving the people well and I don't ever regret that decision

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*Elizabeth Witmer was elected as MPP for Waterloo North in 1990 as a Progressive Conservative and subsequently re-elected in that riding and its successor Kitchener-Waterloo until her retirement in 2012. She began a five-year term as Chair of the Workplace Safety Insurance Board in 2012.*

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because I do believe constituency offices should be focused on helping all of the people all of the time and everyone should feel very welcome approaching you or your staff with problems or concerns. I believe the staff I hired did that job. Their first loyalty was to the people in the riding and I fully believe that's how it should be. I will also say that I did receive a phone call from someone in the party who said, "You know, that's not normally how things are done." So I did discover that's not what usually happens, but to this day I think it was very appropriate that I hired individuals who put people ahead of politics.

**CPR:** You mentioned receiving one call highlighting that this was unusual. Did you have many other colleagues inquiring about how it was working?

**Witmer:** I only remember one call and aside from that one; I don't think people made it a big issue. But after the fact I did become aware that it was more usual to choose someone who had a similar political affiliation to yourself. I had no idea of the political affiliation of the two staff I hired and personally that was irrelevant. I just wanted to make sure they were going to serve all of the people in the riding to the best of their ability as well making sure we addressed the concerns of our constituents to the best of our ability.

**CPR:** What were some of the benefits of keeping the former member's staff?

**Witmer:** They knew the constituents. They were familiar with the job of working in a constituency office. They were aware of the issues and concerns of constituents which included Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and welfare cases, family support issues, birth certificate renewals and replacements, health cards, transportation issues and small business issues. The advantage was the former member's staff knew their job well, and they knew what was expected of them. I appreciated that one of Herb's staff stayed with me throughout my 22 years in the office. This was important when I became a Cabinet Minister in 1995, because I wasn't able to be in my riding as often, she basically managed the office

and stakeholder relationships. However, I was still involved in major decision-making and I never allowed any correspondence to be released without my signature. She did an outstanding job in serving my constituents and at the same time keeping me informed about current issues so that I always had first-hand knowledge about them. This was important information which helped to inform decision-making at caucus and cabinet meetings.

**CPR:** When you took over from Mr. Epp and hired some of his staff, did it allow for you to carry over some of his case files for your own use or is that something that's not done?

**Witmer:** Those files are normally destroyed. However, in this instance we did have access to

some of his files. There was some benefit to having them because it meant the constituent wouldn't have to start all over again with a new constituency assistant who didn't know the background of their case.

**CPR:** Considering that constituency offices have become a key entry point in dealing with governments for various services or in terms of being directed to the right department, should there be a role for

a public servant in constituency offices – someone who would be tied to the institution regardless of which party or member was in office?

**Witmer:** I think it would be too difficult to achieve. Right now it's the MPP who is the employer and there needs to be a level of trust and collaboration between the MPP and the staff who work in the constituency office. You have to have a level of confidence that your staff will represent you in a manner you want to be represented. That is critically important. They are your eyes and ears in the community. They're on the front line. As an MPP you spend a great deal of time in Toronto, especially when you become a cabinet minister. It is the constituency staff who let you know what's going on in the riding, so there has to be a level of trust and honesty between the MPP and their staff. If there are problems they need to let you know as quickly as possible so you can become involved in helping to resolve them.

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# No Independent Office Space: the PEI Experience

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## Interview with Paula Biggar, MLA

*Members of the Legislative Assembly in Canada's smallest province are not provided with a budget to establish their own constituency offices. Instead, as Deputy Speaker Paula Biggar explains, backbench MLAs must do constituency work and hold meetings in a variety of locations including their offices in the capital buildings, local government-run information access centres, libraries, coffee shops or even in their own homes. Biggar notes that while PEI MLAs are the lowest paid in the country, they tend to be, and are expected to be, the most accessible to constituents.*



**CPR:** Constituency offices seem to have developed haphazardly across Canada over the past 40 to 50 years and are now well-established in many jurisdictions. Why do you think Prince Edward Island has not adopted them for provincial politics?

**Paula Biggar:** Backbench MLAs in PEI do not have budgets to run constituency offices. Prince Edward Islanders feel the cost to run an office is not warranted due to accessibility to their local representative. There is somewhat of an expectation that the MLA should be available other than just at an office; for example, constituent meetings take place at coffee shops, by phone, at the MLA's home or at the constituent's home. Most MLAs in PEI adhere to these expectations of accessibility.

**CPR:** What sort of alternate arrangements have been made for MLAs who may be doing casework in their constituency? Do different MLAs have different practices?

**Biggar:** Most MLAs have access to office space in their constituency in an already established government site such as a library or Access PEI offices – a single location where the public can access provincial government services, programs and information. MLAs have access to a phone at these places, but no office staff is provided for them. Cabinet Ministers are provided a budget for an Executive Assistant to assist with constituent inquiries, however. Some MLAs are provided space in the community free of charge to hold office meetings once a week at the local municipal office. I also hold office hours at an alternate location in an office at a government site. On occasion I do have constituents come to my home or I meet with them at a coffee shop.

Each MLA sets up constituency space to reflect their own area. Backbench MLAs also have an office space provided at the Capital where our legislature is located and share office space in the Government Members' Office. For those of us who represent rural areas, these offices are most used when the legislature is in session, while those from Charlottetown tend to use this space as their main office. Each office is generally shared with a mix of rural and urban MLAs, so this arrangement works well.

**CPR:** Are MLAs permitted to use their legislative office expense budgets for work they may need to do elsewhere (i.e. Renting meeting space, travel within the constituency, expenses from a home office)?

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*Paula Biggar, Liberal MLA for District 23 (Tyne Valley-Linkletter), was first elected in 2007. In addition to being Deputy Speaker, she is Chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environment, Energy, and Forestry, and sits on Committees for Public Accounts, Fisheries and Rural Development, Community and Intergovernmental Affairs, and Legislative Management Committee, as well as the Ministerial Committee for the Island Community Fund.*

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**Biggar:** There is no budget provided for backbench MLAs to travel within the constituency for meetings with constituents or to rent meeting space. There is also no budget for backbench MLAs to do any advertising, sponsor any local event, etc. Any event tickets, donations, or lunches with constituents are a personal expense which each MLA takes out of their own salary. MLAs can expense travel from their ridings to the capital up to five times per month when we're not in session and travel can be claimed when we attend meetings for a standing committee. Travel to the capital is covered daily if the legislature is in session. If we stay overnight in the capital during the sitting of the session it is at our own expense as a backbencher. Office supplies such as stamps, printer paper, and business cards are provided by the Government Members' Office.

Backbench MLAs are provided with phone and fax lines at their home and a monthly Internet deduction on their home Internet connection through the Legislative Assembly. Each MLA is provided with a cell phone and a call package paid by the Government Members' Office, unless they are identified as personal calls. Each month, backbench MLAs must sign the statement sent to government members in regard to use of phone line at their home office and calls placed to declare nature of the call. If the calls are of a personal nature then the members have to pay them back.

**CPR:** Federal MPs in PEI have constituency offices. Is there any cooperation in terms of allowing MLAs to use this space for provincial work? Do some MLAs wish to have this system in place provincially?

**Biggar:** There is no affiliation between federal offices and no use of MP office space or other federal offices by any provincial MLA. Due to the potential to confuse the roles and responsibilities of federal and provincial elected officials I do not think it would be a good idea to share the same space.

**CPR:** Does the absence of a constituency office in an MLA's riding tend to make him/her more likely to remain in the capital to work or to focus more on legislative business as opposed to constituent casework?

**Biggar:** The present system generally provides access to constituents at a local level to backbench MLAs. However, a travel, advertising, or event budget would help make the role of backbench MLAs more equitable with their cabinet colleagues. Cabinet Ministers have access to an operational budget and resources that assist their constituency. There is a perception by local constituents that all PEI MLAs receive the same benefits as Cabinet Ministers (i.e. a car with a gas card, meals, etc.). We need to educate the public more. Generally the public feel that MLAs are overpaid and they do not give credence to the hours required for an MLA to effectively carry out our role or the need to have this kind of budget in order to work.

**CPR:** What could other jurisdictions learn from the PEI experience when it comes to how MLAs handle constituency work and representation?

**Biggar:** PEI elected officials are the lowest paid in the country. In discussions with other provincial officials they are very surprised at the fact that backbench MLAs also have no operating budget. Recent events, with regard to misuse of funds in other constituencies across Canada, have made it very difficult to move forward as the perception is that these budgets are misused and parliamentarians are unaccountable for their spending.

Our MLAs are, notably, the most accessible and the expectation for us to be accessible 24/7 is not uncommon on PEI. As each jurisdiction has different budgetary situations I believe governments must all work to be equitable and fair not only to our constituents but also to our elected officials.



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# *Under One Roof: Federal and Provincial Parliamentarians Share Constituency Office Space*

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## **Interview with Gilles Bisson, MPP**

*MPP Gilles Bisson represents a large Northern Ontario riding. To maximize his access to constituents in geographically dispersed communities he began sharing office space with two of his federal colleagues. In this interview, Bisson describes the many benefits of this arrangement for his constituents and how staff members in each office manage their casework flow.*



**CPR:** How did you first come up with the idea of combining constituency offices with these two members (Carol Hughes and Charlie Angus)?

**Gilles Bisson:** When I was elected as a New Democrat in 1990 it seemed to make a lot of sense to me to try to

find a way to share space because constituents would come in the door with an issue and not have an idea of whether it would be federal or provincial. And what would often happen is that they came to the provincial office, they spent time telling their story and then it would turn out to be a federal issue. And I would have to send them down to the federal member's office. And at the time we couldn't do it because he was locked into a lease and the space couldn't accommodate two offices. So I always had it in the back of my head, and

when I asked Charlie Angus to run along with Jack Layton, one of the things I talked to him about was that should he be elected we should put our offices together. In fact, he ran on that as part of his platform and it was fairly popular. People understood it was a one-stop shop: you came to one door, you got the answers, nobody could pass the buck.

**CPR:** Are you aware of other parliamentarians with similar arrangements?

**Bisson:** Most people won't do it for a host of reasons. First of all, you have to be in the same political party. It wouldn't make sense to share it with a member of the opposite party. But there many other reasons which come into play. There could be lease arrangements which make it impractical. In other cases there might be members who just want to do their own thing. But there's not a lot of appetite to do this because it does take a fair amount of effort on the part of both the federal and provincial members. And it's also a bit of a task for the staffs as well. So it's not something most people would like to do, but it works for us here, it's our brand and people in our constituencies are pretty used to it. But I think most members would be hard-pressed to do it.

**CPR:** Can you give an example of how this "one stop shopping" arrangement has helped constituents?

**Bisson:** Just the other night I got a call on my cell phone from someone in my northern constituency with Carol Hughes. She has an insurance problem and a CRA (Canada Revenue Agency) problem. She's a

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*Gilles Bisson is the House Leader for Ontario's New Democratic Party. First elected in 1990, the MPP for Timmins-James Bay operates two full-time constituency offices which are shared with NDP MPs Charlie Angus (Timmins-James Bay) and Carol Hughes (Algoma-Manitowlin-Kapuskasing) in Timmins and Kapuskasing, respectively, and holds regular office hours in the communities of Hearst, Constance Lake and Smooth Rock Falls.*



Members of the Bisson-Angus Timmins constituency office staff in the boardroom after a team meeting: (from left) Dale Tonelli, federal constituency assistant (CA); Cheryl Counter, volunteer; André Grzela, provincial CA; Tina Chartrand, provincial CA; Sue Cardinal, federal CA; Lise Beaulne, federal CA.

small businessperson and the dogs are coming in on her and putting her in a position where she'll probably have to close her business in a couple of weeks if this doesn't get resolved. So she had both a federal and provincial issue: the insurance issue was provincial and the CRA issue is federal. So this morning I called my staff at my Kapuskasing office to see what we could do for them. And so, one person will take on the file but deal with both parts of it. Often, the beauty with that is they're connected in some way. The CRA issue is connected to the insurance issue, as well, and it's best if the staff person following up with that constituent is familiar with both and versed in both. It just makes it a lot easier to deal with. From the constituent's point of view you don't have to waste time telling your story to two different offices. And if it comes to a point where it's nearing completion and one office is handling it differently than another office, it may cause problems when it comes to a resolution. This is a fairly powerful thing for your constituents, but it takes a certain amount of work on the part of the staff and members to make it work.

**CPR:** How do you handle the issue of dividing expenses between jurisdictions?

**Bisson:** Basically we split everything in half. We've made arrangements with our service providers to split our bills in half, so one member pays one half and the other member pays the other half. In other cases there may be a trade off: one member will pick up a bill for something that's \$100 a month and the other will pick up the bill on something else comparable. But most service providers have been good in allowing us to split our bills that way.

**CPR:** Does this help to keep down costs, or are you able to provide a greater level of service?

**Bisson:** What most people don't know is that members have not had an increase in their office budgets for years now, especially on the provincial side, but also on the federal side. So it allows you to have a bit of savings so that you have a bit of a buffer. It's allowed us to have a little bit more staff in terms of reception, but most of it goes into providing a buffer so that you're able to absorb the increase in hydro and the increase in everything else going on these days. Most of us have multiple offices, especially here in Northern Ontario. It's not like some downtown Toronto ridings where you have one constituency office. I run two full-time constituency offices, Charlie



runs two full-time constituency offices, and Carol runs two full-time constituency offices. Plus we have our clinics on top of that because the ridings are so large. Most of the money goes to paying mileage for staff to go from Point A to Point B or for cell phones or computers and such.

**CPR:** How do you handle staffing issues? Do you delegate responsibility? Are there times when one MP has a heavier workload than another?

**Bisson:** I've been managing it with Charlie ever since he was elected – he's been elected over 10 years now – and there's been some adjustment because my staff were used to doing things in a certain way, and it took some time to work out a relationship, but we've managed to work it out. And with workload, it balances out. Take my office with Carol Hughes. Over there I have two staff and she has one, so obviously my people are taking on a bit more, but overall it balances out in the end and it depends on the kind of work you do. Generally provincial politics tends to touch people more directly than federal politics. We get everything from workers' compensation, to loan applications to quarry permits because the provincial government tends to have much more direct contact with people in terms of matters which affect their daily lives.

**CPR:** When you say that you have two workers in that office and Carol Hughes has one, does this mean you do individual hiring?

**Bisson:** Oh yes, everyone has to be on an individual member's payroll. But what we try to do is to divvy up the casework in a way that makes sense. In Kapuskasing the staff there have resisted strict divisions between federal and provincial files, so there is a bit of cross-over work there because that's what they have found works well for them based on the volume of casework. In the Timmins office they prefer a bit more of a defined federal-provincial division and that seems to work well there. So it depends on the individuals.

**CPR:** Is this something you've talked to other MPs and MPPs about in terms of the merits of this system?

**Bisson:** I have talked to people, especially at the beginning when this was put in place, but also during the last election cycle when some of them approached me with questions. But what I've said is that it's not for everyone. If you're a newly elected member and you're thinking about this there are a number of things you need to consider. First, if there's an existing member in the

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*"People understood it was a one-stop shop: you came to one door, you got the answers, nobody could pass the buck."*  
~ Gilles Bisson

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other jurisdiction, are they locked into a lease and if so, can their office accommodate you and your staff? Not all existing members may necessarily want to team up. And of course the other member would need to be from the same party. Don't get me wrong, I've had good working relationships with MPs from another party during some of my time in office, but trying to combine office space and sharing staff with someone who has a different political philosophy about how things should be done would be very difficult, if not impossible.



Dale Tonelli and Emilia Duguay, a co-op student from Timmins High School, verify passport applications at the front desk.



**CPR:** Do you have any final thoughts about this topic you'd like to share that didn't come up during the course of this interview?

**Bisson:** I think one of the most positive things about this setup is that it requires you to have excellent communication with your colleagues from the other jurisdiction; so much so that it's been very beneficial to know what's happening elsewhere. We tend to

keep each other in the loop. And it also allows us to easily cover more terrain in our ridings and speak to matters if the member from another jurisdiction can't be present. We all get invited to events and we can't always attend based on work schedules, so this close communication allows us to cover off for each other or bring some prepared remarks for another member if they can't be present.



**Top:** Volunteers Ed Stecewicz and Cheryl Counter discuss issues of concern in the riding in the main entrance of the office.  
**Bottom:** Lise Beaulne on the phone in her office speaking to a constituent.



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# A Constituency of Millions: “Elected” Senators Discuss Alternatives to Operating a Province-wide Constituency Office

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## Interviews with Senator Doug Black and Senator Betty Unger

*Unlike Members of Parliament who are elected to well-defined constituencies, it's unusual for Canadian Senators to operate constituency offices in their efforts to represent their home provinces/regions. Former Senator Bert Brown of Alberta, who was appointed to the Senate after a province-sponsored election process, ran an office in Calgary as a part of his efforts to be an active representative to the people of his province; but in separate interviews with the Canadian Parliamentary Review, two current “elected” Senators from the province, Senators Doug Black and Betty Unger, suggest they prefer to employ alternatives to a stationary physical space in their outreach and consultations.*

### Senator Doug Black



**CPR:** Senators do not usually have constituency offices. As an “elected” Senator with a direct mandate from your constituents, do you feel a particular need to have something like a constituency office to represent constituents and communicate with them?

**Doug Black:** Unlike a Member of Parliament or a Member of the Legislative Assembly in the respective province, my constituency

is a complete province, which in the case of Alberta, is just over four million people. As you know we have six Senators for four million people. I am an elected Senator, and I was fortunate that in that election I won 83 or 84 of the 87 (provincial) constituencies in the province. So I have constituents in literally every city, town and hamlet in Alberta. I take my responsibility to be in touch with my constituents seriously, and it's a daily responsibility in one way or another. So the question becomes, would an office assist that? My view is no. The whole concept of a physical space is an old paradigm particularly when you're dealing with a province the size of Alberta. Where would I locate my office? What I have done is maintain a very active website and a very active social media presence. We are also doing regular online surveys. So we're asking my constituents what they think and they are responding, there's no doubt about that. I'm always soliciting people's views. Secondly, I'm in regular touch with the Alberta media and we also have good relationships with the cultural community media. So as we're reaching out to people they know that Senator Black is active. And finally, I maintain an active travel schedule in Alberta. Just this past weekend I spoke at a French school in Calgary, met with the mayor of Banff, attended the Winter Games, so I'm very active and I'm seen to be active and seen to be around. So in terms of outreach I have absolutely no sense that an office would assist that.

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*Senator Doug Black finished in first place in the 2012 Alberta Senate Nominee Election. Appointed to the Senate on January 25, 2013, he is also Senior Counsel at Dentons Canada LLP, a global law firm, and was named as one of Canada's 25 most influential lawyers for 2012 by Canadian Lawyer Magazine. Senator Betty Unger campaigned as a Reform Party Senate Nominee in 1998 and was elected by Alberta voters in the 2004 Provincial/Senatorial Election. Appointed to the Senate on January 6, 2012, she founded and operated a medical services company with offices in Edmonton, Red Deer and Calgary.*

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**CPR:** Is there anything in place of an office that would help with this type of outreach?

**Black:** If I could have an individual who worked for me whose job was to do daily outreach in the province that would be fabulous. But that person wouldn't work from an office; that person would work from a car and be moving through Alberta every week. I would love to do that, but there's no money for it.

**CPR:** There has been a lot of discussion about Senate reform recently and debate about the role and purpose of this chamber. Have you talked about this idea for a

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*"If I could have an individual who worked for me whose job was to do daily outreach in the province that would be fabulous. But that person wouldn't work from an office; that person would work from a car and be moving through Alberta every week."*

*~Doug Black*

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budget for outreach staff with your colleagues as a part of these discussions?

**Black:** You know, I haven't talked about that idea, but it is one that I will talk about. But in this current environment the last thing that a Senator is going to get is more money. Another option would be to get funding from a think tank or a corporation or organization to support that initiative which would be possible, potentially. But again, in this particular environment it would be fraught with a little bit of difficulty. I think we have to let waters calm a bit before that discussion. Another option would be to use the funds that I have for my Ottawa office and divert some of them to hire a staff member there. But that would not be very helpful because the job that I have to do is here in Ottawa, so I need the staff I have here with me.

**CPR:** Your colleagues in the House of Commons do have constituency offices, and sometimes they have more than one. In your discussions with them, have there been any broader discussions about these institutions as access points to government and whether they need any reforms?

**Black:** I come to my perspective as a Senator, but the role of a Member of the House of Commons is much different. First, the geographic area they represent is much smaller. Even in parts of Alberta where constituencies are larger, you can drive from one end to another in half a day. So you can manage to travel.

Certainly in the urban constituencies you can take a bus. Second, constituents for MPs will reach out to them with their passport problems, their immigration problems, their Revenue Canada problems; Senators get less of that. So I think there are strong reasons why a Member of Parliament would want an office. If you live in a constituency you can take the bus, or a car, or skateboard and visit your MP's office – this is not possible for an elected Senator from a province unless you're lucky enough to live next door to the strip mall where my office would be.

**CPR:** Do you have any other final thoughts on this topic?

**Black:** The key point for me is connectivity. That's what I worry about every day and that's what my staff worries about every day. How are we connected and how are we relevant to Albertans? The question then becomes, what tools do we need to maintain this connectivity and how do we best deploy them? Do I need a physical office to do this in this particular role? No, I would say I do it through social media, news media, the cultural media and my travel agenda – and it seems to be working. We track things like social media use and my stats on these sites seem to be improving month over month. So that is a good sign.

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#### Senator Betty Unger

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**CPR:** The Senate does not normally provide funding for constituency offices. Are these offices something that Senators might need?

**Betty Unger:** If you were going to establish a constituency office then funding is definitely something you would need: for rent, for phones, for a staff person. Although I haven't used all my budget, a second office would make a significant dent in my budget.

**CPR:** As a Senator who was selected as a provincial nominee through an electoral process, is a constituency office something that you would need to make contact with the people you represent?

**Unger:** In my two years in the Senate, there hasn't been a request for which I've said 'Oh gee, I wish I would have had an office so I could have dealt with this'. When I'm at home I attend as many public events as

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possible, right across the province, to meet with people. If someone says they'd like to talk to me I often suggest coffee and usually that's a good option. So from time to time I meet with people at a mutually agreeable place and sometimes these coffee meetings can be as long as two and a half to three hours! I can also suggest lunch appointments from time to time, if it is appropriate. But not having a constituency office has not been an issue.

The best example I could give you was in 2012 when Senators were each given 30 Diamond Jubilee medals to present. I had a small panel of people at home in Edmonton who were receiving all the applications and processing them. I would consult with them from here (Ottawa) or when I went home we would have meetings. One of the people on the panel works for a company that has a small boardroom which became the logical place to meet because it was convenient for all of us. We went through the entire process, which stretched over the summer, and there was no need for me to have a constituency office. Again, it wasn't an issue.

