

BC has lost two former NDP MLAs in one month

In December, BC lost two former NDP MLAs who served in the government of then premier Dave Barrett. On December 3rd, at the age of 90, Bill King died in his home surrounded by family. Mid-month, Jim Gorst died at 98.

Bill was first elected in 1968 as the MLA for Shuswap-Revelstoke. He went on to serve as Barrett's Labour Minister from 1972 to '75. Jim was the MLA for Esquimalt during the Barrett government. He would go on to become an active and valued board member of the Association of Former MLAs of BC virtually from its creation to just shortly before his death.

Here are their stories.

Bill King left the rails for a political hot seat

By Rod Mickleburgh
Special to the Globe and Mail



In 1972, Bill King stepped from the cab of his diesel locomotive into a political hot seat as labour minister of British Columbia's first NDP government, charged with taming the most unruly industrial relations in Canada. That year, with a workforce of fewer than a million, BC lost an astonishing 2.5 million workdays due to labour strife.

Yet on-the-job heat was nothing new for the tall, imposing railway engineer. In his youth, when trains were powered by steam, he had spent three years as a fireman shovelling coal to feed the engine's furnace.

He took on his government mission with a steely resolve. Early in his tenure, he confronted then-premier Dave Barrett over a minor union request Barrett had agreed to without consulting him. "If I'm going to go down the goddamned tubes, it's going to be because of my decisions, not someone else's," he told the chastened premier. "Either I'm in charge, or you can find someone else."

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"In Jim, a good person walked this earth"

By Times Colonist staff
and Hugh Curtis (from 2008)



Born and raised in Victoria, Jim was a familiar face about the legislative precinct, first as a member of the NDP government, then as a tour bus operator. As anyone who met him will attest, Jim made lasting impressions. He loved to engage, finding common ground with others over shared values, earning many lifelong friends and perhaps a few converts.

Jim was born in James Bay. His father, James Henry Gorst, was born in Manchester in 1882. His mother, Margaret Ann Rawlinson, was born in 1890 in Liverpool. They married in Liverpool in 1915 and emigrated to Canada's west coast. They settled in Saanich. The majority of his father's employment was with the famed CPR coastal steamship service on the Victoria-Vancouver-Seattle routes.

While still in high school, Jim secured employment with the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway. He explained: "I had three jobs at once – wiper, lighter-upper and hostler in the Victoria yards, later at Ladysmith and Port Alberni."

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Her Honour

The Honourable Janet Austin, OBC

Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia

Thank You and Miscellany

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

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(The late) Hugh Curtis

From the Editor's Desk

Welcome to the first issue of *Orders of the Day* for 2021. The "Winter" issue spans January and February giving Rob Lee and me a chance to catch our breath in December.

First, we bid farewell to Bill King and Jim Gorst, two dedicated NDPers who served during the Dave Barrett years. They both flourished into their 90s ... a good run by any measure. In the case of the tribute to Jim, the ghost of Hugh Curtis pays us a visit. Hugh interviewed Jim at great length in 2008, and I was able to bring some of his words back to life.

In fact, Hugh pops up a few times in this issue. On Page 14, we address a pressing issue with the memorial fund that bears his name and that gives grants to hinterland members of the BC Youth Parliament so that they can afford to participate in the BCYP's December parliamentary session. Donations to the fund have been few and far between for the past three years, and it is time for members to dig deep in Hugh's memory. A report on the BCYP's virtual session this past December can be found on Pages 6 and 7.

In this issue, I have also been able to re-oxygenate my interest in the "art of good governance" thanks to contributions from Deputy Speaker Norm Letnick, Pages 8 and 9, and from former cabinet minister Gordie Hogg, Pages 12 and 13.

Finally, we want to send a big shout out to the gang at Canfor for returning to us as an advertiser. Ads in OOTD do not generate much in the way of revenue for our advertisers, but they do generate a lot of goodwill. Thanks Canfor.

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.

The President's Report

Well, the good news is the year 2020 is over! The bad news is we are still not back to normal. I'm just waiting until I can travel to Victoria and do lunch with a group of current MLAs, get a nice intro in the House and drop in for a chat with the current Speaker. For the moment, I have to concentrate on my New Year's Resolution – turn off U.S. cable news! I suspect I'm not the only former MLA currently suffering from this addiction.

But, there is some good news for our organization. Just before the no-essential-travel-ban hit, Brian Kieran and I met with Clerk Kate Ryan-Lloyd in her office. I had never met Kate but had been told she was impressive. She didn't disappoint. We agreed to work together. While in the Precincts, I met with the Hansard video people about doing a future broadcasting archive. Back in Vancouver, I met with our Treasurer, Patrick Wong, and we sorted out bank signing and books. I was happy to receive a cheque to the AFMLABC from outgoing Speaker Darryl Plecas. Big thanks, Darryl!

Further on in this issue, on Page 7, you'll see my December long-distance greetings to the BC Youth Parliament. The young parliamentarians held their "virtual" – and very successful – legislative session just after Christmas. We were able to give them a small financial contribution through the Hugh Curtis Fund. There's more about the fund on Pages 14 and 15.

Finally, I was able to speak by the old-fashioned telephone, a Canadian invention, to BC's new Speaker Raj Chouhan on behalf of our Members. As Premier John Horgan and Opposition Leader Shirley Bond pointed out in the House, his appointment is precedent-setting. From the farm field to the Speaker's chair, congratulations, Raj! Of course, I did tell him we'll be coming to LAMC to ask for some core funding based on the Ontario model. Stay tuned.

