



Photo courtesy of John Yanyshyn / Visions West Photography

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

An open letter to BC

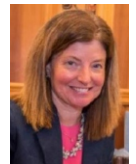
From Dr. Bonnie



Page 4

Leg. responds to a crisis

by Kate Ryan-Lloyd



Page 5

Members write in

And, Bruce sings



Pages 10-13

Leg. Library goes digital

"It's about
better access"

Page 14



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:

P.O. Box 31009
University Heights P.O.
Victoria, B.C. V8N 6J3

Or emailed to ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com
or ootd@shaw.ca

Editor: Brian Kieran
Layout/Production/Research: Rob Lee

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.

Board of Directors 2019-2020

Jeff Bray President
Dave Hayer Vice President
Ian Waddell Secretary
James Gorst Treasurer
Penny Priddy Past President

Directors

Harry Bloy **Tim Stevenson**
Ken Jones **Patrick Wong**
Cliff Serwa

Honourary Directors

Hon. Iona Campagnolo, PC, CM, OBC, LL.D
Hon. Steven L. Point, OBC
Hon. Judith Guichon, OBC

Honourary Members

Hon. Darryl Plecas
Speaker of the Legislature
Joan Barton, MLSc., MPA

Honourary Life Members

Jim Hume
Ian D. Izard, QC, Honourary Solicitor
E. George MacMinn, QC, OBC

Life Members

(The late) Hugh Curtis

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 for the newsletter.

Dues, Subscriptions and Donations

Iain Black, Coquitlam
Arnie Hamilton, Victoria
Cliff Serwa, Kelowna
Lynn Stephens, Langley
Tim Stevenson, Vancouver

From the Editor's Desk

It has been most gratifying to be able to dedicate four pages to letters in this issue of OTTD. That has not happened in I don't know how long. In normal times, folks are busy. Letters take thought; they take time ... time we don't always have. Clearly, COVID-19 has changed all that as we languish in a Twilight Zone of isolation with no shortage of time to sit and reflect while yearning for ways to share with others long distance.

Thank you to Linda Reid, Ian Waddell, Geoff Plant, Ken Jones, Cliff Serwa, Bruce Strachan, Val Roddick and Mike Farnworth for reaching out to us. Each of you has shared a unique take on the pandemic. Running through these letters is an optimism that we are equal to the challenge in BC and that we will emerge from this crisis even better participants in the life of this beautiful province than we are already.

Obviously, the dedication, compassion and tough mindedness of our provincial health officer, Dr Bonnie Henry, continues to command centre stage. I am so pleased that New Westminster-based artist Mark Zelmer has given us permission to illustrate Dr. Bonnie's Open Letter to BC with a picture of his recent portrait of her.

Mark says: "Like almost all of us, my life has been turned upside-down by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a painter and illustrator, at first, I felt like there wasn't much I could do to provide practical assistance to anyone. But after much consideration ... I realized I could contribute by keeping an artistic record of what is occurring right now – what we fear, what we love and loath, who or what inspires us or makes us angry.

"I was very surprised, therefore, at the attention that my first piece received, that of our provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry. I was quite moved by the dialogue that this simple portrait opened up. I feel it's very important to communicate often and communicate well with each other right now, in whatever form that may take."

Thank you, Mark.

Stay safe everyone.

President's Report

As I write this, we are in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic here in Canada. It is too hard to say whether we are at the mid-point or whether to expect a second wave. Nonetheless, it is a difficult time for many, and I hope you are faring well during this unprecedented crisis. Last month, I remarked about the need for elected officials to move quickly and safely in this crisis, while recognizing that accountability in our democratic institutions was still integral to our system of governance.

This month, I want to acknowledge a positive phenomenon that we are witnessing. As former parliamentarians, we are keenly aware that things do not typically move fast in government. However, both in Ottawa and Victoria, we are seeing programs being designed and delivered incredibly quickly. These program roll-outs are also being modified quickly as required. I have been impressed with how nimble our politicians and our public servants have been during this pandemic.

However, it is not the speed of program implementation that impresses me the most, but how receptive both Victoria and Ottawa have been responding to feedback from Canadians and British Columbians. It reflects a keen desire to help as many people as possible during this crisis. Ideologies, policy

platforms, and bumper sticker politics have taken a back seat to simply serving the public in the best way possible.