**CPR:** So a permanent office is not needed as long as you have a budget for travel and an office in Ottawa for coordination?

**Unger:** Yes. And I also live about two and a half blocks from the Alberta legislature. I have an office at home in Edmonton from which I make and receive telephone calls which works well.

**CPR:** As an "elected" Senator, do you feel as though you have a particular mandate that requires you to meet and keep in touch with constituents that unelected Senators do not, or are your appointed colleagues also keeping similar schedules in terms of going to events and meeting with people they represent in their regions?

**Unger:** Well, I honestly don't want to comment for the unelected Alberta Senators. But for example, last September, the University of Alberta was having a degree presentation to graduates of the Department of Engineering and Senator Claudette Tardif and I were invited to be presenters at the ceremony. That was the only request where I was asked to attend an event with another Senator. I do travel around the province to attend events and to meet with as many people as possible. I tend to focus more on Red Deer and northern Alberta as my territory because the other two ("elected") Senators are from Calgary and southern Alberta.

**CPR:** Your colleagues in the House of Commons do have constituency offices. In your conversations with them has there ever been discussion about this aspect of their work? Is there a sense there needs to be a broader examination of these access points to government or have they developed in a way that works well enough as is?

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*"In my two years in the Senate, there hasn't been a request for which I've said 'Oh gee, I wish I would have had an office so I could have dealt with this.'"*

*~Betty Unger*

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**Unger:** Your question reminded me of another option. I know my own MP very well, and that pre-dates me being named to the Senate. Arranging a meeting in his office would probably be another option. In addition, during the summer, we (the Conservative Party of Canada) have an Alberta caucus and Edmonton caucus. In these caucuses, we discuss local issues and people will be invited or will ask to come in to give presentations which are always excellent: two examples are the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce or Edmonton Economic Development. And this is another way to communicate with Albertans. If people ask to meet with me, occasionally, conversations are held at the conclusion of a previous meeting or another time is scheduled at their convenience.

**CPR:** Is there anything about this topic that we haven't covered that you'd like to add?

**Unger:** I was elected in 2004 when Alberta had three vacancies at the time. Prime Minister Paul Martin did not acknowledge Alberta's elections and he did his own thing. Previously, as a Registered Nurse, I had founded and managed a medical services business for 25 years - with offices in Edmonton, Red Deer and Calgary. Had I been appointed to the Senate then, having offices in Alberta would not have been of concern because I would have used those existing offices. However, I still don't see a need for a permanent constituency office and to this point I haven't experienced a time where that's been an issue.



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# *“The People’s Office”: Constituency Offices in the Far North*

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**Roundtable with Michael Nadli, MLA, Frederick (Sonny) Blake Jr., MLA, and Kevin Menicoche, MLA**

*In this roundtable discussion, three MLAs from rural/northern parts of the Northwest Territories reflect on the unique challenges parliamentarians face when doing constituency work in remote communities. They explain that offices often tailor themselves to the needs of the community. For MLAs, an office helps to create work/life balance, offers a source of much-needed local employment, and provides an additional connection to the seat of government. They are also the office of last appeal for constituents frustrated by bureaucratic decisions.*



**Michael Nadli**



**Frederick (Sonny) Blake Jr.**



**Kevin Menicoche**

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*Michael M. Nadli (MLA Deh Cho), served as Grand Chief of Deh Cho First Nations from August 1997 to June 2003. First elected to the Legislative Assembly in 2011, he is the Chair of Standing Committee on Government Operations. Frederick (Sonny) Blake Jr. (MLA Mackenzie Delta) served as the Chief and Mayor of Tsiigehtchic for two terms from 2007 to 2011. Since becoming an MLA in 2011 he has served as Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure. Kevin Menicoche (MLA Nahendeh) was first elected in 2003 and re-elected in 2007 and 2011. He is a past Chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations.*

**CPR:** When you represent a geographically vast district, how do you decide where to set up your constituency office(s)? How do you balance where you spend your time?

**Menicoche:** It just so happens that the largest community in my riding is my home community of Fort Simpson and that’s where I have my constituency office. I often conduct three full tours of the communities and have a public meeting when I’m there. I do three trips per year. In between, the ministers travel



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to the communities once or twice a year. It's all part of the consensus style of government. Each of these communities has a chief, two of mine have mayors, and two have Métis presidents. I'm dealing with 10 elected officials. In a more central riding like Hay River or Inuvik you're dealing with one mayor, potentially a Grand Chief and one Métis organization.

**Nadli:** I represent four communities with the farthest being about two and a half hours away by vehicle. The closest community is a 45-minute ride. When not in session or doing committee work, I spend the majority of my time in my home community so it was logical for me to set up a constituency office in my community. I also established a part-time office in the farthest community. When I travel to the communities of my riding, I start with the farthest community.

**Blake:** What I decided to do when elected was have an office in Fort McPherson because it is the largest community. The office had always been there and people appreciate that. I'm from Tsiigehtchic and there was a thought that I'd move it there. A lot of elders stop by every few days to see what's happening or if they have any concerns. Because we're in Yellowknife for an average of 100 days a year, I spend as much time at home with my family as I can. During the summer we have a lot of time to travel in our constituency. So I spend a lot of time in Fort McPherson and I attend a lot of events there and in the community of Aklavik. We have jamborees during Christmas and feasts and I also contribute to those feasts. We have to watch our budget and since I have to fly in to Aklavik, I really have to get my timing on there; though in the winter we can drive in and that helps a lot. Also, they have a gathering at the Beaufort Sea once a year. I went there last year and I was really happy with that.

**CPR:** When you travel to communities that don't have an office, where do you meet with constituents?

**Blake:** We usually have an arena or a hall that we can use.

**Menicoche:** Even though they're small, all our communities have an arena or hall or band office with meeting facilities. And before the meeting or after the meeting we'll visit the elders in their homes or yards

and speak to them on a one-to-one basis. In fact, one of the things I find with our Aboriginal constituents is that they're not ones to use email or phone calls or letters. They'd rather wait for you to visit and then tell you what their needs or their concerns are. Often they'll say, "Oh, I was waiting for you to show up because I had this thing going on." It's interesting.

**CPR:** Are there guidelines for establishing these offices? How did you decide what type of staff you needed and what types of services you would provide?

**Nadli:** Constituency Offices are established to ensure the MLA's presence in the community and riding. The design is at the discretion of the MLA, but we must follow policies and procedures of the Legislative Assembly. As I am not always in my office, it was important to have an experienced office worker and independent person as Constituency Assistant (CA). A prerequisite was understanding the local language of Deh Gah Got'ie Dene. Our office strives to be a place that the public can visit, to assist constituents with their concerns or issues, and also to support communities in their

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*"Having physical space and an office is important, to not only separate your home and work life, but to contribute to the local economy by renting office space and creating the position of a CA. Most northern communities have about 40 per cent unemployment."*  
~ Michael Nadli

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events and functions.

**Blake:** You have to have someone in the office who is able to work with everyone. It can be challenging in some of our smaller communities. I kept the CA for the former MLA. She also helped me when I ran for MLA, so it worked out pretty well. She's easy-going and knows pretty much the whole community, so that helps out a lot. Because we have smaller communities we tend to know more people in the communities we represent. And that really helps a lot too.

**Menicoche:** There are no specific guidelines, but we do have to work within our budget. I have someone on staff in the smaller communities as the community contact person, but having a central constituency office with a knowledgeable CA is important.

**Blake:** Similar to what Kevin mentioned, because I only represent three communities I have a contact person in the community. I can only pay \$500 a month, but they're happy with that because it's a part-time job. If anything comes up in the community, they let me know. If people have concerns, they'll sit down with them.

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**CPR:** Parliamentarians representing urban districts can usually establish an office that is easy to access for their constituents. As an MLA representing a rural area, do you find that having a physical space from which to work in your riding is less important than access to a travel budget to visit various communities in it? Is more work handled by phone or email than by physically meeting with constituents? Are physical offices still a necessity?

**Nadli:** Having physical space and an office is important, to not only separate your home and work life, but to contribute to the local economy by renting office space and creating the position of a CA. Most northern communities have about 40 per cent unemployment. Depending on the nature of constituent concerns, it is better to discuss matters in person rather than by phone or email. For these reasons, I believe a physical office is a necessity.

**Menicoche:** The legislature has set it up that they'll pay for up to five trips to each community per year and that's not part of constituency budget, so we have lots of opportunity to travel to meet with people in person.

**CPR:** Do staff in rural/northern constituency offices tend to have a noticeably different caseload than their urban counterparts? Are the issues generally the same or are their unique issues in rural and northern areas that your offices encounter?

**Blake:** I think we have a lot more casework in our communities because we have a 35 per cent unemployment rate. Also, the facilities we have in our communities are not what they have in the larger communities, so the demand, whether it's health or education, is higher. There's a lot more pressure on our smaller communities because the service level is less.

**Menicoche:** I tend to concur. One of the things we share is the difficulty in getting nurses to our smaller communities, and MLAs representing larger centres probably wouldn't have that.

**Blake:** Another issue is the RCMP, along with the nurses. We have communities without RCMP detachments which means our residents have to be the first responders. It puts a lot of pressure on them.

**CPR:** Compared to your urban counterparts, are constituency offices and staff more difficult to maintain?

**Nadli:** The supply of office space is limited in rural communities.

**Blake:** And one of the things our constituents would like to see are more offices, possibly one for each community, but there's no money for that. We get a budget of roughly \$90,000 and if that were to double we could make things easier for our constituents by setting up more offices. That's one thing the people in our communities would like to see – a place in their own community for them to stop in.

**CPR:** In many other jurisdictions which have partisan systems, when individual MLAs/MPs leave office they do not pass along casework/records to their successors, and unless their replacement belongs to the same party the previous staff is replaced. In the Northwest Territories' non-partisan form of government, when one MLA is defeated or retires, is there more of a tradition of keeping previous staff or providing information and casework to the incoming member?

**Nadli:** This is my first term and I haven't experienced a 'passing of the torch' kind of transition, where the victor and loser of the election share files or maintain a tradition of keeping previous staff.

**Blake:** I think it varies with each MLA. The former MLA in my riding, who retired after 16 years, really helped out quite a bit

and gave me a heads' up about what was happening. One of the beautiful things about the consensus style of government is that we have a research staff here and all the information that the former MLAs have gone through is compiled in our research library. Any information is available to us.

**Menicoche:** The constituents like dealing with knowledgeable CAs, so it helps if they are well-briefed.

**CPR:** How do people in your ridings tend to see these offices? Are they the central way to access government services? Are they places to go when they have difficulty with the bureaucracy? Are they tangible symbols of the distant seat of the territorial government?

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*"...[O]ne of the things I find with our Aboriginal constituents is that they're not ones to use email or phone calls or letters. They'd rather wait for you to visit and then tell you what their needs or their concerns are. Often they'll say, 'Oh, I was waiting for you to show up because I had this thing going on.'"*  
~ Kevin Menicoche

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**Nadli:** I believe people in my riding view our office as a place to go when they need help with their concerns. “The MLA’s office” is a common remark that I hear, referencing our office situated downstairs in a local government building. There is also a Government Services Office which is a supposed to be a one-stop shop for guiding the public through the various services provided by government. I think our office takes on the role of ombudsman from time to time. I prefer to view our constituency office as “the people’s office.”

**Blake:** To add to what Michael said, the government has recently created Government Service Offices in our communities and I am very fortunate to have two of these in the three communities I represent and soon there will be a third. That will be very helpful for a lot of our constituents to help with filling out forms for subsidies or other programs and services. But my constituency office doors are always open to help with any of these things too.

**Menicoche:** Michael and Sonny mentioned the government service workers. They’re part-time in the small communities, but they are able to address some of the concerns constituents have in addressing government services or filling out forms. A lot of

people contact my office because they feel that the MLAs in the Northwest Territories are the appeal guys. “The government denied me this or that, what can I do about it? I’m appealing to you because I tried working with the bureaucracy or the regional manager and I didn’t get the answer I want.” We’re seen as the appeal person – the office of last resort. I tell them that sometimes the answer is still no, but as an MLA I’ll follow through for them. What I find is that when people aren’t getting answers, they don’t know what to do next. If they get a ‘yes’ the process continues, if they get a ‘no’ they know what to do, but at least give them an answer.

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*“One of the things our constituents would like to see are more offices, possibly one for each community, but there’s no money for that. We get a budget of roughly \$90,000 and if that were to double we could make things easier for our constituents by setting up more offices.”*  
~ Frederick (Sonny) Blake Jr.

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**CPR:** Do you have any concluding thoughts about particular issues or challenges northern/rural MLAs face when doing constituency work?

**Blake:** I think one of the issues our smaller communities face is when people are about to get evicted. That comes up in a lot of our ridings. We are pretty much their last resort. A lot of times the ministers are flexible and tend to give the person one more opportunity to get into a payment plan. They really appreciate the help they receive from their MLAs and ministers in that situation. Otherwise they find themselves homeless or living with family members. I think that’s one of the biggest challenges of our smaller communities.

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# British Columbia Reaches a New Benchmark for Women's Representation

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**Hon. Linda Reid, MLA**

*With 36 per cent of its MLAs now women, British Columbia currently has the highest proportion of women parliamentarians in Canada. Moreover, women hold key decision-making positions in the province as Lieutenant Governor, Premier and Speaker. While celebrating these milestones, in this article, B.C. Speaker Linda Reid warns against complacency and urges parliamentarians across Canada and the Commonwealth to continue implementing changes designed to facilitate a level playing field for women interested in political life. She provides several examples of innovations which have contributed to the province's success at bolstering the number of women representatives and improving the quality of their work life in politics.*



The importance of ensuring equal representation of women in politics has been a recurrent theme in recent issues of the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*. Parliamentarians have reflected on their experiences in public life, and stressed the importance of women

participating in political decision-making processes. Women care about different issues and offer important perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, research shows that gender balance in politics results in well-rounded policies and better organizational performance.

Notable advances in women's representation have been made in British Columbia in recent years. The May 2013 provincial general election saw a significant

increase in the proportion of women elected over the previous parliament and the highest number of women ever elected to hold provincial office in B.C. Thirty of the 85 total seats were won by women – five more seats than in the previous general election. The by-election victory of Premier Christy Clark in July 2013 increased that number to 31.

With 36 per cent of its MLAs now women, BC currently has the highest proportion of women parliamentarians in Canada. The province is now well above the United Nations' minimum threshold of 30 per cent for women as a group to exert a meaningful influence in legislative assemblies. In addition, BC also now surpasses the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's threshold of 33 percent for women to become a critical mass and to have influence.

In addition to holding a significant percentage of seats, BC women hold notable positions in decision-making roles. For example, our Premier, seven of the 19 members of the executive council, and the Lieutenant Governor are women. In addition, several Opposition critics are female, as was the Leader of the Opposition from 2001 to 2010. I am proud to serve as the province's fourth female Speaker and the first since 1994. For the first time in our provincial history, the positions of Lieutenant Governor, Premier, and Speaker are held by women.

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*Linda Reid is Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. She will become chair of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, Canadian Section, in 2014.*



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While we have surpassed some notable milestones in BC, we must not be complacent in wider efforts to increase women's participation in political life. Much work remains to increase women's representation, both nationally and abroad. Despite some provinces making great strides in recent years, Canada remains ranked 54<sup>th</sup> on the Inter-Parliamentary Union's "Women in National Parliaments" list, and trails other governments in Europe, parts of Africa, and Australia.

How can we attain more proportional representation for women to ensure we serve society's interests more fully? Are there changes we can make to our political institutions to achieve this end? What lessons might be learned from recent successes in BC? These are some of the questions I ponder as Speaker and as Vice-Chair of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians.

Some of the options to increase female representation have been well-documented in the *CPR* and elsewhere. Actively encouraging women to consider running for office, particularly in winnable ridings, is an obvious first step. Establishing rules to keep campaign spending limits within reasonable amounts will also ensure a level playing field for women to run. Other targeted actions could include providing specific funding to assist women candidates with expenses such as child care, and supporting efforts of non-partisan advocacy groups that work to support women and raise awareness. Electoral reforms could possibly achieve the broader goal of parity of women's representation. These are but some of many ways to encourage and facilitate the entry of women into political life.

As an MLA for 23 years, my experience has been that pursuing women-friendly initiatives in the workplace can have a significant impact. Indeed, we need to ensure that our work environment is conducive to both attracting and retaining women. For example, adopting a parliamentary schedule and sitting times that recognize the need for work-life balance provides stability and predictability of working hours. In BC, we have had a parliamentary calendar with fixed sitting days for several years. Rather than a session called at a moment's notice and daily sittings that extend late into the night, we have scheduled sitting days, and

no Friday sittings. Some weeks during the session are also set aside for working in the constituency. This has made it much easier for women to balance their responsibilities as an MLA with those of their family.

During my time in office, I have seen the benefits that even seemingly minor changes can make for women entering politics. For me, the decision to allow women to take maternity leave without penalty when the House is sitting was a godsend. It meant that when I gave birth to my son, I was able to take four weeks off, rather than a mere four days, as was the case with my daughter. Other physical changes to the parliamentary buildings can also have an indirect impact. For example, providing more women's washrooms and improving barrier-free access for persons with disabilities has benefitted women working in our precinct. BC now has three MLAs who use wheelchairs for mobility, two of whom are women.

Another factor I'd like to stress is the important role that mentorship can play for women, particularly

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*"As an MLA for 23 years, my experience has been that pursuing women-friendly initiatives in the workplace can have a significant impact. Indeed, we need to ensure that our work environment is conducive to both attracting and retaining women."*

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*~ Linda Reid*

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those new to political life. Entering the world of politics can be daunting for any person, and experienced parliamentarians can play a key role in mentoring newer colleagues, whether in the form of advice or support. For instance, in my earlier role as Deputy Speaker, I hosted

monthly lunches with women MLAs from both sides of the House to discuss relevant issues. After becoming Speaker, I invited new women MLAs for lunch and a discussion on safety and security issues. Providing time and common ground to meet with other women, regardless of their political affiliation, is something I cherish and will continue.

According to a recent study in the United States, men are more than twice as likely as women to have thought about running for political office. This thinking needs to change. As Hillary Rodham Clinton once said, "There cannot be true democracy unless women's voices are heard." I agree with this principle wholeheartedly, and I hope that a time will come when women will make up at least half of all elected members and Cabinet. Narrowing the gender gap, however, will require a joint and concerted effort by both women and men.

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# Experiential Learning in the Constituency Office: Educational Innovation at Ryerson University

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Patrice Dutil

*In 2013, some senior undergraduate students in the Department of Politics and Public Administration at Ryerson University were given the opportunity to be the first class to enroll in an innovative course called the Constituency Office Project. Pairing each student with a Member of Parliament or Member of Provincial Parliament in the Greater Toronto Area, the course allowed students to experience the practical application of political theories they had learned in the classroom. In this article Patrice Dutil outlines the steps taken to set up the course, lists some of its scholastic resources, and shares the feedback he received from the first participants.*

The Ryerson University Department of Politics and Public Administration has developed and implemented an innovative learning experience for its senior students. Working with Members of Parliament and Members of the Provincial Parliament in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), the department developed a credit course that includes 80 hours of work in a constituency office, as well as additional research projects. The course has rapidly become a keystone in the department's curriculum – an educational innovation that could set a new standard in political science education across the country.

The purpose of this project is to provide students insights on the applied aspects of what is involved in representing constituents, delivering front-line customer service, and helping the public navigate through government departments. The Constituency Office Project course has so far proven to be a worthy initiative that is reproducible, with some tailoring, across the land. Improvements continue to be made

on how to deliver the experience, but these pioneering efforts have paid off, not least in exposing students to some of the real work of elected officials and in allowing them to discover what has become an important part of Canada's working democracy.

Constituency offices in many areas of Canada already host students, but the initiative mostly comes from social work faculties who wish to give students experience in assisting citizens. (It is worth noting that in some larger cities, urban planning and geography departments also place students in municipal councillors' offices.) The assignment makes sense, but these students also have the general option to complete their internship in any agency devoted to social work. In fact, social work students are not required to take political science as part of their curriculum, so their work in the constituency office is focused entirely on its social work dimension. The internship is typically a requirement to graduate, but it is not a credited course.

For Ryerson Politics students, this senior-level course is an opportunity to gain hands-on experience and to bridge the gap between the theory and skills learned in the classroom and the real work world of parliamentarians and their vitally important constituency staffs. The result has been an important success for the three partners involved. The students have reported immense satisfaction in their course evaluations and earned a credit for their work and

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*Patrice Dutil is a professor in Ryerson University's Department of Politics and Public Administration and the Yeates School of Graduate Studies. A former Acting Executive Director and Director of Research at the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC), he is the President of the Champlain Society and was the director of the "Parliament-to-Campus" program of the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians from 2008 to 2013.*



Ryerson students were placed in GTA constituency offices belonging to MPs and MPPs from various political parties, including (from left) Bernard Trottier, MP, Glen Murray, MPP, (next page) Carolyn Bennett, MP, Andrew Cash, MP, Jonah Schein, MPP and Ted Opatz, MP.

study, the constituency offices received some help, and Ryerson University has formed a new outreach mechanism to help graduating students bridge the gap between university life and the real world of work.

### How it Works

Though the course is taught exclusively in the Winter term, the process involves the professor from the beginning of the academic year. At that point, the instructor reaches out to the parliamentarians in the GTA to solicit their interest. The response to our first inquiries was overwhelmingly positive with over 50 offices responding affirmatively that they would host a student.

In late October, the department announces to its senior students that the course will proceed as planned. The students must apply and indicate their choice of riding but are strongly encouraged to seek their work experience in their home constituency if possible. They are asked to identify any party preference (this has not proven to be an issue as less than five percent of students declared a partisan bias and were easily accommodated by Toronto's mix of Liberal, New Democrat and Conservative MPs and MPPs). Because Ryerson University attracts students from every corner of the GTA, the matching effort has proven relatively easy, though many students expressed the desire to work in a downtown Toronto constituency office, within easy reach of campus. Only one student was assigned per office, and the match was

done on a first-come, first-served basis for the highly popular downtown ridings. In some cases students asked for ridings that were outside the GTA because they lived in residence but typically returned home for the weekend. This was also accommodated.

In mid-December, after the matching exercise has been completed, the students are called to an orientation session with the instructor. The event features key instructions, reminders and tips, as well as presentations from constituency office professional staff and former students.

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*The purpose of this project is to provide students insights on the applied aspects of what is involved in representing constituents, delivering front-line customer service, and helping the public navigate through government departments.*

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The course starts with the Winter term as students report to the constituency office and begin their work assignment. They must work eight hours a week over a 10-week period from the first week of January until the end of March. Though

many students volunteered more hours, the course requirement is 80 hours.

Working alongside office staff, students developed an immediate feel for the connection between the theoretical discussions they have experienced in their studies and the work undertaken by elected representatives. The student could assist in a wide range of tasks, including but not limited to: strategic communications; stakeholder relations; media relations; community outreach; event planning; office administration and budgeting; data management; correspondence; and assisting with case work.