Best,
Ian Waddell



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Bill King

King made a mark as labour minister that few could match. Little more than a year after taking office, he had authored a revolutionary labour code that forever changed the old ways of doing things. To an extent not seen anywhere in Canada, even today, the code stripped jurisdiction over strikes and picketing from the courts and transferred it to a reconstituted Labour Relations Board (LRB) with unprecedented interventionist powers.

Opponents decried the change. However, thanks in large measure to the acumen of the LRB's first chairman, Paul Weiler, the bold move worked. Parties were soon beating a path to the board to resolve conflicts.

The BC code was considered the most progressive in North America. "The BC Labour Code was the gold standard that liberally minded people in the field aspired to," said Harry Arthurs, retired professor of labour law at Osgoode Hall in Ontario. "It went further than any other jurisdiction in Canada."

King, who chose a medically assisted death on Dec. 3, brought in equally progressive reforms in human rights, workers' compensation and employment standards. While these were mostly done away with by succeeding non-NDP governments, his landmark labour code remains mostly intact.

The militant Federation of Labour mounted a strong campaign against the code, singling out its failure to grant unions untrammelled picketing rights. At a private meeting between King and a Federation leader, matters became heated. After weathering a series of insults, King had had enough. According to King's account, he told his adversary: "The next time we meet, and you're insulting, I just want you to know that I'm going to knock your teeth so far down your throat, you won't be able to talk." There were no more meetings between the two.

William Stewart King was born Sept. 15, 1930, in Tisdale, Sask., the youngest of eight children born to British immigrants Minnie and Patrick King. In the early 1940s, the family moved to Nelson. King left school at the age of 15, taking a job as a section hand with the Canadian Pacific Railway for 50 cents a day. He worked his way up from a wiper to a fireman and then an engineer, guiding trains through the mountains of eastern BC. "I did that for 20 years until I became a cabinet minister," King recounted. His home base was the railway centre of Revelstoke, where he married bank teller



Audrey Lennard in 1953. The couple had two children, Linda and William Jr.

Politics took root at an early age. King was a moderate socialist, committed to the CCF and then the NDP. He took part in numerous election campaigns, beginning when he was just 13. In 1968, King stood for the NDP in a provincial by-election, winning that race but losing the Revelstoke-Slocan seat in BC's general election of 1969. Finally, in 1972, he was part of the landslide victory by the provincial NDP that swept out premier W.A.C. Bennett.

The next 39 months were among the most turbulent in BC history, as the new socialist government ushered in dozens of dramatic changes that transformed the province. Despite his proclivity for unions, King brought in legislation in the fall of 1975 that forced an end to a wave of crippling strikes in forestry, supermarkets, the propane industry and rail transportation.

Shortly afterwards, Barrett called a snap election, which the NDP lost to a rejuvenated Social Credit Party. King returned to the Opposition benches. NDP caucus members referred to him as "Senator."

"He had an integrity that could not be falsified, and everyone knew it," said former MLA Charles Barber.

When King lost his seat in the 1983 election, he went back to Revelstoke and the railroad. He tried a return to politics with a run for the provincial NDP leadership in 1984, finished third, and that was it.

King's wife Audrey died in 2013. He married Glenna Whyte in 2016, the two having met over dinner at their retirement residence. He leaves Glenna King, his daughter Linda Gillis (John), grandsons Matt, Corey and Jared, and two great-grandchildren. His son William King, Jr., died of cancer later on the same day as King's passing.

Jim Gorst

The railway experience did not last long. World events took him to the RCAF in April 1941 as an aircraftsman: "The airforce was the best job I ever had!" His war service lasted four-and-one-half years, all of it in Canada. His time as ground crew was relatively short; three of the four years was flying time out of airbases across Canada.

Family was important to Jim, and re-establishing his relationship with his daughter Carol Ann in Africa was his greatest joy. With loved ones everywhere, he was often at the computer or on the phone, messaging friends and family across town or around the globe. He always kept in touch, never forgetting a name, a birthday, or phone number – a skill which served him well through his long life. Beyond his remarkable memory, he was renowned for his gentle character and astute analysis of public affairs.

Jim thought Victoria was the most perfect place on earth and was called to civic duty at a young age. His passion for politics was rooted in his upbringing and lessons from his father, who, after surviving the trenches of the First World War, became a founding member of the CCF.

In 2008, Hugh Curtis, then editor of *Orders of the Day*, interviewed Jim at length. Here's part of that interview:

"In the months leading to the 1969 provincial general election, Jim decided to try for provincial office. Why not? He was well-known in the Victoria area and had proven his commitment to the New Democratic Party, after a flirtation with the Liberals. Jim sought and won the New Democratic nomination in the Esquimalt constituency but lost to the well-established incumbent Herbert Bruch.

"On August 30, 1972, after repeated tries provincially and once federally, Jim tasted victory. An hour after the polls had closed in Esquimalt, the 50-year-old NDPer was assured of a victory over Social Credit's Bruch.

"Bruch was blunt about his feelings: 'The Liberals and Tories won the election for Gorst.'

"Gorst admitted his victory was part of a provincial sweep but said he felt his work in the community over the last three years resulted in 'at least some of my support.'