Now, there will be a period of reflection; a time when people will point out what they think various levels of government could have or should have done. And, the public will start to lose patience with distancing constraints before we start to see an easing of those restrictions. But, at present, I simply want to commend our elected officials and the public service for the amazing work they have done, in extraordinary times, and with such alacrity.

To our health care workers, grocery store clerks, bus drivers, pharmacists and many others providing essential services, I want to say on behalf of our association, thank you! To our readers I wish for you all to stay safe and healthy and I wish us a smooth transition to recovery.



Jeff Bray,
President AFMLABC

INVESTING WHERE WE LIVE.

WE ARE COMMITTED TO CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVING OUR PRINCE GEORGE BREWERY

TECHNOLOGICAL UPGRADES MEAN QUALITY PRODUCTS THAT TASTE BETTER & STAY FRESH LONGER

PACIFIC WESTERN BREWING

PWBREWING.NET

More departures. More fare options. More choice.

For trusted, affordable travel: Just Harbour Air and you're there.

FROM VANCOUVER	✈️	🚗/🚲	SAVE
Victoria, Inner Harbour	35m	3h, 5m	2h, 30m
Seattle, Lake Union, WA	50m	2h, 58m	2h, 8m
Nanaimo Harbour	20m	2h, 44m	2h, 24m
FROM VICTORIA	✈️	🚗/🚲	SAVE
Richmond, YVR South	30m	3h, 16m	2h, 46m
Pitt Meadows Airport	35m	3h, 29m	2h, 54m
Vancouver, Coal Harbour	35m	3h, 5m	2h, 30m

HARBOUR AIR SEAPLANES

For full locations and to book: harbourair.com | 1.800.665.0212

And many more!

An Open Letter to BC

The spread of COVID-19 knows no boundaries

By Dr. Bonnie Henry

When an outbreak hits a community, one of the most urgent things people want is information. This is human nature, as information allows us to protect ourselves, our families and our loved ones.

Information is at the heart of public health – knowing what our risks are, where they are coming from and who is affected. One of the key ways we gather information is through active contact tracing, when public health teams map the transmission, alert those at risk and close the circle to break the chain.

Public health protocols also dictate that when the potential for transmission is unknown, we must immediately alert the public. From the very beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in BC, we have been doing exactly that – alerting people to the risks within communities through regular briefings and connecting with individuals who are close contacts. When we cannot close the circle, we open the circle.

Public health is boots-on-the-ground health care, which means teams work to connect with each and every person who may be at risk of exposure to COVID-19. We do this to provide individual support and, equally important, to continue to follow the transmission trail.

Initially, public health teams identified that the source of transmission was from travellers. That is why our briefings listed travel locations and cruise ships. With that information known, we were able to put precautions in place.

However, as we have seen here in BC and globally, once there is community transmission, there is no boundary to the spread of COVID-19. Simply put, the risk is everywhere.

It would be irresponsible to mention only a few communities and give people outside those areas a false sense that they are not susceptible or at lower risk. Every health region in BC has people with COVID-19. Every community and home town – no matter how large or small – is at risk.

As we notify the public about COVID-19 cases, we have been careful about how much we disclose about the personal details of people who were potentially exposed and the specific location of confirmed cases. This is because, as with many communicable diseases, there is still very much of a stigma associated with infection.



Mark Zelmer- reprinted with permission

We want people who have symptoms to contact us and to feel safe contacting us, knowing their personal information will be protected. This is important to everyone. It allows public health teams to do the work they need to do to keep all of us safe.

So, while I understand the desire to know and understand what the COVID-19 situation is in your community, I need to emphasize that knowing where the positive cases are does not protect you, your family or your community. The actions you take will do that.

No one is immune from this disease, but everyone can make a difference. Every British Columbian has a part to play to flatten the curve.

Wash your hands, do not touch your face, stay home if you are ill, and stay apart with physical distancing. Let's all do the right thing.