Students must also fulfill academic requirements; there were two assignments in the term. The first required the submitting of a journal which recorded their reflections on the work performed each day. The students were given a reading list consisting of academic articles on constituency offices in Westminster systems and asked to reflect on how the insights offered by the research matched the lived realities.

The research on the work and role of constituency offices is not particularly rich in Canada. The list includes Peter MacLeod's indispensable "How to Organize an Effective Constituency Office" (*Canadian Parliamentary Review*, 2006) and Royce Koop's recent "Party Constituency Associations and the Service, Policy and Symbolic Responsiveness of Canadian Members of Parliament" (*Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 2012) as well as Sue Thomas's "The Effects of Race and Gender on Constituency Service" (*Western Political Quarterly*, 1992) and Pippa Norris's "The Puzzle of Constituency Service" (*The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 1997).

The list also features some classics, such as R. K. Carty's, *Canadian Political Parties in the Constituencies* (Research Studies of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, 1991), Harold D. Clarke et al's "Constituency Service among Canadian Provincial Legislators: Basic Findings and a Test of Three Hypotheses" (*Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 1975), C.E.S. Franks's study, "Members and Constituency Roles in the Canadian Federal System" (*Regional and Federal Studies*, 2007), Eagle Munroe's "The Political Ecology of Representation in English Canada: MPs and their Constituencies" (*American Review of Canadian Studies*, 1998) and John Halligan et al's, "Constituency Service among Sub-national Legislators in Australia and Canada" (*Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 1988) to name a few.

Given the strong multicultural dimension of the Ryerson University student body, the class was also exposed to some notable constituency research from around the world.

In examining the British experience, for example, students were asked to consider Ron Johnston and Charles Pattie's, "MPs Expenditure and General Election Campaigns: Do Incumbents Benefit from Contacting their Constituents?" (*Political Studies*, 2009) and Charles Pattie's "Still Talking, But is Anyone Listening? The Changing Face of Constituency Campaigning in Britain, 1997-2005" (*Party Politics*, 2009) while they worked.

The impact of constituency work in other European countries was also considered in Eimear O'Leary's, "The Constituency Orientation of Modern TDs" (*Irish Political Studies*, 2011), Audrey Aube et al's "Belgian Affairs and constituent preferences for 'good constituency members'" (*Acta Politica*, 2012), as well as in Yasushi Hazama's "Constituency Service in Turkey: A Survey on MPs" (*European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 2005) and Donley Studlar and Ian McAllister's, "Constituency Activity and Representational Roles among Australian Legislators" (*The Journal of Politics*, 1996).

The readings also serve to orient the students in their final assignment, a research paper related to an aspect of the work of the constituency office in which they were interns.

### The Final Research Paper

The final paper of about 25 pages in which students documented an aspect of constituency office work was a key deliverable. Subjects varied widely, but capture the broad range of interest that was engendered in the minds of the students.

Quite a few papers stood out in terms of investigating how small constituency offices managed service to a





clientele that varied enormously in terms of ethnicity, language, experience and familiarity with Canadian affairs. A number of students analyzed the Member of Parliament's private bills and documented how these initiatives were (or were not!) tied to the riding's concerns. Many students in the downtown Toronto area saw firsthand how immigration issues dominated the time and energy of the office staff and examined various aspects of this challenge. One student focused on the "blockages" in Immigration Canada, while the other documented the "troubleshooter" practices of one office that was particularly adept at tackling what appeared to be lost causes.

Many students were deeply impressed by the outreach strategies, analyzing how harried members of parliament make the most of weekend time to connect with constituents of all sorts. One particularly observant student compared the "branding" practices of constituency offices as they worked within the rules of the Government of Canada that aim to make constituency offices partisan-neutral outreaches designed to serve all of Canada's residents, regardless of how they voted. Many students examined the motivations and histories of the staff they worked with. One student memorably conducted a poll to document the degree to which the riding's inhabitants were actually aware that there even existed a constituency office!

The students were reunited at a class seminar at the end of the term and each delivered a short verbal presentation on their research. A former MPP attended

part of the seminar and shared his own insights on the work of constituency offices and their links with the politics of the ridings.

### Assessment

The project has been a success on many levels. One student was hired by her constituency office upon graduation. Many have decided to continue to volunteer, and all have expressed how impressed they were with this part of Canadian democracy they were completely unfamiliar with. As one student put it, "this experience has taught me as much as several other courses combined because actually being there and participating in cases gave me a clear view of life and career in government." Another student noted that the experience "shaped my views on politics. Instead of focusing on the actions of government from the top,

I will be more aware of the effects of policies on the ground." As one student put it, "I don't think it shaped my views on politics in general; I think it gave me a real perspective on the work an MP does and how time consuming it can be."

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*"This experience has taught me as much as several other courses combined because actually being there and participating in cases gave me a clear view of life and career in government."*  
*~ comment from a student course evaluation*

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There were hits and misses. One student excitedly wrote that he had met the prime minister at an event after only a few weeks on the job, something he could not have imagined before. The students who had an opportunity to accompany the Member of Parliament at events really appreciated the experience. There were some disappointments, nevertheless. Many students reported that the office was not very busy and that their talents did not find

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as many outlets as they would have expected. One student spoke for a few when he put it baldly: “the office didn’t know what to do with me.” We think this problem can be resolved with better communication with the staff in the constituency office.

### **Keys to Success**

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In a placement situation, success depends to some degree on the host/office but mostly on the students. They were encouraged to:

1. Think politically—and to remember that they were there as political scientists, not social workers. They were encouraged to think about what they could do to help the MPP or MP improve his/her connection to the community or understanding of the politics of the riding.

2. Volunteer for outreach. There is *always* something to do in efforts to get a politician better known in a community. Students were encouraged to volunteer to create lists of contacts, posters, brochures, mail-outs (householders), website improvements, etc. Because many offices have a designated “outreach coordinator,” this was a key fit.

3. Volunteer to do research on local issues and write briefing notes. This is on the assumption that “there is always something going on.” More “intelligence” has never hurt anyone and, as students of politics, they have been trained to track issues.

4. Be a reflective practitioner. The idea is to be mindful of the context (physical, political, personal) of the Constituency Office. How do political ideas translate themselves through the actions of the staff, and of the elected member for the riding?

5. Keep the daily journal up-to-date by taking a few minutes at the end of the shift to note key activities and reflections in light of the scholarly material presented in the course.

Asked whether they would recommend taking this course to their friends, the response was a unanimous “yes”. Many recommended that the course be doubled in length to encompass the two terms of the academic year, but many equally complained that the course was too demanding in terms of time and effort. Innovation in teaching politics can be demonstrated, but some things do not change.

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# Perceptions and Performance: How Do MPs Shape Up?

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Elisabeth Gidengil and Heather Bastedo

*Drawing from several chapters contained in Canadian Democracy from the Ground Up: Perceptions and Performance, in this article Elisabeth Gidengil and Heather Bastedo examine citizens' evaluations of their elected representatives and assess several key aspects of MPs' performance in light of these evaluations. Noting some possible reasons for a disjuncture between citizens' perceptions of MPs and how MPs perform their representational roles, the authors suggest some possible avenues for improving MPs' public image.*

Satisfaction with the way democracy works in Canada lags behind a number of other established democracies. In fact, only a bare majority of Canadians (55 per cent) are satisfied with the country's democratic performance, placing Canada in 11<sup>th</sup> place among 20 countries in which the same question was posed.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, dissatisfaction with the way democracy works in Canada has grown in recent years. Canadians appear to be particularly displeased with the performance of their MPs.<sup>2</sup> But is their dissatisfaction warranted?

Borrowing from several chapters contained in *Canadian Democracy from the Ground Up: Perceptions and Performance*, we examine citizens' evaluations of their elected representatives and assess several key aspects of MPs' performance in light of these evaluations. We also explore some possible reasons for a disjuncture between citizens' perceptions of MPs and how MPs perform their representational roles. We end by suggesting some possible avenues for improving MPs' public image.

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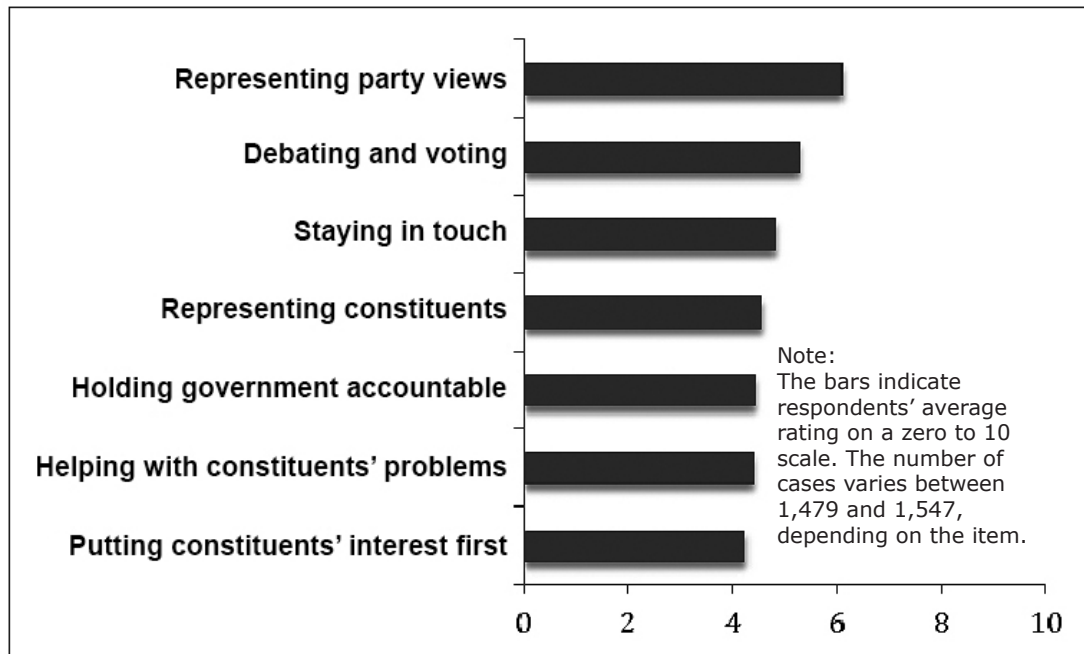
## Public Perceptions

Figure 1 presents Canadians' evaluations of MPs on a variety of dimensions.<sup>3</sup> We can see that MPs receive particularly poor ratings (4.2) when it comes to putting constituents' interests ahead of their own. They fare only a little better for dealing with the problems of individual constituents (4.4), representing the views of their constituents (4.5) and staying in touch with constituents and local groups (4.8). These are harsh judgments. Many Canadians seem to view MPs as self-serving and as failing in their role as representatives of their constituencies. Equally concerning is the failing grade for holding the government to account (4.4). Evaluations are somewhat more positive when it comes to MPs' performance with respect to debating and voting on issues in the House of Commons (5.3) and representing their party's views (6.1), but as Ruderman points out, these tasks are relatively removed from the day-to-day lives of constituents.<sup>4</sup>

Another widespread perception is that those elected to Parliament fail to keep most of their promises. This was evident when the survey respondents were asked to rate Canada's performance on various attributes. Promise-keeping received one of the lowest scores (5.0) on a zero to 10 scale; only the items asking about the honesty of government officials (4.8) and corruption in politics (4.5) received lower scores.<sup>5</sup> Parliament itself received a bare pass (5.6) when it came to being representative of Canadian society. Moreover, a majority of respondents (56 per cent) were dissatisfied with the way MPs in Canada are doing their job.



Figure 1: MPs' Report Card



Source: Samara Citizens' Survey.

### Comparing Perceptions and Performance

How justified are these negative perceptions? The lacklustre grades for whether parliament is representative are warranted – at least from the perspective of descriptive representation. Descriptive representation is achieved when elected representatives resemble those whom they represent.<sup>6</sup> The Canadian parliament falls far short of mirroring the electorate. The proportion of women, Aboriginals, immigrants, visible minorities, and young people in Parliament has historically lagged far behind their presence in the population. However, the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament did come closer to reflecting the diversity of Canadian society. Moreover, the numerical underrepresentation of women, Aboriginals, visible minorities and immigrants was to some extent offset by prime ministerial appointments. Nonetheless, these groups remained underrepresented in most parliamentary positions.

Descriptively accurate representation, of course, is no guarantee that Parliament will be responsive. Conversely, Parliament may be responsive even if it fails to mirror the electorate. From the perspective of substantive representation, elected representatives are responsive to the extent that they *act for*, and in

the interest of, those who elected them.<sup>7</sup> Substantive representation is much harder to quantify than descriptive representation but we can gain some insights from a comparison of Canadians' policy priorities, as expressed in opinion polls, and those of parliament as expressed in debates.

To do so, Blidook combined survey data with a content analysis of Question Period, Standing Order 31 Member Statements, and legislative debates in order to evaluate the extent to which MPs' statements reflect the public's priorities and respond to changes in those priorities.<sup>8</sup> The results suggest that public perceptions that MPs are out of touch and unresponsive to public concerns are unduly harsh.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, there were some notable divergences between public and parliamentary priorities. Some of these divergences were understandable. Health care is a public priority but it falls primarily within provincial jurisdiction. Conversely, trade is not on Canadians' minds but given its importance to Canada's well-being, it is of concern to parliament. It is more difficult to justify the divergence on crime. However, there were also issues, such as labour and employment and the economy, taxes and fiscal matters where public and parliamentary priorities were fairly closely aligned.

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The notion of “acting for” constituents is ambiguous: should MPs feel bound by the wishes and opinions of their constituents or should they act as trustees who do what they believe to be in their constituents’ best interests? There is no easy answer to this age-old question. Eagles and his colleagues employ Samara’s exit interviews with 79 former MPs, conducted in partnership with the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians, to shed some light on how MPs themselves view their representational role.<sup>10</sup>

The former MPs clearly differed in the extent to which they had weighed constituency opinion in the legislative process. Some felt an obligation to act on constituency opinion; others saw themselves more as trustees; and several others had tried to balance constituents’ wishes with partisan considerations. Former Reform MPs were the most likely to opt for a delegate role. How much weight these former MPs gave to constituents’ opinions varied, depending on constituency characteristics such as the margin of victory and the homogeneity of the electorate, as well as the degree of party discipline to which they were subject.

It is worth noting that party discipline does, however, aid in fulfilling election promises. Canadians gave MPs a bare passing grade when it came to keeping promises. However, these negative perceptions appear to be somewhat at odds with the objective record. Pétry has compared specific pledges in the Conservatives’ 2011 platform with the party’s record in government during its first year in office.<sup>11</sup> His analysis reveals that many Conservative campaign pledges had actually been fulfilled: early in its mandate, the Conservative government had kept or partially kept almost 65 per cent of its platform commitments.<sup>12</sup>

The greatest divergence between perceptions and MPs’ performance is apparent for constituency service. The interviews confirmed that many MPs devote a good deal of their time and energy to helping their constituents to resolve problems.<sup>13</sup> It is also clear that many of them find this to be the most fulfilling part of their job. However, some MPs resented having to spend their weekends on constituency matters and

a few were skeptical of the notion that MPs enjoy this work and spend a lot of time on it, which is important to note. The extent and nature of constituency service varied considerably depending on whether the MP had represented a rural constituency or an urban one. A Winnipeg MP also observed that constituency service was particularly important for “... MPs coming from seats where they had squeaked through and there was a narrow margin of victory or who were relatively new and felt the need to be in the riding more and trying to cater to that and to allow them to build up their credentials in their riding.”<sup>14</sup>

### **What is Driving Negative Evaluations of MPs’ Job Performance?**

MPs’ commitment to constituency service is strikingly at odds with the perceptions of many Canadians who gave MPs failing grades on dealing with the problems of individual constituents and staying in touch with constituents and local groups. Canadians evaluate MPs most poorly in precisely those areas to which MPs claim to devote so much of

their time. Similarly, the widespread judgment that those elected to parliament fail to keep their promises and do not pay attention to what Canadians think appears to be too harsh. The question is: Why are so many Canadians getting it wrong?

#### **Is it a Lack of Political Awareness?**

It is possible that Canadians’ negative evaluations of MPs’ job performance reflect a lack of political awareness. Some Canadians may be evaluating MPs poorly because they lack basic knowledge about MPs and what they do. Blidook, for example, suggests that many Canadians may think that MPs are unresponsive to their concerns because they are simply unaware of how much responsiveness actually occurs in Parliament. There is no shortage of information about what transpires in Parliament but there does not appear to be much appetite for watching streaming online video of the proceedings or visiting citizen-initiated websites that provide information on what MPs are doing. As Blidook observes, “Parliament is not particularly interesting or engaging for most citizens.”<sup>15</sup>

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*“MPs’ commitment to constituency service is strikingly at odds with the perceptions of many Canadians who gave MPs failing grades on dealing with the problems of individual constituents and staying in touch with constituents and local groups. Canadians evaluate MPs most poorly in precisely those areas to which MPs claim to devote so much of their time.”*

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People are apt to compensate for their lack of information by relying on stereotypes.<sup>16</sup> If negative evaluations of MPs' job performance simply reflect ill-informed stereotypes of politicians as uncaring and only out for themselves, we would expect to find a strong relationship between low levels of political knowledge and poor performance evaluations. Ruderman and Pétry have both explored this possibility and find little support for the argument. Contrary to expectations, Canadians who remember the name of their MP are significantly less likely to believe that politicians keep their promises and they evaluate MPs' overall job performance more negatively. Moreover, overall evaluations are unrelated to general political knowledge. It seems that low levels of knowledge are not the reason for public dissatisfaction with MPs' performance. We have to look elsewhere.

### Is "Attack Journalism" to Blame?

A plausible candidate is the way that the media report on Parliament. Media coverage of parliamentary proceedings focuses overwhelmingly on Question Period, where the most partisan exchanges take place. As a former NDP MP complained, "...it's Question Period exchanges that are combative that get in the news. It's not serious debate or information going out to the people of Canada on complex issues. Most media trivializes important matters of public policy; they not only trivialize, but they polarize and emphasize the negative."<sup>17</sup> The venues in which much of the 'real work' of Parliament goes on are much less likely to attract media attention. Moreover, instances of politicians keeping their promises are unlikely to qualify as very newsworthy. Certainly, they are less likely to garner the attention of the media than broken promises. As Pétry notes, "Media reporting of promises kept is likely a relatively rare occurrence."<sup>18</sup>

Scholars are divided over the impact of news media on public disaffection with politics. Some speak of a "spiral of cynicism."<sup>19</sup> These scholars argue that media coverage is unduly focused on the partisan game and that this fuels political cynicism on the part of the public. Other scholars posit a "virtuous circle."<sup>20</sup>

According to this view, news media consumption enhances interest in politics and political engagement.

When it comes to Canadians' evaluations of MPs' job performance, the evidence points in favour of the "virtuous circle" hypothesis. People who are exposed to more news on television and in the newspapers tend to give MPs higher grades for keeping their promises. Ruderman, meanwhile, finds no evidence that those who consume more news evaluate MPs more negatively. On the contrary, consumption of Internet news is a particularly strong predictor of positive evaluations of MPs' overall job performance.

Of course, it is possible that the politically disaffected are less likely to consume news about politics because they have been turned off by coverage that is sensationalistic, unduly negative and overly focused on the horse race aspect of politics. However, analyses conducted by Bastedo and her colleagues produce a more nuanced evaluation of the quality of political coverage.<sup>21</sup> Much of what we know about

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*"There is cause for concern when so many Canadians appear to be dissatisfied with MPs' performance, even though some of these judgments appear to be more negative than the data presented here would seem to warrant. A degree of skepticism about elected representatives is probably healthy but dissatisfaction can undermine support for the system if it becomes too widespread."*

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the nature of media coverage comes from studies conducted during election campaigns, but they chose instead to analyze coverage of three bills that dominated the federal government's legislative agenda in fall 2011.<sup>22</sup> The majority of the coverage, especially in the press, actually focused on process or policy. They also report that the negativity bias is not as pervasive as critics

often contend, especially on television. Their findings suggest "a critical and responsive press, rather than a hostile one."<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, coverage of the three bills did not prove to be particularly informative.

### Frustrating Experiences with Government?

Studies conducted for *Canadian Democracy from the Ground Up: Perspective and Performance* suggest that Canadians' evaluations of MPs are strongly influenced by their everyday experiences with government. As Joe Soss has observed, "Legislatures may host more dramatic political activities, but the police station, the motor vehicles office, and the Internal Revenue Service are more likely to supply citizens with lessons about government that ring with the truth of first-hand experience."<sup>24</sup> When people have frustrating experiences with service providers



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or experience difficulty navigating the bureaucracy, they are apt to conclude that the political system is unresponsive. It appears that people generalize these personal experiences to government and politics at large. Many of the focus group participants recounted their experiences with a seemingly unresponsive bureaucracy and it was clear that these negative experiences contributed to their disaffection with politics and politicians.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Samara survey respondents who had had unsatisfactory experiences with government offices were significantly more likely to give MPs poor ratings overall, and they were also more likely to rate MPs poorly for promise-keeping.

### Countering Negative Perceptions of MPs

There is cause for concern when so many Canadians appear to be dissatisfied with MPs' performance, even though some of these judgments appear to be more negative than the data presented here would seem to warrant. A degree of skepticism about elected representatives is probably healthy but dissatisfaction can undermine support for the system if it becomes too widespread. In the nature of things, MPs are unlikely to receive top marks from the electorate but we can suggest some steps that might help make for a better report card in the future.

The 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament shows that affirmative action can be effective in producing a parliament that is more representative of Canadian society. The increase in the number of women elected as MPs was largely a result of the NDP's commitment to having more women on the ballot; prime ministerial appointments also helped to ensure more proportionate representation of historically under-represented groups among the ranks of cabinet ministers and parliamentary secretaries.

A greater challenge will be resisting increasing encroachment by political parties upon venues where MPs have traditionally been less constrained by party discipline. One of the key findings to emerge from Blidook's study is that the degree of congruence between public priorities and parliamentary priorities tends to be greatest in venues such as Private Members' Business, Members' Statements and Routine Proceedings. From the perspective of responsiveness to public priorities, the April 2013 ruling by the Speaker that reaffirmed the Speaker's authority to decide who is recognized to speak in the House is a positive step. However, the onus is on MPs to stand and be recognized and it remains to be seen how many will risk sanctions to speak without the approval of their party's whip.

Using "10 per centers" and householders for their proper purpose—informing constituents and soliciting their opinions—and not for blatantly partisan purposes could help to counter the perception that MPs do a poor job of staying in touch. More generally, MPs would do well to find ways of improving communication with their constituents and enhancing awareness of their constituency service.

Finally, MPs need to understand how the design of programs and the delivery of services can influence Canadians' perceptions of politics and politicians. As the tasks confronting lawmakers become ever more complex, it is likely that many Canadians will continue to judge their elected representatives not so much on the basis of what they do but on how citizens are treated in their day-to-day encounters with government.