"Spirits were high at NDP headquarters on Esquimalt Road. Huddled around a nine-inch TV in the middle of Dominion Hall, a crowd of 20 faithfuls were clapping and cheering by nine o'clock. Ten minutes later, a smiling



Penny Priddy and Jim Gorst at a recent Annual Dinner.

Gorst appeared, accepting early congratulations and greeting the crowds of surprised and ecstatic supporters who began streaming into the building. 'I never thought I'd be in this position,' Gorst admitted.

"As NDPers triumphed across the province, Gorst predicted the end of the Social Credit Party. 'The Social Credits will completely disappear. They will (be absorbed by) the Liberal and Conservative parties as a coalition force.'"

The NDP was defeated in 1975, marking the end of Jim's legislative career, but he was always proud of his service and achievements, especially the relaunch of the SS Princess Marguerite. Jim remained an active member of the NDP to the end, putting up election signs and knocking on doors well into his 90s.

His career in politics was followed by years in the tourism industry as the owner-operator of Marguerite Tours. He later established Victoria Tours and Charters. When he wasn't welcoming tourists, Jim was often one himself. On his many trips to Italy with his wife, Italia Corletto, he enjoyed the piazza culture of coffee and conversation.

In Jim, a good person walked this earth. He is predeceased by his parents Margaret and John, sisters Mary and Celia. He is remembered by his wife Italia, daughter Carol and husband Daniel Neto, granddaughters Laura, Claudia and Odessa, great-grandchildren Anderson, Maxwell, and Reeves.

According to his wishes and COVID-19 rules, there was no funeral.

BC Youth Parliament Zooms past its challenges

By Adriana Thom,
Premier, 92nd BC Youth Parliament

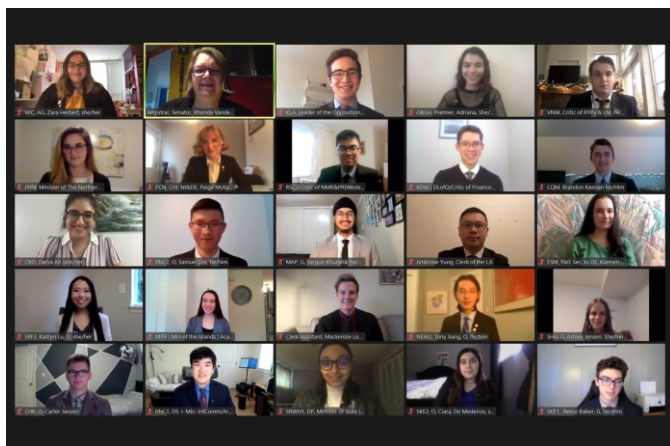
The 92nd Session of the British Columbia Youth Parliament (BCYP) took place December 27th to 31st. However, for the first time since the Second World War, the session did not take place in the Legislature. Instead, our 97 members between the ages of 16 and 21 representing communities across the province came together virtually via Zoom.

BCYP has faced challenges in the last year in terms of running our usual service projects, fundraisers, and events. However, our annual session – even though it looked a little different than usual – was a success and a reminder that tough times also present opportunities for change, creativity, and growth!

Throughout the week, our membership learned more about our democratic systems by engaging in parliamentary procedure and debating legislation that outlined plans for the various events and projects the British Columbia Youth Parliament will be running throughout the year.

This included our Parliamentary Activities Act setting out our commitments to service and fundraising and various amendment acts outlining changes to the way we operate as a non-profit organization; a Supply Act outlining how we will raise and spend money; and, most notably, our Project Phoenix Act detailing how we plan to run a week-long day camp for children who might not otherwise have the opportunity to attend one.

Additionally, members discussed several Private Members' Resolutions on topics such as lowering the voting age to 16, implementing a mandatory vaccine program for COVID-19, and, on the lighter side, whether or not all foods can be classified as a soup, salad or sandwich.



COVID-19 presented Youth Parliament challenges, but Zooming helped keep the session alive.

We had the opportunity to receive greetings from many notable and inspirational British Columbians, including current and former elected representatives (at local, provincial, and federal levels), community leaders, and former alumni. A particular highlight was receiving greetings from The Honourable Janet Austin, Lieutenant Governor of BC. (My mum was a little disappointed that the Vice-Regal Canine Consort Macduff was not present).

We also had the privilege of Dr. Bonnie Henry, BC's Provincial Health Officer, serving as the Lieutenant Governor of our 92nd Session. The opportunity to honour and hear from someone who has dedicated themselves to public service was the perfect reminder to our members of the connection between politics and service and that no matter where your interests lie (whether it's politics, medicine, trades, or more) there are so many ways you can be a leader.

While this has been an unprecedented year, our 92nd Session was a week that was inspiring and energizing. Just as the Phoenix rises from the ashes, after even the longest, coldest winters, so too have our membership proven that in the face of adversity, young people are willing to step up as leaders, be innovative, and serve their communities.

Our annual session may be our most notable event, but it is only the beginning of our sessional year. We have a ton of exciting events on the way, including Regional Youth Parliaments, Project Phoenix, and various regional events, and we look forward to being able to fulfill our motto of "youth serving youth."

I want to thank the Association of Former MLAs of BC and each and every one of you for your ongoing support. If you would like any further information about what we are up to, our website and our Facebook page will keep you up to date, or you can contact me at premier@bcyp.org.

We're passionate about the work we do, and we'd love to connect with you and share our experiences!



