

SELF-DIRECTED GUIDE BOOK ENGLISH



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA



Welcome to the Parliament Buildings, home to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia where elected representatives – called Members of the Legislative Assembly or MLAs – meet to shape the future of the province by debating and passing the laws that govern British Columbia.

The Parliament Buildings and surrounding areas are located on the traditional territories of the Lekwungen-speaking (pronounced Le-KWUNG-en) peoples. Now known as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, these Coast Salish people have a rich culture and history dating back thousands of years.

We hope that you will enjoy your visit.

Lower Floor

A visitor pass is required to access this floor.
Please ask for assistance.

- Parliamentary Dining Room
(call 250.387.3959 for reservations)
- Accessible entrance/exit

Main Floor

- Tour Desk
- Security Reception
- Parliamentary Gift Shop
- Public washrooms
- Water fountain

Second Floor

- Accessible and gender-neutral washroom with change table

Third Floor

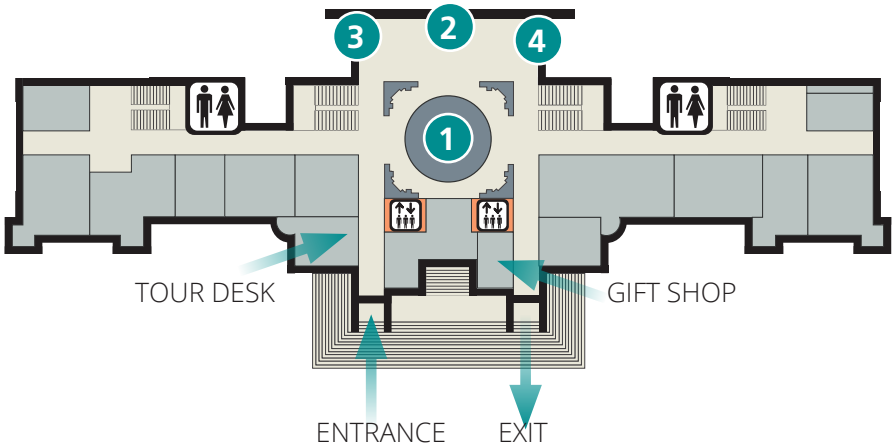
This floor is only open when the Legislative Assembly is meeting.

- Public Gallery

Please ask a member of our staff if you have any questions or require assistance.

- Protective Services staff are trained in first aid.
- A lost and found is located at Security Reception.
- Wheelchairs are available for use by visitors.

MAIN FLOOR



1 The Lower Rotunda

From the Lower Rotunda, the interior of the main dome stretches to a height of 30.5 metres (100 feet). On top of the dome is a two-metre tall statue of Captain George Vancouver. The statue is made of beaten copper and plated with 14 carat gold.

In the centre of the room is an original hand-laid Italian mosaic. Placed on the mosaic is *Shxwtitostel* (pronounced: Schwe-tea-tos-tel), a traditional inland river canoe, carved by the Honourable Steven Point, 28th Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, and Chief Tony Hunt, Hereditary Chief of the KwaGulth and master carver. *Shxwtitostel* means “a safe place to cross the river” in Halq’eméylem and represents the idea of a bridge between peoples.





2 Hall of Honour

The Hall of Honour is used throughout the year to host events, receptions and government announcements. The room also regularly features special exhibits and displays.



3 Diamond Jubilee Window

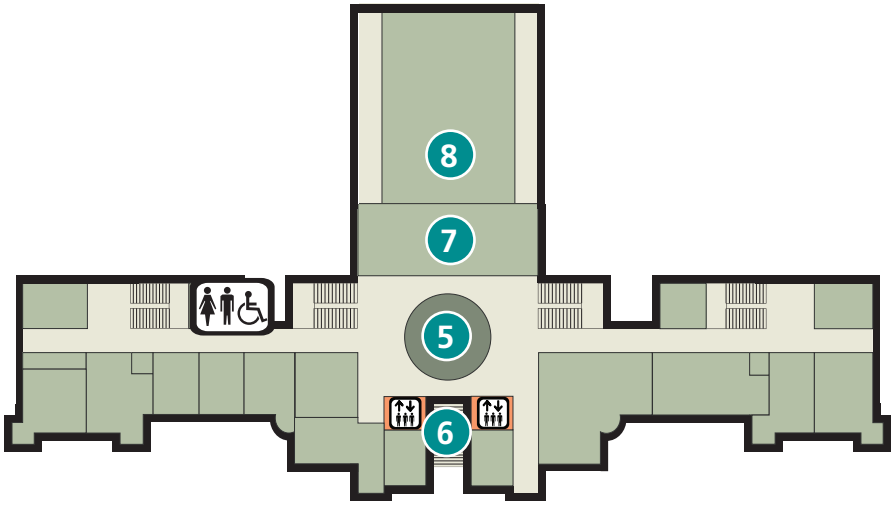
This window was commissioned for the 60th year of the reign of Queen Victoria in 1897. It was manufactured by Powell Brothers Ltd. of Leeds, U.K., who also made many of the other windows in the stairwells and public areas of the Parliament Buildings.