### Endnotes

- 1 Lawrence LeDuc, and Jon H. Pammett. "Attitudes toward Democratic Norms and Practices: Canada in Comparative Perspective" in Elisabeth Gidengil and Heather Bastedo (eds.), *Canadian Democracy from the Ground Up: Perceptions and Performance*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014.
- 2 Nick Ruderman, "Canadians' Evaluations of MPs: Performance Matters" in Elisabeth Gidengil and Heather Bastedo, eds., *Canadian Democracy from the Ground Up: Perceptions and Performance*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014.
- 3 The data are drawn from Samara's Citizen Survey, an online survey with Canadians across the country that was conducted between March 19<sup>th</sup> and April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012. Samara is a charitable organization that works to improve political participation in Canada. The survey was conducted by Feedback Research Corporation under the direction of André Turcotte. A total of 1,915 Canadians completed the survey, representing a response rate of 43.1 percent. After data cleaning, the effective sample size was 1,761 respondents.
- 4 Ruderman.
- 5 LeDuc and Pammett.
- 6 Hanna F. Pitkin. *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 Research involved a computer-assisted content analysis of the words of all speakers in the House of Commons as recorded in Hansard during three four-week periods during the 2012 parliamentary calendar year. Spanning 54 days out of a total of 135 sitting days, these three periods represent 40 per cent of the time that the House was in session

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- that year. Approximately 3.7 million words were analyzed using a topic dictionary adapted from the Policy Agenda Project ([www.policyagendas.org](http://www.policyagendas.org)).
- 9 Kelly Blidook. "Democratic Responsiveness in the House of Commons" in Elisabeth Gidengil and Heather Bastedo (eds.), *Canadian Democracy from the Ground Up: Perceptions and Performance*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014.
  - 10 Munroe Eagles, Royce Koop and Alison Loat. "MPs on the Home Front: How Constituency Characteristics Influence Representational Approaches" in Elisabeth Gidengil and Heather Bastedo (eds.), *Canadian Democracy from the Ground Up: Perceptions and Performance*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014.
  - 11 Analysis is based on a content analysis of laws and regulations, throne speeches and budget speeches, and annual reports from government ministries and agencies.
  - 12 François Pétry. "A Tale of Two Perspectives: Election Promises and Government Actions in Canada" in Elisabeth Gidengil and Heather Bastedo (eds.), *Canadian Democracy from the Ground Up: Perceptions and Performance*, University of British Columbia Press, 2014.
  - 13 Also see: David Docherty, *Mr. Smith Goes to Ottawa: Life in the House of Commons*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997.
  - 14 Eagles et al., p. 204.
  - 15 Blidook, p. 217.
  - 16 Kuklinski, James, and Paul J. Quirk "Reconsidering the Rational Public: Cognition, Heuristics, and Mass Opinion" in Arthur Lupia, Matthew D. McCubbins, and Samuel L. Popkin (eds.), *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice and the Bounds of Rationality*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
  - 17 Blidook, p. 218.
  - 18 Pétry, p. 242.
  - 19 Joseph N. Cappella, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. *Spiral of Cynicism: The Press and the Public Good*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
  - 20 Pippa Norris. *A Virtuous Cycle. Reinventing Political Activism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
  - 21 Heather Bastedo, Quinn Albaugh and Alex Marland. "The Story Behind the Story: Evaluating the Content of Political News" in Elisabeth Gidengil and Heather Bastedo (eds.), *Canadian Democracy from the Ground Up: Perceptions and Performance*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014.
  - 22 This analysis includes the omnibus crime bill and the bills abolishing the Firearms Registry and the Canadian Wheat Board's monopoly over sales of western wheat and barley, and was based on a study of 2,806 newspaper articles published in 42 daily newspapers between September 1, 2011 and November 30, 2011 and transcripts of 174 stories broadcast on seven national television news programs over the same period.
  - 23 Bastedo, Albaugh and Marland, p. 142.
  - 24 Joe Soss. "Lessons of Welfare: Policy Design, Political Learning, and Political Action." *American Political Science Review* 93(2), 1999, p. 376.
  - 25 Heather Bastedo, Wayne Chu and Jane Hilderman. "Outsiders: Agency and the Non-Engaged" in Elisabeth Gidengil and Heather Bastedo (eds.), *Canadian Democracy from the Ground Up: Perceptions and Performance*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014.
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# Book Excerpt: *Tragedy in the Commons* “What Job Is This Anyway?”

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**Alison Loat and Michael MacMillan**

*In Tragedy in the Commons: Former Members of Parliament Speak Out About Canada's Failing Democracy, authors Alison Loat and Michael MacMillan draw on exit interviews with 80 former parliamentarians to reveal how federal politicians felt about their experiences leading and directing the country. Chief among their findings: many MPs did not have a clear understanding about what their job in Ottawa was, and often felt stymied by a partisan system that constricted their freedom in Ottawa. These selected excerpts from Chapter 4 (“What Job Is This Anyway?”) suggest that many MPs interviewed found the most tangible result of their work to be individual casework for constituents in their home ridings, prompting the authors to ask if all constituency work alone is the best use of an MP's talents and time.*

Once they've faced down the challenges of their first weeks in Ottawa—where the office is, how to claim expenses, where to find staff, how to get to the bathroom—new MPs face a more long-term hurdle: managing the many demands on their attention and schedule. The former Liberal MP for Miramichi, New Brunswick, Charles Hubbard, for one, was astonished by the number of people who approached his office to seek help from one of the federal bureaucracies, such as Immigration Canada, Revenue Canada or Service Canada. “Your office is always facing calls where somebody is frustrated with trying to approach the government,” said Hubbard. “When you think of somebody having trouble with his income tax or with his EI or trying to access the Canada Pension or an old age pension, and they get the proverbial runaround, they wind up calling your office.”

In fact, Hubbard's office dealt with this type of matter so frequently that he assigned the equivalent of two and a half full-time people to handle the calls (most MPs have only half a dozen staff between their

two offices). The staffers, Hubbard said, averaged more than a hundred such calls per day; in the 15 years that he served as an MP, Hubbard figures his staffers handled more than a hundred thousand calls that involved constituents seeking help in their dealings with federal government bureaucracies.

A high school principal before entering politics, Hubbard shared a story about a former student in desperate need of help. By then about 35 years old, the man had a wife and three kids, and was dying of cancer—and yet Service Canada was denying him his disability payments. When Hubbard heard about the situation he called the man's doctor, who subsequently wrote a statement to support the man's claim, which Hubbard then made sure was read by the proper person at Service Canada. A month before the former student's death, Service Canada approved the man for the disability pension. The money would make an enormous difference in the lives of the man's family—his kids would get the payments until they came of age, and his wife would get payments as long as she needed them. “So, you know, as a Member of Parliament, you have people in need who call you, and who can benefit from a bit of effort you put into it,” Hubbard said.

Hubbard came to regard dealing with these appeals for help with the Canadian federal bureaucracy as an important aspect of the MP's job. When we asked which part of his work as a parliamentarian he enjoyed most, Hubbard mentioned these cases. “You probably

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*Alison Loat is an associate fellow and instructor at the School of Public Policy and Governance at the University of Toronto, co-founder of Canada25 and a regular commentator on Canadian politics. Michael MacMillan is the former executive chairman and CEO of Alliance Atlantis Communications and current CEO of Blue Ant Media. Loat and MacMillan co-founded Samara, a think-tank working to improve political participation in Canada, in 2009.*



get more satisfaction from helping people than you did from trying to wade through legislation,” Hubbard said. “And the struggles in Ottawa, in terms of trying to put forward your ideas, or to get changes done, it’s a very frustrating experience. And when you look at somebody who is in need of Canada Pension, who’s been denied it... by bureaucrats who’ve never seen them, and the person comes to [your] office and you see the condition he’s in, and he has five kids at home and is disabled and you can help that person, there’s probably more satisfaction from that.”

Few would ever fault Charles Hubbard for doing what he could to help any individual, let alone a former student, facing such tragic circumstances. But we were struck by the number of MPs who had similar stories. Is this what voters send MPs to Ottawa to do?

...

Just as Charles Hubbard remembers fondly helping his ailing former student navigate Service Canada, some MPs emphasized working in a service-oriented capacity for constituents not only as one of the job’s most gratifying elements but as one of its primary purposes. “You’re the ombudsman,” explained Conservative MP Jim Gouk. “When there’s a federal problem, you’re the go-to guy. You’re the one that they look to for help because if you can’t help them, who can? You either help or put them in touch with someone who can. You listen to their problem.” This can mean assisting constituents with the bureaucratic matters—immigration, employment insurance, passports or veterans’ support. It also includes helping people benefit from federal programs or legislation, and fulfilling the role of a representative by attending social occasions or other commemorative events. In fact, about a quarter of the MPs we interviewed said this service to constituents, when they could operate freely from any party interference and the results were tangible and personal, was the best part of being an MP.

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*In fact, about a quarter of the MPs we interviewed said this service to constituents (assistance with the federal bureaucracy), when they could operate freely from any party interference and the results were tangible and personal, was the best part of being an MP.*

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A few MPs, on the other hand, disagreed with what they saw as an over-demand for constituency service on the part of those they represented. Conservative MP for Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Brian Fitzpatrick referred disparagingly to the “chamber of commerce” philosophy held by some mayors in his riding, which had them badgering him about what he was doing for

the riding as its MP. Was he bringing them grant money that would create jobs? Was he wooing industry? “I guess I never really was strong on that area,” Fitzpatrick said. “I didn’t think that was the role. We’re lawmakers—we’re there to make sure that we pass good laws and so on. It’s not like I’m a lobbyist, to bring industry and stuff to your

riding. . . . It still bothers me, because philosophically I think the role of government is to create the proper environment so that enterprise and business operates in a free market, not with the government trying to give out grants and so on. So I always found it a bit distasteful to get involved with that stuff, but you’re forced into it whether you like it or not.”

Liberal MP Sue Barnes saw the importance of constituency work, but felt that most of it could—and should—be done by the staff at her local office. “I’m known for good constituency work, but I didn’t do most of it—my staff did it on my behalf,” she said. “I gave them the instructions, and they knew they’d be in

trouble if they didn’t do it.” At the same time, she added, “To me [constituency work is] a sidebar.” And she recognized that her constituents would have preferred she work directly on providing service in the riding. “It’s something of a political truth that they don’t care what you do somewhere else.” However, Barnes saw the two as linked, and acknowledged that she chose her legislative priorities from among the issues that mattered to her constituents.

She backed medical marijuana in 1999 and 2004, for example, because a constituent raised the issue with her. “A lot of things [were] sparked by individual constituent problems,” Barnes said. “My interest in same-sex marriage came from a constituent who



Authors Michael MacMillan and Alison Loat





In Alison Loat and Michael MacMillan's revealing book *Tragedy in the Commons: Former Members of Parliament Speak Out About Canada's Failing Democracy*, many MPs describe front-line constituency work as consuming vast amounts of time and personnel, prompting questions as to whether some MPs have become "defacto front-line service representatives for the federal government."

worked for me in my first campaign, and later died of AIDS—a very intelligent young man."

...

It's a noble pursuit, helping frustrated citizens deal with the federal government's most difficult bureaucracies, whether with passport applications, immigration claims or pension problems. But the practice raises a larger question: Should our Members of Parliament really be spending their time on such issues? The traditional definition of an MP in the Westminster system of government—to consider, refine and pass legislation, and to hold the government to account—suggests not. Eleni Bakopanos, for one, agreed: "That was the hard part," she said, "trying to explain to somebody, especially immigration cases, where we were limited in how far we could intervene. . . . It should not be the MP's office handling that."

Bakopanos is right. The practice of MPs intervening in immigration, employment insurance, veterans' affairs, Canada pension and disability cases raises difficult questions about political interference in a process that is meant to be handled by an objective bureaucracy. Judging from the MPs' reports of their efforts, Canadians, and would-be Canadians, are receiving unequal and inconsistent treatment. If you know an MP, or if an MP takes an interest in your case, then it seems likely you'll get better service. Is the Canadian federal bureaucracy one that functions better on the basis of who you know? Do citizens who happen to be Conservative Party members receive the same level of service from their MPs in Liberal-held ridings? What about NDP, Green or Bloc party members? It is a precept of our democratic government that our party affiliation should not act as an advantage, or disadvantage, in our dealings with bureaucrats.

Continued on page 36



Party affiliation aside, one's ability to solicit help from an MP can also be enhanced by a personal connection. In other countries where politicians interact with government in such a manner, those activities are referred to as corruption. Ideally, our bureaucracy should be equally accessible for all, regardless of whether one happened to catch the MP's attention, or helped out in a certain political campaign.

Then there's the question of appropriate focus. Working for their constituents in this way, our MPs are acting as de facto front-line service representatives for the federal government. Should an MP's job description include the imperative to paper over a broken bureaucracy? Or should the federal bureaucracy's decision-making processes be made more transparent and accessible to citizens, so that the burden of this work can be taken out of MPs' offices and placed back in the bureaucrats' hands, where it belongs?

Another question the practice poses: Is it the most effective use of our parliamentarians' time? Many Members of Parliament are spending valuable time and energy acting as intermediaries between individuals and the federal government. But rather than responding to citizen complaints about, say, an immigration process gone awry, rather than untangling the individual snarls symptomatic of a flawed system, shouldn't MPs more productively devote their energies toward reforming these snarled bureaucracies? Toward streamlining our nation's immigration application processes? To improving the customer service provided by Revenue Canada and perhaps simplifying the tax code? To fixing the approvals processes of the pension and employment insurance systems?

All that said, it takes only a little analysis to understand what's motivating the phenomenon, at least from the MPs' perspective. Part of it might be decent human kindness: after all, people can arrive at an MP's office in pretty dire straits, and it is human

nature to want to assist. It also helps MPs take the pulse of the people they represented. "The constituency work is the reality check," said John Godfrey in an interview on CBC Radio's *The Current* about his exit interview. "You can be far too abstract if you're not dealing with real people, one at a time, sitting in front of you, with real problems."

Let's not fool ourselves, here, however: a constituent assisted by an MP is a constituent who is likely to vote for that MP in the next election. More fundamentally, constituent service is a manifestation of the same factors that encourage and perpetuate MP freelancing.

In many ways, this customer service work is the logical extreme of freelancing. Helping constituents to fill out paperwork, immigration forms, passport advocacy—this is what our federal political representatives descend to, when our political system renders them impotent. It's a logical symptom of the MPs' absence of power.

***Helping constituents to fill out paperwork, immigration forms, passport advocacy—this is what our federal political representatives descend to, when our political system renders them impotent. It's a logical symptom of the MPs' absence of power.***

An MP typically starts out as a backbencher who isn't allowed much control over her political career. She doesn't choose the committee on which she serves. Her press releases, and increasingly her parliamentary speaking points, are pre-written and approved by the leader's office. And she certainly doesn't get much input on the important aspects of government

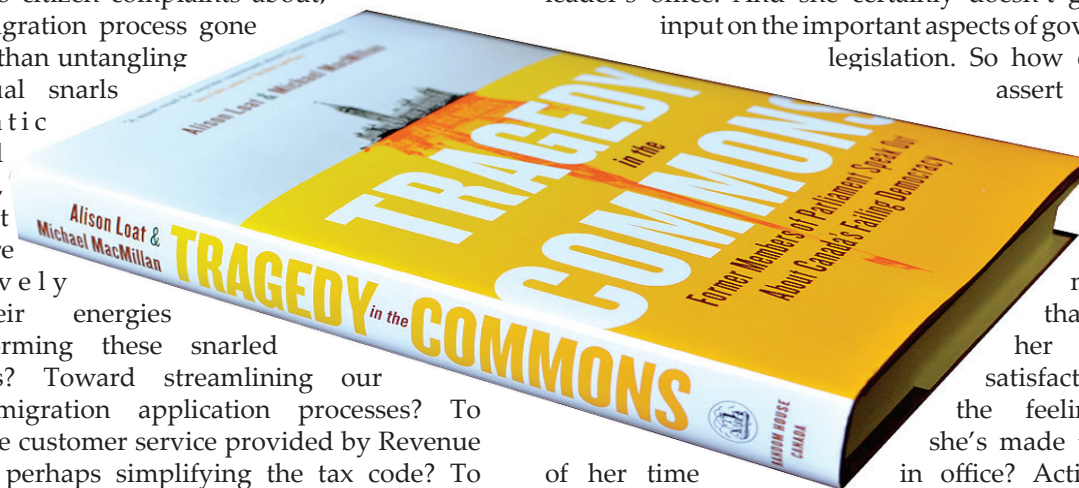
legislation. So how does she assert herself?

How does she work in a manner that gives her personal satisfaction and the feeling that she's made the most

of her time in office? Acting as a customer service rep for the federal government is perhaps the easiest way to do that. This is labour that the MPs can control.

**Tragedy in the Commons: Former Members of Parliament Speak Out About Canada's Failing Democracy** is published by Random House Canada and available anywhere books are sold.

See also, Parliamentary Book Shelf, page 44



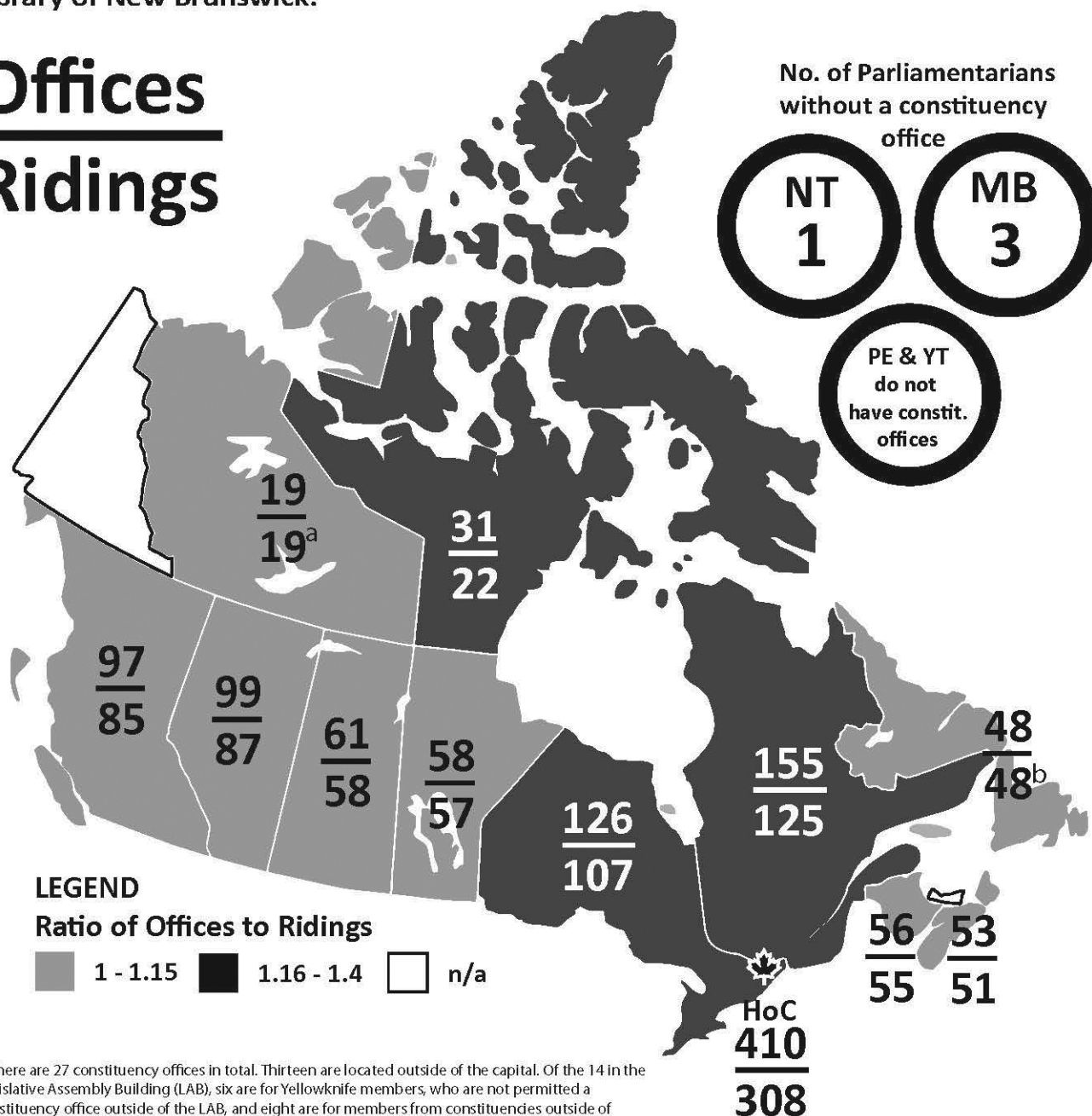


# Constituency Offices: By the Numbers

We asked the Canadian Association of Parliamentary Administration (CAPA) a series of questions about constituency offices across the country. From the responses, we present some particularly notable numbers and interesting factoids.

Additional thanks to Nancy Marling, Director, Human Resources at the Legislature of Ontario, Helen Chong at the Ontario Legislative Library, and the Legislative Library of New Brunswick.

## Offices Ridings



a. There are 27 constituency offices in total. Thirteen are located outside of the capital. Of the 14 in the Legislative Assembly Building (LAB), six are for Yellowknife members, who are not permitted a constituency office outside of the LAB, and eight are for members from constituencies outside of Yellowknife, who also have constituency offices in their ridings.

b. All MHAs have Constituency Offices. Seventeen are located in the Confederation Building Complex, three are co-located with Ministers' offices in the capital but outside the Confederation Building, 21 are in leased accommodations, six are in government owned buildings outside of the capital, and one is in an MHA's home.

**10%**

Average amount of  
office budget MPs spend  
on lease expenses

**1930s**

Early form of constituency  
offices established  
in QC

**1976**

Office in La Sarre, QC  
is established - and it's  
still in the same  
location

**900m**

Distance from Legislature  
to Wolseley constit.  
office in MB

**5,918km**

Distance from one of  
the three offices in  
YT to the HoC

## Offices that represent the **MOST** constituents<sup>c</sup>



No. of Parliamentarians with more than one office in their riding:

BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	NL	NT	NU	HoC
12	11	5	5	15	24	1	2	0	8	8	78

## Offices that represent the **FEWEST** constituents<sup>c</sup>



c. Some jurisdictions reported using number of electors/-households instead of constituents. The number of constituents in a riding was divided by number of offices in a riding to make these designations.