Dr. Bonnie Henry was the BCYP's 92nd Session Lieutenant Governor.

Waddell's remarks to BCYP

By Ian G. Waddell
President, AFMLABC

On December 27th, in my role as President of the Association of Former MLAs of BC, I had the honour of addressing, via Zoom, a virtual parliamentary session of the BC Youth Parliament, an association we are proud to support through the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund.

Here is the sum and substance of my remarks:

Speaker, Premier, Leader of the Opposition and Members, welcome to the annual BC Youth Parliament. I was about to say welcome to the Legislature, but of course, this is a different year, and a lot of former politicians like me are learning to "Zoom."

Our Association of Former MLAs of BC is incorporated by an act of the BC Legislature and has many purposes. One of the most vital is the promotion of democracy and democratic institutions in a non-partisan way. A few years ago, our farsighted members collected monies to form the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund. Hugh, a respected and dedicated municipal and provincial politician, was one of our association's founders and was well loved by politicians from all parties. Each year, the fund's investment interest income provides financial support to enable two students to participate in your parliament.

So, congratulations to those students and to all of you for dedicating these few days to good governance and democracy in a collegial, non-partisan framework. A free parliament, together with the rule of law, is the essence of democracy. The participation of young people is vital to its survival. Make no mistake about it; around the world, democratic institutions and free speech are under attack.

Even here, we have to watch how we conduct ourselves in the political process. I noticed a Twitter hashtag the other day, referring to "Trudeau Traitor." You can absolutely disagree with, say, the Prime



Minister's China policy, but really, "traitor?" South of our border, I'm seeing people referring to their opponents as "enemies." My message to you is to debate forcefully but civilly. Have a respectful, thoughtful debate.

You might also use a sense of humour. The best debaters do, and it can be very effective. A few years ago, in Question Period in the House of Commons, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was spending a lot of money on travel at a particularly difficult economic time. I asked him why he needed to spend \$5,000 on a hotel room and added, "what did you get, a little chocolate on your pillow?" He exploded, and the issue was on the national news. However, a month later, I asked the government what it produced by sending a lot of money into Quebec, and I mangled the French so concluded quickly with "what has this Prime Minister produced?" Mulroney got up, smiled at me and looked at the Speaker. "Four kids and two majority governments, Mr. Speaker." The House exploded in laughter, and I slinked back into my seat!

So, civility, humour, good debate, and fun, if that is possible on Zoom!

You might also want to consider working in an MLA's office and later run for and serve in the Legislature. Three of my former assistants are in the current cabinet. I got my start in the model parliament in Ontario and sat, at age 18, in the Ontario Legislature. It opened my eyes.

Your generation is the smartest in human history and has unparalleled access to information almost instantly. So, use it. Good luck!

Former MLAs can inspire youth to embrace public service through their stories

By Norm Letnick, MLA
Assistant Deputy Speaker
BC Legislative Assembly

Are you proud of your time in public service in a staff or elected role? Of course you are! Thank you for serving. As the boomer generation moves into retirement, there will be a lot of competition for the hearts and minds and work of younger generations. We need to attract the best of the best to a life of service to others. Can you please help by taking a few hours to think back during your life about one or more examples that you believe might inspire a new generation to public service?

How you tell the story is just as important as the story itself if others are to be drawn into it and have their soul touched. It's totally acceptable to ask others to help you communicate the experience in writing. Fully develop the characters as best you can to engage the reader as you would if writing a short story. The length is up to you, but

probably no more than a three-minute read should suffice. Feel free to use real names with written permission, and when permission is not available, please be sure to address confidentiality.

It is my hope that enough stories will come in from across the country to publish and distribute a book free of charge to all of BC's high schools, along with eventually the creation of a companion website containing videos of submissions utilizing young actors as storytellers.

Are you in? Please send me a quick note – N.Letnick@leg.bc.ca – so I know how many stories to expect, and then let's shoot for the summer for the submission deadline.

Thank you, and together let's change some lives!



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Here's an example

Through political noise comes a defining moment

Kelowna is a beautiful mid-sized city on the shores of Okanagan Lake in the southern interior of British Columbia. This four-season playground attracts newcomers from around the world to many friendly communities. Rutland is one of those communities I've had the privilege of representing both as a city councillor and a member of the BC Legislative Assembly. Rutland is a complete community with commercial services, schools, highways, recreation facilities, and a hard-working middle-class citizenry.

During every non-pandemic year, the good citizens of Rutland gather together for many events. A highlight is the annual Christmas tree light-up in early December. Imagine a few hundred people assembled together in a very small park next to a relatively large parking lot. In the middle of the park is a tall Christmas tree installed with lights waiting for official permission to shine and call upon children of all ages to look upon its beauty and majestic standing. Between the tree and the public are a group of performers leading the assembled through a book of Christmas songs.

Families walk around the park and car lot, holding firm to their hot chocolate provided freely by volunteers. They check out a public transit bus decked out for the season and containing a large man dressed in Santa attire offering to hear the innermost desires of children brave enough to enter his domain. Some avail themselves to other free food but don't come too late as usually free attracts many and you risk being left out in the cold, hungry.

