



Orders of the Day

The Publication of the Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia

Volume 30, Number 3

April 2024

Calling all retiring MLAs

The AFMLABC & OOTD need you to sign up

by Brian Kieran
Editor, *Orders of the Day*

AFMLABC president Dave Hayer will be in the Precinct this month to invite retiring MLAs to join the association and subscribe to this monthly newsletter, *Orders of the Day*.

With the 2024 provincial election just months away, some MLAs will have decided to hang up their political spurs. You have served long and well and richly deserve to kick up and let a new wave of politicians embrace the challenges and rewards of public service.

The thing is, once an MLA, always an MLA. For years to come, folks will stop you on the street and ask your help. Most of you will still try to be there for them. Our members tell us that in retirement, they come to better appreciate that good governance trumps partisan divides. Old foes become friends. Issues that seemed black and white become more nuanced. Like those who have gone before you, many of you will want to stay connected. That's where the AFMLABC comes in.

For information about Dave's visit to the Legislature, turn to his report on Page 3. As well, I want to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of your active participation in the association and *Orders of the Day*. Together, they serve as a bridge that connects us. In a perfect world, they reflect our members' collective wisdom, experiences, and insights. It is a platform where your voices can be heard, your stories can be shared, and your contributions can continue to make a significant impact on our community.

There are compelling reasons why engaging with and participating in our association and newsletter are so important:

Former MLAs are building community. Sharing successes, challenges, and personal journeys fosters a sense of belonging and community. It allows us to connect on a deeper level and strengthens the bonds that hold our association together. I'm reminded that members often observe that they have more in common in retirement than they realized when they were two sword-lengths apart in government.

It is an opportunity to amplify your achievements. Your accomplishments, whether personal or professional, deserve recognition. The AFMLABC and OOTD provide a platform to highlight your achievements, inspire others, and showcase the remarkable talent within our association.

And there are many networking opportunities. Engaging with fellow members can lead to meaningful connections and collaborations. You never know when a contribution might spark new relationships or open doors to exciting opportunities. A perfect example is the recent incorporation of the Strengthening Democracy Foundation society by former NDP premier Mike Harcourt and former Social Credit/Liberal cabinet minister Graham Bruce. With AFMLABC's blessing, these two retired politicians have joined forces to fight in common cause to strengthen democracy at a time when our democratic institutions and our civil society are under assault.

Turn to Page 16 for more information on joining AFMLABC.

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Her Honour

The Honourable Janet Austin, OBC
Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia

Orders of the Day is published regularly throughout the year, and is circulated to Association members, all MLAs now serving in Legislature, other interested individuals and organizations.

Material for the newsletter is always welcome and should be sent in written form to:

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Association Membership (former MLAs) dues are \$60.00 per year. Annual subscription rate is \$40.00 for those who are not Association Members.
Payment can be sent to the above address.

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The Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia is strictly non-partisan, regardless of members' past or present political affiliation. Founded in 1987, the Association was formally established by an Act of the British Columbia Legislature on February 10, 1998.

Orders of the Day was conceived, named and produced in its early stages by Bob McClelland, former MLA and cabinet minister, following his retirement from office. Hugh Curtis ably helmed this publication up through May 2014.

Thank You and Miscellany

Thank you to those of you who, when sending in your Member dues or subscription renewals, added a donation to help cover production costs.

Dues, Subscriptions and Donations

Ida Chong, Victoria
Arnie Hamilton, Victoria
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Andrew Weaver, Victoria

From the Editor's Desk

From my armchair observations of politics, it is harder and harder these days to shake off the dreadful notion that the resilience of many of the globe's democracies is going to hell in a handbasket.

In recent issues, I have covered this phenomenon from various perspectives. This past month, I discovered a definitive study of the state of democracy worldwide, and I want to share it with you. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Democracy Index 2023 – Pages 6 and 7 – is sobering.

The index report starts with this overview: "It was an inauspicious year for democracy with the average global score falling to its lowest level since the index began in 2006. Less than eight per cent of the world's population live in a full democracy, while almost 40 per cent live under authoritarian rule – a share that has been creeping up in recent years. The increasing incidence of violent conflict has badly dented the global democracy score and prevented a recovery after the pandemic years of 2020-22."

The EIU is the research and analysis division of the Economist Group, providing forecasting and advisory services through research and analysis, such as monthly country reports, five-year country economic forecasts, country risk service reports, and industry reports. The full report can be found here: www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2023/.

I got a note from OOTD editorial board member Bruce Strachan recently suggesting that we recruit a few Legislature Press Gallery members – current and retired – to share some of their best recollections. This issue begins with my old pal Robin Adair, who is still very active with his *Rumble Room* blog (Page 13). Thanks to Bruce for a great idea and to Robin for getting us started.

Finally, we bid farewell to George Garrett, a BC broadcasting legend and a familiar face in the corridors of power. George, who died in March at 89, was our guest speaker at the 2019 Government House dinner, and he was a hit. Take a bow George ... in 3, 2, 1 ...

The President's Report

In my role as the President of the Association of Former MLAs of BC (AFMLABC), I will be visiting Victoria this month to meet with caucus members of all political parties represented in the Legislature to promote the mandate of our association and to encourage potential new members to join our family.

This year, there will be a provincial election. As in past election cycles, some MLAs will decide to seek re-election, and some will retire. I invite all of those MLAs who will not be seeking re-election to join the AFMLABC. You might even consider stepping up to serve as a director. Our next AGM will be held after the provincial election so this will give you an opportunity to be an integral part of our group.