By: Julie Anderson

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# The Constituency Project Ten Years On

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Peter MacLeod

*Ten years ago an enterprising Ph.D candidate at the London School of Economics spent four months touring nearly 100 of Canada's federal constituency offices — what he calls perhaps “the country's most dramatic if accidental parliamentary reform” — in an attempt to better understand a political culture where voter participation and trust in government were on the decline. In this article Peter MacLeod reflects on some of the subtle insights he picked up during his journey and looks to future innovations. He concludes by asking if, in the digital age, new generations of MPs will be more inclined to think of their offices and local budgets in terms of open platforms for community building and learning.*

In 2004, I returned to Canada after two years spent tracking the New Labour experiment from my post as a researcher at the London think tank, Demos. Though post-9/11, these were still heady, pre-recession days where the British government was on a spending tear, London was booming, and Anthony Giddens's call for Third Way politics still felt fresh.

I had, only a short time before, enrolled as a part-time student at the London School of Economics with a plan to get a Ph.D. Though I was what could only generously be called a Canadianist, I had managed to take just enough courses in architecture and urbanism to be admitted to the sociology department's cities program.

Now I needed a research project and though I had enrolled with a plan to leave Canadian politics far behind and make a home in this new discipline, I couldn't entirely shake a fashionable preoccupation with declining voter turnout and trust in government. It's what I knew. And truthfully, it's what I cared about.

Soon after, I came back to Canada to begin my fieldwork, having decided to travel as far as I could from official Ottawa. My plan was to explore the periphery

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*In 2007, Peter MacLeod quit his doctorate to found the public engagement firm, MASS LBP. Since then MASS has led some of Canada's most original and ambitious efforts to engage citizens in tackling tough policy options while pioneering the use of Civic Lotteries and Citizen Reference Panels on behalf of a wide array of public sector clients.*



Photos by Peter MacLeod

Peter MacLeod, pictured in Cambridge, Ontario, took a cross-country journey in 2004 which brought him to nearly 100 federal constituency offices as a part of his doctoral research into Canadian political culture.

of Parliament and spend four months visiting some of the loneliest outposts in politics, sitting as they do alongside laundromats and video stores. This was the beginning of the Constituency Project.

Ten years later, the absurdity and light-heartedness of the project are possibly what matter most. Over the course of four months, I drove the length and width of the country, visiting nearly 100 offices belonging to local MPs.





Each piece of paper pictured in these mugs represents a constituent phone call returned in this office.

The sample size was ridiculous. The same study could have been easily completed with four offices, maybe 10. But as an antidote to London and to theory, there was something honest and grounding about spending time with people who, while working for politicians, were themselves almost wholly apolitical. Their job, as they saw it, was simply to help other people. And so, happy in their company, I just kept going.

Of course, many of the offices were entirely unremarkable — but many more were a reliable source of subtle insights.

In Fredericton, I spent a morning learning how Andy Scott ingeniously packed local halls for his public meetings. In the Gaspé, I visited bustling Bloc offices. With little interest in parliamentary affairs, staff were sent to the ridings to work as local fix-its. If other parts of the country were baffled by the enduring local appeal of Stockwell Day, 10 minutes

with his staff in Penticton set the record straight. The same goes for Anne McLellan, then deputy Prime Minister, who was a renowned constituency MP. Her office was an impossible maze of filing cabinets containing tens of thousands of folders accumulated over a decade spent tending to the concerns of her Edmonton residents.

In Saskatoon, staff for Maurice Vellacott were proud to show off a recently outfitted RV that doubled as a mobile office. Jim Prentice was apparently so keen to simply talk with his constituents that he removed the desk from his private office, preferring just two wingback chairs.

Not surprisingly, staff for MPs like Libby Davies and Claudette Bradshaw made a specialty of social justice issues. John Godfrey's outpost on dreary Laird Road in east Toronto was nevertheless a magnet for urbane young staffers.

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Every imaginable grievance passed through their doors: nasty child custody fights; accusations of workplace discrimination; decades-long battles to reunite distant families; shocking miscarriages of justice; and stories of intractable tax collectors run amok. Any new staffer would immediately find himself or herself swamped by the endless stream of employment insurance claims, missing passports, and neglected veterans.

More than once I heard assistants in grittier neighbourhoods compare their dingy storefronts to local emergency rooms. The urgency of their work didn't leave much time for ideology. As an office of last resort, constituency staff found themselves on the front line, too often stepping in when every other public service falls apart. And so they hustled for public housing, made referrals to legal aid, and kept pushing their carefully cultivated contacts in the line ministries to resolve a case.

Then came the litany of requests for endorsements of every cause, letters asking for all manner of worthy commendations and invitations to a groaning board of local pancake breakfasts and chicken dinners.

Tracking well below the quagmires and correspondence was the actual policy work – telegraphing back to Ottawa the pulse of local opinion. As a proportion of the total activities fielded by staff, the receipt of thoughtful, original letters from local constituents concerning upcoming bills in Parliament is so comparatively rare that their novelty is itself a source of influence. If only because a change is as good as a rest, a personal note to your MP will likely be read with interest and gratitude.

### **Fixer Politics**

Canada is almost alone amongst democracies in the heavy emphasis we place on the local end of parliamentary work. Perhaps it's a consequence of the special contempt Canadians have for Ottawa, or a lingering provincialism that views with suspicion any talk of high politics. Regardless, today's MP has little choice but to prove they haven't lost touch, and join the weekly exodus from the Ottawa airport. Along with our American cousins, our political system could be truthfully said to run on jet fuel, possibly making

for one of the worst, most fatigue-inducing commutes yet conceived.

None of this was by design. In fact, the advent of constituency offices may be the country's most dramatic if accidental parliamentary reform – wholly reshaping the role of MPs and their relationship to Canadians.

The first office opened innocently enough: conveniently just a two hour drive from Ottawa, in Kingston. A recently elected Flora Macdonald wanted a way to keep in touch, and hired a Queen's student, paying his wage and the cost of a small office from her own salary.

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***"The humble MP's office remains Parliament's most malleable and low-risk site for civic innovation. It falls to the MPs of our next parliament to reimagine these stages for their own time."***

***~ Peter MacLeod***

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Within the decade, a system of enhanced travel stipends and office budgets was introduced. The very MPs which Trudeau had infamously called 'a bunch of nobodies' 50 yards off the Hill now had a local taxpayer-funded stage of their own. It was a solution to a question no

one had thought to ask but which suddenly everyone wanted.

Today, the great English legislator, Edmund Burke, would have trouble recognizing either delegates or trustees among Parliament's many tribes. In their place, we have installed a system most properly described as 308 elected ombuds.

Whether stuck on the backbench and frozen out from the work of their leader's office, or else genuinely motivated by the chance to make a local difference, today's MPs occupy themselves in ways unimagined or unavailable to their Hill-bound predecessors.

### **Engaging Constituents**

While MPs have been busy reinventing themselves as helpful fixers and responsive caseworkers, it appears paradoxically that this shift has done little to slow the decades old decline in public confidence for elected politicians.

Of course even the most diligent local fixer will only ever tend to the needs of a small slice of their constituency. As a high-touch strategy, it's a role that leaves little time for anything else, including pursuing larger agendas that might begin to address the structural issues that feed the demand for their services.



It also obviates an even more direct good — proactively engaging residents in the work of parliamentary decision-making, and increasing public understanding of the issues and trade-offs that confront it.

This strategy might well be called, however unfashionably, adult education; but here we can imagine the MP as the lead learner navigating a mix of issues where too often there are no easy answers. Here too constituency offices might be used more profitably when treated as nodes on a network for a new style of civic programming. Is it inconceivable to imagine political parties coordinating speakers circuits, or other events with better production values than a typical townhall meeting, travelling the country?

Inevitably each MP must make choices — how they allocate their scarce time being the most important. It is an unenviable job, yet the task of representing and speaking for others remains an extraordinary and rare privilege. Asking for hepped-up programing in a constituency office to restitch the connection between politics and people might seem like a tall order.

Yet, the limits of fixer politics are also apparent. Rob Ford, perhaps Canada's uber-constituency politician, is an unsettling example of the fixer extreme, where every policy decision gets subsumed to a grotesque populism. Here you will get your call returned, and a city worker redirected to tamp down fresh asphalt at your curb, but the real work of governing and city-building goes undone.

Surely the fifth decade of constituency politics will provide an opportunity for fresh approaches. A new generation of young parliamentarians may well be more inclined to share their local and increasingly online stages, shifting away from the service model as more and more government services are delivered electronically and, on the whole, more seamlessly. As this happens, tomorrow's MPs may be more inclined

to think of their offices and local budgets as open platforms for community building and learning.

The humble MP's office remains Parliament's most malleable and low-risk site for civic innovation. It falls to the MPs of our next parliament to reimagine these stages for their own time.



From dense city cores to suburban strip malls to rural industrial areas, constituency offices assume different forms to suit their locales and the needs of the MP and local populations.





## Parliamentary Book Shelf

**Gendered News: Media Coverage and Electoral Politics in Canada** by Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant, UBC Press, Vancouver, 2013, 246p.

In early February, Liberal MP Chrystia Freeland rose to ask her first question in the House of Commons. For most new MPs, that initiation is usually a proud, if intimidating, milestone. For Freeland, who had won a tough Toronto by-election in November, it was a test of fortitude. The former business journalist was asking about the prospects for Canada's economic recovery when the Conservative heckling commenced. The Speaker interceded twice but the mostly male voices jeered more loudly. On her third try, Freeland finished a truncated query. Shortly after a federal minister replied with a stock answer, *Vancouver Observer* journalist D. Matthew Millar offered his advice: "Put on your 'big girl' voice for [for Question Period]," he tweeted, "the Hon. Members water glasses are shattering." [sic]

It has been almost a century since women won the right to vote in federal elections – but the quest for equality remains elusive. Barriers to women's participation in politics have toppled as party brass, fundraisers, riding association members and voters increasingly view them as desirable candidates. But, as Queen's University political scientist Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant

explains, women's representation in federal and provincial governments remains "stubbornly short" of the 30 per cent of legislative seats generally required for women to make a difference in politics. What accounts for this continuing disparity? Through an analysis of television coverage of the party leaders in the 2000 federal election and print coverage of candidates in the 2006 election, Goodyear-Grant examines the media's "important role in shaping voters' perceptions of female leaders and candidates and of the political world generally, thus influencing voters' support for female politicians."

The result is an important look at a relatively unexplored topic: the complicated relationships among the media, the politicians and the voters. The media do not come out well. Goodyear-Grant argues that the mainstream media present women as different from their male colleagues in far more "insidious" ways than Freeland experienced. She maintains that men dominate the news media, journalists reflect that culture, and the resulting gendered news contributes to the idea that femaleness "is different, alien to politics, or even *unwelcome* in politics." In effect, the media have unwittingly adopted the broader culture's mental frameworks that organize their beliefs and knowledge about gender. Then they filter events through a schema in which politics is

viewed as a masculine world – and news stories rely heavily on masculine language, symbols and metaphors.

Goodyear-Grant does not pretend to have easy answers for this dilemma in which the voters, the media and the politicians themselves play roles. She could not consider the vital role that social media now plays – and certainly should play – in upsetting the balance in these relationships, allowing politicians to bypass media filters. She is also naïve and occasionally wrong about the way that journalists operate, especially on Parliament Hill.





Indeed, she should have posed a few basic questions to journalists to balance her interviews with politicians on how they handled and occasionally manipulated the effect of their gender on their media coverage.

Despite those flaws, *Gendered News* remains a worthy eye-opener. Goodyear-Grant teases out findings from the 2000 Canadian Election Study of television coverage by four networks, as well as data from the McGill Media Observatory on print coverage of the 2006 campaign by seven major newspapers. She found gender equity in visibility in televised news and print. But there is no similar balance in *how* women and men were covered. In 2000, 70 per cent of the news coverage of New Democratic Party leader Alexa McDonough depicted her as attacking her opponents, while the coverage of the four male party leaders was not similarly

skewed. McDonough's sound bites were also remarkably longer when she attacked, in contrast to the treatment of her male peers.

Such selective treatment was damaging. Using that election study from 2000 and a media reception look at Toronto voters, Goodyear-Grant finds that this distorted depiction of the usually cool-headed McDonough hurt her; male party leaders were generally not penalized for such attacks. (Prime Minister Jean Chrétien did go too far, however, when he combined verbal attacks with aggressive body language.) Goodyear-Grant argues that when women attack, it contradicts cultural norms: "It is all the more newsworthy, because it is surprising and atypical."

There are other wake-up calls. The televised coverage of McDonough usually focused on her activities or campaign trail events – as opposed to polls that might have flagged her viability as a candidate. McDonough was more associated with so-called soft issues such as health care as opposed to hard issues such as the economy – although the media could have simply picked up on the NDP's campaign focus. Perhaps most worrisome, *every* story that provided journalistic interpretations of McDonough's message in the television lead-ins and wrap-ups failed to offer "evidence or reasoning to substantiate the interpretive content." The number for men was "significantly lower."

In the 2005-2006 election, women candidates faced glaringly sexist references of their personal lives in print coverage, including their childlessness and marital status. Women did, however, receive less personal coverage when they built up a reputation as competent

politicians. Happily, there was no statistically significant difference in the coverage of the professional qualifications of male and female candidates. As well, the tone of news stories on the electoral prospects of female and male candidates did not differ. When the coverage of challengers was isolated from that of incumbents, however, female candidates were more associated with soft issues than male challengers. Journalists have seemingly absorbed gender stereotypes.

But Goodyear-Grant goes astray when she asserts that the news media reflect the male-dominated hierarchies in newsrooms who want to attract advertisers with an audience of affluent, older, white males. The news may be a function of culturally skewed selection and the media hierarchy does remain top-heavy with men. But editors and journalists, male and female, are far more concerned about beating their competitors to a story than placating advertisers. There are usually sturdy walls between publishers and editors – although they can be breached. As well, contrary to her assertion, television reporters do write their own copy. Finally, she should have applied even more skepticism to the complaints of former Prime Minister Kim Campbell: after all, Campbell did pose holding her judicial robes in front of her bare shoulders; and much of her ire was aimed at coverage that examined her professional credentials.

Last February, when Freeland faced jeers, she remained composed – and chided the Conservatives. Within minutes of journalist Millar's tweet, before Question Period even ended, she shot back: "This is 2014!"



Millar apologized. Goodyear-Grant suggests that female politicians, their male allies and political parties should “take every opportunity to challenge prevailing (masculine) norms.” Perhaps that prompt apology represents progress. But this scholarly book indicates that damaging gendered assumptions still underpin Canada’s media and political worlds – and they do influence the voters.

**Mary Janigan**

Journalist and Author of *Let The Eastern Bastards Freeze in the Dark: The West Versus The Rest Since Confederation*

**O.D. Skelton: The Work of The World, 1923-1941 Edited by Norman Hillmer, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal & Kingston, 2013, 517p.**

Although many civil servants will concur that their chosen profession has the potential to bring them much personal fulfillment, few would suggest they enter this field with visions of achieving great fame. Some might even argue that fame—or worse, notoriety—is exactly what civil servants are expected to avoid at all cost. Theirs is a working life confined mostly to obscurity while the ministers of their departments operate as the public face of their collective efforts, successes and failures.

With this in mind, it is refreshing to see an historian shine a light on the work of one civil servant whose counsel on foreign policy was routinely sought by both Liberal and Conservative prime ministers during a period of great international upheaval. Carleton University professor Norman Hillmer’s edited collection of

Oscar Douglas Skelton’s official memoranda, diaries and letters provides readers with not only a portrait of a trusted civil servant, but also the man behind the memos. Hillmer’s informative introductory note presents a strong narrative foundation for the subsequent collection of annotated documents. Reproduced chronologically and divided by key events or periods, he provides readers with a window into the world of a biographer working his way through the archives.

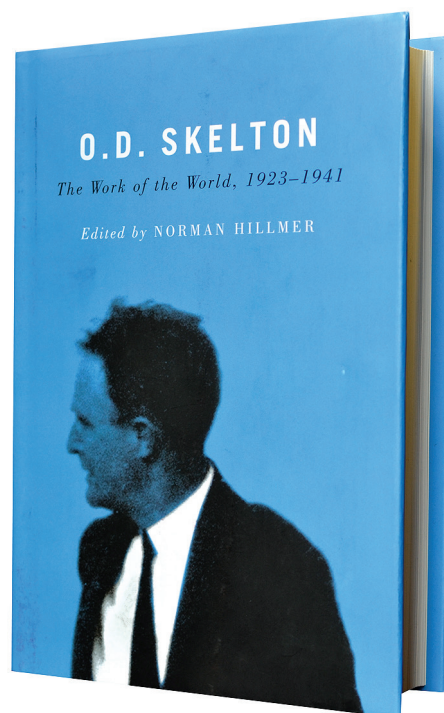
When Skelton was recruited to the Department of External Affairs in 1923, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King deemed the new hire’s staunch anti-imperialism (at least with respect to the British Empire in Canada) and his proscriptions for an independent Canadian foreign policy to be a strong foundation for the country’s approach to external affairs. The new hire would almost immediately make his mark with a memorandum titled “Canada and the Control of Foreign Policy,” which King brought to his first Imperial Conference as prime minister.

Some historians have dismissed Skelton’s work on this document, which outlined Canada’s emerging foreign policy, as that of a partisan hack (he had been active in Liberal circles for some time and had previously worked with King at the end of Laurier’s government) and an effort which sought to solve problems that no longer existed in terms of British imperialist designs on the dominions and colonies. However, in his introductory note, Hillmer suggests that while it was clearly a partisan document, Skelton’s memorandum was a direct

response to Britain’s continued insistence on “diplomatic unity” and deference to the British Foreign Office on important matters. Furthermore, he notes that Skelton’s interventions, which played a role in the dominions’ constitutional progress, were credited by South Africa’s prime minister as helping to make it “Canada’s conference.”

Hillmer’s thoughtful choice of annotations in these documents equips readers with information that provide context and colour. For instance, in an excerpt of the famous 1923 memorandum, Hillmer highlights a hand-written note of approval (“very good”) from Mackenzie King beside a passage noting that although each part of the Empire has its own distinct sphere of interests, these spheres occasionally intersect and some interests are shared. Other notes offer important historical explanation, introductions to key players or citations for further exploration.

Hillmer’s biographical sketch





is careful to note that Skelton was “not anti-British, nor anti-empire. It was imperialism and the agents of imperialism that were his enemies” (p. 13). Indeed, Skelton’s world view saw Canada as British North America while Britain was British West Europe.

Despite his partisan background, Skelton continued to serve when Conservative R.B. Bennett formed a government in 1930. After some initial misgivings and clashes of opinion which led Bennett to consider firing him, Hillmer notes that Skelton was soon found to be indispensable.

As King’s Liberals returned to government, troubles in Europe pointed to the possibility of renewed military conflict. Skelton, fearing impending divisions in Canada, clearly favoured an isolationist policy in the lead-up to World War II and expressed disappointment when King stated that the possibility of Canada staying out of a British war with Germany was nil. Skelton suggested the wary attitude of Canada’s francophones was “really Canadian” (p. 44); yet he noted that a majority would support participation in war provided there was no conscription. The civil servant’s isolationist sympathies did not preclude him from acknowledging the likelihood of war and his views on conflict shifted as Germany invaded France and set its sights on Britain.

At the time of Skelton’s unexpected death, in the midst of a particularly bleak period during the Second World War, Lester B. Pearson, then working in the Office of the High Commissioner for Canada in London, lamented that “seldom... in any organization has the loss of one

man meant so much” (p. 55). Hillmer’s deft skill in curating these documents presents readers with a strong confirmation of Pearson’s praise.

A prolific scholar, Hillmer’s extensive background and expertise in 20th-century Canadian international policy offers a unique opportunity for a thorough and insightful guided tour of Skelton’s professional life in government.

**Will Stos**

Editor

Canadian Parliamentary Review

**Tragedy in the Commons: Former Members of Parliament Speak Out About Canada’s Failing Democracy, by Alison Loat and Michael MacMillan, Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto, 2014, 288 p**

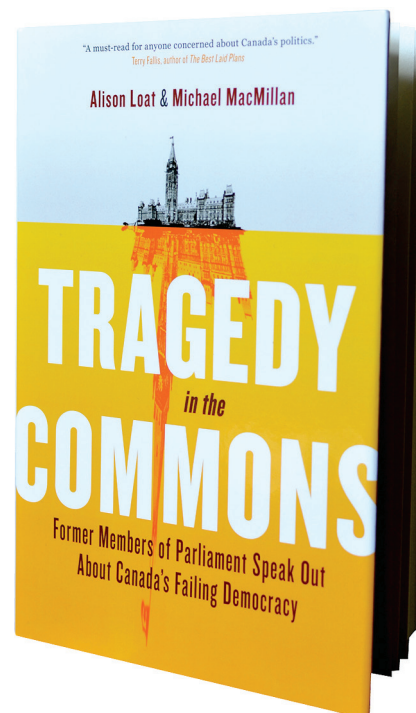
It’s very easy to find writing that looks at the health of Canada’s parliamentary system, but up to now there has been very little that spoke to the parliamentarians who worked in the system. Alison Loat and Michael MacMillan seek to fill this gap with *Tragedy in the Commons*.

The book, a synthesis of the Samara Institute’s exit interviews with 80 former Members of Parliament, features an impressively broad group of politicians, including some who retired by choice and others who experienced electoral defeat, along with a former Prime Minister and Ministers from different governments, as well as backbenchers who left office still wet behind the ears or long in the tooth. Structurally, the book devotes chapters to the stages of a parliamentarian’s career: entering politics; the various parts of elected office; and,

ultimately, the return to civilian life. A concluding chapter offers thoughts on how to improve our governance from their experiences.

A few clear themes emerge. First, the authors remind us that being a Member of Parliament is a job without an instruction manual. Once elected, MPs find themselves dropped quickly into the deep end, with little orientation for a demanding job that has often brought them to a new city away from their families. There’s even little guidance for running a constituency office.

Second, those interviewed felt that they often had too little voice in the political system, subjugated by a top-down party system that limited their ability to act independently in the interests of their constituents. MPs could have been placed on committees for which they had no expertise or shuffled to another in mid-term; there were constant expectations to be a good soldier and partake in the



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partisan circuses the public has come to expect. For example, Gary Merasty, a Liberal elected in Saskatchewan in 2006, was frustrated enough to resign before completing a term, feeling he could do more good as a civilian.

Third, there are different perspectives on what the role of an elected representative should be. Two camps emerge: delegates vs. trustees. The former act as the direct voice of constituents in Ottawa on an ongoing basis; the latter act based on their own judgement, having been empowered to act by proxy - little captures the difference between Reform and Liberal MPs from the class of '93 better than these two camps.

It is clear that MPs feel constrained by the absence of much direct power. But it's equally interesting to discover places where MPs find the system works. Party caucuses, for example, were cited as a way of holding cabinet ministers to account. Both Conservatives and Liberals indicated that successful

policy must first make its way through a party's MPs at caucus. At times, on issues such as post-secondary education, a caucus could push the government to do more. A full caucus is decentralized and consultative by definition, mostly free from party control.

