

BCTI Fall Gazette

A Parliamentary Education Newsletter for BC Teachers

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Read Time: 10 minutes

CHANGES IN THE HOUSE: NEW PARTY & MEMBER UPDATES

Party standings have been shifting at the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. In British Columbia's system of parliamentary democracy, there are multiple parties that comprise the Legislative Assembly's 87 seats. In the 2020 provincial election, Members from three parties were elected to represent constituents: the B.C. NDP, the B.C. Liberal Party (now B.C. United), and the B.C. Green Party. In August 2022, after removal from the B.C. Liberal Caucus, John Rustad, MLA for Nechako Lakes, became an **Independent Member** in the House. MLA Rustad joined the Conservative Party of B.C. in February 2023, becoming the party's only elected MLA. He was later acclaimed party leader.

In September 2023, Bruce Banman, MLA for Abbotsford South, originally elected in 2020 as a B.C. Liberal, joined the Conservative Party of B.C. A recognized political party in B.C. is represented in the Legislative Assembly by two or more Members. This resulted in the formation of a new caucus, known as the Fourth Party. MLA Rustad is now the **Leader of the Fourth Party**, and MLA Banman is now the Fourth Party **House Leader**.

Most recently, Adam Walker, MLA for Parksville-Qualicum, was removed from the B.C. NDP Caucus in September 2023. He now sits as the only **Independent Member** in the Legislative Assembly.

Emma Curtis, Parliamentary Education Officer

Parliamentary Trivia

Q: What changes to voting have been made under the modernized *Election Act (R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 106)* which will take effect in the 2024 provincial general election?

Visit [Elections BC](https://www.electionsbc.ca) to find the answer!

The first correct answer will win a prize from the Parliamentary Gift Shop! Email PEO@leg.bc.ca to submit. Good luck!

Party	Number of Members
BC NDP	56
BC United	26
BC Green Party	2
Conservative Party of British Columbia	2
Independent	1
Total	87



Key Terms for Educators

House Leader: The Member of a recognized party who is responsible for managing the party's business in the Legislative Assembly.

Independent Member: A Member of the Legislative Assembly who does not belong to a recognized political party.

Leader of the Fourth Party: The leader of the third opposition party in the Legislative Assembly.

Opposition Party: A political party that is not the governing party.

Party Standing: The breakdown of party membership in the Legislative Assembly.

FROM 'GAVEL TO NO GAVEL'?

It has often been said that [Hansard Services](#) provides gavel to gavel coverage of the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, yet we no longer see the Speaker using a gavel in the Chamber. It turns out that this was not always the case and that a gavel was once a regular sight on the desk of the Speaker.

Our research started with the discovery of a gavel at the Vancouver Maritime Museum by PEO staff. The museum was in possession of a gavel that was presented to the Legislative Assembly for the opening of the new Parliament Buildings on February 10, 1898. Following that day's [Speech from the Throne](#), the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly read a letter from Charles McCain to the Members and the assembled guests. The letter explained that the gavel was made of teak and copper, which Mr. McCain had salvaged from the S.S. Beaver, a [Hudson's Bay Company](#) ship and the first steamer in the Pacific Northwest. The *British Colonist* described it as "an ornate gavel" that was "quite heavy on account of its metal castings and would make a formidable weapon in the hands of an angry man."

In the years following opening day, the gavel can be seen in the Chamber in many archival photos. Newspaper articles covering proceedings of the Legislative Assembly mention the gavel on many occasions, such as on the final day of the session in 1960: "The whack of the Speaker's gavel...will call members of the 25th Legislature to order as they take their seats." More excitingly, on February 23, 1961, the *British Colonist* described the Speaker banging his "gavel time and time again...to restore order in the House."

We do not know exactly when the gavel fell out of use and how this particular gavel ended up at the Maritime Museum in Vancouver. I suspect that the gradual introduction of technology to the Chamber, such as the chime system, microphones and speakers, made the use of a gavel increasingly unnecessary.

Another reason for its demise may come from an event covered in the *Daily Colonist* on June 13, 1975. It was reported that a gavel was broken by the Deputy Speaker in an attempt to restore order. "The honourable leader of the Opposition caused me to break my gavel," the Deputy Speaker said. A Member of the opposition promised "to take up a collection and get you a new gavel."

Today, a gavel can still be found in the Chamber, but it is quietly tucked away behind wooden columns to the side of the Speaker's Chair.

