

No Ottawa regrets, but it's hard pushing for change



Jody Wilson-Raybould – guest speaker at the AFMLABC's Sept. 15th annual Government House dinner – is an “in-between” with no regrets.

In a recent interview with *Chatelaine's* Kim Wheeler, Wilson-Raybould said she was taught to lead based on consensus. It's how her ancestors thrived for thousands of years before colonizers and settlers arrived in this country. Decisions were made based on the good of the people and the community.

“That kind of butts up against the reality of politics,” she told *Chatelaine*. “And, I think if I learned anything while I was in Ottawa, it was that it's hard to be one of those people pushing for change. Being an 'in-between,' or being uncomfortable, is the only way to actually make change. I don't regret one minute of the time that I was there.”

An “in-between,” a term Wilson-Raybould uses throughout her latest book, *True Reconciliation*, is similar to an ally. “In-betweeners are those who know how to navigate the space of the new, the evolving and the changing,” she says. “Who embrace, at once, recognizing and respecting distinction and diversity, and interdependence, cohesion and unity.”

Inside this issue, on Pages 4 and 5, Wilson-Raybould speaks with the *CBC's The Next Chapter's* Shelagh Rogers about *True Reconciliation*. And, on Pages 15 and 16, there's everything you need to know to start planning for the Sept. 15th AFMLABC Annual General Meeting at the Legislature in the afternoon and the annual Government House dinner that evening. Don't put this off; ticket sales are already brisk.



Former justice minister Jody Wilson-Raybould gave testimony about the SNC-Lavalin affair before a justice committee hearing on Parliament Hill in Ottawa in February 2019.

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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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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.

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Robin Blencoe, Victoria
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From the Editor's Desk

Anne Edwards – dedicated teacher, editor, feminist and author who served in the NDP cabinet of former Premier Mike Harcourt – died eight months ago at 87.

At the time, saying farewell to Anne was hard. She was an active participant on the newsletter editorial committee. Her background as a teacher was a godsend. Her clinical reviews of the final newsletter drafts saved my editing butt. In the humbling process, I rediscovered why this woman was so universally respected and admired.



The lingering impacts of COVID-19 delayed a public celebration of Anne's life. No longer. I have received this note from her son Greg: "We have set the plans for Mom's service. It will be held Aug. 12th at the Cranbrook History Centre (formerly the Canadian Museum of Rail Travel), 57 Van Horne St. S.

"The service will be from 1 to 3 p.m. There will be light snacks and refreshments. We encourage anyone wishing to attend to arrange accommodation soon, as there is a music festival in Cranbrook the same weekend. Anyone who wishes to speak is encouraged to do so; we would appreciate notice from those who wish to speak so we can plan the timing. Any response or questions can be sent to my email address: gregedwards@telus.net."

Last month's contribution by Mike McDonald explored the exhausting light years of travel required to bridge BC and the seat of national power in Ottawa and the benefits of a hybrid parliamentary model. It put me in a federal frame of mind that is reflected in this issue. I was really pleased to stumble across a Samara Centre pitch for continuance of the pandemic-inspired hybrid House (Pages 6 and 7).

Good news for travelling AFMLABC members, family and friends attending the Government House dinner Sept. 15th. The Grand Pacific Hotel, right next door to the Legislature, is offering a special "Government House Dinner Rate" of \$249 a night subject to availability for those of you coming from out of town. When you call to reserve just tell them you are part of the "Former MLA Government House Dinner Group."

The President's Report

On June 10th there will be a celebration of life for our friend Al Horning (1939 – 2023) and for his loving partner of 59 years, Donna.

Al was an MLA (2005 – 2009), MP (1988 – 1993), and Kelowna City Councillor for 11 years. Al was known for his hard work and his dedication to his community. His energy and unwavering spirit are dearly missed. Donna passed away Dec. 30th, 2019, but COVID-19 delayed a celebration of her life.

A Celebration of Life for Al and Donna will be held on Saturday, June 10, 2023, at 10:00 a.m., at Rutland Centennial Hall, 215 Shepherd Road, Kelowna, BC.

An excellent forum discussing “Strengthening Democracy” was held April 30th at UBC’s Liu Institute for Global Issues. This BC-based project is an initiative to engage with non-partisan parliamentary organizations, students, local governments, First Nations leaders, academics, and other civil society stakeholders to reinforce and strengthen our democratic institutions and help them to be more resilient and robust. This initiative was started by former NDP Premier Mike Harcourt and former Social Credit and BC Liberal MLA and cabinet minister Graham Bruce.

I have been approached by many family members seeking justice for the victims of the June 23rd, 1985, Air India bombing. The flight from Canada was the worst aviation tragedy in Canadian history; 329 people perished from the made-in-BC

bomb, including 280 Canadians, 86 of them children. Two baggage handlers died in a premature second blast intended to blow up an Air India flight leaving from Japan on the same day. Only one person has ever been convicted of the bombings.

I wish to invite everyone to the 38th annual memorial for the victims of the Air India flight. It will be held on Friday, June 23rd at 6:30 p.m. at the Air India Memorial in Stanley Park’s Ceperley Playground in Vancouver.