The AFMLABC was founded in 1987 and was formally framed in legislation in 1998. The act mandates these objectives: "To put the knowledge and experience of its members at the service of parliamentary democracy in British Columbia and elsewhere; to serve the public interest by providing non-partisan support for the parliamentary system of government in British Columbia; to foster a spirit of community among former MLAs; to foster good relations between current and former MLAs; and to protect and promote the interests of former MLAs."

Only former BC MLAs can join as AFMLABC members. Annual dues are a modest \$60. However, there is nothing preventing individual sitting MLAs from subscribing to Orders of the Day (OOTD) and contributing content to this newsletter.

Our editor, Brian Kieran, is constantly in search of engaged, home-grown contributors who can help him explore good governance issues in a non-partisan context. The whole idea of OOTD is to support the AFMLABC's mandate to "serve the public interest" by publishing content that promotes the resilience of our parliamentary system.

April is a month of renewal. It's the month we observe Earth Day. Christians worldwide celebrate Easter in this month of spring – the season of new life and new beginnings, a time to celebrate what has gone before and what will come. Similarly, in the Sikh and Hindu faith, we celebrate our beginnings, our future and togetherness during Vaisakhi.

This month, other occasions to reflect upon include: Yom HaShoeh, Holocaust Remembrance Day, Eid-ul-Fitr, Birth of Buddha, Earth Day, World Autism Awareness Day, World Book Day, International Worker's Memorial Day and Cancer Awareness Month.

As you reflect on the good things in your life, consider also the impact your actions have on the Earth. Try to find ways at a personal level and in business to positively impact the environment. Every action matters.

If you have any suggestions, advice, or just want to talk, please feel free to contact me at Dave.S.Hayer@gmail.com.

Dave Hayer,
President

TIME TO RENEW



2024 Member Dues and OOTD subscriptions are due!

Annual membership for former MLAs in the Association is **\$60** (unchanged from previous years) which includes the subscription for Orders of the Day (OOTD).

Fans of OOTD who are not former MLAs/Association members should send payment of **\$40** to remain on the subscription list.

Cheques should be made out to: The Association of Former MLAs of BC
and mailed to: P.O. Box 30024
Reynolds P.O.
Victoria, B.C. V8X 1J0

You can also make your payment electronically by going to our website www.formerbcmla.com.

- Go to the Payments page in the navigation bar and follow the prompts.
- Be sure to include your purpose for payment in the Comments section on the Payments form.

AFMLABC scholarship supports UNBC poli-sci student

(Note from Ken Jones, AFMLABC Membership Chair: Our two university endowment agreements with UVic and UNBC provide for four undergraduate scholarships, where possible, one male and one female recipient at each university, for students who have graduated from a BC secondary school. The funds support full-time undergraduate students who demonstrate an interest in future public service - elected or appointed - and who may need financial assistance to continue their studies. UNBC and UVIC created endowments with these funds. This year, they provided three scholarships from the invested earnings. UVic's endowment had grown to \$39,000 by March 2023, and UNBC's had grown to \$69,000.)



Dear Association of Former MLAs of BC:

I hope all is well. My name is Amrit Manak, and I was thrilled to learn that I have been selected as the recipient of the Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia Award for the 2023-2024 school year. I am writing this letter to express my heartfelt gratitude for your support.

I would like to take this opportunity to share a little more about myself and how much this award means to me. Originally from Toronto, Ontario, I am currently in my second year at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). Alongside my academic pursuits, I am proud to be a member of the UNBC Women's basketball team.

My chosen field of study is Political Science, and my aspirations include attending law school and practicing human rights law. However, being far away from home has presented financial challenges, as the cost of living and educational expenses can become overwhelming. This award has significantly lightened this burden, allowing me to continue striving for both athletic and academic success.

My appreciation for being chosen as a recipient of this prestigious award is immeasurable. The support you have extended to me through your generosity is a powerful motivation for me to continue pursuing my goals on and off the basketball court. Once again, I would like to express my sincerest thanks to the Association of Former MLAs of BC for their invaluable support and belief in my potential.

As donors, your commitment to empowering students and fostering education is admirable, and I am honoured to be a beneficiary of your kindness. With your help, I am confident that I will be able to achieve my goals and positively contribute to society!

All the Best,
Amrit Manak



BRITISH COLUMBIANS BENEFIT FROM PERSONAL SERVICE

As B.C. continues to grow, so does the demand for personalized service. That's why there are offices in virtually every community, with over 15,000 insurance brokers province-wide, ready to serve. Brokers provide families with advice and better coverage for their homes, vehicles and businesses.

Working together in the community, brokers help families by providing information about safety, emergency preparedness and other local issues.

For more on insurance brokers and the benefits they provide to B.C. families go to bcbroker.ca.

HELPING WHEN LIFE CHANGES



Simon says ...

Reflecting on leaders with a measure of the intangible

By Simon Gibson

Perhaps you've seen the cartoon showing a politician joining a parade and rushing to the front in order to take credit for its direction.

It's amusing, of course, because it contests the concept of someone who motivates followers to join their cause based on shared values or principles.

We may esteem some people in responsible political positions, but I sense we don't really know what we appreciate. A strong leader may be admirable – and have a significant cadre of supporters – but do we amicably follow them simply because their articulated views match our own?

Is leadership an exercise in creating a compilation of ideas which are sufficiently regarded by a group of people and can be translated into electoral success? Does the efficacious leader have well-honed intuition skills (combined with the capacity to interpret polling)?