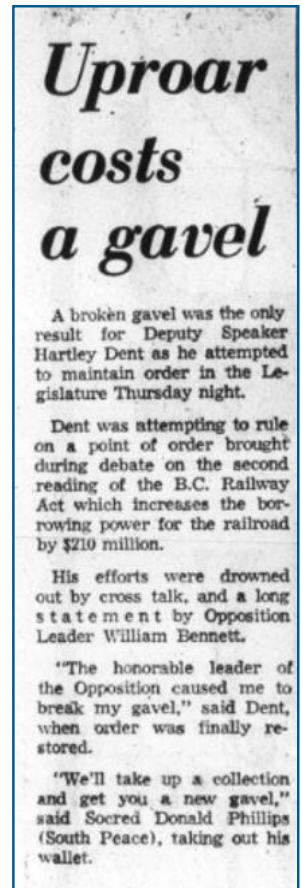
David Nicholls, Parliamentary Program Officer



A gavel seen on the desk of Speaker Dowding who served from 1972 to 1975.



The gavel that was presented on opening day, February 10, 1898.



Daily Colonist, June 13, 1975



British Colonist, March 18, 1960

SUMMER AT THE PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS: THANK YOU TO OUR VISITORS!

It was another busy summer season for the Parliamentary Tour Program. In the past four months, over 118,000 British Columbians and visitors from around the world passed through the doors of the Parliament Buildings. 45,000 of those visitors joined us for a free guided tour and another 3,600 joined us for a theatrical performance on the Legislative Precinct. Although we are not quite back to pre-pandemic visitor numbers, it was certainly busy. Nearly every day there was a lineup of eager visitors waiting outside.

Here is what the visitors had to say about their experiences:

"Our Tour Guide was excellent. She was very knowledgeable, welcoming and a great speaker. Well done!"

"I want to emphasize what a fantastic job both of the security personnel at the wheelchair entrance did. Wow, what wonderful humans. They were incredibly welcoming and polite. Never in my life have I felt so well taken care of by a public employee anywhere in the world."

We are back to our regular business hours providing free guided tours and self-guided tours on weekdays from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. With the House having resumed sitting on October 3, we expect an increase in school tour bookings, and as always, for those who are unable to visit us in person, we have many virtual opportunities available as well.



Tour Guides, 2023

Adriana Ayers, Parliamentary Tour Officer

HOLIDAY PROGRAMMING: CHRISTMAS LIGHTS ACROSS CANADA

Please join us for festive caroling and musical performances to celebrate the lighting of the provincial Christmas tree.

The event begins on the Front Driveway at 6:00 p.m. at the Parliament Buildings.

No advance registration required!



Parliamentary Trivia

Q: Who was the first Speaker in the province of B.C.?


The first correct answer will win a prize from the Parliamentary Gift Shop! Email PEO@leg.bc.ca to submit. Good luck!


**Christmas Lights
Across Canada**

**DECEMBER 7
6:00 pm**

The Honourable Raj Chouhan, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, invites you to celebrate the lighting of the provincial Christmas tree and Parliament Buildings.

Featuring performances by local bands and choirs with seasonal treats.

 We acknowledge and respect the *lalkwungen-speaking peoples, known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, on whose traditional territories the Legislative Assembly stands.*



YOUTH VOICES

The Next Step for Democracy: Involving the Youth of Today for Tomorrow

It is difficult for youth to initiate change. Enacting change requires a step out of one's comfort zone – a step that increases vulnerability and requires one to act as a trailblazer on a new path. The confidence to embrace the uncertainty in taking a step for change is intimidating. However, extrinsic support can encourage youth to take the next step and raise leaders into the world.

As a student, I was fortunate to have a teacher who valued her young students like adults. One of the most significant ways this respect raised our confidence was through learning about our [democracy](#), which was something that was seemingly reserved for adults but was presented to us as something that we can be a part of now and in the future. Growing up, I remember seeing candidate signs for political parties when driving to school. Once I reached grade seven, those signs gave a distinct impression they were no longer merely printed names on cardboard, distinguished only by a bold colour associated with beliefs, but real people who could make a difference in how my life is lived. My perception of politics around me shifted when my teacher, Mrs. Cumberland, educated us on democracy after attending the [B.C. Teachers Institute on Parliamentary Democracy](#) (BCTI). She invited each MP in our riding to speak to our class on the views of their party. We then researched the parties further and finally participated in a student vote. These experiences prepared us to take the step into our role in democracy and be ready to vote when we turned 18.