Our AGM for the Association of Former MLAs of BC will be held Friday, Sept. 15th at 1:30 p.m. in the Hemlock Committee Room in the BC Legislature. Our Association’s Annual Dinner will be held the same day at 6 p.m. at Government House. Our special guest speaker is Jody Wilson-Raybould, former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

Please buy your dinner tickets now by visiting our website at www.formerbcmla.com and renew your membership at the same time if you have not done so already. I’m looking forward to seeing all of you there with your family and friends.

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

Dave Hayer,
President



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CANFOR

“True Reconciliation ... should be a bit challenging”

Jody Wilson-Raybould says she has been asked one question more than any other: What can I do to help advance reconciliation? People have asked her that in airport lineups, in boardrooms, and even on the way to the restroom. She says it is the right question and that when we ask the right questions, we can find a way to move forward.

Her new book, *True Reconciliation*, attempts to answer that question. The book combines Wilson-Raybould's personal experiences with other people's stories and expertise, past reconciliation efforts, historical facts and infographics to guide readers through a process of learning, understanding and taking action on reconciliation.

She is a lawyer and has served as the BC regional chief of the Assembly of First Nations. She was also a Member of Parliament and served as the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada as well as Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence during her time on Parliament Hill.

She is a descendant of the Musgamagw Tsawataineuk and Laich-Kwil-Tach peoples, which are part of the Kwakwaka'wakw, also known as the Kwak'wala-speaking peoples. She is a member of the We Wai Kai Nation. Her traditional name, Puglaas, means “woman born to noble people.”

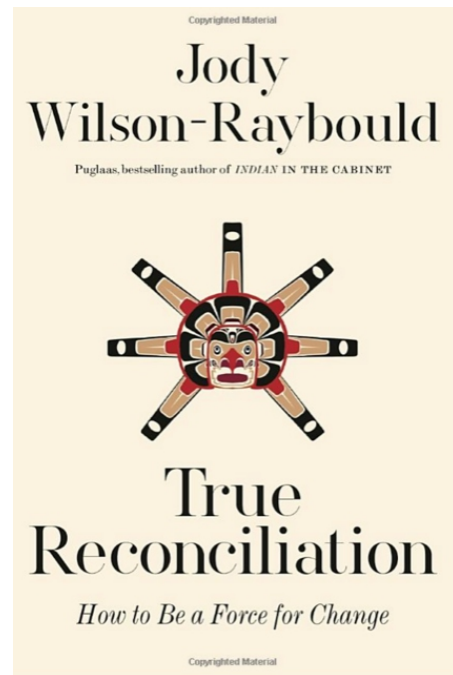
Her other two books are *Indian in the Cabinet* and *From Where I Stand*.

Wilson-Raybould spoke with *The Next Chapter's* Shelagh Rogers about *True Reconciliation* at an onstage event in Victoria.

I love very much how you begin *True Reconciliation* by honouring your family. I'd like to talk about your grandmother and her influence in forming your book.

I always get a little teary-eyed when I talk about my grandmother. Her name was Pugladee, which in our language means “a good host.” She was the matriarch of our clan. For a previous book I wrote, I had the great benefit of listening to audio recordings of my grandmother.

My sister was far more diligent than I when we were younger and she taped my grandmother talking about what it means to be from the We Wai Kai First Nation, the laws of our big house, the potlatch, what it means to be in leadership roles and pass down our laws and our ways of being and the values that I carry today. For me — and I know for many or all Indigenous peoples — we stand on the shoulders of our ancestors. One of the strongest shoulders that I was able to stand on were my grandmother's.



You asked the question: “What would my grandmother make of the word reconciliation?” What do you think she would make of it?

My grandmother went to residential school and the only book she had when she was young was the dictionary. So, she had a very expansive vocabulary, but I do not believe reconciliation necessarily would be in there in the context of Indigenous issues.

I don't think she would ever use the word reconciliation, but I will say that we're in an extraordinary period of time right now where reconciliation is a word, an activity, a learning that we are all undertaking together and more so than ever before. I find that extraordinary, which is one of the reasons why this book came together.

It's a question that began your book *True Reconciliation*, which is a question that dogged you wherever you went. People would come up to you to say, “What can I do?” What did people asking that question of you mean to you?

I talk in the book somewhat jokingly, but not really – I've been followed into the bathroom, in airports and in other places. What does that mean to me? It means that we are in this place collectively, as individuals, as Canadians, having this conversation about the relationship or the lack of relationship or the necessity to improve the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in this country.

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This is unfinished business and the cascading amount of news that we are receiving, which, in some ways, culminated in the summer of 2021 when there was that public revelation of the unmarked burials in Kamloops, galvanized the public in an extraordinary way more than ever before.

In the book, I talk about the definition of reconciliation: two people or a group of people have had a disagreement and now they're trying to make amends to get back to a proper relationship. For Indigenous peoples in this country, there has never been that proper relationship between the Crown and (with) non-Indigenous peoples. That's why people say reconciliation is dead.