Complaining about the centralization of power in leaders' offices is nothing new in Ottawa. Jean Chrétien was known as "The Friendly Dictator" in the early 2000s and Stephen Harper's reputation for centralizing control in the Prime Minister's Office is well-known. Every new government seems to promise a new and more collaborative approach to parliament; but each successive long-serving government tends to take top-down control to unprecedented levels. If anything, perhaps we should be surprised that MPs themselves are surprised at this state of affairs in Ottawa.

*Tragedy in the Commons* looks very specifically at the experiences of former MPs, but it raises questions that the general

public must grapple with. Are Canadians comfortable with party-driven politics that keep MPs on a short leash? Popular perception seems to be that we are not: voter turnout continues to decline and even retired MPs are reluctant to think of themselves as "politicians." And yet little changes.

The book draws its title from a famous essay by ecologist Garrett Hardin, which lamented how collective action problems can result in everyone ultimately suffering. Such problems are only ever really solved when all participants agree that something needs to change and actually endeavour to fix it. MPs who were interviewed want change, but appeared unwilling to make a sustained effort to bring about that change. Perhaps the real tragedy in the Commons is that their constituents, the public, seem resigned to accept this inaction.

**Michael Powell**

Government Affairs and Research  
Associate, Impact Public Affairs



# Legislative Reports



## Alberta

### 2nd Session of the 28th Legislature

The first sitting of the Second Session of the 28th Legislature opened with the Speech from the Throne, delivered by Col. (Ret'd) Hon. **Donald S. Ethell**, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, on March 3, 2014. Focusing heavily on the province's relationship with municipal governments, the speech touched on long-term stability funding for municipalities, transit support through the "Green Trip" budget allocation, and further amendments to the *Municipal Government Act*. Other topics of note included flood preparedness, investment in Alberta's infrastructure, and promoting Alberta to the rest of the world. Three days later, on March 6, 2014, the province's proposed 2014-2015 budget was presented by **Doug Horner** (Spruce Grove-St. Albert), President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance. The Main Estimates were debated by the three Legislative Policy

Committees (LPCs) beginning on March 17, 2014, and were reported to the Committee of Supply for a vote on April 16, 2014. Bill 8, *Appropriation Act, 2014* also passed First Reading on April 16, 2014, and went on to receive Royal Assent on April 24, 2014.

### Changes to the Standing Orders

Government Motion 7, which proposed changes to the Standing Orders governing the review of the Main Estimates by the three LPCs, was passed by the Legislative Assembly on March 4, 2014. The changes included updating the mandates of the LPCs to accurately reflect the portfolio names included in the current Cabinet, reducing the size of the LPCs from 18 to 15 members and clarifying the rotation of caucus speaking times during the estimates debates. A specific segment of time for independent Members was added into the rotation and the maximum amount of time to review a ministry's estimates, which had previously varied from two to six hours, was set at three hours for all ministries except Executive Council, which remains at two hours.

### Resignation of the Premier

On March 17, 2014, **Alison Redford** (Calgary-Elbow) received a standing ovation from her Progressive Conservative caucus after being asked in Oral Question Period if she continued to have the support necessary to

lead the province as the Premier of Alberta. Two days later, Ms. Redford announced that she would be resigning as Premier effective March 23, 2014.

Ms. Redford's resignation followed weeks of scrutiny and criticism of her travel costs, use of a government aircraft and other spending. In addition, two Progressive Conservative MLAs had recently crossed the floor to sit as independents and several other caucus members were openly discussing similar action. In her resignation speech Ms. Redford noted that she was "not prepared to allow party and caucus infighting to get in the way of building a better future for our province and for all Albertans." Having resigned as Premier, Ms. Redford has indicated she will continue to represent her constituents in the Assembly.

On March 23, 2014, **David Hancock** (Edmonton-Whitemud) became the 15th Premier of Alberta. Prior to this appointment he had served as Deputy Premier for a number of months and Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education, a portfolio he continues to hold. His tenure as Government House Leader began in 1999 and he regularly filled this role until his appointment as Deputy Premier in December, 2013. He has been responsible for a variety of portfolios during his five terms in the Legislature, including the ministries of Justice, Education, Human Services



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and Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs.

Ms. Redford's departure as Premier also triggered a leadership race within the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta. Mr. Hancock has publicly indicated he will not be pursuing the leadership role on a permanent basis, therefore, the winner of the leadership selection process will become the 16th Premier of Alberta. The leadership nomination period was open from May 15 to May 30, 2014, and the selection vote is scheduled for September 6, 2014. The association requires a candidate to receive more than half the votes cast in order to win the leadership. If no single candidate receives such a majority on the first vote then the top two candidates will go on to compete in a second ballot scheduled for September 20, 2014.

#### **Changes to Caucus Membership**

On March 13, 2014, **Len Webber** (Calgary-Foothills), a Member of the Government caucus, announced that he was leaving the Progressive Conservative caucus to sit as an independent Member of the Legislative Assembly. Four days later, **Donna Kennedy-Glans** (Calgary-Varsity), Associate Minister of Electricity and Renewable Energy, announced she was resigning from Cabinet and leaving the Government caucus to sit as an Independent.

On April 7, 2014, **Ken Hughes** (Calgary-West) announced his resignation as Minister of Municipal Affairs. He confirmed his intention to run for the leadership of the Progressive Conservatives on April 11, 2014; however, he has since withdrawn from the leadership race. In

May, **Ric McIver** (Calgary-Hays) stepped down as Minister of Infrastructure and announced that he would be running for the leadership of the Progressive Conservatives, followed by **Thomas Lukaszuk** (Edmonton-Castle Downs), who resigned as Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour. Former federal cabinet minister **Jim Prentice** has also joined the race.

**Greg Weadick** (Lethbridge-West) has been sworn-in as the Minister of Municipal Affairs; **Wayne Drysdale** (Grande Prairie-Wapiti), Minister of Transportation, has taken on the added responsibility of the Infrastructure portfolio; and **Kyle Fawcett** (Calgary-Klein) is now the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour.

#### **Committee Activity**

The Legislative Policy Committees debated the 2014-2015 Main Estimates from March 17, 2014 until the vote in Committee of Supply on April 16, 2014. Under the Standing Orders, these committees, and all other legislative committees, are prohibited from meeting for any other purpose during this period. However, on March 4, 2014 the Assembly passed amendments to the Standing Orders which included an exception to this rule, in order to permit the Select Special Ethics Commissioner Search Committee to continue its recruitment activities without interruption. Ultimately, in order to maintain its schedule the Committee met three times during the period the Main Estimates were under review.

On March 10, 2014, the Legislative Assembly referred the *Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head Blight) Amendment Act, 2014*, to the Standing Committee

on Resource Stewardship prior to the completion of second reading. Bill 201, a Private Members' public bill, sponsored by **Maureen Kubinec** (Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock), seeks to amend the *Agricultural Pests Act* in order that a tolerance level for fusarium graminearum, an aggressive plant pathogen, which can lead to the destruction of a variety of crops, of 0.5 per cent be accepted for Alberta seed and feed.

The Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future has met with a wide range of stakeholders and completed a series of public meetings on the future of high-speed rail in Alberta. A call for written submissions on the matter closed March 31, 2014. In order to complete its review within the allotted six-month timeframe the Committee will report to the Assembly on the matter by May 25, 2014.

**Jody Rempel**  
Committee Clerk



#### **Nova Scotia**

The spring sitting of the House of Assembly was a very busy one with long hours and the passage of two controversial health bills.

#### **Emergency sitting**

The Speaker recalled the House of Assembly for 9:00

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am Friday, February 28, 2014 to deal with a pressing issue of public interest. The first order of business, a motion put forth by the Government House Leader to extend the sitting hours of the day to midnight, was adopted. Bill 30, *An Act to Ensure the Provision of Essential Home-support Services*, was introduced by **Kelly Regan**, Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. A strike by approximately 450 home-support workers had commenced at 8:00 a.m. that morning and several hundred workers were protesting outside the House of Assembly in frigid weather.

With the unanimous consent of the House, second reading debate commenced at 9:15 am. At approximately 1:50 p.m. the motion for second reading was carried and the bill was referred by the House to the Law Amendments Committee – at that point over 130 presenters were scheduled to speak with approximately 90 more remaining to be scheduled.

At 6:00 p.m. the Government House Leader requested and obtained the consent of the House to adjourn until 9:00 am Saturday, March 1, to allow presentations before the Law Amendments Committee to continue through the night. The last time the House of Assembly sat on a Saturday in Nova Scotia was on May 24, 1986.

At 9:05 a.m. on March 1, with unanimous consent of the House to dispense with Committee of the Whole House, third reading debate of the bill commenced and continued for approximately one hour. The motion for third reading was carried and the bill was walked to Government House for the signature of the Lieutenant Governor.

Although only the home-support employees of one

employer were on strike on February 28, this legislation applies to 12 employers and 19 union locals and requires the employer and the union to identify the employees who provide “essential services” and allow only the non-essential workers to strike.

### Legislation

The spring sitting commenced on March 27, 2014 with further health care labour unrest on the horizon, as nurses with the Capital Health District, members of the Nova Scotia Government Employees Union, prepared for a strike. On March 31, 2014 at 7:12 pm, Ms. Regan, Minister of Labour and Advanced Education introduced Bill 37, *An Act to Ensure the Provision of Essential Health and Community Services*. As the opposition parties had not been briefed on the bill, the House was recessed. Unanimous consent to proceed to second reading was not obtained and the House adjourned until 12:01 am on April 1.

April 1 proved to be a marathon session with Question Period commencing at 12:21 am followed by second reading debate on Bill 37 which commenced at approximately 1:30 am. A “hoist” motion was proposed by the NDP and debate continued until 6:37 am when a series of bell ringings and votes took place. At 9:30 am the vote for second reading of Bill 37 was taken and the motion carried. The bill was referred to the Law Amendments Committee where over 200 presenters were scheduled to speak. At that point the House was recessed until 11:30 pm at which time the hours were called for the following day, April 2.

Proceedings commenced at 2:00 pm on April 2 – Wednesdays are Opposition Days and the House recessed at approximately 4:00 pm after the conclusion of opposition business until 11:30 pm at which time the House was adjourned until 12:01 am on April 3. At 12:01 am proceedings commenced and at the end of Question Period at 1:30 am the House resolved itself into Committee of the Whole House of Bills. The bill was reported from the Committee to the House at 4:13 am, at which time unanimous consent was requested to proceed to third reading of the bill; consent was not obtained. The House then recessed until 2:15 pm, at which time **Diana Whalen**, Minister of Finance, delivered her first budget speech. At the conclusion of the budget speech at approximately 4:00 pm the House was adjourned to 12:01 am Friday, April 3.

Third reading debate on Bill 37 commenced at approximately 12:30 am on April 3 and continued until 6:09 am; at this time there was bell ringing and votes were taken on the previous question and on third reading of the bill. The motion for third reading took place at 7:09 am; the House rose following the vote. As the nurses were already legally on strike at that time, the Bill received immediate Royal Assent.

During most of the week, protestors were present outside and inside the House. The public gallery of the House was cleared once by the Speaker due to the disruptive behaviour of the public.

The Government House Leader called for extended hours to deal with the budget estimates commencing on Monday, April

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7 – days of 6, 8 and 10 hours were called daily thereafter.

There have been 40 Bills introduced so far this spring sitting – 26 Government, 11 Private Members' and three Private Bills. It is expected that the House will rise in early May.

**Annette M. Boucher**  
Assistant Clerk



## British Columbia

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### Speech from the Throne

As reported in the spring 2014 issue, the First Session of the 40<sup>th</sup> Parliament prorogued on the morning of February 11. The Second Session began that afternoon, with Lieutenant Governor **Judith Guichon** delivering a Speech from the Throne which focused on economic development and the creation of opportunities through maintaining a balanced budget, opening new markets for investment, achieving labour stability and supporting development of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry. A commitment was also made for a 10-year skills-training action plan to ensure British Columbians benefit from this economic growth. Ms. Guichon announced the government's intention to formally apologize for the historical wrongs done

to the Chinese community. In addition, she noted the government will develop a long-term comprehensive strategy to move towards a violence-free BC, and will also introduce legislation to amend BC's liquor laws and policy.

Leader of the Official Opposition **Adrian Dix** delivered his response to the Speech from the Throne the following day, summarizing the speech as failing to address BC's economic and employment problems.

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### Budget 2014/2015

On February 18, Minister of Finance **Mike de Jong** delivered what he characterized as a "boring" budget for fiscal year 2014/2015, projecting a slim surplus of \$175 million. Mr. de Jong pointed out that among the provincial and federal governments, only BC and Saskatchewan generated balanced budgets this year; he reiterated BC's commitment to promoting economic growth and investment in communities without running a deficit. He also commented on the importance of BC's nascent LNG industry and described the LNG tax regime the government intends to implement in the fall. Tax provisions included sheltering credit unions from a negative federal tax change for another three years and increasing the tariff on tobacco.

In his response, Opposition finance critic **Mike Farnworth** described Budget 2014/2015 as lacking vision. He asserted that government-imposed rate increases will mean families pay more for medical service premiums, ferry fares, home heating, hydro, tuition and basic car insurance.

As with the previous budget address, both the Minister and

the critic used PowerPoint slides displayed on large monitors in the Chamber to supplement their presentations on Budget 2014/2015. Display monitors may be used by the Minister of Finance and a leader of a recognized opposition party, or designated member thereof, to present textual and numerical information or graphical data, while audio, video or other images are not be permitted.

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### Changes to Standing Orders

On February 12, the House unanimously agreed to amend Standing Orders 2(1) and 3 to make permanent regular sitting hours that have been the practice of the House since 2009. These adjustments had previously been authorized through sessional orders.

On February 13, the House passed a sessional order amending Standing Orders 25 and 47a to reschedule Oral Question Period and the daily Members' Statements from afternoon sittings to mornings on Tuesdays and Thursdays of each sitting week. Oral Question Period and Members' Statements on Mondays and Wednesdays will remain scheduled each afternoon. Government House Leader Mike de Jong indicated his intention to meet with members of the Opposition to assess the impact of the changes following the session.

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### Legislation

On March 27, the Government House Leader advised the Legislature that all bills that formed part of the government's legislative agenda for the present spring session had been introduced. The Second Session of the 40<sup>th</sup> Parliament saw the introduction and First Reading



of 27 Government Bills, ten Members' Bills and one Private Bill. At the time of writing, nine Government Bills have received Royal Assent, including:

- Bill 3 — *Missing Persons Act*: Provides the authority for police to access records and search premises in specified circumstances when the police are conducting a missing person investigation.
- Bill 6 — *Provincial Capital Commission Dissolution Act*: Dissolves the Provincial Capital Commission and transfers its property, assets and liabilities to the provincial government, with the exception of the Belleville wharves, which are transferred to the BC Transportation Financing Authority.
- Bill 15 — *Liquor Control and Licensing Amendment Act, 2014*: Provides for implementation of 15 out of 29 provincial liquor policy review recommendations that require changes to the *Liquor Control and Licensing Act*. Highlights include allowing the sale of BC wine, craft beer and spirits at farmers' markets; streamlining requirements for manufacturers so that they can expand on-site tasting venues; and allowing hobby brewer and vintner competitions.

### Application for Speaker's Ruling

Over 1,000 non-union container truck drivers at Port Metro Vancouver went on strike on February 26, 2014, where they were joined by about 250 union truck drivers on March 10. On March 24, Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Minister Responsible for Labour **Shirley Bond** introduced Bill 25, *Port Metro Vancouver Container Trucking Services Continuation Act*, to impose a cooling-off period respecting employers and the union, in order to restore functioning of the port

and minimize the sustained negative impact on the provincial economy.

On March 25, the Government House Leader made an application to the Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 81, that Bill 25 be permitted to advance through two or more stages of debate in one day due to the urgent need to resolve the dispute. The Speaker took the matter under advisement, preparing a decision for delivery the following day. On March 26, Mr. de Jong, with agreement from the Opposition, requested a delay in delivery of the Speaker's ruling to accommodate labour negotiations underway. Prior to moving adjournment of the House that evening, Mr. de Jong reported resolution of the labour dispute and withdrew his application for a ruling.

### Committee Activity

In March 2014, the Legislative Assembly Management Committee (LAMC) committed to work towards publicly releasing the Assembly's quarterly financial operating and capital reports, including a capital projects update, as part of an expanded routine disclosure process. Work is also underway to disclose — for the first time — Members' constituency office expenses, following through on a September 2013 LAMC commitment. These constituency office expenses for the January 1 to March 31, 2014 reporting period will be posted on the Assembly's website in late May 2014.

On April 10, Committee Chair **Bruce Ralston** presented the First Report of the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts for the Second Session of the 40<sup>th</sup> Parliament,

providing recommendations on document retention and disposal applications made to it by the Public Documents Committee. The Public Accounts Committee holds oversight responsibility regarding retention and disposal of all records created by the executive of government and its agencies, pursuant to Section 3 of the *Document Disposal Act*, first enacted in 1936.

### Cabinet Changes

On April 11, 2014, **Norm Letnick** was sworn in as Minister of Agriculture, replacing **Pat Pimm**. Mr. Pimm, who has been undergoing treatments for cancer, continues to serve as MLA for Peace River North. Mr. Letnick previously served in this portfolio between September 2012 and June 2013.

**Aaron Ellingsen**  
**Gordon Robinson**  
Committee Researchers



### Nunavut

The 1st Session of the 4th Legislative Assembly reconvened on March 6, 2014. The proceedings of the Committee of the Whole during the 2014 winter sitting of the House were dominated by the consideration of the Government of Nunavut's proposed 2014-2015 capital estimates.

The winter sitting was the first to be broadcast live across the territory on direct-to-home satellite service, in addition to existing broadcasts on community cable stations.

In April of 2013, representatives from the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut and the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories appeared before the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) on the occasion of its public hearing concerning the legislatures' joint application for mandatory distribution.

In August of 2013, the CRTC issued a decision requiring mandatory carriage of the televised proceedings of the territorial legislatures on the digital basic service of the direct-to-home satellite broadcasting distribution undertakings serving Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

## Legislation

Five bills received Assent during the winter sitting:

- Bill 1, *An Act to Provide for a Fixed Election Date*;
- Bill 2, *Appropriation (Capital) Act, 2014-2015*;
- Bill 3, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act, No. 3, 2013-2014*;
- Bill 4, *Supplementary Appropriation (Capital) Act, No. 4, 2013-2014*; and
- Bill 5, *Interim Appropriation Act, April 1, 2014 – July 31, 2014*.

Bill 1, *An Act to Provide for a Fixed Election Date*, was the first bill to be introduced in the current Legislative Assembly. Bill 1 was introduced under the authority of the Legislative Assembly's Management and Services Board. Speaker **George Qulaut** appeared before the Committee of the Whole on the occasion of its clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

Bill 1 amended the *Nunavut Elections Act* and the *Legislative*

*Assembly and Executive Council Act* to provide that the election day for a territorial general election must be the last Monday in October in the fourth calendar year following the election day for the most recent general election. Consequently, the next territorial general election will be held on October 30, 2017.

Bill 1 fulfilled a commitment that was announced as part of the communiqué which was issued following the February 18-21, 2014, full caucus retreat. The retreat, which was held in the community of Kugluktuk, brought together all Members of the Legislative Assembly. Other decisions and initiatives announced by caucus included:

- The holding of a territory-wide plebiscite in 2015 concerning the alienation of municipal lands, pursuant to Article 14.8.4 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*. The vote, which will be held under the auspices of the recently-passed *Plebiscites Act*, will ask residents to consider the question of whether the current restrictions applying to the disposal of municipal lands should continue.
- The adoption of a new *Code of Conduct* for Members of the Legislative Assembly.
- The holding of a mid-term leadership review of the Executive Council (Cabinet) in the fall of 2015. Caucus agreed that the review will be broadened from past exercises to include such matters as the size of Cabinet and the Legislative Assembly's standing committee structure.

The 1st Session of the 4th Legislative Assembly was prorogued on March 19, 2014. The 2nd Session convened the following day. Commissioner **Edna Elias** delivered the Opening Address. Premier **Peter Taptuna** tabled a copy of the new

government's mandate statement, *Sivumut Abluqta: Stepping Forward Together*. Speaker Qulaut tabled a copy of the new *Code of Conduct* for Members of the Legislative Assembly.

The 2nd Session of the 4th Legislative Assembly reconvened for its spring sitting on May 22, 2014.

## Committee Activities

The membership and terms of reference for the standing committees of the 4th Legislative Assembly were established by way of motion on March 6, 2014. The committees are:

- Standing Committee on Legislation;
- Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts;
- Standing Committee on Social Wellness;
- Standing Committee on Community and Economic Development; and
- Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and Privileges.

The Standing Committee on Legislation, which is chaired by Arviat South MLA **Joe Savikataaq**, is presently considering the proposed *Northern Employee Benefits Services Pension Plan Act*, which was introduced in the House on March 20, 2014. The bill sets out the proposed legislative framework for the continuation of the Northern Employee Benefits Services plan as a multi-employer, multi-jurisdictional pension plan for employees of approved public sector employers in northern Canada. A piece of mirror legislation was introduced in the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories on February 26, 2014.

The Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts, which is chaired by Iqaluit-Tasiluk MLA **George Hickes**, held hearings from April 1 to 3, 2014, on the reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly on *Education in Nunavut* and *Safety of Schools and Childcare Facilities in Nunavut*.

The hearings were televised live across Nunavut on local community cable channels and direct-to-home satellite service. Auditor General **Michael Ferguson** and officials from the Government of Nunavut's Department of Education and Department of Community and Government Services appeared before the standing committee to provide testimony.

**Alex Baldwin**

Office of the Legislative Assembly of  
Nunavut



## Manitoba

### Budget

The Third Session of the 40th Legislature resumed on March 6, 2014, with the delivery of the first budget from new Finance Minister **Jennifer Howard**.

The 2014-2015 total operating expenditure of \$12.3 billion represents an increase of 2% from

2013-2014. Highlights of the government's budget included:

- Creating jobs and more opportunities for young people while keeping life affordable and protecting the front-line services families count on;
- Creating more apprenticeship and training opportunities to help grow Manitoba's workforce by 75,000 by 2020;
- Setting up a five-year plan to invest \$5.5 billion in core infrastructure to improve the province's roads, bridges, flood protection and municipal infrastructure and create tens of thousands of jobs;
- Achieving further administrative savings to be reinvested in front-line services for families including the extension of corporate administrative spending caps to all regional health authorities; and
- Creating a lean council tasked with providing advice to government on new ways to offer better services more efficiently across government departments.

### Opposition's Response to the Budget

During his contribution to the budget debate on March 7, 2014, Official Opposition Leader **Brian Pallister** moved a motion expressing non-confidence in the government which stated that the budget failed to address the priorities of Manitobans by:

- failing to repeal the massive tax and fee increases imposed in Budget 2012 and Budget 2013, including the PST hike;
- refusing to hold the legally required referendum before increasing the PST;
- breaking the promise to eliminate the structural deficit of nearly \$400 million;
- failing to address the growing threat to services Manitobans count on such as health and social supports;
- failing to raise the employment

and income assistance rental allowance rates to 75 per cent of median market rents;

- failing to provide promised tax relief for seniors;
- stifling economic growth and prosperity through excessive red tape and unwarranted taxation; and
- failing to join the New West Partnership.