As I got older, I continued to feel the importance of democracy, but my perspective began to develop. The leadership skills I gained from Mrs. Cumberland allowed me to step out of my comfort zone and make a difference in my own community on issues that I cared about, just like the adult leaders around me. Now I have begun to develop a [Youth Council](#) with the city of Penticton so that youth can truly be involved in their community and make a difference on issues that matter to them.

Student perspectives are shaped from a very young age. The continuous support of educators and mentors makes a huge difference in the steps a student takes- out of their comfort zone and into making a difference in issues they are passionate about. Even as the world changes and Canadian leaders change and students develop into individuals, steps taken now will drive steps taken in the future. With the support of teachers, we can involve youth for the future now.

Sophie Robinson, Grade 12, Penticton

ANNOUNCEMENT

DEMOCRACY & ME Art Contest



Calling All Artists!

The *Democracy & Me Art Contest* launched on November 6, and is open to all children and youth in British Columbia. Co-sponsored by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia and the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, the contest encourages [K-12 students](#) to create visual artwork that explores the importance of democracy and community.

- [Win a trip to Victoria](#)
- [Art is displayed in the B.C. Parliament Buildings](#)
- [Artwork deadline: January 31, 2024](#)

We welcome all submissions. Scan the QR code for more details.

Good luck!



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British Columbia.

Co-sponsored by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia and the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, the contest encourages K-12 students to create visual artwork that explores the importance of community and democracy.

Contest winners will receive a trip to Victoria and their work will be displayed in the Parliament Buildings.

Artwork must be submitted by January 31, 2024. Scan the QR code for contest details. Remember to get creative!



Deadline to apply
January 31, 2024



Parliamentary Education
Office
250-356-0823
artcontest@leg.bc.ca



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Lekwungen-speaking peoples, known
today as the Songhees and Esquimalt
Nations, on whose traditional territories
the Legislative Assembly stands.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

leg.bc.ca
artcontest@leg.bc.ca

THE PARLIAMENT PAST & PRESENT TRAVELLING PLAY WOWS CROWDS

This summer, over 3,600 enthusiastic audience members of all ages watched the B.C. Heritage Award-winning Parliament Past & Present Travelling Plays. These theatrical experiences whisked visitors around the buildings and back in time. For the first time this year, the Parliamentary Education Office also offered a combined Play and Tour program for schools, which was very popular. One teacher raved, “The play was brilliantly written so that it's interactive, informative and entertaining all in one.” Another said, “I was really blown away. I'm so glad 2023 has this in it.” Students also expressed their appreciation, saying it made them feel “welcome to be in the Parliament Building,” and “excited and interested to learn more about government.” Some students even announced that after the show, they wanted to work at the Legislative Assembly some day! If you are interested in the Play and Tour, the offering will return next year in May and June.



Parliamentary Players, 2023

Nicholas Guerreiro, Player Program Coordinator

NEW

TAKE A VIRTUAL TOUR: DISPONIBLE EN FRANÇAIS



WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE VIRTUAL TOUR IS NOW AVAILABLE IN FRENCH!

As you make your way from the front lawns to the Legislative Library on your virtual tour, you can click on the tags to learn more about the items on display!

[Visite virtuelle \(français\)](#)



SIGNIFICANT DATES



2019 - The Legislative Assembly of B.C. unanimously adopted the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (S.B.C. 2019, c. 44).



1970 - Hansard Services was first introduced at the Legislative Assembly of B.C. on January 22.

THANKS FOR ASKING: CALL OUT FOR STUDENT QUESTIONS!

PEO is seeking student input for our next BCTI Gazette publication. We are calling for students to submit interesting trivia questions with the chance of being featured in the next issue! Our office will credit the school, grade, and class.

Please email us at PEO@leg.bc.ca by January 12, 2024, with your question!

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wrote this newsletter in the Parliament Buildings, which are located on the traditional territories of the Lekwungen-speaking peoples. Now known as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, these Coast Salish peoples have a rich culture and history dating back thousands of years.

We are thankful to live and work here.

This newsletter is developed by the Parliamentary Education Office at the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. If you have questions, please connect with us!



[Educational Programs & Workshops](#)



PEO@leg.bc.ca



250-387-8669