There's other words that are used, whether it's "resurgence" or "rebuilding," which is a word I like. But I think that for all of us: How do we get excited as we continue to learn? We continue to understand and we act in our own ways and our individual lives to help tear down silos that have been built up between and amongst us and actually start to get to know each other. Through that and through those building of relationships, we actually will define what reconciliation means together.

You are hopeful because you say in the last 12 years, more has taken place to advance reconciliation than in the previous 50 years. What are your hopes for the next 12 years?

Within those 50 years, Indigenous peoples got the right to vote. There were some amendments to the Indian Act. We saw some self-government agreements happen in the country – extraordinary things. But more has changed since I became regional chief, and yeah, it does give me a hope.

We have 25-plus self-governments – communities across the country that have removed themselves from that racist, colonial policy called the Indian Act, [and] other communities are moving down that governance continuum. But what makes me hopeful now more than ever is that Canadians are talking about this all the time.

I believe that reconciliation can be a lens we look through as Canadians to develop a shared story for Canada. We face so many issues, whether it is climate change or social justice issues, that we actually need to look at each other more and more as human beings and do what we can do to assist and build relationships that are more loving and harmonious.



Jody Wilson-Raybould and Shelagh Rogers discuss Wilson-Raybould's book True Reconciliation at an onstage event in Victoria.

Governor General Mary Simon says at the very end of an address she gave that reconciliation is a responsibility that all Canadians share. We all need to listen. We all need to understand, and you've added "act." How do we act?

We see politicians or people in government labelling pretty much everything as an act of reconciliation. But when everything is labelled an act of reconciliation, it effectively makes nothing an act of reconciliation.

I think we need to be mindful of preformative reconciliation or symbolic reconciliation. We can lower a flag; we can wear beautiful orange T-shirts. We can create a national holiday for Truth and Reconciliation.

These are important acts. They elevate awareness and understanding and learning, but they don't lift a child out of poverty or ensure a child can be kept in their home or reduce the number of Indigenous peoples in the criminal justice system, recognize rights or settle long standing battles over title.

All acts of reconciliation aren't equal. All of our actions depend on our own individual lives, our own realities, our own knowledge of Indigenous issues, but true reconciliation is and should be a bit challenging and a bit uncomfortable.

(Jody Wilson-Raybould's comments were edited by CBC for length and clarity.)

A hybrid parliament – inclusive, flexible, economical

(Editor's note: In the May issue of OOTD, Mike McDonald wrote that a hybrid federal parliament offers a release valve, providing the option to take meetings or House duty virtually from the constituency office, thus avoiding a forced march to far away Ottawa.

Below, Samara Centre for Democracy Executive Director Sabreena Delhon – appearing before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs (PROC) – provides recommendations to further a review of the virtual hybrid House and committee proceedings. PROC studies and reports on the rules and practices of the House and its committees, electoral matters, questions of privilege, MP conflicts of interest, internal administration of the House, and services and facilities for MPs.)

My name is Sabreena Delhon, and I am the Executive Director of the Samara Centre for Democracy, a nonpartisan registered charity dedicated to making Canada's democratic culture more accessible, responsive and inclusive. We have been studying the lived experience of elected officials for 15 years.

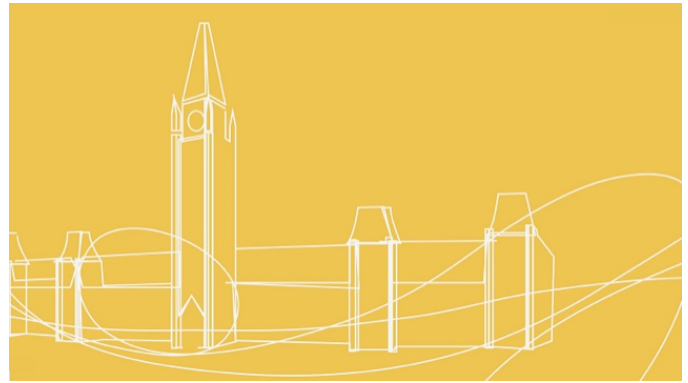


Our recommendation is that the House of Commons maintains hybrid proceedings for both the House and its committees. This recommendation is informed by our MP Exit Interview project, which entails conducting in-depth, rigorous interviews with former Members of Parliament.

Our view is also informed by recent research on hybrid workplaces within the future of work discourse. We advise maintaining hybridity for three reasons. It offers the opportunity for Parliament:

- To be more inclusive and representative;
- To function as a flexible and contemporary workplace that can attract and retain top talent;
- To increase efficiency by saving money and travel time.

Our conclusion is shaped by the underrepresentation of various groups in the House, including women and those in the LGBTQ+, Indigenous and visible minority communities. Our interviews with former MPs over the years have underscored that the grinding schedule of



weekly travel to and from Ottawa, particularly from regions far from Ontario, can create a barrier for women with families, particularly women who lack abundant resources to put towards child care.

This aligns with the findings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which currently ranks Canada 61st in gender representation amongst national parliaments. It recommends that gender-sensitive parliaments allow teleworking as a strategy to increase equity.