Or is genuine leadership something else? If you've ever lamented a dearth of leaders today, perhaps you can empathize with the pursuit of a worthwhile nomenclature.

In business and entertainment, Jim Pattison, Warren Buffett, Celine Dion and Justin Bieber easily come to mind as leaders in their fields, but the quest for political leaders may be more of a challenge.

For one thing, simply serving in an elected position does not necessarily signify that the person is regarded as a leader. They might effectively fulfill their responsibilities and even achieve a level of electoral success, but they are not necessarily admired as leaders.

Successful leaders, especially in politics, need to offer a measure of the intangible, the capacity to encourage and give hope, especially when there are economic or social challenges.

An authentic political leader, I have discovered, is less about legislative accomplishments and more about inspiring genuine emotion that rises above the mundane.

(I recall teaching students in human resources courses and reminding them business leaders develop vision and strategies while managers normally focus on the present.)

We're drawn to leaders, and given the partisan divisiveness that seems to be intensifying, we long for



peacemakers who seek to draw us together and make us proud to be Canadians or British Columbians.

Where do we find these leaders? How are they discerned? Are there courses, experiences or strategies suitable to cultivate the requisite skills?

BC universities generally only offer a modicum of leadership courses, mainly related to education. Royal Roads and Trinity Western, uniquely, have master's degree programs, presumably designed to equip graduates to assume responsible positions in the public and private sectors.

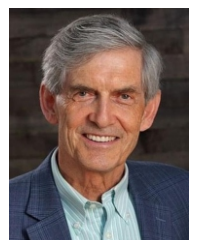
Notwithstanding the availability of some leadership programs and courses, I have concluded that the capacity to lead and engage genuine supporters is primarily an innate aptitude. It can be honed – over years of practical experience – but its genesis is likely already in place.

Authentic political leaders are seemingly in short supply, but I am optimistic that we will always have those altruistic individuals who accept the challenge and pursue the available opportunities.

Perhaps you have someone in mind you can mentor and instruct based on your experience. Your encouragement may make all the difference and will benefit the political landscape, federally, provincially and locally.

As everyone's favourite leader, Winston Churchill, once said: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

(Simon Gibson was elected in 2013 to represent Abbotsford-Mission for the BC Liberals. He served two terms. Before his election, Gibson was a member of Abbotsford City Council for more than 30 years. He has returned to his role as a councillor.)



Age of Conflict: Democracy, war and peace

According to the 2023 Democracy Index: 74 of the 167 countries and territories covered by the model are democracies of some type. The number of “full democracies” (those scoring more than 8 out of 10) remained at 24 in 2023, the same as the previous year. The number of “flawed democracies” increased from 48 in 2022 to 50 in 2023. Of the remaining 95 countries in our index, 34 are classified as “hybrid regimes,” combining elements of formal democracy and authoritarianism, and 59 are classified as “authoritarian regimes.”

The title of this year's Democracy Index report is *Age of Conflict*. The world's democracies seem powerless to prevent wars from breaking out around the globe and less adept at managing conflict at home. In 2023, wars in Africa, Europe and the Middle East caused immense suffering and undermined prospects for positive political change. As U.S. hegemony is increasingly contested, China vies for global influence, and emerging powers such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey assert their interests, the international order is becoming more unstable. Meanwhile, even the world's most developed democracies are struggling to manage political and social conflict at home, suggesting that the democratic model developed during the eight decades after the Second World War is no longer working.

The significant contribution of Carl von Clausewitz to the study of war was his insistence on the centrality of politics. In his seminal work *On War*, Clausewitz argued that “the only source of war is politics.” Whereas previous writers had considered war only from a military perspective, he pointed out that war does not take place in a political vacuum but is “simply the continuation of policy by other means.”

The political causes and objectives of war should be paramount in shaping its conduct, argued Clausewitz, and the same applies to any serious analysis of conflict.

The world is immersed in many types of conflict – inter-state, intra-state and non-state – and their causes are varied. Economic issues such as competition for resources underpin many contemporary conflicts, but they are not the only causes and not necessarily the most important ones. And whether economic conflict at the national or international level leads to violent contestation or war is a matter of political choices.



Other drivers of conflict include disputes over borders and territorial issues, sectarianism based on religion and ethnicity, suppression of democratic rights and civil liberties, extremist forms of political Islamism, drug cartels and organized crime, and failed states that do not control their territory and cannot provide security for their citizens.

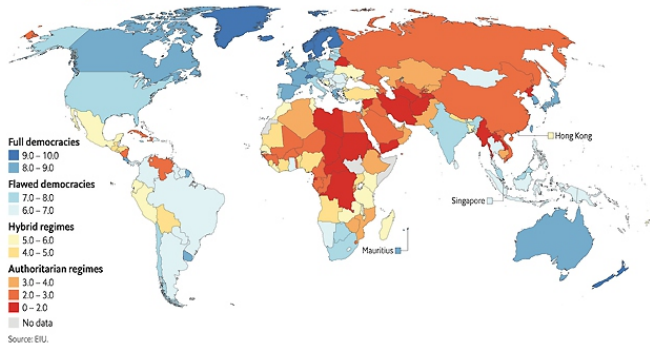
Another source of conflict that arguably presents the greatest danger to world peace lies in the realm of geopolitics. The position of the U.S. as the global hegemon is increasingly contested by rising powers such as China, fuelling instability worldwide. Though its predominance has waned, the U.S. retains economic and military primacy and continues to dominate international political and economic decision-making.