One Christmas light up around 2015, I made my way to the area next to the choir in anticipation of being invited once again to help other local dignitaries count down to the moment when we would fire up the Christmas tree lights for the season. Surrounded by family and friends, I held my hot chocolate and sang carols with the community when I heard someone call out "Norm." Looking around in the crowd, I once again heard "Norm" and made eye contact with someone I didn't recognize. This isn't unusual for a public official as we are blessed with many invitations to public events and meet many people. As much as I've tried to remember names and faces over the years, it usually requires a few encounters for my memory chip to do its job properly.

"Norm," she said, "I need to talk with you!" Oh no! When she said, "I need to talk with you," I immediately thought about what I may have done wrong to this constituent that she now wanted to give me a piece of her mind at this very public venue. "Quick – let's defuse the situation," I thought and wished her a Merry Christmas and informed her that I was about to help with the light up. She would have nothing to do with that and instead said, "I need to talk with you now." Okay, plan B to avoid a scene, I pulled out a business card and suggested she called my office the next day; my office happened to be in Rutland just around the corner from the park, and we could meet there alone and discuss her concern in private.

Well, you guessed it, waiting for another moment was not in her plans. Okay, now we are in plan C, so I suggested we move away from the crowd a bit and let her bite my head off at least somewhere where most of the crowd wouldn't be able to hear and have a story to tell their friends the next day about their local MLA who got chewed out at the Rutland light up. Off we went.

"Norm, you see that young lady over there sitting on the fence not far from the tree?" she asked. "Yes," I replied. "She wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for you." Quickly my mind started to race as I was trying to understand what she meant by that. It didn't sound like she was taking me out to the woodshed; it sounded more like a thank you. "You see, when she was having trouble last year and every door we knocked on closed to her, we came to see you, and somehow the right door opened. We don't know what you did but whatever it was, thank you."

I still get a lump in my throat when I think back to that night and what this mom said. When people ask me why I run for public office and serve, I always think back to that night in Rutland when the lights came on not only for a tree and our community but especially for me. Public life has its many challenges, but now and then, through the noise of adversarial politics comes a defining moment. This was mine. What will be yours?

- Norm Letnick, Assistant Deputy Speaker

Chouhan is the first South Asian to serve as Speaker

Burnaby-Edmonds MLA Raj Chouhan took over as the Speaker of the Legislature in early December, replacing Darryl Plecas who left the BC Liberal Caucus to support an NDP minority government in 2017.

Chouhan is part of a 57-seat NDP majority after October's snap election, making his election as speaker a formality as Premier John Horgan headed into a brief pre-Christmas session to present plans for COVID-19 containment and recovery.

Born in the Punjab province of India, Chouhan immigrated to Canada in 1973 and has been a lifelong advocate for labour rights, human rights, and racial equality. Premier Horgan welcomed Chouhan as an immigrant farmworker who was fired from his job, launching him on a career of advocacy for farmworkers.

Horgan noted that Chouhan is the first South Asian to hold the position in BC.

"As a proud member of the Indo-Canadian community, I am tremendously proud of this historic occasion and honoured to continue my public service in this new role," Chouhan said Dec. 7. "There was a time when people of colour were not even allowed in this building, much less this chamber."

In a brief speech after being acclaimed with no one else standing for the speaker's job, Chouhan credited fellow farmworker advocate Charan Gill and others for their work.

Speaking to reporters after being acclaimed to the position, Chouhan described himself as a "lifelong member of the NDP and a very proud trade unionist," but emphasized that his role is strictly non-partisan.

"My focus is going to be to make sure that this place runs efficiently, and everybody's concerns are taken care of," Chouhan said. "I haven't seen all the recommendations made by (former) Speaker Plecas, but my focus is going to be to make Question Period become the most dull and boring Question Period."

While the daily Question Period is meant to allow Opposition MLAs to keep the premier and the cabinet accountable, it is most often associated with scoring political points against the sitting government than exploring public policy issues in a civilized, constructive context.



Chouhan was first elected as the MLA for Burnaby-Edmonds in 2005. He was then re-elected in 2009, 2013, and 2017. He served as Assistant Deputy Speaker and has served as Official Opposition critic for labour, human rights, multiculturalism, and immigration.

As a student in India, Raj was actively involved in student union activities. Upon his arrival in Canada, Raj was greatly impacted by the plight of other immigrant workers and the wide disparity between the rich and poor in a prosperous country. This contributed to his ongoing advocacy for community and social justice for workers.

Raj is the founding president of the Canadian Farmworkers' Union and served as the director of bargaining for the Hospital Employees Union for 18 years. Raj also served as a member of the Labour Relations Board of BC and the Arbitration Bureau of BC.

A founding member of the BC Organization to Fight Racism, Raj has worked relentlessly in promoting human rights and racial equality. He has served as the vice-president of BC Human Rights Defenders since 2003. Raj has taught courses on human rights, the BC Labour Code and collective bargaining since 1987.

He has also travelled across Canada to give seminars and attend conferences that raise the awareness of issues such as racism, poverty, worker rights and discrimination.

Raj continues to support organizations in his community and has helped to promote diverse programs, including neighbourhood safety, refugee assistance and health and wellness programs for seniors.