While there was initial concern that gender representation would be compromised with limited in-person convening, innovations in the functioning of hybrid parliament have made it possible for virtual work to increase democratic representation across genders.

Our research also indicates that MPs from underrepresented groups often feel alienated in Ottawa. We believe that if representatives have more opportunity to work from and within their communities, it will reduce the sense of alienation they may experience in the House and have the longer-term effect of encouraging MPs from underrepresented groups to not only enter into politics but also to stay.

The retention of MPs from underrepresented groups is worth noting. If the House wants to attract and retain high-quality individuals with varied training and innovative problem-solving abilities, it must be responsive to larger changes happening in Canada's new world of work.

Hybrid work options are an indicator of a modern employer, and workplaces across sectors are institutionalizing this option. Research shows that people who have worked in a hybrid environment over the past two years strongly wish to retain the option going forward.

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This is particularly true for those with disabilities, women of colour and LGBTQ+ employees. Institutionalizing hybrid proceedings for the House and its committees is a key way to demonstrate that Parliament is a responsive, contemporary work environment committed to attracting, retaining and supporting top talent.

The Samara Centre has long held the position that the House should work to foster a workplace culture that facilitates collegiality and informal relationship-building. We believe that this can be accomplished through a combination of virtual and in-person interactions. Our survey of MPs in 2020 found strong support for a hybrid model of Parliament. This is readily within reach to set as a standard practice now that our use of virtual technologies has evolved and become commonplace, adaptable, effective and user-friendly.

Beyond equity, hybrid proceedings offer incredible efficiencies. The transit time recovered each week for MPs living in ridings far from Ottawa is significant. Our research has consistently revealed the mental and physical toll that constant travel can take on Members of Parliament.

Making hybrid proceedings permanent opens up significantly more time for constituency work while protecting the health and well-being of MPs. In addition, the savings on travel means substantially less expense to the public purse.

We must consider what the removal of virtual engagement as an option for MPs would signal to both acting Parliamentarians and the electorate, and what it would convey about the responsiveness of our democracy. Parliament Hill is not a static institution; in the past, the House has adapted to the country's changing needs as well as technological innovation.

Before the Second World War, sessions in Ottawa were short and lasted for a few winter months, with the rest of the year spent in ridings. In response to the war, and subsequent innovations in air travel, the expectations for sitting periods changed. The House now has the option to similarly adapt to changes made during a crisis by instituting hybrid working structures that enable equitable, effective and efficient representation in the House.

With perhaps the exception of select circumstances, we recommend remote participation be available for all MPs at any time. This will mitigate the liabilities of in-group versus out-group dynamics developing. We encourage the creation of an inclusive hybrid workspace that is agile and responsive, which requires getting regular feedback from Parliamentarians about what is and is not working.

Finally, we advise bringing intentional approaches to in-person interactions in the House. Making these opportunities meaningful and productive will ensure the hybrid culture not only functions but thrives.

We are willing to partner to support a hybrid approach that advances a representative, effective and collegial workplace for Members of Parliament should the Committee see a role for us.



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Equity and fairness in providing Canada pensions

“The moral test of government is how it treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.”

– Hubert H. Humphrey

By Frank Oberle

Of course, it is not always useful to compare ourselves to societies in other parts of the world that have more progressive social benefit structures. There are certain deeply entrenched cultural differences and economic models that enter any equation. But, the concept of universality is generally accepted as the best measure of social programs such as health care and old age security.

Canadians should take no comfort from the fact that our neighbours to the south, despite their enormous wealth, are widely considered to be among the least socially conscious in treating the disadvantaged among their citizens in a fashion that could be considered fair and equitable. The Canadian healthcare system leaves much to be desired. But, with all its shortcomings, it is universally accessible to everyone.

In the area of old age pension, Canadians are divided into distinct classes. The most privileged among us are employed by the government, its agencies and Crown corporations. Those employed by large private corporations participate in pension plans similar to those in the public service. However, employer contributions to such plans are deductible from taxable income, thus creating a tax expenditure for the federal government. Of course, large private and public corporations find ways to pass the costs of their generosity on to their customers.

The largest numbers in the Canadian workforce – people in the service sector tied to a low-wage economy – are, in the main, dependent on moving toward retirement on the basic Old Age Security (OAS) and the still immature Canada Pension Plan (CPP). Needless to say, people on minimum wage or living from payday to payday in the small-business service sectors have little or no disposable income to save for retirement.

Well-intended programs such as the Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) or the Tax-Free Retirement Savings Plan (TFRSP), designed to encourage such savings, are of no benefit to them. Neither are they protected from such basic health costs as dental care, eyeglasses, or drugs, all benefits featured in government and most private pension plans.

That leaves a third, rapidly growing sector of self-employed individuals or contract employees who generate taxable income and can afford to supplement their



Lester B. Pearson launched a courageous government initiative to implement a universal pension plan.

healthcare coverage and perhaps manage to put aside some money for retirement. It's ironic that the income tax this group submits to the Treasury offsets some of the costs incurred by the federal government in support of the more privileged.