Meanwhile, the European powers, whose economic weight in the world is greatly diminished compared with the post-war period, continue to enjoy a privileged position in major world institutions. A failure on the part of the Western powers to reorganize the global, multilateral system in conformity with the increasing economic and political importance of emerging economies is generating resentment against the West. The preservation of an antiquated international political system that does not reflect the shift in the global balance of economic power, in particular to Asia, is increasing the risk of tensions spilling over into conflict.

This essay argues that we have entered an era of intensifying great power rivalries, which, if left unchecked, can potentially unleash a devastating conflict. Many politicians and commentators in the West argue that the rise in conflict globally is the result of a greater preponderance of authoritarian states. According to this perspective, the world is bifurcating between democracies and autocracies, with the former being proponents of peace and the latter instigators of war. Intuitively, this argument appears to make sense.

[continued next page](#)

Democracy Index 2023, global map by regime type



After all, most of the wars and conflicts taking place today were started by or involve countries run by non-democratic and authoritarian regimes. However, there are many flaws in the democratic peace thesis. In particular, this binary explanation ignores the sources of conflict emanating from the Western-led international political order. But first, we must consider whether we really are living in an age of conflict.

War and peace in the 21st century

From Russia's war in Ukraine to the Israel-Hamas war, Azerbaijan's military conquest of Nagorny Karabakh, the Guyana-Venezuela crisis, the civil war in Sudan and the Islamist insurgencies in the Sahel in West Africa, the world appears to be engulfed in conflict. The number of inter-state wars, cross-border military incursions, civil wars, Islamist and jihadist insurgencies, violent attacks on military bases and commercial shipping, and threats of war seem to be increasing. As a result, many have drawn the conclusion that we are living in an increasingly conflict-driven world.

However, from a historical perspective, and based on the number of deaths in conflict, 2023 was far from being a particularly deadly year. Deaths in conflict may be an imperfect metric to analyze the underlying dynamics of conflict, but it is probably the best indicator of the intensity of conflict at any given time. Figures from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program and the Peace Research Institute Oslo show that the post-Cold War period after 1991 has been much more peaceful than the Cold War era between 1946 and 1991. Today's world seems far removed from that of 1914-1945, a period encompassing two world wars that killed an estimated 79m-100m people, if both military and civilian casualties, as well as deaths from war-related disease and famine, are included.

The annual death toll from war started to drop after 1950, with an even more pronounced fall following the end of the Cold War in 1991. When considering relative terms, such as deaths per 100,000 people, to adjust for the significant population growth since the Second World War, the decrease in war-related deaths becomes even more remarkable. In Europe, the Cold War era was mostly "peaceful." However, there were plenty of wars elsewhere, in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

Big spikes in the number of war deaths occurred in the civil wars of the immediate post-war period, during the Partition of India (1946-48), in the Korean War (1950-53); in Vietnam during war with the U.S. (1965-73); and in the 1980s, during the Soviet-Afghanistan war (1979-89), the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) and the Salvadoran, Sudanese, Somali, Sri Lankan and other civil wars. The most striking decline in war-related deaths occurred in the period after the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991. The number of deaths in conflict fell from around 500,000 per year in 1946-55 to around 51,000 per year in the 1990s and to about 20,000 per year in the 2000s.

After a decline in the number of deaths in conflict in the 1990s and 2000s, there was an increase in the 2010s and an even sharper one in the 2020s. Most casualties have been the consequence of intra-state wars (state versus non-state actors, for example, in Syria), non-state conflicts (between non-state armed groups, as in drug wars in Latin America) and one-sided violence (armed groups versus civilians, for example, the Islamist insurgencies in West Africa).

However, over the past decade or so, the number of inter-state wars has been creeping up: Russia-Georgia (2008), Russia-Ukraine (since 2014), and Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorny Karabakh, 2016, 2020, 2023). The past two years (2022-23) were deadly in terms of combatant deaths in conflict: The combatant death toll in 2022, which surpassed 200,000, was the biggest since the 1980s. People, therefore, have good reason to think that we live in an age of conflict and that the world is becoming more dangerous.

(Coming in May's OOTD from The Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index: "What's democracy got to do with it?")

In an election year, half approve of Eby and Moe

Campaign season is not far off for three of Canada's provincial leaders. Saskatchewan's Scott Moe and British Columbia's David Eby head into their expected October competitions in a relatively strong place when it comes to public opinion, garnering approval from approximately half of constituents respectively.

For Premier Blaine Higgs in New Brunswick, the battle appears to have a steeper grade. Higgs is currently the least popular provincial leader in the country.

In the nearer term, budget season has provincial governments from coast to coast laying out promises and priorities for the coming year. They do so with varying levels of support from provincial residents. Here are the Angus Reid Institute Premier Approval Ratings for March 2024.

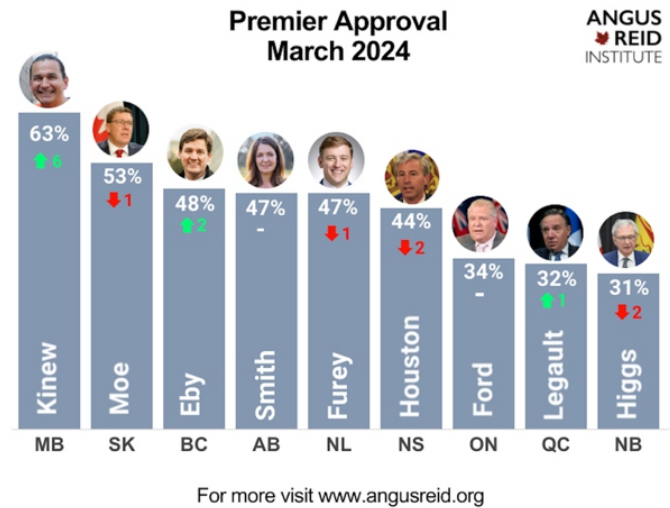
BCNDP leader David Eby is approved of by approximately half of BC residents (48 per cent) ahead of an expected October election. This proportion has remained unchanged for well over a year now. Eby's government announced significant new housing and affordability relief expenditures in its 2024 budget, which will portend more than a \$7-billion deficit for 2024/25 (approximately double the projection outlined in the 2023 budget).