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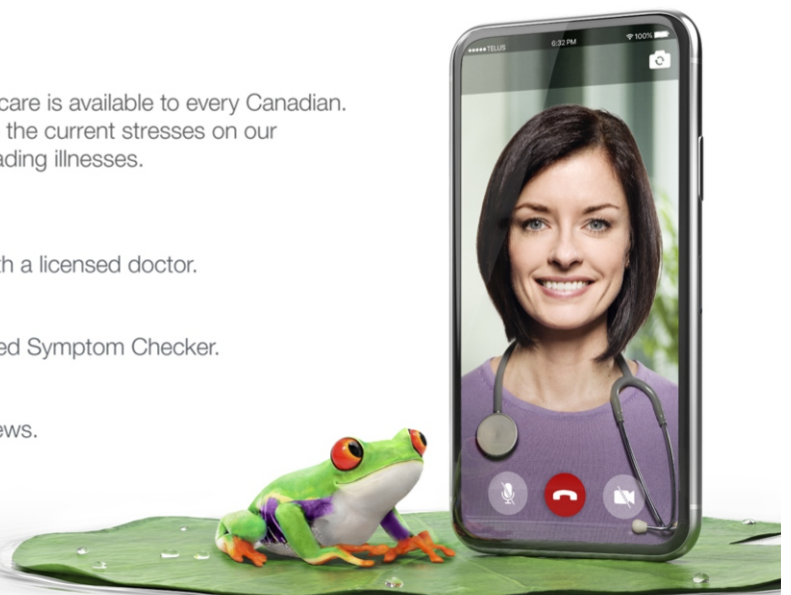
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A former MLA revisits his Ph.D. thesis

Creating public policy in a complex society

Question: “Dr. Einstein, why is it when the mind of man has stretched so far as to discover the structure of the atom that we have been unable to devise the political means to keep the atom from destroying us?”

Dr. Einstein: “That is quite simple, my friend. It is because politics is more difficult than physics.”
(Princeton, New Jersey, January 1946).

By Gordon Hogg

The current social and political unrest and violence in the USA have reinforced Albert Einstein's observation.

Canada is not immune to these threats. Right-wing zealots have connected through social media and their radical views have gained support and empowered them. Canadians are feeling more and more isolated and disconnected from our society's power structures. I believe that a coordinated, multi-disciplinary approach would result in better decision making, better policies and a greater sense of understanding and involvement from citizens. Combined with a behavioural model of policy development rather than the traditional rational approach, these processes will result in a more connected committed decision-making process.

The potential for subjective perceptions to be distorted is much more acute when viewed through an ideological political lens, which is dramatically influenced by uncontrolled social media reports.

The enormous and pervasive increase in public access to policy information has, paradoxically, contributed to the complexity of understanding controversial public policies.

In this state of complexity, confusion, policy flux, and “post-modern” trends, citizens have increasingly expressed dissatisfaction and alienation from their politicians and governments.

Civic engagement, along with higher levels of participation, are key indicators of the health of our democracy.

We are at a turning point in human history. For over a millennium, change was slow and episodic; it was so slow that people did not experience much change. Improving one's lot was largely based on a life of more repetition and greater efficiency. For about 1,300 years, from the end of the Roman Empire until 1700, there was evolutionary



Former MLA and cabinet minister Gordie Hogg (South Surrey/White Rock – 1997-2017) graduated from SFU on June 9th, 2016, with a Ph.D. His thesis was titled: “Creating Public Policy in a Complex Society: The Context, the Processes, the Decisions.”

change but virtually no growth in average per capita incomes. Over the next three centuries, the Western world saw an increase in per capita income of 22,740 per cent.

Around 1700, people with businesses started to do things differently. Entrepreneurial innovation and competition started; people recognized that if you had a better idea and could make it work, you would be rich and respected. People were going to copy what you did. This new innovative and competitive approach did not expand far beyond the business sector. Governments and the citizen sector of the Western world remained mainly stuck in their old world of repetition and efficiency. It became easier for governments to financially sustain themselves and their citizens as new businesses were generating “new money” that could be taxed and redistributed for their priorities (including social programs).

About 1980, the social services programs sector started to change just as the business sector had done 300 years earlier; innovative entrepreneurial approaches emerged. In the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, this sector had been increasing jobs at more than two times the rate of the business sector (from an interview with Bill Drayton June 19th, 2014 Vimeo).

This entrepreneurial approach was related, as well, to the broader concept of social innovation in the provision of government services, which, since 2000, had increased substantially in popularity and practice. The social innovation construct has been defined as “the process of

continued next page

inventing, securing support for, and implementing novel solutions to, social needs and problems and dissolving boundaries and brokering a dialogue between the public, private and non-profit sectors.” (Phills, Deigmeier & Miller, 2008).

THE PROCESSES

Public policies are the purposeful actions taken by governments to shape behaviours connected with the philosophy, values, and beliefs of the societies they represent. They are essential to the process of governing (Shafir, 2013). More specifically and simplistically, public policies consist of the laws and the specific policies within them that attempt to regulate citizen behaviours and determine how, which, and to whom services are provided and funded.

At the most basic level of policy structures, most governance structures are multi-level, ranging typically from the national to the provincial, regional, and local. It is an undisputed policy phenomenon that public policies have grown exponentially in the modern and post-modern periods to cover virtually all aspects of daily life. The enormous and pervasive increase in public access to policy information paradoxically has contributed to the complexity of understanding controversial public policies.

The confusion associated for some in response to shifts in priorities and policies and the difficulty of sorting through intensely partisan narratives about complex policies also affects social cohesion, social capital needed to solve common problems, and the quality of life of citizens and their communities.