The European approach differs from ours in that the first responsibility to plan and safeguard a comfortable and financially secure retirement rests with the individual. In general terms, a premium of approximately 20 per cent of monthly earnings, shared equally between employers and employees, entitles the beneficiary to a pension ranging between 60 and 75 per cent of their last paycheque at the end of their working career.

In 1968, Lester B. Pearson launched a courageous government initiative to implement a universal pension plan. It was tailored to mirror the practices of most, if not all, European countries. Being conscious of the impact such a program would have on the general economy, the government implemented a plan that allowed for a period of modest incremental adjustments to the premiums imposed on both the employers and the employees.

The government also recognized the need to provide, from general revenue, for some bridge funding in the form of the Old Age Security program. This was to be a temporary measure until a universal pension scheme was fully subscribed and funded.

The public service superannuation (pension plan) dates back to 1924. It was to provide government employees with suitable and sufficient income after retirement. Likewise, private sector pension plans have existed in various forms long before 1968. The need for any so-called bridge funding for this group of workers was, therefore, misguided at the very beginning.

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Now, after 50 years of the government's initiative to embrace the entire workforce within a pension scheme, the program is still a work in progress, and the need for public funding from general revenue will be with us for some time to come.

In the meantime, the OAS program, indexed to inflation, represents the single biggest public expenditure – close to \$50 billion in the 2018 budget, a sum princely enough to significantly tip the scale in favour of our society's worth as it cares for those in their twilight years. However, the massive drain on the public purse generated by the OAS leaves other critical areas, such as healthcare and education, starved for money.

Successive governments never had the courage to follow Pearson's intention to raise monthly premiums to the required level. Had we carried through with Pearson's plan, the government's role would be reduced to that of an actuary administrator. Instead, the crime in our approach has been to perpetuate the myth that certain rights and freedoms are absolute. Imposing a burden of responsibility of this sort on the general public could be seen as the government's failure to protect those rights.

Every politician is aware of the rewards in the polls during elections following the implementation of programs such as the OAS, but they are also keenly aware of the enormous political risks in phasing out programs whose objectives have been met and are therefore redundant.

Our system of government is incapable of committing to the kind of fundamental change required to redress such situations, and we can only speculate on what our present-day fiscal situation would look like had the federal government's budget been augmented by over \$600 billion over the last 15 years.

(Born in Forchheim, Germany, Frank Oberle survived the turmoil of Hitler's Germany and post-war chaos before immigrating to Canada in 1951. During his career, he tried his hand at many jobs, including logger, gold miner, rancher, and town mayor, before serving six consecutive terms as the Member of Parliament for Prince George–Peace River from 1972 to 1993.)



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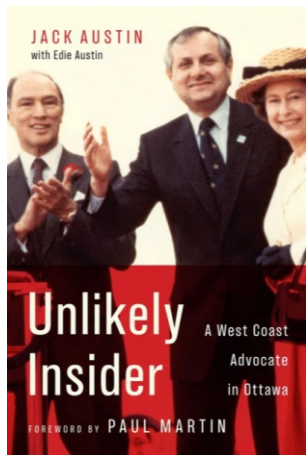
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Senator Jack was our West Coast advocate in Ottawa

by David O. Johnston

Jack Austin's reputation in Canadian politics is dominated by his time served as a senator, and with good reason. Austin entered the upper chamber in 1975 at the senatorially unripe age of 43 and was its longest-serving member when he stepped down in 2007 at the mandatory retirement age of 75.

But as his newly published memoir, *Unlikely Insider: A West Coast Advocate in Ottawa*, reminds us, Austin was a significant player in the capital even before his Senate years, although in an unelected capacity. He only ran once for office, in Vancouver-Kingsway in 1965, and lost. But a decade later, he was in the prime minister's office, the third of five people to serve as principal secretary, or chief of staff, to Pierre Trudeau.



This is a book that could have been written earlier. After all, Austin left the Senate 16 years ago and just turned 91. It took some nudging from his eldest daughter, Edie – editorial page editor of the *Montreal Gazette* until her recent retirement – to light the spark. She wrote the first couple of chapters. As Austin writes in his acknowledgements, he was surprised at how well she had captured his voice and viewpoints. From there on, father and daughter worked together. The result is a very readable memoir from a Western Canadian who has made a valuable contribution to Canadian public life.

As Austin remembers his two years as principal secretary in 1974/75, he started out eager to please the famously difficult-to-please Trudeau. One day, he took it upon himself to write a speech that he thought the prime minister should deliver.

Austin says Trudeau rolled the speech into a ball and threw it into a wastepaper basket.

“Not very good, Jack,” he vividly remembers Trudeau saying.

Austin writes: “I didn't get the sense he was particularly uncomfortable with my speech, but he wanted to say, in effect, 'Don't presume to try to help me where no need is evident. You have enough to do without going outside your job description.' I remember the incident well because it fascinated me in terms of his setting the personal space between us.”