Some critics have referred to this year's budget as the party's election platform. Much of the intrigue in the electoral contest will depend on a divided opposition, which has given the NDP a comfortable lead in vote intention thus far.

Premier Scott Moe of Saskatchewan remains among the country's most approved leaders, one of just two leaders who break the majority mark this quarter (53 per cent). Moe and his Saskatchewan Party have been going head-to-head with the federal government on the carbon tax.

Moe's government was called "immoral" by Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault for deciding not to collect the tax and distribute rebates to residents. Moe responded that the government would replace rebates with "less tax." Saskatchewanians will likely head to the polls this October to weigh in themselves on the direction of the province.

In New Brunswick, Blaine Higgs is heading into the election as the least popular premier in the country. The Progressive Conservative leader is approved of by 31 per cent of residents. In recent months, he has spent considerable time defending his controversial – but supported – position on parental rights and LGBTQ2+ policies in schools.



Higgs' government recently conveyed \$75 million in affordability payments. However, he noted significant negative coverage of the payments had frustrated him after critics suggested certain groups, like retirees, should have been eligible for benefits but weren't.

After a precipitous 16-point decline in quarter-over-quarter approval to end last year, Quebec Premier François Legault sees his personal assessment stabilize at 32 per cent. The Coalition Avenir Quebec's forthcoming 2024 budget will reportedly run a larger deficit due to the unforeseen funding needed to reach a deal with the province's teacher's union, which was on strike for 22 days in December and January. Quebec's highest court recently upheld (most of) one of Legault's signature legislative pieces – Bill 21 – which the leader cheered as a "great victory for the nation of Quebec."

Ontario's Doug Ford announced his intention to "Get It Done" last month, introducing new legislation to streamline infrastructure projects by shortening environmental assessments and speeding up approval processes. However, cooperation with the federal Conservatives may be less than a given if that party forms the next government in Ottawa.

Tensions between the two conservative camps flared after newly elected federal MP Jamil Jivani criticized Ford's government in a victory speech. Ford suggested Jivani, a former advisor to his own party, should "focus on the carbon tax."

Ford and his Progressive Conservatives hope that getting it done will help boost his stagnant personal approval rate, which hasn't exceeded its current 34 per cent mark since September 2022.

Provinces criticized as unresolved issues linger

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians in most provinces across the country are significantly more critical of their respective provincial government's performance around service delivery and issues management than they were five years ago.

Canadians' priorities have been clear and evident in recent years. They are concerned with the rising cost of living and the state of health care. These issues rank foremost in residents' minds in all provinces.

There are some variations behind those top concerns. In BC, Ontario, and Nova Scotia, at least two-in-five believe housing affordability is a top issue facing their province. Public safety is an elevated concern in Manitoba, while education is a priority for those in Saskatchewan and Quebec, two provinces where labour action from teachers interrupted the current school year.

Regardless of which issues residents prioritize, there is a sense that provincial governments across the country are struggling to address the critical files of the day.

The Angus Reid Institute's Government Performance Index is an average of the proportion of respondents who believe their provincial government is doing a "good job" on a variety of critical issues. The Saskatchewan government leads the country on this metric at 42, while New Brunswick is at the bottom with a score of 22. Both provinces are in an election year.

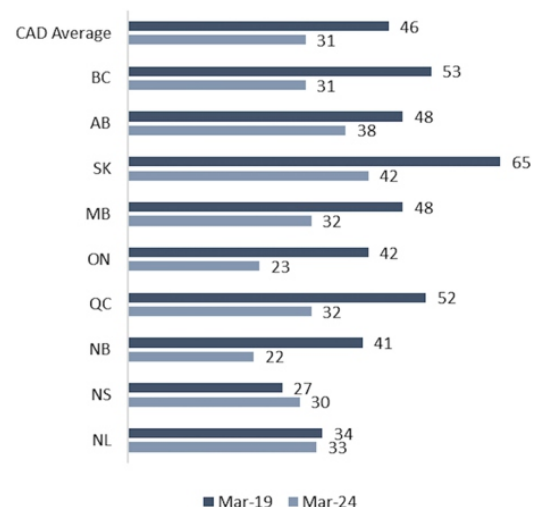
Premier David Eby and the BC NDP government also face a re-election battle this year. Overall reviews of the government's performance are poor, but the government has closely tracked with its peers according to the Government Performance Index in recent years.

The New Democrat government dates back to the 2017 election when it first won a minority under then-Premier John Horgan. Eby took over as premier in 2022 after Horgan retired. Throughout its tenure, there have been consistent concerns over health care and housing, with the former rising in prominence in recent years.

While Eby is new to the office of premier, he is a veteran of the housing file after serving as the housing minister under Horgan. Eby has used the top role to advance sweeping changes, but the effects of the policies likely won't be felt for years. And British Columbians remain critical. Four-in-five (78 per cent) believe the government has done a poor job on housing affordability.