4 Golden Jubilee Window

This window was made to commemorate the 50th year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II in 2002. It was crafted by two local artisans, Edward Schaefer and Thomas Mercer, and depicts a number of provincial symbols, including the provincial bird (the Steller's Jay), the provincial fish (the Pacific salmon), and the provincial gemstone (jade).

SECOND FLOOR



5 The Memorial Rotunda

The Memorial Rotunda is dedicated to British Columbians who gave their lives for Canada. The flags of B.C. and Canada, as well as the White Ensign and the King's Colour are displayed overhead.

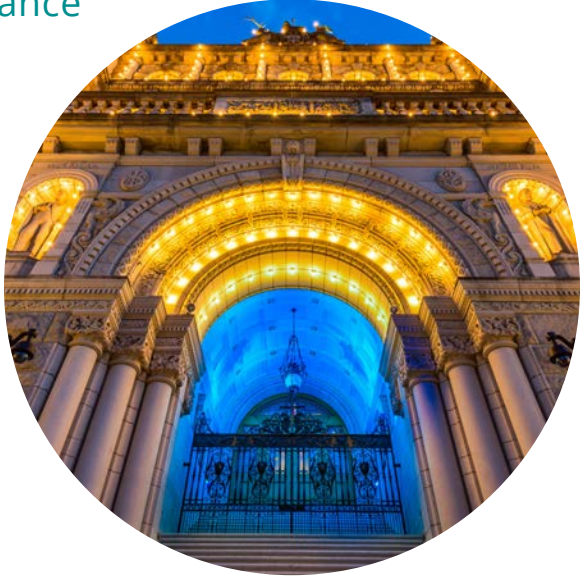
The walls are lined with Tennessee marble and decorated with 23 carat gold leaf. The terrazzo floor is constructed from pieces of marble and granite from Italy.

The ceiling features paintings that represent industries of historical significance in British Columbia: agriculture, fishing, forestry, and mining. Painted by George Southwell in 1935, they were not installed until 1952.



6 Ceremonial Entrance

The Ceremonial Entrance is used each year by the Lieutenant Governor, the representative of the Monarch in British Columbia, when they arrive to open a new session of parliament. It is also used for special occasions, such as in 1998, when Chief Joseph Gosnell came to address the Legislative Assembly during debate on the *Nisga'a Final Agreement Act*.