On March 18, 2014 Mr. Pallister's amendment was defeated on a recorded vote of yeas 19, nays 35, while the main budget motion carried on a recorded vote of yeas 34, nays 20.

### Legislation

In addition to the bills introduced in the fall, the spring session to date has seen the introduction of approximately 16 bills addressing a variety of governance areas including:

- Bill 37 – *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Connecting Schools to the Internet)*, which enables school boards to enter into cost-sharing agreements to establish or improve Internet services in schools.
- Bill 49 – *The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act*, which enhances the ability to gather information relevant to insurance claims. Under this bill, MPI is granted authority to obtain information from certain public bodies, persons who claim benefits and persons claiming payment for goods or services.
- Bill 52 – *The Non-Smokers Health Protection Amendment Act (Prohibitions on Flavoured Tobacco and Other Amendments)*, which prohibits the sale or supply of flavoured tobacco products and also repeals the exemption allowing a parent to provide tobacco to his or her child in a non-public place. Menthol tobacco products, snuff and chewing tobacco are exempt from this prohibition.



- Bill 55 – *The Environment Amendment Act (Reducing Pesticides Exposure)*, which prohibits the use of prescribed classes or types of pesticides on lawns and on the grounds of schools, hospitals and child care centres, except in specific circumstances.
- Bill 59 – *The Adoption Amendment and Vital Statistics Amendment Act (Opening Birth and Adoption Records)*, which creates a scheme that allows for more openness with respect to adoption records and pre-adoption birth records, subject to certain privacy rights.
- Bill 212 – *The Child and Family Services Amendment Act*, which requires a child and family services agency, when it proposes to remove a child from the care of a caregiver in the absence of child protection plans, to prepare a written plan, notify the caregiver in writing about its intentions and explain its reasons for the proposal and its assessment of the factors relevant to determining how the proposed move may affect the child; and, once the final decision is made to carry out the proposal, give the caregiver a written decision and provide copies of the notice and decision to the authority under which the mandated agency operates.

### Opposition Day Motion

On April 17, 2014 **Kelvin Goertzen** moved an opposition day motion urging that “a Special Committee of the Legislative Assembly be appointed to investigate the conduct of the First Minister and the Member for Riel with respect to the issuing of invitations to provincial civil servants and immigration service providers to attend a political debate in the House on April 19, 2012 concerning immigration settlement services.” Following the debate, the motion was defeated on a vote of yeas 19, nays 28.

### Committee of Supply

The Committee of Supply considered the Estimates of the Departmental Expenditures from March 19 to April 30, 2014. During this period, resolutions to approve departmental spending were passed and motions were moved in certain departments to reduce the ministers’ salaries to various dollar amounts. All motions were defeated.

As a result of the Sessional Order adopted on September 11, 2013, the Committee of Supply also considered and passed supply resolutions dealing with temporary funding for operating and capital expenditures until the Assembly deals with the main supply bills later this session. As a result, Bill 40 – *The Interim Appropriation Act, 2014* received Royal Assent on March 27, 2014.

### Standing Committees

Manitoba Standing Committee activity this quarter included the following meetings:

- Legislative Affairs Committee – to consider the appointment of the Children’s Advocate;
- Sub-Committee of the Legislative Affairs Committee – met in camera on two separate occasions regarding the recruitment and selection of a new Auditor General and a new Ombudsman;
- Public Accounts Committee – to consider several fiscal years of the Public Accounts Volumes as well as the report from the Auditor General – Operations of the Office.

Under the provisions of the Sessional Order, the Public Accounts Committee is required to have 10 meetings between September 11, 2013 and September 11, 2014. This committee has held five meetings as of March 19, 2014.

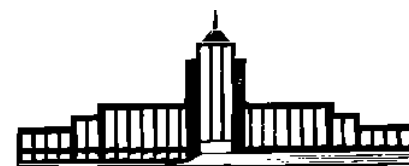
### Current Party Standings

The current party standings in the Manitoba Legislature are: NDP 36, Progressive Conservatives 19, Independents two.

Under the terms of the Rules and the Sessional Order, the House did not meet during spring break from March 31 to April 4 and during the week considered as Constituency Week from May 5 to 9, 2014.

**Monique Grenier**

Clerk Assistant/  
Clerk of Committees



### Newfoundland and Labrador

#### New Session

On the morning of March 12, 2014, **J. Derek Green**, Chief Justice of Newfoundland and Labrador, prorogued the Second Session of the Forty-Seventh General Assembly. In the afternoon he delivered the Speech from the Throne opening the Third Session of the Forty-Seventh General Assembly.

#### Members

Former Premier **Kathy Dunderdale**, who had resigned as Premier on January 24, 2014, resigned her seat on February 28.

**Sam Slade**, MHA, Carbonear-Harbour Grace who was elected on November 26, 2013 took his seat before the House was prorogued.

Liberal candidate **Cathy Bennett** was elected in the

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District of Virginia Waters in the by-election which took place on April 19. Ms. Bennett was sworn in and took her seat in the House on May 5.

On June 2nd Minister of Environment and Conservation, Joan Shea resigned her seat.

The composition of the House is now 33 Progressive Conservatives, 12 Liberals and three New Democrats.

### Appointment of Sergeant-at-Arms

On March 18, by Resolution, the House approved the appointment of **Wayne Harnum** as Sergeant-at-Arms. Mr. Harnum, who succeeds **Bill Brown**, is a 30-year veteran of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, having retired as Staff Sergeant before taking up his new position.

### Leadership Renewal

The leadership convention for the Progressive Conservative Party scheduled to take place in July will now consider only one candidate, **Frank Coleman**, as the other two candidates have withdrawn.

On May 17th at their annual convention the New Democratic Party of Newfoundland and Labrador affirmed **Lorraine Michael** as leader.

The House adjourned for the summer on June 5th on which date **Tom Marshall** spoke in the House for the last time as Premier to bid farewell to the Members. In his comments the Premier indicated that he suspected that it would also be the last time he addressed the House as an MHA.

**Elizabeth Murphy**  
Clerk Assistant



## Saskatchewan

The third session of the 27th Legislative Assembly resumed on March 3, 2014. Some of the highlights included the Budget presentation and debate on several government bills and motions.

### Government Motions

Several government motions were debated and passed in the spring sitting. The first two government motions were moved by unanimous consent under Rule 61 – urgent and pressing necessity. These motions focused on grain transportation and the crisis in Ukraine. Three additional government motions sought support for the Northern Gateway pipeline, the Canada-Korea Free Trade Agreement and the use of a P3 model in the construction of a new bridge in the city of Saskatoon. An amendment to the motion on the P3 model was proposed but defeated.

### Budget Presentation

On March 19, 2014, Finance Minister **Ken Krawetz** presented the province's budget for 2014-2015. The Budget entitled *Steady Growth* focused on infrastructure investments for highways, hospitals, high-speed data networks and education capital. The government cited significant planned expenditures in health,

social services and labour force development.

Prior to the budget presentation, the Opposition laid out seven items they wished to see in the budget. According to the Opposition, six out of seven of their requests were not met. Finance Critic **Trent Wotherspoon** criticized the government for not addressing the high cost of living, citing increases to monthly bills from some of the Crown Corporations and less transfers to municipalities as ways the government is pushing pressure onto property tax. The item that was included in the budget was the presentation of the budget on a summary basis and the requirement that only the summary financial statements are included in the public accounts. For many years, the Provincial Auditor recommended that the government produce their budget and financial statements on a summary basis. This change was included in the *Financial Administration Amendment Act, 2014*.

### Legislation

The Assembly passed two bills that relate to the *Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 2007*.

Bill No. 129 – *The Executive Government Administration Act* establishes the Office of Executive Council, consolidates the provisions of *The Government Organization Act, The Tabling of Documents Act, 1991* and *The Federal-Provincial Agreements Act*. It is accompanied by Bill No. 130 – *The Executive Government Administration Consequential Amendments Act, 2013*. This Act provides separate acts for both Executive Government and the Legislative Assembly. This is

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the first time that there will be separate statutes for the two branches of government.

### **Interparliamentary Relations**

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The Province of Saskatchewan and the State of Western Australia share a great number of similarities including parliamentary institutions, socio-economic circumstances, issues of national-provincial relations, First Nations matters and cultural diversity. In July 2012 the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan and the Western Australia Parliament agreed in principle to pursue a parliamentary study exchange.

The goal of the study exchange is to encourage practical professional development through learning from each other, through the examination of practices and by the sharing of information and experiences. Members and staff must apply to participate in the program with a statement of interest describing their purpose of participation, their goals and objectives, specific area of interest, and how the exchange relates to and may enhance their roles. The program for members consists of two parts – one part relating to the operation of Parliament, and the second to focus on a special interest determined by the participants. Participants are matched with members of the host parliament who have similar interests. The hosting members are expected to make the arrangements for the second part of the study visit.

The first cycle of the exchange took place in September 2013, when a Saskatchewan study delegation visited Western Australia. A Western Australia delegation visited Saskatchewan for two weeks in April.

### **Saskatchewan Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy**

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Speaker **Dan D'Autremont** welcomed 16 teachers to the Saskatchewan Teachers' Institute that was held from April 5 to 9, 2014. This year marked the 17th anniversary of the program.

The first Saskatchewan Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy was held in 1999, with the aim of developing a strategy to enhance the understanding of parliamentary democracy in the classroom. Since then, over 200 teachers from across Saskatchewan have participated in the institute. During the five-day Institute teacher participants receive a behind-the-scenes look at democracy at work. Participants have the opportunity to meet with the Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker, the Premier, cabinet ministers, caucus leaders, Whips and Chairs, as well as with private members, the Clerk and other members of the Legislative Assembly Service, Officers of the Assembly, the press gallery association and the judiciary.

### **Speakers' Outreach**

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Speaker D'Autremont continues to do presentations as part of the Speaker's Educational Outreach Program on Parliamentary Democracy. The program aims to promote awareness and understanding of the Legislative Assembly and the democratic process through a non-partisan approach. This year has seen an increase in interest and participation as a result of direct communication with social studies teachers across the province. Speaker D'Autremont completed 25 presentations from January to April 2014. Teachers

have remarked that this program has given them the ability to teach children about citizenship, the democratic system and the importance of voting.

**Stacey Ursulescu**

Committee Clerk



### **Northwest Territories**

The Fifth Session of the 17th Legislative Assembly reconvened February 5, 2014. The six-week session saw the consideration and adoption of 18 pieces of legislation, including the *Appropriation Act* for operations expenditures for the 2014-15 fiscal year as well as 10 bills directly related to the implementation of the Devolution Agreement with the Government of Canada. Responsibility for public lands, water and resource management was transferred effective April 1, 2014 from the Government of Canada to the Government of the Northwest Territories. For the first time, Northerners will be able to pass laws and make their own decisions about how the environment is managed and protected and the resources are developed. This was an historic occasion in the ongoing evolution of the territory.

### **Budget 2014-2015**

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On February 6, Finance Minister **J. Michael Miltenberger** presented the 2014-15 territorial operations budget. The biggest highlight of the \$1.612 billion budget is the \$59 million to administer the new land, water and resource management programs and services. This is to be funded through a \$67 million increase in the



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Gross Expenditure Base in the Territorial Formula Financing Grant. Other highlights include \$27 million in new investments in health and education to expand economic opportunities as well as \$54 million to address increased salary costs and other forced growth pressures for existing programs. The *Appropriation Act* received Third Reading on March 7 and Royal Assent on March 13, 2014.

### Legislation

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Other bills of particular interest that were considered include Bill 4: *Health Information Act*, which was introduced in November and referred to the Standing Committee on Social Programs. The bill establishes rules regarding the collection, use, disclosure and security of personal health information. The Committee held public hearings in February and March and proposed and adopted amendments broadening the bill's purpose statement, as well as adding a mandatory review clause requiring the Minister to conduct a review of the *Act* within 10 years of its enactment. The bill received Third Reading on March 12 and Royal Assent on March 13, 2014.

On March 6, amendments to the *Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act* were introduced to revise the electoral districts of the Northwest Territories. The bill proposed changes to the electoral boundaries within the communities of Hay River, Inuvik and Yellowknife, and moved the areas of Lutselk'e, Fort Resolution, Detah and Ndilo to a new Tu Nedhe and Weledhe electoral district. The status quo is maintained in the remaining seven constituencies. Bill 18

did not propose any increase to the 19 Member Legislative Assembly. The Bill was reported out of Committee of the Whole on March 12 and remains on the Order paper with Third Reading scheduled when the Fifth Session resumes in May.

### Term Extension Request

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The next NWT general election is currently scheduled, by way of fixed-date election legislation, for October 5, 2015. This is the same month as the next scheduled federal general election and municipal elections in several NWT communities. Some provinces with elections scheduled for the fall of 2015 have already extended their terms in order to avoid overlap in election periods, or are considering doing so in the near future. In an effort to avoid significant communications and administrative difficulties, as well as the possibility of lower voter participation rates, the Assembly adopted a motion on March 10 requesting an amendment to the federal *Northwest Territories Act* that would authorize the current Assembly to extend its term, from the current four years, to a period not exceeding five years. On a recorded vote, the motion was carried by an 11-7 margin.

### Building Anniversary Projects

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November 2013 marked the 20th Anniversary of the NWT Legislative Assembly building. The final mortgage payment has been made and full ownership of our magnificent facility has been assumed. Surplus funding received from the Legislative Assembly Building Society was then committed to a number of celebration and enhancement projects that will be completed over the summer months. The ongoing projects include a

new exterior building sign, the rejuvenation of the Water's Edge Park and the establishment of an ongoing scholarship fund for NWT students. Work is also underway for signage upgrades in the Capital Site area that will serve as landmarks and guide visitors and tourists to our building and other important public institutions located on the Capital Site.

### Direct-to-Home Satellite Television Broadcasting

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In August 2013, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission approved a joint submission from the Legislative Assemblies of the NWT and Nunavut, requesting mandatory distribution of Assembly proceedings. Commencing in February, our proceedings are now being carried through direct-to-home satellite providers Bell Express Vu and Shaw Direct, giving northerners and Canadians another option to view the proceedings of our legislature. These dedicated channels are being shared with the Nunavut Legislative Assembly. Broadcasting will not be limited to just the formal proceedings of the House and will include rebroadcasts in our Aboriginal languages, public meetings of the committees, special events and archival materials.

### Extended Adjournment

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The House went into extended adjournment on March 13 and will resume on Wednesday, May 28, 2014.

**Doug Schauerte**  
Deputy Clerk



## Ontario

After a busy winter adjournment for its committees, the Ontario Legislature resumed its Second Session of the Fortieth Parliament. Speaker **Dave Levac** made a number of rulings during the period of February to April 2014, some of which are outlined below.

### Speaker's Rulings

On February 25, the Speaker ruled on a point of privilege raised by **Gilles Bisson**, Member for Timmins-James Bay, regarding a request by **Todd Smith**, Member for Prince Edward-Hastings for unanimous consent to have his just-introduced bill immediately called for Second and Third Reading. Mr. Bisson noted that Mr. Smith, having not received the unanimous consent requested, issued an open letter saying that a member or members of the Third Party, of which Mr. Bisson is the House Leader, said "no" to the request. Mr. Bisson asserted that his caucus was in favour of the request and therefore would not have said no, while Mr. Smith said that it was his honest belief that there were "noes" from the Third Party.

The Speaker ruled that a *prima facie* case of privilege was not made out. The ayes or nays on a request for unanimous consent are not recorded; thus there was no record of which members might have declined consent.

The Speaker stated that it is therefore: dangerous to make allegations about requests for unanimous consent, and even more so to attribute motive for the perceived refusal, since by their nature requests for unanimous consent are handled without debate and therefore without any opportunity for a member to state a position for or against.

The Speaker delivered another ruling on March 3, this time relating to provincial legislation that provides for Members representing areas in eastern or southwestern Ontario to be given the opportunity to participate in public announcements relating to financial assistance or incentives affecting the area. The Member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, **Jeff Yurek**, gave notice of his intention to raise a point of privilege that such a public announcement was made in his riding but that he was given no notice or opportunity to participate.

The Speaker ruled that the application of privilege is "confined to proceedings in parliament, and to the activities of members in their parliamentary roles." Because this issue concerned constituency-related work, the Speaker could not find a *prima facie* case of privilege. Even though the Speaker found that privilege was not breached, he noted that "complying with the law is always a good policy."

On March 25, the Speaker ruled on a point of privilege raised by the Government House Leader, **John Milloy**, relating to a question posed to the Minister of Finance during Oral Questions the week before. Mr. Milloy charged that **Vic Fedeli**, Member for Nipissing, knowingly "disclosed the contents of a confidential committee document" while

posing his question, and therefore committed a contempt of the Legislature. Mr. Fedeli maintained that he referred to a set of redacted documents that were to be made public.

Both Mr. Milloy's and Mr. Fedeli's submissions refer to an Order of the Standing Committee on Estimates that protected certain documents received by the Committee as confidential. Consequently, the Speaker contended that the "power rests with the Standing Committee on Estimates which, as the custodian of the documents in question, is best able to decide if the allegation of improper disclosure is correct." The matter was therefore prematurely brought to the attention of the House. As with all matters of privilege relating to Committees, the Committee in question must adopt and present a report to the House.

On April 14, the Speaker ruled on a point of privilege raised by Mr. Fedeli relating to alleged Budget leaks. He referenced a document that he said outlines the government's plan to pre-announce the contents of the Budget. His case was that the "announcements represent an improper disclosure of information that first ought to be given to the Legislature." He also sought to make a distinction between a breach of privilege and contempt of the Legislature, arguing that this case is similar to the 2003 "Magna Budget", when the government of the day presented the Budget at the Magna facility instead of at the Legislature. In that case, Speaker **Gary Carr** found that a *prima facie* case of contempt had been established.

In his ruling, Speaker Levac noted that it has been widely

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settled that a “breach of budget secrecy does not equate to a matter of privilege.” Procedural authorities and previous rulings have deemed budget secrecy as a political convention rather than a parliamentary privilege. He cited a number of these authorities and rulings, including Speaker Carr’s ruling on the “Magna Budget.” In this case, the Speaker found that a *prima facie* case of privilege had not been made out because he could not find that “there is any intention on the part of the government to similarly bypass or pre-empt normal procedures of the Legislative Assembly with respect to the 2014 Budget.”

### Condolences

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On April 10, while proceedings were going on in the House and Committees, Members and staff were shocked to learn that **Jim Flaherty** had suddenly passed away that afternoon. Within moments of the news, the House observed a moment of silence in respect for Mr. Flaherty’s death and then recessed for a few minutes. Subsequently, upon receiving representation from the House Leaders, the Deputy Speaker adjourned the House and Committees for the rest of the day.

Mr. Flaherty was the Member of Provincial Parliament for Durham Centre from 1995 to 1999 and for Whitby-Ajax from 1999 to 2005. He was the sitting Member of Parliament for Whitby-Oshawa and had just resigned from his post as the Minister of Finance in the Canadian House of Commons. A state funeral was held in his honour on April 16 in Toronto.

### Committee Activities

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On April 1, the Standing Committee on Social Policy

tabled its *Report on Diluted Chemotherapy Drugs*. The Report is a result of many months of public hearings and report writing relating to the oversight, monitoring and regulation of non-accredited pharmaceutical companies. This study was initiated when it became known that patients in Ontario received diluted doses of chemotherapy drugs. The Committee made six recommendations hoping that similar situations are avoided in the future.

The Committee continued its review of the *Local Health System Integration Act*, and the regulations made under it, pursuant to an Order of the House. It also held public hearings on Bill 135, *An Act to protect pupils with asthma*, a Private Member’s Public Bill introduced by Mr. Yurek. The bill is seeking to require that every school board establish and maintain an asthma policy.

The Standing Committee on General Government continued its self-directed study and review of the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games and the Pan/Parapan American Games Secretariat (P/PAGS), established under Standing Order 111. To date, there have been 12 days of public hearings, with further hearings expected to continue through early June. Witnesses invited by the Committee have included **Saäd Rafi**, Chief Executive Officer of the TORONTO 2015 Pan Am / Parapan Am Games Organizing Committee, as well as the Deputy Minister of P/PAGS, **Steven Davidson**, who was called back to appear a second time.

The Committee further continued its self-directed study relating to the auto insurance industry, and began report writing in March.

Throughout February, March and April, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts continued its consideration of the 2012 *Special Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario on Ornge Air Ambulance and Related Services*. After two years of consideration, the Committee is now working on its second interim report.

In addition to the work surrounding Ornge, the Committee has also requested the Auditor General to complete several value-for-money audits within various public entities in the province. Since February 2014, the Committee has asked the Auditor General to complete the following value-for-money audits: the Winter Road Maintenance Program; a review of all community care access centres in the province of Ontario; and all security contracts surrounding the Toronto 2015 Pan/Parapan Am Games.

The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills held public hearings on Bill 69, *An Act respecting payments made under contracts and subcontracts in the construction industry*. Introduced by **Steven Del Duca**, Member for Vaughan, the bill sets out various rules and requirements in relation to payments made under construction contracts.

On March 5, the Select Committee on Developmental Services presented its interim report. The report is a summary of the oral and written submissions received by the Committee over the previous four months. The Committee’s final reporting date has been extended to not later than June 5, 2014.

**Valerie Quioc Lim**  
Committee Clerk





## New Brunswick

### Budget

The House adjourned on December 13 and resumed sitting on February 4, when Finance Minister **Blaine Higgs** tabled the 2014-2015 Budget, the fourth for the Alward Government.

The provincial government projected a deficit of \$391 million. Revenues are expected to increase 4.3 per cent from 2013-14 estimates, exceeding \$8 billion. Spending is budgeted to increase less than two per cent over the previous year.

"The challenge is to create the opportunities to keep New Brunswickers home. We have chosen to put our natural resources to work for the people of this province. New Brunswick has a long history of developing its mineral and forest resources in a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable manner to provide jobs, stimulate investment, generate wealth and grow the economy," said Higgs.

Investment highlights included an increase of three per cent to social assistance rates, \$27 million for the New Brunswick Drug Plan, providing drug insurance to 70,000 families

without drug coverage; and \$7.2 million for the "Home First Strategy," helping seniors stay in their own homes.

Spending reduction initiatives include reducing the number of MLAs from 55 to 49 in the next election and making reductions to the public service sector through the retirement and attrition of approximately 1,500 employees. There were no planned increases to gas, income and consumption taxes, or to major fees, including vehicle licensing and registration.