THE DECISIONS

Traditional forms of political policy development and decision making have contributed to a growing dissatisfaction between decision-makers and their constituents. The practice of decision making is far less linear and rational than traditional models posited. However, new communications technologies are now providing novel ways to inform and engage citizens and communities in the decisions that affect their lives.

These accessible communication technologies are particularly relevant given the contemporary societal shifts

in social capital exacerbated by modern economic realities such as the growing income disparities that have dramatically altered the environmental and cultural context of decision making. Part of the growing sense of dissatisfaction and alienation between politicians and citizens has been linked to the negative impacts of economic policies on the core middle income individuals. Creative interdisciplinary policies and programs that incorporate innovative approaches to policy development and decision making have the potential to increase the quality, impact and acceptance of both policies and programs.

Traditional approaches to the development of public policy assume that the future is, to some degree, both predictable and anticipated. From this perspective, it has followed that static policies would be effective in managing the issues to be faced. However, 21st Century modernity has not proven so susceptible to predictable futures; rather, both citizens and policymakers have met with more challenges and more opportunities than ever before, requiring them to make many difficult choices.

SUMMARY

It is essential to engage citizens to balance traditional policy development components and innovative components. Models of policy development include three fundamental principles: Getting very close to an issue for insight into how value is created for citizens, getting far enough away from an issue to see the patterns and to look across traditional silos, and looking at leveraging resources for better outcomes rather than at service delivery which includes assessing which resources are available to citizens.

My observation of policymakers, especially politicians, is that too many of them seldom get close enough to controversial issues to experience them viscerally nor far enough away to accurately understand the citizen policy impact patterns. In other words, politicians tend to understand such invariably complex issues from the less informative space between close up and far away. This likely contributes to the widely held alienating image of policymakers as myopic and unemotional concerning the impact of their policy choices.

And importantly, Einstein was right, “Politics is much more difficult than physics.”

Memorial fund to help BCYP needs your help

The Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia (AFMLABC) is issuing an urgent appeal to its members and to all friends of the association to donate generously to the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund.

Sara Neely, Director of Philanthropic Services at the Victoria Foundation, reminds us that “the Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia wanted to establish an annual award in Hugh's name for youth attending the British Columbia Youth Parliament (BCYP) held each year in Victoria.”

The BCYP models itself on the Westminster Parliamentary system and is sponsored by the Youth Parliament of British Columbia Alumni Society, a charitable organization. On Hugh's behalf, the AFMLABC wanted to encourage participation in the BCYP by youth who would otherwise have difficulty attending the BCYP program because of the cost of travel and accommodation.

Grants of \$1,000 were made in each of 2017, 2018 and 2019 to support the BCYP. A grant of only \$500 was made in 2020.

“The fund's capital is invested according to the Victoria Foundation's investment policy by several portfolio managers, is overseen by a volunteer investment committee and supported by the director of investments,” Neely says.

“The amount that is available for support of the BCYP each year is based on the foundation's distribution policy, which for 2021 is 4.25 per cent of the market value. The balance of the investment return remains in the capital. It is this growth through investment, as well as new gifts, that increases the amount available for grants each year in support of the BCYP.”

Neely reports that the fund's current balance is \$27,751. Established in 2015, the fund has run into hard times. Contributions to the fund have all but dried up over the past three years. Throughout all of 2019, there were scarcely any donations, and investment interest last year totalled just \$718 available for the two grants, well short of the required \$1000.

Neely says the 10-year annualized return to the end of 2019 was 8.2 per cent. By retaining a portion of the fund's return, the fund value is inflation-protected, and a steady distribution is ensured each year to carry out the fund's purposes.



When Hugh died of cancer on May 27th, 2014, the association was left without its driving force. Fortunately, the association regrouped. Under the leadership of former MLAs such as Anne Edwards and Gillian Trumper, the association was re-energized and placed on a more secure financial footing.

There was a great deal of enthusiasm when former president Penny Priddy presented a motion to directors of AFMLABC to create the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund. The grants are intended to alleviate the financial burden of travel for BCYP members who live in hinterland communities. This assistance encourages young people to participate in the BCYP's governance mentorship programs across the breadth of the province.

BCYP was hoping that it would hold an annual distanced session in the Legislature from December 27th to December 31st. But those plans were derailed in favour of a virtual session via Zoom.

Regardless, the BCYP's need for assistance during these difficult times is greater than ever.

You are encouraged to make a contribution to the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund on their behalf. A tax receipt will be sent promptly from the Victoria Foundation.

You can donate two ways: Call 250-381-5532 to donate by credit card directly to the Victoria Foundation. Or, you can send a cheque to the Victoria Foundation at

#200 – 703 Broughton Street,
Victoria, BC,
V8N 1E2.

Please make the cheque out to The Victoria Foundation and note the name of the fund in the memo line or a cover letter.

Hugh Curtis was a classy politician in tough times

Hugh Curtis, former Saanich mayor and then BC finance minister during the tumultuous restraint period in the early 1980s, died at age 81 in May 2014. He had cancer.

At the time of his death, his son Dave Curtis told Carla Wilson of the Times Colonist that “one of the things he was most proud of was that he was an elected official for 25 years and never once was defeated.”

In a 1969 interview, Curtis said he found elected life fascinating because of “the ability to introduce change, to take the given situation and to work with others in improving it or in introducing a new approach to a problem.”

In 2014, Bob Plecas, a former long-time deputy minister and author, said: “Hugh broke the ground on this in Canada — on being tough during tough fiscal times.”