That space would narrow over time after Trudeau left public life in 1984, as he and Austin forged a personal friendship and became travel companions during Austin's Senate years. There's a separate chapter in *Unlikely Insider* devoted to Austin's account of his fascinating travels with private-citizen Trudeau from 1987 to 1994.

Austin says he never imagined a Senate role for himself. As he tells it, he told Trudeau in 1974 that he hoped his time as principal secretary would be brief. From 1970 to 1974, Austin served as deputy minister of energy, mines and resources. He had been a driving force behind the production in 1973 of a white paper on energy policy that ultimately led to the creation of Petro-Canada. Austin says he had made it clear he wanted to become the first chair and CEO of Petro-Canada.

As it turns out, Maurice Strong was appointed the first chair and Bill Hopper the first president. Jim Coutts replaced Austin as principal secretary. Austin was offered an ambassadorship to Japan but declined. That's when he accepted the Senate appointment.

Austin was certainly a credible candidate for a top position at Petro-Canada, given his work as DM, oversight of the white paper and his experience as a private-practice lawyer in Vancouver specializing in natural resources in the late 1950s and 1960s. Along the way, he picked up policy experience in the public sector, serving from 1963 to 1965 as executive assistant to Arthur Laing, Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources.

Born and bred in Calgary, Austin, the son of a grocer, moved to Vancouver to do his post-secondary studies at the University of British Columbia. He was a top student in the law faculty there. His big break, he writes, came shortly after graduation, when the federal government sought him out through an intermediary for a legal opinion that helped strengthen Canada's negotiating position with the US for the Columbia River Treaty in 1961.

Austin's work in private practice brought him to Japan and opened his eyes to new economic opportunities for Canada in Asia, as well as pegging him as an emerging young Canadian expert on Asia. After Trudeau opened diplomatic relations with China in 1970 – two years before Richard Nixon's visit to the People's Republic and eight years before the US established diplomatic relations – Austin was among the 24 people who were part of the first official Canadian delegation to China in 1971. It was the first of many trips to China for Austin. It's clear from the two chapters in his book about China that his work with that country has meant a lot to him.

In the chapter titled *Travels with Pierre*, Austin describes what it was like to travel with private-citizen Trudeau. The first of his four travel adventures with the former PM was a 1987 trip along the old Silk Road between Pakistan and China. Travelling with Trudeau were Austin, his wife Natalie, Senator Leo Kolber and his wife Sandra, and their adult son Jonathan. As with the other trips, Austin was the principal organizer. He solicited logistical assistance from Canadian embassies and the governments of Pakistan and China.

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Jack Austin and Pierre Trudeau on a cruise along the Yangtze River in 1987

So it was that Trudeau's little group had its own Pakistani military escort that turned into a Chinese military escort when crossing into China. Austin describes their first night in China at an isolated place with no plumbing and a communal outhouse that had a dozen holes in the ground inside – with no privacy at all. After several days, the group flew to Beijing, where Austin had arranged with Chinese authorities for a special tribute for Trudeau in the Great Hall of the People. All of China's ambassadors to Canada during the Trudeau years were there.

Austin writes: "There were many speeches and marvellous discussions about Canada-China relations, Canada's role in assisting China to take its place in international organizations, and how appreciative they were. It was like a big thank you for the role he had played."

In hindsight, that big thank you in Beijing may have been the high point in Canada-China relations. Two years later, the Tiananmen Square massacre damaged China's international relationships. Austin describes playing a role in helping rebuild the relationship by, among other things, helping to organize Team Canada trade missions to China.

Austin completed his book before the recent revelations of alleged Chinese interference in Canadian elections. But he does address Canada's arrest in 2018 of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou in Vancouver at the request of the US, and China's retaliatory detention of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. Austin says there is no doubt these incidents have had a "severe impact" on Canada-China relations.

Having played such a pathfinder role in developing China-Canada relations, Austin had always been hopeful about the bilateral relationship, but he says he was never naïve. "Canada is entirely within the US sphere of influence – no ifs, ands, or buts," he writes.

As for his old professional digs of 32 years, Austin says the rise of independent senators has presented new challenges for how the upper chamber operates. How should debates be structured? What should be the rules for representation on committees? There are many new questions. Austin says there should be a public assessment of how things are currently working in the Senate and that new practices need to be codified.

Unlikely Insider is a book that will appeal to political junkies and general readers alike. It provides valuable new perspectives on important policy issues and is sprinkled with interesting anecdotes and revelations that help keep the narrative moving along at a brisk pace. This is a well-constructed memoir. It leaves the reader realizing that nation-building is, has been, and ever will be, a work in progress.

(Policy contributing writer David O. Johnston served as Regional Representative in Quebec and Nunavut of the federal Commissioner of Official Languages from 2014 to 2022. Previously, he worked at *The Montreal Gazette* for 33 years, concluding as editorial page editor.)



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



You can help BCYP make Camp Phoenix a success

By Megan Ryan-Lloyd
BCYP Minister of Camp Phoenix

Every child deserves the opportunity to explore nature, build friendships, and create lifelong memories. The annual British Columbia Youth Parliament (BCYP) camp project ensures that happens, and applications are now open for Camp Phoenix 2023.