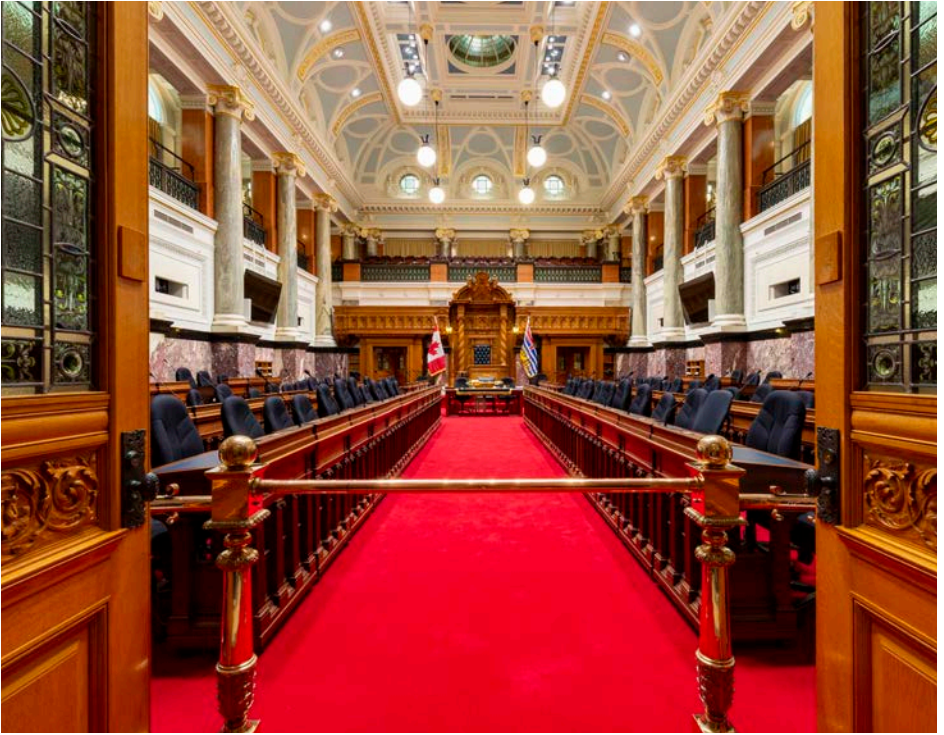


7 Members' Lobby

The "golden gates" of lacquered brass lead to the Members' Lobby and to the entrance of the Legislative Chamber. The plaques along the walls display the names of all the MLAs who have served since B.C. became a province of Canada in 1871.



8 Legislative Chamber



The Legislative Assembly of British Columbia is composed of 93 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), who are elected from 93 electoral districts around the province. Elections are scheduled for the third Saturday in October, every four years.

MLAs work on behalf of British Columbians by studying, debating, and voting on proposed legislation. They scrutinize and approve the government's annual spending proposals and ask questions about government plans and activities. MLAs also serve as an important link between the public and the government by representing the views of their constituents, by raising local issues of concern, and by helping people in their district to access government programs and services.

Visitors are invited to observe proceedings from the Public Gallery whenever the Legislative Assembly is meeting. For those who cannot make it in person, they can watch online, on television, or read the full verbatim transcripts.



Mace

The mace serves as a symbol of the authority of the Legislative Assembly and must be present on the Clerks' Table for the Assembly to conduct its business. The current mace, which is the third in the history of the province, has been in use since 1954 and is made of B.C. silver and plated with 24 carat gold.

Members' Desks

The Chamber is divided into rows of desks on either side of the floor. Traditionally, the government sits to the Speaker's right and the opposition parties sit to the Speaker's left. Governments are formed by the political party that has the support of the majority of the MLAs. The leader of that party is invited to serve as Premier and is the head of the provincial government.

Talking Stick

The Talking Stick was carved by James Delorme of the Songhees Nation and was presented to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly at a special blessing ceremony in 2016. Its presence in the Chamber serves as a reminder of the need for respectful dialogue in the ongoing process of reconciliation.



Speaker's Chair

The Speaker is an MLA elected by the other MLAs to preside over debates. The Speaker is neutral and is responsible for making sure that all MLAs, no matter what party they belong to, are treated fairly and impartially.

HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY

The Parliament Buildings and surrounding areas are located on the traditional territories of the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, who have lived in this area for thousands of years. In 2007, an agreement was reached between the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations and the Canadian and B.C. governments to settle the land claims related to this property.

The Birdcages

This property has served as a site of government since 1859, when construction started on the Colonial Administration Buildings for the British Colony of Vancouver Island. They are better known as “the Birdcages”, a name given to them due to their unique architectural style.

The six Birdcage buildings continued to be used after B.C. joined Canada in 1871, but quickly became too small for the growing province. In 1892, an architectural contest was held to select a design for new Parliament Buildings. Of the 65 sets of drawings submitted, those of 25-year-old architect, Francis Mawson Rattenbury, were selected.

Most of the original buildings were demolished after the completion of the new Parliament Buildings. The only remaining building was moved to the back of the property and used in a variety of capacities, including as a mineral museum, until it burned down in 1957.



Image A-00934 courtesy of the BC Archives.

The Parliament Buildings

The Parliament Buildings were the first major commission for Francis Rattenbury, who had apprenticed with his uncle’s architectural firm in England before moving to Vancouver in 1892. He went on to design several more landmark structures in British Columbia, including the Empress Hotel.

Construction of the Parliament Buildings began in 1893 and was completed by the end of 1897. They were officially opened on February 10, 1898. Various additions were completed between 1913 and 1920. The total cost of construction came to just over \$2 million.

By the early 1970s, the Parliament Buildings had deteriorated noticeably and needed repair. The government of the day initiated a decade-long renovation project to restore the Parliament Buildings to their former glory and make them better suited to the needs of the Legislative Assembly and the MLAs.



Image M00098 courtesy of the City of Victoria Archives



Image A-02774 courtesy of the BC Archives

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Please visit the Legislative Assembly's website to:

Learn more about the role of the MLAs.

Find biographical and contact information for your MLA.

Watch videos or read transcripts of debate.

See what bills have been introduced in the Legislative Assembly.

View the Parliamentary Calendar.

leg.bc.ca

**Please visit the Parliamentary Gift Shop
as you exit the building.**