Curtis was elected to the Legislature in 1972 as a Progressive Conservative, switching to Social Credit in 1974.

He held several portfolios in the government of then-premier Bill Bennett, most notably spending seven years as BC's second-longest serving finance minister, after W.A.C. Bennett.

Curtis was finance minister during BC's 1983 restraint program that fuelled the Operation Solidarity movement's massive protests against government austerity measures, including public sector wage restraints and job losses.

The wage restraint program fell under Curtis's ministry, and Plecas was the policy adviser. “He certainly knew that he had to make the right decisions, and he did. He was a good minister,” Plecas said.

Plecas defined a good minister as one who understands that their job is politics and doesn't try to be a deputy minister, is decisive, will back you up, and is honest and open-minded.

Brian Smith, a former Social Credit cabinet minister, said he and Curtis used to meet regularly. “For quite some time, we were the two resident cabinet ministers from Victoria. We used to collaborate to try and protect things that were important to Victoria.” These included maintaining the Mill Bay ferry service and fighting the suggestion of a bridge to the mainland.



Hugh Curtis reading the 1980 budget in the BC legislature

“He was a very, very classy guy in politics. He was rather formal,” Smith said.

The late Norman Ruff, University of Victoria professor emeritus, said Curtis “played a key role at that point in BC politics when it looked like Social Credit was faltering.” When Curtis crossed the floor along with some Liberal party members, that helped the Social Credit party rebuild as a coalition, he said.

Curtis had enormous influence in cabinet, Ruff said. He “was a partisan Conservative, but he never crossed the line and developed the sharp edge that mars a lot of what goes on in the Legislature.”

Penelope Chandler, ministerial assistant to Finance Minister Mike de Jong, came to the BC Legislature after working on a campaign for Curtis. “I would say that Hugh was one of nature's gentlemen,” she recalled.

Hugh's public service was encouraged by Stan Murphy, former reeve of Saanich. Hugh was elected for the first time to Saanich Council in 1961 and re-elected in 1963. He was elected reeve in 1964 and re-elected for three consecutive terms. In 1968, the title reeve was changed to mayor, technically making him the first Mayor of Saanich! He was the first Chair of the Capital Regional District and was re-elected in 1967, 1968 and 1970. He was also President of the Union of BC Municipalities, vice president for BC for the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities, and Chairman of the Municipal Finance Authority.

Our leaders may anger the mob but not incite

By Jim Hume, "the Old Islander"

It was 2:35 p.m. when the opposition leader rose to speak but then stood silent for a few seconds, his head cocked to one side, as he tried to comprehend shouts bouncing off the marble and granite walls of Legislature.

It was 1958 and is remembered here in the aftermath of the Washington DC meltdown in early January. Mass protests have been around for a long time with loud choruses of verbal abuse and threats. The difference in Canada is that while our PMs and premiers may anger the mob, they do not incite it.

On Tuesday, February 11, 1958, the Daily Colonist's front-page headline proclaimed: "Angry Shouting Farmers Storm into Legislature." Several hundred on the front steps demanded to meet Premier W.A.C. Bennett. "Bring him out, or we'll come in and we'll bring him out," they chanted.

What was the problem? The price of milk. In 2021 we have become so programmed to food price increases that a cent a pint increase would seem like a gift – but not to BC farmers in '58 whose costs outstripped their returns.

Bob Strachan, the opposition leader you met in my opening paragraph, with his head cocked to snare the far away shouts, asked if maybe the minister of agriculture would like a few moments to chat with the farmers. We are told the minister "looked up and with a weak smile" declined the invitation.

Close to 20 years later, in January 1976, W.A.C. Bennett's son Bill was occupying the premier's chair when the doors to the cabinet room crashed open, and a mixed mob of protesters and press gallery reporters barged in. In one of the rare photos recording the event, it's hard to tell the reporters from the protesters.

Nothing of consequence was damaged; the premier took control; and, the reporters who had become part of the story would later boast about the time they attended a cabinet meeting.

In dispute that day – auto insurance rates and some drastic and unwelcome social welfare changes called "reforms" by the government, "cruel cuts" by recipients and social workers.



Operation Solidarity

It was a prelude to the 1980s procession of mass protests that exploded with the infamous 1983 provincial budget (26 restraint control bills in a single day) and the July occupation by staff of the Kamloops health facility at Tranquille.

The siege lasted 22 days, and the newly formed Operation Solidarity took over with the first protest marches of 25,000 in Vancouver and 3,000 in Nelson. There were an estimated 80,000 on hand that fall to form an unbroken ring around the Hotel Vancouver where Premier Bennett and the Social Credit Party were meeting.

In between, there had been two or three mass rallies with crowds up to 40,000 strong in Victoria covering the front lawn of the Legislature and stretching several blocks back along Government Street to Fort.

And there was one protest which gained access to the Legislature while the House was sitting. There was damage to the main doors to the Chamber, and one senior commissioner was injured before order was restored.

Students of BC political history will be well aware of my selection of noisy, sometimes threatening, but rarely totally out of control protests. There have been many over the years.

These are offered as counterpoints to former president Donald Trump's failed coup, which would surely have resulted in a nation-wide bloodbath had it not collapsed within hours.

Here in Canada, we may have our minor uprisings, but we can take comfort in the knowledge that career-ending censure would be swift if one of our provincial or national leaders pulled a Trump stunt.