Megan Ryan-Lloyd

With our motto of "Youth Serving Youth," BCYP members are dedicated to serving the youth of British Columbia through various individual and group projects. Our largest annual project is Camp Phoenix.

This is a summer camp experience for young individuals who would otherwise be unable to attend. This year Camp Phoenix will take place from Aug. 23rd to the 27th at Camp Barnard in Sooke. It is a five-day sleepover camp for children aged 8 to 12. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis, and the deadline for application is July 9th.

Camp Phoenix holds immense importance for our organization as it serves a vital social purpose. This project bridges the gap for children who face social or financial limitations preventing them from experiencing summer camp. By providing this unique opportunity, we seek to empower each camper with access to personal growth, development and unforgettable memories.

Camp Phoenix guarantees that financial constraints do not hinder a child's participation by offering full subsidies to

families in need. Our lower staff ratios also ensure campers have unlimited access to the specialized support they need.

Camp Phoenix was a great success in 2022. Former Minister of Camp Abby Head – currently our premier – leads the project supporting 48 campers. Last year the project was staffed by more than 40 young people who attended camp training in the spring of 2022 and dedicated the last week of their summer break to support this project. With camp unable to run during COVID-19, having the project run again in 2022 felt like a triumph for our BCYP community. We hope to build on our success this year and recruit up to 60 campers.

Support is much appreciated by anyone who can help us with our recruitment efforts. For recruitment purposes, we do outreach to local schools and child-support organizations.

AFMLABC members and their families can also help with recruitment. Please share information about this opportunity with families in need and your community contacts. Encourage them to spread the word. Promotional information is available at: <https://bcyp.org/camp-promo>.

Financial contributions to Camp Phoenix are also warmly accepted. Your generous donation will make a difference and enable us to offer partial or complete subsidies to families in need, ensuring that no child is left behind due to financial limitations.

To make a donation or learn more about how you can support Camp Phoenix 2023, please contact: camp.phoenix@bcyp.org

Thank you for your interest and support.



June 1935: "On to Ottawa Trek"

Striking workers commandeer east-bound freight trains

In early April 1935, during the Great Depression, a strike and protest by Unemployment Relief Camp workers was organized by the Workers' Unity League (WUL). It was led by WUL officer Arthur "Slim" Evans. The League was affiliated with the international Communist movement. The protest was motivated by a desire for improved conditions and benefits in the camps, where workers were paid 20 cents a day for a 44-hour work week. However, the federal government under Prime Minister R. B. Bennett was reluctant to provide work and wages programs.

In Vancouver, the strikers organized themselves into divisions. They undertook alliances with civic, labour, ethnic and political groups, held demonstrations, and spoke with government officials, including British Columbia Premier Dufferin T. Pattullo and Vancouver Mayor Gerald McGeer. The two-month protest included the occupation of the Hudson's Bay store and the city museum and library. A May Day parade also drew some 20,000 strikers and supporters to Stanley Park.

Local governments refused to take responsibility for the strikers' welfare. The men themselves began to grow restless at the apparent failure of their protest. In response, Evans and his associates decided to take the movement to Ottawa. On June 3rd, more than 1,000 strikers began the "On to Ottawa Trek." They sought to inform the nation of their cause and to lay complaints before Parliament and Prime Minister Bennett.

The strikers peacefully commandeered freight trains. They made stops in Calgary, Medicine Hat, Swift Current and Moose Jaw, where more men joined their ranks. Their numbers had grown to around 2,000 when they reached Regina on June 14th. In Regina, the railways, supported by an order from the prime minister, refused further access to their trains.

Negotiations with two federal cabinet ministers took place on June 17th but went nowhere. Eight Trekkers were then dispatched to Ottawa to meet with Bennett. The remaining marchers waited at the Regina Exhibition Grounds. Food and shelter were supplied by townspeople and the Saskatchewan government, even though Premier James Gardiner was displeased that the convoy of protestors had been stopped in his province's capital.

When the Depression hit, hundreds of thousands of Canadians were thrown out of work. Jungle camps became home to many unemployed with nowhere else to go. These men found space in a camp near the Vancouver City dump.



The talks in Ottawa quickly broke down. The delegation returned to Regina, having decided to disband the Trek. A rally was held at Regina's Market Square on July 1st to secure last-minute assistance from the townspeople. Although the Trek was dispersing, Bennett had decided to arrest its leaders. That day, Regina constables and RCMP squads moved into a rallying crowd of some 300 people to arrest Evans and other speakers, thus provoking the Regina Riot.

The conflict raged back and forth on Regina streets. Trekkers assaulted police with rocks and clubs. Police fired guns into the crowd. The fracas ended by midnight after the rioters had returned to the Exhibition Grounds. Two people, including one city constable, were killed; hundreds of people, including rioters, constables and citizens, were injured; 130 rioters were arrested; and tens of thousands of dollars of damage was done to the city. Four days later, the Saskatchewan government helped the marchers on their way. Most of them returned on passenger trains to Vancouver.