For the latest medical updates, including case counts, prevention, risks and testing, visit: bccdc.ca, or follow @CDCofBC

For the provincial health officer's orders, notices and guidance, visit: gov.bc.ca/phoguidance

For non-health related information, including financial, childcare and education supports, travel, transportation and essential service information, visit: gov.bc.ca/COVID19

Or call 1-888-COVID19 (1-888-268-4319) between 7:30 a.m. and 8 p.m., seven days a week.

(Dr. Bonnie Henry is BC's provincial health officer.)

Continuing Legislative Assembly business during a crisis

By Kate Ryan-Lloyd
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Since BC confirmed its first case of COVID-19 in January, the Legislative Assembly has closely monitored the recommendations of the Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry and Health Minister Adrian Dix.

Accordingly, our Administration adapted our business continuity plan. After the adjournment for the spring break on March 5th, the Administration established a COVID-19 Response Team and activated its Pandemic Response Plan.

Enhanced cleaning protocols were initiated and regular communications from the Office of the Clerk and Human Resource Operations began for Members, caucus and Assembly staff and all other Precinct building occupants. Remote work arrangements for most staff were established and staff were equipped to work from home.

By March 13th, public tours were cancelled and increased sanitation protocols introduced. By March 16th, the buildings were closed to the public until further notice.

Today, we continue to support core operations with a small team in the buildings while more than 80 per cent of staff and most caucus staff work remotely.

On March 30th, the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts became the first parliamentary committee to hold a meeting entirely by videoconference. One month later, we have hosted seven public committee meetings using the videoconferencing platform Zoom which features security provisions that can be optimized by meeting hosts.

Interested citizens can continue to follow parliamentary committee proceedings through our Hansard broadcast channel or on the Assembly website. Zoom has proven a suitable alternative to in-person meetings during these exceptional times, providing us with a mechanism to support operational continuity of parliamentary committees. An enhanced rollout of Zoom in the months ahead will support a busy summer season of public hearings with the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services' annual budget consultation process beginning in June, along with another set of public hearings with the Special Committee to Review the Personal Information Protection Act.



We are also assessing the feasibility of using video conferencing software to support a virtual meeting of the Legislative Assembly. Other options include supporting physically distanced sittings of the House as occurred on March 23rd, or a hybrid approach that would have some Members in the Chamber and others joining virtually.

The March 23rd special one-day sitting was focused on consideration and adoption of special supply, budgetary and legislative matters to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its substantive economic consequences for our province. At the close of that sitting, the Assembly adopted a “long adjournment motion” that said the location and means of conducting sittings can be altered due to an emergency situation or public health measures.

A virtual sitting of the Assembly will require preparation and teamwork by all and will include the involvement and input of Speaker Darryl Plecas, the House Leaders and all Members. While that work is already underway, we recognize that any virtual sitting will need to be carefully planned, with a clear structure and temporary procedural adaptations to replicate the basic functions of the Chamber.

The adapted proceedings should also facilitate the participation of as many Members as possible from all caucuses and reflect broad regional representation. Key procedural elements, such as seeking recognition from the Chair to speak, moving a motion and introducing a bill or tabling a document are all elements of a typical sitting. We are working through these procedural details in support of the institution and its Members.

Perhaps by the time the next issue of Orders of the Day is published, we will have more to report. Times are changing but, as Dr. Henry has noted: This is just for now; it is not forever, and we look forward to resuming regular proceedings in the fullness of time.

Parliament under pressure: The response to COVID-19

The past few weeks have brought bewildering changes to our society, as governments worldwide seek to slow the spread of the coronavirus and mitigate its health, social, and economic impacts. The Canadian response has already generated the largest ever expansion in government activity and spending during peacetime.

We are all learning to muddle through and keep working despite these changes – and that includes our elected Members of Parliament, who together face an enormous disruption to their usual methods of engaging with citizens, reviewing legislation, and scrutinizing the government.

While adaptation is required in these exceptional times, democratic institutions should nevertheless continue to uphold their fundamental functions of scrutiny, transparency, and representation. Recognizing the increased potential for abuses of democracy, Samara Centre researchers are monitoring international and Canadian legislative bodies to see how they fare under the strain of COVID-19.

On March 13th, Canada's Parliament bent its own rules to enable emergency government spending by instantly passing Bill C-12. When Parliament reconvened briefly to pass the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act (Bill C-13), Canadians saw their democratic institutions stretched to the limit.