Health care, too, is a source of severe criticism for the BC government. Seven-in-ten (69 per cent) say the

Angus Reid Institute
Government Performance Index
(Note: Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released)



government has done a poor job handling health care. The government launched a \$1-billion plan to recruit health care professionals to fill shortages in 2022, but residents appear to believe more work needs to be done. In August last year, half of British Columbians said either they didn't have a family doctor, or it was difficult to get an appointment with the one they had.

The early years of the UCP government in Alberta brought high praise from constituents, but acclaim turned to criticism throughout the pandemic. Danielle Smith replacing Jason Kenney as premier has coincided with an increase in positivity from Albertans towards their government – it trails only Saskatchewan on ARI's Government Performance Index – but there is much work to be done to ascend back to the highs of the early years of Kenney's term.

In 2019, Kenney and the UCP rode a wave of dissatisfaction with the governing NDP to a majority government. The province had suffered through a period of lower oil prices, hurting the economy and the provincial budget. With higher oil prices and more royalty revenue coming in, five years later, concerns over the economy have been replaced by worry over health care.

Albertans are critical of government performance on that file – 61 per cent say it is doing poorly. Smith and the UCP are in the midst of major surgery on the health care system, but issues – dissatisfaction among health care workers, criticism of the handling of laboratory services, rural emergency room closures – persist.

Nenshi makes his move and loves the UCP freak-out

By Graham Thomson
For *The Tyee*

He wasn't exactly walking into the lion's den, but when former Calgary mayor and now NDP leadership candidate Naheed Nenshi visited the Alberta legislature recently, he was surrounded by many more enemies than friends.

Those enemies included United Conservative Party members who have been so busy setting their hair on fire at the prospect of Nenshi becoming NDP leader that the government should send one of its water bombers to UCP headquarters.

Within minutes of Nenshi announcing his candidacy, social media exploded with posts from outraged UCP supporters attacking Nenshi's record as Calgary mayor from 2010 to 2021.

One of the government's more combative ministers, Jason Nixon, mentioned Nenshi by name as he tried to link him with dictator Joseph Stalin during a legislative speech attacking an NDP proposal for rent control.

"It'd make Joseph Stalin blush, how much this NDP wants to go down the road of communism in our province," said Nixon as he pivoted to Nenshi. He needled opposition MLAs by suggesting that Nenshi, who joined the party only three weeks ago, was intent on hijacking the NDP and turning it into a vanity political movement under a new name using Nenshi's "purple revolution" brand.

"Even when Nenshi gets here and changes their colour to purple and changes their name, we're still going to see a socialist party across from us," said Nixon.

As Nenshi sat in the legislature's public gallery to watch question period, former cabinet minister Rick Orman posted on X (Twitter) a not-so-subtle dig at Nenshi by suggesting he had a "cozy relationship" with the always-unpopular-in-Alberta Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and included an undated photo of the two men embracing.

Far from being offended, Nenshi is lapping up the attention.

"It's sort of funny that I'm two days into this job, and we're seeing people in the Conservative movement get really, really nervous," said Nenshi during a scrum with members of the legislature's press gallery. "That's OK with me. That's fine with me. I'm happy to make them a little nervous, to get a little bit under their skin."

Nenshi's enemies also include the five other candidates in the leadership race, although they are doing their best to appear welcoming. Sort of.



Nenshi's NDP leadership bid triggered one UCP minister to try to link him to Joseph Stalin. Nenshi is flanked by NDP MLA supporters Parmmeet Singh Boparai, left, and Court Ellingson. Photo by Graham Thomson.

Kathleen Ganley, a Calgary MLA who was seen as the front-runner before Nenshi entered the race, criticized Nenshi's reputation in some circles as a prima donna: "Provincial politics is played as a team, and he's been pretty clear that he doesn't want to be on that team."

Another serious contender, Edmonton MLA Rakhi Pancholi, acknowledged Nenshi "does have big name recognition, and a lot of people are excited," but wondered if he could grow the party's base beyond Calgary into rural Alberta.

That's actually a question facing all the candidates.

Traditional NDP members do worry Nenshi will use his name recognition to attract enough non-aligned progressive voters to win the leadership vote on June 22 and, as Minister Nixon mischievously suggested, hijack the NDP.

After all, his campaign slogan, "Naheed Nenshi for Alberta. For all of us," doesn't mention the NDP. His unofficial slogan is pretty much "Only I can defeat Danielle Smith in the 2027 provincial election." And that's what will be the ultimate selling point of his campaign.

Nevertheless, he insists he is a good fit for the party despite not being a member until last month and despite being critical of the party in the past. In last May's provincial election, Nenshi only "loaned" his vote to the NDP as a protest against Premier Danielle Smith.

continued next page

Former Calgary mayor Naheed Nenshi kicked off his campaign by saying of the UCP government: "They're not only incompetent, they're dangerous. And they're immoral." Photo via Nenshi campaign website.



Interestingly, that is part of his strategy for the leadership race: To embrace his status as an outsider to persuade other outsiders to join the party and make him leader. But he also says longtime members were among "500 enthusiastic" supporters who turned out for his campaign launch in Calgary.

There is no doubt Nenshi's candidacy has electrified the race. No other candidate has been the subject of national news coverage.

Nenshi has known Smith since they were in university together 30 years ago and has slammed her right-wing UCP government as "incompetent, immoral and dangerous."

For her part, Smith is not returning fire.

"I'll do what I have always done with leftist politicians. I will debate them on policy and our record, and I'll trust that Albertans will decide which party better reflects their values and priorities," said Smith during a news conference.