The 2014-2015 Capital Budget totaled \$555 million. The majority of the expenditures will go towards maintaining existing infrastructure, with \$35 million in capital spending dedicated to new projects. Highlights include \$223 million to repair and maintain transportation infrastructure; \$213 million for health-care infrastructure; and \$99 million for school infrastructure.

On February 6, Finance Critic **Roger Melanson** responded to the Budget speech. Melanson spoke at length on the issues surrounding hydrofracking. He questioned why the government had not yet balanced the budget, despite cuts to frontline services and increased taxes and fees in recent years, including gas, tobacco and income taxes. Melanson also raised concerns about a number of unfulfilled campaign promises, including the elimination of ambulance fees, the doubling of medical seats in universities and freezing property taxes for those over 65 years of age.

### Legislation

Legislation introduced by the Government since the spring sitting includes;

Bill 51, *An Act Respecting Members' Pensions*, introduced by Premier **David Alward**, would adopt a shared-risk pension model for MLAs, placing Members into the Public Service Shared-Risk Pension with government employees. Members would retain service accrued to date, but new service would be calculated differently. The age for unreduced retirement on future service would increase from 60 to 65. Changes are expected to save taxpayers \$1.3 million annually.

Bill 56, *Organ and Tissue Donation Strategy Act*, introduced by **Wes McLean**, requires the Minister of Health to create an Organ and Tissue Donation Strategy, which would include collaboration with various stakeholders to promote public awareness through government departments, schools and Regional Health Authorities. This is the first Private Member's Public Bill introduced by a Government Member since 1999.

Legislation introduced by the Official Opposition includes;

Bill 46, *Government Advertising Accountability Act*, introduced by Leader of the Official Opposition **Brian Gallant**, would prevent the airing or publishing of government advertisements that are deemed partisan or political. The Act would apply to any type of advertisement that the government proposes to pay for.

### Party Affiliation

**Jim Parrott**, Member for Fundy-River Valley, rejoined the Progressive Conservative caucus on April 30. Parrott was removed from Caucus in 2012, and sat as an Independent PC, and later as an Independent. The standings in the House are now 42 Progressive Conservative and 13 Liberal.

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## Lighting

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On April 2, the portico of the Legislative Assembly building was lit in blue in support of Light It Up Blue, a campaign launched by Autism Speaks to help raise awareness about autism. **Ryan Riordon**, the Member for Nepisiguit who took the initiative on the lighting, was joined by Premier Alward, Speaker **Dale Graham**, and Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development **Marie-Claude Blais**, along with members of the Chaleur Autism and Asperger Family Centre for the lighting of the building.

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## Retirement

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On February 20, Speaker Graham announced he would not be seeking re-election in the upcoming general election, scheduled for September 22. Graham was first elected as the Member for Carleton North in a by-election in 1993. He was subsequently re-elected from 1995 to 2010, representing the riding of Carleton. Graham has held the positions of Deputy Premier, Minister of Supply and Services, Minister of Human Resources, Minister Responsible for Service New Brunswick, and Acting Minister of Environment and Local Government. He has served on numerous committees and held the position of Opposition Whip and critic for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, and Supply and Services. He was elected Speaker of the 57<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly on October 27, 2010.

**John-Patrick McCleave**  
Committee Clerk,  
Research Assistant



## Prince Edward Island

The Fourth Session of the Sixty-fourth General Assembly resumed on April 2, 2014. On April 9, 2014, **Kathleen Casey** (Charlottetown-Lewis Point) was elected Acting Deputy Speaker during the absence of Deputy Speaker **Paula Biggar** (Tyne Valley-Linkletter), who is expected to be away from the Legislative Assembly for a number of weeks.

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## Budget 2013

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**Wes Sheridan**, Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs, introduced his budget on April 8, 2014, which contained expenditures of \$1.656 billion. Health continued to account for the largest share of provincial expenditure at over \$583 million, followed by Education and Early Childhood Development at \$232 million. The minister indicated revenues will grow in 2014-2015 by 3.3 per cent, while expenditures will be held to two per cent. The following year, revenues are expected to grow by 3.5 percent while expenditures grow by 1 percent. For the 2013-2014 fiscal year, the government improved on its budget target of a \$58.9 million deficit, with a forecast deficit of \$51.9 million. In the upcoming fiscal year, there will be a further reduction in the deficit to \$39.7 million before achieving a small surplus in 2015-2016.

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## 4-H Debate in the Legislative Chamber

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As part of their annual conference on citizenship and parliamentary process, 4-H Canada held a debate in the Legislative Chamber of Province House on April 14, 2014. Youth from across Canada participated, debating the motion, "Be it resolved that an equal representation of both men and women should exist among government leaders." In addition to the proceedings at Province House, the program included visits to Lennox Island to view a Mi'kmaq cultural presentation, the Acadian Museum and a tour of the north shore of Prince Edward Island.

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## Significant Legislation

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A number of pieces of significant legislation were introduced during the spring sitting :

- *An Act to Amend the Election Act* (Bill 34) provides for an exception to the current requirement to hold provincial general elections on the first Monday in October in the fourth calendar year following the last general election, thus avoiding the possibility of having two general elections—one federal and one provincial—in October 2015. If the federal general election is held in October 2015, the provincial general election will be held in April 2016.
- *An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act* (Bill 41) allows for the Comptroller to be appointed under the Civil Service Act. The Comptroller is currently appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.
- *Health Information Act* (Bill 42) establishes a set of rules for custodians regarding the collection, use, disclosure, retention and secure

destruction of personal health information; enables the sharing and accessing of personal health information where appropriate to improve the provision of health services and the planning and management of the health care system; provides individuals with the right to examine, and to request corrections to, their personal health information.

### Province House Repairs

Province House was closed for the month of February 2014 for repairs to ceilings, gutters and downspouts. It reopened to the public on March 24, 2014, a week prior to the resumption of the session. The building remains in need of major restoration, which will likely require an extended closure, and the relocation of the Legislative Chamber and associated staff and offices, potentially as soon as 2015.

### Royal Tour

On April 11, 2014, the details of a Royal Tour to Prince Edward Island by Their Royal Highnesses **The Prince of Wales** and **the Duchess of Cornwall** were announced. The province will host Their Royal Highnesses on May 19 and 20, 2014. "Prince Edward Island is delighted to be included in this historic tour during 2014 as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference," said Premier **Robert Ghiz**. "The Royal Tour is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the history, natural beauty, vibrant culture and people of our province."

**Marian Johnston**  
Clerk Assistant and  
Clerk of Committees



### The Senate

During the spring session, two bills relating to Aboriginal Peoples and the subject matter of another were the object of debate. One, Bill C-16, which was granted Royal Assent on March 4, gives effect to the Governance Agreement with Sioux Valley Dakota Nation. The purpose of the bill is to provide this community greater control over its affairs in a way that is more transparent, accountable and responsive to local needs. This is to be done by promoting better living conditions and by fostering a positive climate for investment and economic development.

The second legislative measure, Bill C-15, deals with the transfer of resource control and management in the Northwest Territories, specifically through devolution of land and resource management from Ottawa to the Government of the Northwest Territories, and the improvement of the regulatory regime in the Northwest Territories. This will be achieved by removing barriers to private investment, enhancing environmental stewardship, and investing in programs to support economic growth and provide opportunities for Northerners. This bill received Royal Assent

on March 25. On April 10, the Senate adopted a motion to allow for the pre-study of a bill still before the House of Commons. *The First Nations Control of First Nations Education Act* (C-33) that involves education standards for aboriginal communities was sent to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples.

The pre-study of a bill that is still in the Commons, is a Senate practice that was commonly used in the 1970s and it has once again become an option of interest to the government. In addition to the pre-study of Bill C-33, the Senate authorized the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs to pre-study Bill C-23, the *Fair Elections Act* and the committee issued an interim report on the bill on April 15 with proposals for nine amendments. Another pre-study motion was passed on April 9; this one, dealing with the budget implementation bill (C-31), was sent to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance while portions of the bill was sent to five other committees for the purpose of the pre-study. Also, on the financial front, the usual supply bills were studied by the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance and passed by the Senate in March.

### Committees

In addition to the three pre-studies of Commons' bills, the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages issued its third report, entitled: *CBC/Radio-Canada's Language Obligations, Communities Want to See Themselves and Be Heard Coast to Coast!*. The committee took an in-depth look at the key role this federal institution plays in the advancement of Canada's linguistic duality and



the development of official-language minority communities. In making its recommendations, the Senate Committee first considered the conditions of licence issued to the Corporation by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission. It then highlighted the importance for the Corporation to act in the spirit of the Official Languages Act.

In February, the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament presented three reports amending the Rules of the Senate. Amongst other things, the definition of critic and sponsor was added to the Rules and a limit on how many times senators can adjourn an item of non-government business in their name for the balance of their time was introduced.

The Standing Committee on Conflict of Interest for Senators presented a report amending the Conflict of the Interest Code for Senators. The Committee exercises general and constant oversight over the conflict of interest regime applicable to Senators and, as part of this mandate, regularly assesses and reviews the Code. The Committee's report, presented in March and adopted on April 1, amends those sections dealing with the inquiry process under the Code.

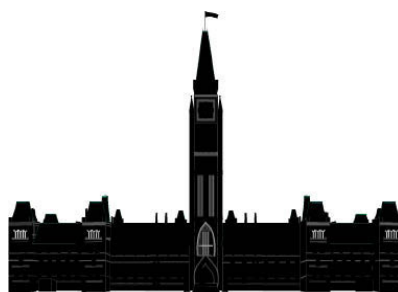
All committee reports and can be accessed at <http://www.parl.gc.ca/SenCommitteeBusiness/default.spx?parl=41&ses=2&Language=E>

### Speaker's Ruling

On March 4, a point of order was raised respecting the acceptability of a motion proposing that the Senate call upon the members of the

House of Commons to invite the Auditor General to conduct a comprehensive audit of their expenses, along the lines of the audit currently underway in the Senate. The objection was that the motion is an instruction to the House of Commons and would not respect the autonomy of the houses in a bicameral Parliament. In his ruling, the Speaker allowed for the debate to continue on the basis that although the language "call upon" might be considered strong or ambiguous, it is up to the Senate as a whole to decide if debate should proceed on the matter.

**Vanessa-Moss Norbury**  
Procedural Clerk



## House of Commons

The Second Session of the Forty-First Parliament resumed on January 27, 2014. The information below covers the period from February 1 to April 30, 2014.

### Legislation

Bill C-23, *An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts*, introduced on February 4, 2014, was the subject of provisions dealing with voter identification requirements, banning Elections Canada from encouraging Canadians to vote and proposing

changes to spending limits on fundraising. After being time allocated, the Bill was read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs on February 10, 2014. On February 10, 2014, an opposition motion, which sought to instruct the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs as to the manner in which it should consider and report the Bill, was defeated.

An unprecedented situation arose in February with respect to private Member's Bill C-461, *An Act to amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act (disclosure of information)* sponsored by **Brent Rathgeber** (Edmonton—St. Albert). The Bill had been reported with amendments by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics in the last session and reinstated at report stage in the current session. After all recorded divisions had taken place on report stage motions, Mr. Rathgeber informed the Chair that he did not wish either to proceed further with the Bill or to move the motion to concur in the Bill at report stage. Pursuant to Standing Order 94, which allows the Speaker to make all arrangements necessary to ensure the orderly conduct of Private Members' Business, the Speaker ruled that the order for concurrence at report stage be discharged and that the Bill be dropped from the *Order Paper*.

### Financial Procedures

On March 24, 2014, when the House was considering Bill C-29, *An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31*,

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2015, **Tony Clement** (President of the Treasury Board) announced that, from now on, the form of supply bills would change to present organizations in alphabetical order, as in the 2014-15 Main Estimates, which had led to a change in vote numbering. This change, he said, resulted from comments provided by the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates during its review of estimates and supplies. Mr. Clement stated that the rights and privileges of Members to criticize any item in the estimates when considered in committee would not be curtailed or restricted.

### Points of Order, Questions of Privilege and Procedure

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#### *Points of Order*

In a challenge to Bill C-23, *An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts*, **Nathan Cullen** (Skeena—Bulkley Valley) rose on a point of order on February 6, 2014, claiming that a serious discrepancy between the French and English versions of the Bill meant that the Bill was not in the correct form. **Peter Van Loan** (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) insisted that the discrepancy in question was with the summary of the Bill only and that the summary was not, in fact, part of the Bill. In his ruling, delivered on February 10, 2014, the Speaker noted that the error in question had been caught and corrected in the version of the Bill of which the House was officially seized, and concluded that the matter had accordingly been resolved.

On March 6, 2014, Mr. Cullen rose on a point of order to object to the moving of a time

allocation motion pursuant to Standing Order 78(3)(a) on the ground that the Government had not first consulted with the opposition parties to seek agreement under the provisions of sections (1) and (2) of the Standing Order. The Deputy Speaker ruled that the simple assertion that agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) was all that was required by the Chair, which would not inquire into the nature of the consultation.

**Wayne Easter** (Malpeque) rose on a point of order on April 9, 2014, in connection with Bill C 483, *An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (escorted temporary absence)*. Mr. Easter contended that amendments adopted in committee had in effect altered the scope of the Bill. A similar point of order was raised by Mr. Rathgeber on April 10, 2014, with regard to Bill C-30, *An Act to amend the Canada Grain Act and the Canada Transportation Act and to provide for other measures*. At the time of writing, the Speaker's rulings are pending.

#### *Questions of Privilege*

In relation to Bill C-23, on February 6, 2014, **Pierre-Luc Dusseault** (Sherbrooke) claimed that there was little or no interpretation provided at a technical briefing organized by the Government on the Bill had been inadequate or non-existent, thereby preventing francophone Members of Parliament from participating fully in subsequent debate on the Bill. The Speaker ruled, on March 3, 2014, that the question before the Chair was simple: does attending a departmental briefing that was delivered without full interpretation obstruct Members

in the discharge of their responsibilities in direct relation to proceedings in Parliament? The Speaker noted that a Member who is preparing to participate in the proceedings of the House, whether through a technical briefing or some other means, is not participating in the proceedings themselves. He concluded that Mr. Dusseault had not been obstructed in the discharge of his responsibilities in such a way as to support a finding of a *prima facie* case of privilege.

On February 25, Mr. Cullen claimed that **Brad Butt** (Mississauga—Streetsville) had misled the House when he stated on February 6, 2014, that he personally witnessed the inappropriate use of voter identification cards. Notwithstanding an admission and apology by Mr. Butt, the Speaker, on March 3, 2014, noting that "the House continues to be seized of completely contradictory statements," concluded that the matter merited further consideration and that it constituted a *prima facie* case of privilege, and he invited the House Leader of the Official Opposition to move the appropriate motion. After debate, the motion to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs was defeated. In a related question of privilege raised on April 10, 2014 by **Peter Julian** (Burnaby—New Westminster), it was alleged that **Pierre Poilievre** (Minister of State (Democratic Reform) had made false claims about the misuse of voter identification cards and that he had subsequently contradicted himself. In his ruling, delivered on April 30, 2014, the Speaker emphasized the limits on what

the Chair is authorized to do with respect to allegations such as those adduced in this question of privilege. It was, he said, clear to him that there was no compelling evidence that deliberate misrepresentations had been made to the House and that the question of privilege was, in effect, a dispute as to facts. Accordingly, he declined to find a *prima facie* case of privilege.

### Committees

On February 5, 2014, the House adopted, private Member's Motion M-431, moved by **Brad Trost** (Saskatoon—Humboldt), asking the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to consider the election of committee chairs by means of a preferential ballot system by all the Members of the House of Commons, at the beginning of each session and prior to the establishment of the membership of the Standing Committees. A report is expected later this year.

On March 5, 2014, the House concurred in the Third Report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs on the Board of Internal Economy (BOIE). While finding no reason to alter the structure, membership and general functioning of BOIE, the Report made a number of substantive recommendations, among these that the Members' Expenditures Report be enhanced by providing additional information. The Committee noted that the level of detail of information disclosed in the Members' Expenditures Report has continuously increased in recent years and encouraged the Board to take any further steps that would increase public

disclosure, while remaining mindful of privacy implications and administrative constraints. The Committee supported BOIE's considering putting into place proactive disclosure for Members in the same fashion as Ministers are currently doing for travel and hospitality. The Report also recommended that the Auditor General be invited by BOIE to conduct audits with greater frequency, and that BOIE, in consultation with the Auditor General, develop publicly-available guidelines with respect to audits of House of Commons' spending.

On March 27, 2014, pursuant to Standing Order 56.1(1), **K. Kellie Leitch** (Minister of Labour), seconded by **Tom Lukiwski** (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre) moved "That the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be instructed to consider the matter of accusations of the Official Opposition's improper use of House of Commons resources for partisan purposes; and that the Leader of the Opposition be ordered to appear as a witness at a televised meeting of the Committee to be held no later than May 16, 2014." The question was put on the motion and, fewer than 25 Members having risen to object, the motion was adopted.

### Other Matters

#### *Members*

On February 4, 2014, a two-volume work titled *The Selected Decisions of Speaker Peter Milliken* was tabled in the House of Commons. Former Speaker **Peter Milliken** was present in the gallery of the House on the occasion of this tabling.

On February 5, 2014, the Speaker advised the House

that he had that day received a letter from the Chief Electoral Officer informing him that **James Bezan** (Selkirk—Interlake) had provided a corrected return as required by the *Canada Elections Act*. He further advised that he was making copies of the letter available to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which was studying a related question of privilege.

On February 26, 2014, the Acting Speaker (**Bruce Stanton**) informed the House that **Dominic LeBlanc** (Beauséjour) had been appointed a member of the BOIE to replace **Judy Foote** (Random—Burin—St. George's). On March 12, 2014, **Olivia Chow** (Trinity—Spadina) resigned as a Member of Parliament. **Jim Karygiannis** (Scarborough—Agincourt) resigned as a Member of Parliament on April 1, 2014.

On April 10, 2014, when news was received of the passing away earlier that day of **Jim Flaherty** (Whitby—Oshawa), there were brief consultations among the parties, following which, at 2:28 p.m., the House adjourned for the day. The following day, the House proceeded with tributes to Mr. Flaherty, observed a moment of silence, and transacted some urgent business. The House adjourned for the day at 10:38 a.m. Mr. Flaherty had resigned as Minister of Finance on March 19. He was replaced by **Joe Oliver**, previously Minister of Natural Resources.

On April 29, 2014, further to consultations among the parties, representatives of the various parties made statements in tribute to the late **Herb Gray** and observed a moment of silence in his memory.



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*Statements, Resolutions, Special Debates*

On February 5, 2014, the House held an emergency debate on grain transportation, and take-note debates were held on February 12 on the situation in the Central African Republic, on February 26 on the evolving situation in Ukraine, and on April 29, on the situation in the Republic of South Sudan.

The House adopted unanimously several resolutions in February, March and April. On February 28, 2014, the House adopted a resolution on violence in Venezuela. On March 3, 2014, the House adopted a resolution condemning Russia's military intervention in Ukraine. On March 26, 2014, the House again condemned Russia's intervention and denounced Russia's sanctions against the Speaker and Members of the House of Commons, a member of the Senate, public servants and the President of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. The Speaker was instructed to convey the resolution to the Ambassador of the Russian Federation and a message was sent to the Senate. On March 26, 2014, the House resolved to call for an independent international inquiry into allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sri Lanka. Finally, on April 7, 2014, the House adopted a resolution calling for commemoration of the Rwandan genocide on its 20th anniversary and reflection upon the lessons learned from it.

His Highness the **Aga Khan** addressed Members of the Senate and of the House of Commons in the Chamber of the House of Commons on February 27, 2014.

**Gary Sokolyk**  
Table Research Branch



**ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE**

Q U É B E C

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**Dissolution of the Assembly, general election and composition of the Assembly**

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On 5 March 2014, at the request of Premier **Pauline Marois**, the Lieutenant-Governor dissolved the National Assembly, calling the next Assembly to meet on May 6 2014. The call for an election ended the 40th Legislature. At its dissolution, the Assembly was composed as follows: Parti Québécois, 54 Members; Québec Liberal Party, 49 Members; Coalition Avenir Québec, 18 Members; four independent Members (two under the banner of Québec Solidaire and two without any affiliation).

The provisional results indicate that the new composition of the Assembly following the general election of April 7 is the following: Québec Liberal Party, 70 Members; Parti Québécois, 30 Members; Coalition Avenir Québec, 22 Members; three independent Members elected under the banner of Québec Solidaire.

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**Debates on reports from committees, budget speech and passage of a bill**

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Between the adjournment of the parliamentary proceedings before the holiday season and the dissolution of the Assembly on March 5, the National Assembly sat from February 11 to 20. It should be noted that, during this period, before being able to

carry out any other business, the Assembly was required to hold six limited debates on standing committee reports containing recommendations.

On February 20, the last sitting of the 40th Legislature, the Minister of Finance and the Economy, Nicolas Marceau, delivered his budget speech. During the same sitting, the Assembly unanimously passed Bill 28, *An Act to establish the new Code of Civil Procedure*. This bill establishes the new Code of Civil Procedure, whose main objectives are to ensure the accessibility, quality and promptness of civil justice, the fair, simple, proportionate and economical application of procedural rules, the exercise of the parties' rights in a spirit of co-operation and balance, and respect for those involved in the administration of justice.

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**Standing committees**

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The Committee on Public Administration (CPA) carried out two orders during the first quarter of 2014. First, it heard the Auditor General on his annual management report and his financial commitments for 2012-2013. The Standing Orders of the National Assembly provide that this order must be carried out every year. Second, following the release of the Auditor General's report in autumn 2013, the CPA heard the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal on its administrative management and its governance. No report was published following these hearings.

Following a motion carried unanimously by the National Assembly, the Committee on Labour and the Economy (CLE) held special consultations and public hearings on the

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inappropriate use of public funds by Tourisme Montréal. The CLE tabled a report containing two recommendations concerning the training and terms of office of the members of the boards of directors of regional tourist associations.

The Committee on Institutions (CI) held 13 days of hearings during which it heard 69 groups and individuals who had submitted a brief within the framework of the general consultation on Bill 60, *Charter affirming the values of State secularism and religious neutrality and of equality between women and*

*men, and providing a framework for accommodation requests.* The CI also concluded the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 28, *An Act to establish the new Code of Civil Procedure*, which had begun on October 8, 2013. In all, the Committee held 30 sittings, for a total of 106 hours.

The Committee on Health and Social Services completed the special consultations and public hearings within the framework of its order of initiative on the living conditions of adults staying in residential and long-term care centres. In this regard, 36 persons and groups came

forward to speak their views and 160 respondents participated in the on-line consultation questionnaire.

Before the general election was called, the Committee on Transportation and the Environment began special consultations and public hearings on Bill 37, *An Act to prohibit certain shale natural gas exploration and production activities*, during which 13 groups were heard.

**Manon Voyer and Cédric Drouin**  
Parliamentary Proceedings  
Directorate

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