The repression of the Trekkers and Bennett's antagonism towards Evans contributed to Bennett's political decline. The protest also increased the public profile of the Communist Party of Canada during the desperate times of the Great Depression. In 1997, the site of the Regina Riot was declared a National Historic Site by the federal government.

Source: The Canadian Encyclopedia

A spacewalk from Orville Wright to Alan Shepherd

By Geoff Plant

Writing in his blog *Feels Like Far*

When I was a kid, my dad used to wake me up in the morning so I could watch the astronauts take off from Cape Canaveral. Mercury, then Gemini, then Apollo. Walter Cronkite presiding. Mission Control voices doing the countdown. I wanted to be an astronaut. Who didn't?

And, in the summer of 1969, when I was 14 and a camper on the shores of Deka Lake in BC's Cariboo, a long way from electricity, let alone television sets, the camp leader Lorne Browne pointed up at the sky one night as we were sitting around the campfire and said, "Boys, the astronauts are on the moon tonight," and we all looked up and marvelled.

A few days later, when the mail came, my parents had sent me that issue of the *Vancouver Sun* that was renamed "*The Moon*" with the image of one of the astronauts descending the ladder and the immortal words, "That's one small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind."

The world was a place of hope and possibility. Mankind could do anything it set its mind to.

So (recently), we went to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC, and I got to see the Columbia space capsule the three Apollo astronauts flew home from the moon in.

And, the Mercury capsule Alan Shepherd flew the first American space flight in. And the Gemini capsule that Ed White took the first EVA (spacewalk) from. And the model of the starship Enterprise used in the original Star Trek TV show. And a rebel alliance fighter jet from Star Wars. And the plane that Orville Wright flew the first powered flight in at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in 1903. And the *Spirit of St. Louis*, which Lindbergh flew all by himself across the Atlantic in 1927, a 33-and-a-half-hour solo flight. Over 100,000 people swarmed the runway at Paris–Le Bourget Airport just outside Paris to greet him.

And, moon rocks.

The place was hopping. Every nine-year-old kid within a day's drive was there with their brothers and sisters and parents. But somehow, the crowds just added to the energy of the place. After all, inside, I was one of those nine-year-old kids.

I kept thinking of my dad, who would wake me up on mission day by whistling at me from the door of my bedroom and then join me on the sofa in front of the TV in our family room, where we would listen to the countdown and cross our fingers and hope everything would work out. Then, hours or days later, we might see TV shots of the spacecraft parachuting into the ocean somewhere.

The astronauts were smiling as they emerged from the capsule as it bobbed on the waves, crammed too long into a space smaller than the front seat of a Volkswagen Beetle, somehow getting it all right. I collected *LIFE* magazines when the space missions were on the cover and treasured the photograph of Earthrise that the Apollo 8 astronauts took as they entered lunar orbit on Christmas Eve 1968.

It turns out that Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin legally changed his name to Buzz in 1988. Maybe if you were the second human to walk on the moon's surface, you could call yourself anything you want?

We inspected the space suits and the gear packed in case the craft landed in some wild and remote jungle instead of the ocean. The machete knife looked pretty impressive, as did the collection of pills for the astronauts who might have survived a half-million-mile journey to and from the moon, only to deal with dysentery after they landed.

For all that was miraculous, perhaps the most miraculous thing was the astonishing problem-solving capacity of the hundreds of people in Mission Control who got the Apollo 13 crew safely home after an oxygen tank exploded while en route to the moon and solved dozens, if not hundreds, of other seemingly insoluble problems during almost every mission.





The Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia

*With thanks to Her Honour, Lieutenant-Governor Janet Austin,
you and your guests are invited to our 2023 Dinner.*

Association Annual Dinner

**Friday, September 15, 2023
Government House, Victoria**

Time: 6 p.m. for 7 p.m.
Dress: Business attire please
Cost: \$135 per person, taxes included
Special Guest: **Jody Wilson-Raybould**
Former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

This event is open to all. You and your guests need not be former MLAs. Join us for dinner and enjoy! Please advise soonest.

Please make your cheque payable to the **Association of Former MLAs of BC** and mail it to the address below. (If you wish, you may post-date your cheque, but **no later** than August 25, 2023). Sorry, no refunds after that date. If you have already reserved, thank you!

**Association of Former MLAs of BC
P.O. Box 30024, Reynolds P.O.
Victoria, B.C. V8X 1J0**

Dinner guests can also purchase tickets 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 let us know the names of all the persons attending by including them in the Comments section on the payments page and/or by email to ootd@shaw.ca.



Response Coupon - please detach and return with your payment

I/we plan on attending Dinner at Government House on Friday, September 15, 2023.

My cheque for _____ persons @ \$135 is enclosed. Total \$_____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

(please list additional guest names on the reverse side of this coupon)

Deadline for payment by mail or online is August 25, 2023
(no refunds after that date)



The Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia

This is to notify all Members of our A.G.M.

Official Notice of 2023 Annual General Meeting **Friday, September 15, 2023**

Hemlock Committee Room
Parliament Buildings, Victoria
Commencing 1:30 p.m. sharp



Additional dinner guest names

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____