But she, too, couldn't resist needling the NDP over the prospect of an outsider like Nenshi taking over the party: "I don't even think they know what they want to be at the end of their leadership contest. So, as soon as they choose their leader and decide what they want to be, whether they want to be the NDP or some other version of it, I'd be more than happy to talk about policy."

Nenshi has rejected changing the party name as some former New Democratic members suggested last year. However, he is interested in cutting formal ties with the federal NDP, a party that is about as popular in Alberta as the federal Liberals.

Besides Nenshi, the NDP leadership candidates include Alberta Federation of Labour leader Gil McGowan and four MLAs: Ganley, Pancholi, Sarah Hoffman and Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse.

Nenshi is not an MLA, and reporters wanted to know how he could lead the party effectively without a seat in the legislature.

"Ultimately, you can lead from the lobby as well as from the floor, and we've got a great caucus," said Nenshi, who added that he would not force a member to step down to trigger a byelection.

Nenshi, though, isn't devoid of friends in the legislature. Three NDP politicians flanked him during his media scrum: Calgary-Falconridge MLA Parmeet Singh Boparai, Calgary-Foothills MLA Court Ellingson and Edmonton-Ellerslie MLA Rod Loyola.

As part of the Nenshi team, they face an uphill battle. They have little time to sell memberships before the April 22 cutoff date.

(Graham Thomson is an award-winning Edmonton-based columnist who has covered Alberta politics for over 30 years, first with the Edmonton Journal and now as a freelancer. The Tyee is an independent, online BC news magazine founded in 2003, devoted to fact-driven stories, reporting and analysis that informs and enlivens democratic conversation.)

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A respected, good-as-gold BC radio voice is gone

By Brian Kieran
Editor, *Orders of the Day*

One of BC's most recognizable and respected voices in news radio has been silenced. George Garrett has died at 89.

George was a reporter at *CKNW* for more than four decades, breaking exclusive stories and covering some of the biggest events in Canada. He was also a great friend of the AFMLABC and was the association's guest speaker at its annual Government House banquet in 2019.

George was so much more than a retired reporter who spent more than 40 years with *CKNW*. He was also the best-selling author of his memoir, *George Garrett: Intrepid Reporter*.

Canadian business magnate Jim Pattison described George this way: "George Garrett is one of the most remarkable reporters of news I have ever known. He has always had the ability to smell a good story and to report on it honestly and accurately."

During his storied career, George also worked for *BCTV* (now *Global TV*). He received the Bruce Hutchison Lifetime Achievement Award from the Jack Webster Foundation and the Radio Television Digital News Association of Canada Lifetime Achievement Award. He was an Honorary Life Member of the RCMP Veterans Association, an Associate Member of the Vancouver Superannuated Police Officers Association, and an Honorary Constable of the New Westminster Police Department.

Starting from humble beginnings as a farm boy in Saskatchewan, George rose through the ranks of journalism and came to be known as the reporter who, as radio personality Rafe Mair recalled, "seemed to know details almost as soon as the police did" on such infamous stories as the Clifford Olson murders.

He was willing to take risks to get to the real story, which resulted in his being assaulted in the Rodney King riots in Los Angeles, among many other scrapes. In his memoir, Garrett shared the behind-the-scenes tales of his harrowing, humorous, and occasionally humiliating investigative tactics, from posing as an accident victim to uncover the questionable practices of an insurance claim lawyer, to acting as a tow truck driver to expose a forgery scheme, and baring it all for the sake of an interview at a local nudist colony.

Garrett also delved into the personal details of his life, sharing the hardships and resilience that mark him as an empathetic storyteller. He revealed the heartbreaking loss of his son in a canoeing accident and his wife Joan's devastating diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease, which inspired him to dedicate his time to supporting the Alzheimer Society.

Through it all, George never lost the insatiable curiosity that, according to Mair, made him the "standard by which good reporting is judged."

At the 2019 AFMLABC banquet, Garrett said: "In my 43 years of covering the news beat for *CKNW*, I always had respect for those of you who have served the public in elected office ... whether it was park board, school board, municipal or city council, the Legislature or Parliament. As you all know, it means hard work and sacrifice to serve. I take my hat off



to you and your partners in life. As you well know, it can be very difficult for relationships and family life.

"Only you who have served can understand those challenges but also the adrenalin rush that goes with being in public office. My guess is that many in the public do not understand the common bond that joins you ... no matter which party you represent. The fiery debates ... we all remember the leather lungs of Don Phillips and the keen wit of Alex Macdonald, who once poked fun at the member from Vancouver-Point Grey Pat McGeer ... 'He has a fine brain, why does he keep it in a jar?'"

The very veteran *Vancouver Sun* political columnist Vaughn Palmer captured the essence of George Garrett with wordsmithing economy: "He was a great reporter and a legend in our trade. He knew everyone, was on top of everything and was invariably first."

No more need be said.

Reporter Robin Adair's life and death question for Hawking

By Robin Adair

It was June 30th, 1993, when the *CHEK TV* assignment desk sent me and cameraman Rod Park to Victoria's Inner Harbour to speak to Stephen Hawking. This British scientist and icon had made a presentation that morning in Vancouver and, after taking a quick float plane ride to the South Island, would shortly depart for a conference in Seattle. During this brief layover, he agreed to speak to local media.

North Saanich's Sue Rodriquez famously had taken her demands for legally assisted suicide all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. Rodriquez was afflicted with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), which was the same disease that had debilitated Hawking. So, when he appeared in front of the Tourism Victoria Centre, he was strapped to a wheelchair and was only able to communicate by tapping on a communications device.

Stepping out to officially greet this famous thinker (the Big Bang theory) was Advanced Education Minister Tom Perry. After some brief remarks, Perry excitedly had Hawking's thumbprint stamped inside a copy of *The Theory of Everything*, which was destined to be placed in the Legislative Library.

Next, it was my turn. I leaned down and explained that Sue Rodriquez planned to take her life with the assistance of a doctor's intervention. She wasn't prepared to deteriorate and suffer with her ALS. My question: What did he think of a legally assisted death under these circumstances?

Hawking never appeared to make direct eye contact but immediately started tapping on his pad. This continued for over a minute, and then a mechanical voice clearly relayed his answer.

"I feel that people have the right to die as they want. It is one of the few rights a severely ill person has left."

With that, Stephen Hawking was wheeled away for a short tour of the city in a local cab, and I rushed off to post my story. I've always been grateful to have been in the right place at the right time to ask the opinion of one of the world's greatest minds.

As a postscript, Sue Rodriquez did carry out Canada's first legally assisted suicide in December of 1994. Stephen Hawking would continue to write and make



public appearances until his passing in 2018 at the age of 76. He'd lived with ALS for 50 years, making his own choices and encouraging others to do the same.

(Editor's note: Robin Adair, looking down on the House many years ago, is well known as a TV and radio reporter, anchor and commentator who worked in broadcasting for 25 years, including 17 years at *CHEK TV* in Victoria. Between 1990 and 1997, he served as *CHEK*'s Legislative Bureau Chief and was a member of the BC Legislative Press Gallery. Today, retired in Victoria, he produces *Victoria Rumble Room*, a current events video podcast with 1.7 million cumulative visits. Stephen Hawking is seen in the photo above in the Inner Harbour in 1993. That day, Hawking also visited the University of Victoria and an Oak Bay beach, and had lunch at the Empress. He then boarded the Victoria Clipper for a trip to Seattle, where he spoke before travelling to Salt Lake City.)

April puts spring in the steps of Canadian women

April 2, 1991 – Rita Johnston became the first woman in Canada to serve as premier of a province.

Johnson ran successfully as the Social Credit Party candidate for the riding of Surrey in the 1983 provincial general election and was re-elected to represent Surrey-Newton in 1986. She served in various parliamentary secretary roles and was later appointed to several cabinet portfolios, including municipal affairs, recreation and culture, and transportation and highways.



Following the resignation of Premier Bill Vander Zalm in 1991, Johnston was selected by her caucus to serve as interim leader of the governing Social Credit Party, thereby becoming the Premier of British Columbia. On taking office, she committed to giving social issues a higher priority with "more emphasis placed on violence against women, violence against children and seniors."

April 14, 1980 – For the first time in Canadian history, a woman was chosen as Speaker of the House of Commons. Saskatchewan native Jeanne Mathilde Sauvé served as Speaker until January 15, 1984, and later became the 23rd Governor General of Canada.

April 13, 1925 – Women in Newfoundland won the right to vote and run for public office after decades of lobbying government officials and promoting their cause on the public stage. As voting members of society, women became better equipped to influence public policy and advance their concerns, which often included domestic violence, maternal health, child welfare, and public education. Although suffragists endured years of mockery and opposition while fighting for enfranchisement, their victory affirmed the status of women as equal members of society and challenged traditional gender roles.

April 17, 1919 – Women's suffrage was approved in the province of New Brunswick.

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April 12, 1917 – Women in the province of Ontario gained the right to vote. Ontario became the fifth province to grant women the right to vote after more than half a century of activism by suffragists. Beginning in the 1870s, Ontario's suffrage movement emerged from the vibrant nationwide mobilization of middle-class women who sought political representation as a means to improve women's rights and assert influence in social, economic and political reform. The first Ontario suffragists were a cohort of predominantly white, Anglo-Protestant, educated women led by Dr. Emily Stowe.

April 5, 1917 – Women in the province of British Columbia gained the right to vote. Between 1891 and 1914, 16 women's suffrage bills were introduced and defeated in BC's Legislative Assembly. In 1916, Premier William Bowser decided to hold a referendum on the issue in conjunction with the provincial general election. The referendum results revealed that 65.8 per cent of the men who voted were in favour of extending the franchise to women.

Women in Vancouver were the first in the province to have the opportunity to vote when a byelection was held the following year. The newly enfranchised women of



Cartoon, circa 1910, about women in Toronto fighting for the right to vote (Archives of Ontario/C301).

Vancouver used their vote to help elect Mary Ellen Smith as the first woman Member of the Legislative Assembly.

April 19, 1916 – The legislature in Alberta passed the Alberta Equal Suffrage Act, permitting women in the province to vote in provincial elections.

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Greetings, retiring MLAs, thank you for your service

An invitation to join the AFMLABC from President Dave Hayer

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The Association:

- Publishes *Orders of the Day* (OOTD), the highly sought-after Association newsletter. Ten issues of OOTD are released each year, covering topics relevant to the significant times and events in British Columbia's history.
- Administers the *AFMLABC Hugh Curtis BC Youth Parliament Fund*, which provides financial assistance to participants in the annual British Columbia Youth Parliament session at the Legislature, and provides bursaries to UVic and UNBC students.

The Association's goals are compelling in these troubling times. Its mandate is to:

- Put the knowledge and experience of its members at the service of parliamentary democracy in British Columbia and elsewhere;
- Serve the public interest by providing non-partisan support for the parliamentary system of government in British Columbia;
- Foster a spirit of community among former MLAs; and
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