It is the Samara Centre's analysis that, while there were some missteps and lessons learned, Canada's parliamentary institutions did not buckle under the pressure.

What our democracy got right

The Opposition opposed. Pressure from Opposition MPs led to compromises for both C-12 and C-13 that balance the Government's need for flexibility in its response to COVID-19 with oversight and transparency.

(Ed. note: Until mid-April when the Conservatives were outvoted on the model for parliamentary sessions.) Political parties cooperated in good faith. While tempers flared, none of the parties walked away from the process or used this time for political gamesmanship.

Innovations were embraced. Discussion resulted in never-before-seen provisions to allow the Standing Committees on Finance and Health to meet via teleconference or videoconference in order to scrutinize the government's response to the pandemic while Parliament isn't sitting.



What our democracy got wrong

Government initially went too far in limiting parliamentary oversight. The initial draft of Bill C-13 would have given the Government the capacity to tax, borrow, and spend any sums of money it saw fit until the end of 2021. Under Opposition pressure, the tax measures were abandoned while the spending powers only last until September and are under much tighter scrutiny.

Oversight measures are complicated and incomplete. Rather than placing oversight provisions directly within bills C-12 and C-13, the measures were adopted through separate motions in the House of Commons. This arrangement makes it difficult for even close observers of Parliament to know how oversight of the government's emergency powers is supposed to work. Neither MPs nor Senators have the ability to remove the government's emergency powers as is the case with those available under the Emergencies Act.

Power was even further concentrated. The negotiations for Bills C-12 and C-13 were handled by an elite group of senior MPs from each party. Two-thirds of the MPs at the March 24-25 emergency session were either party leaders, ministers, whips, house leaders, or parliamentary secretaries, while just one Government backbencher was present.

Representation was particularly weak. Although limiting travel makes sense during a pandemic, 72 per cent of the MPs and 76 per cent of the Senators who took part in the emergency session of Parliament were from Ontario or Quebec, and no MPs or Senators were present from the Territories, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, or Prince Edward Island. This pandemic is playing out differently across the country, but we did not have all regions represented in Parliament.

While women are already underrepresented at Parliament (29 per cent of MPs and 45 per cent of Senators), they made up just 25 per cent of the MPs and 32 per cent of the Senators present for the emergency debate.

Scrutiny was strictly limited. The cross-party group of senior MPs who negotiated the COVID-19 response measures in Bills C-12 and C-13 expected all other MPs to support the legislation without seeing or commenting on it. Bill C-12 did not even receive first reading before it was passed through all stages, so some MPs who supported the motion passing the bill may not have known its contents.

Senators were largely excluded from the emergency negotiations for C-13 but were still expected to pass it within hours.

Transparency was abandoned. Anyone tuning in to see what could have been one of the most important debates in a generation found a green screen. As soon as the emergency sitting began on March 24th, the debate was suspended so that senior MPs from all parties could retreat into a backroom to discuss possible solutions rather than debating and amending Bill C-13 in public. By comparison, both Australia's Coronavirus Economic Response Package Omnibus Bill and the UK's Coronavirus Bill were amended during their passage through transparent debates.

While the Senate version was available in a day, the House of Commons' Hansard record of the important debate on Bill C-13 was only posted online a week after the debate took place.

Lessons learned and suggestions for the future

Plan for the worst. While Parliament no doubt has plans for how to handle parliamentary proceedings during a nuclear war, there was no immediate plan in place for how MPs could debate and discuss when they cannot meet physically.

Go remote. Parliament must urgently identify ways to ensure that all MPs remain able to effectively represent their constituents and have their voices heard, including through technology-enabled engagement at a distance. We have already seen that the pandemic will impact different parts of the country in different ways. The ability of MPs to share such diverse experiences can help to improve Canada's response, and should not be sacrificed in the name of efficiency.

Show your work. Government should always give the Opposition and Senate sufficient time to scrutinize bills. In the vast majority of cases, debate should extend over several days so that the Opposition can scrutinize the text and consult with concerned citizens. In a situation like this, where time is of the essence, governments should go out of their way to engage all MPs early on, by showing them draft bills ahead of sitting. With both C-12 and C-13, tabling the original versions of the legislation the night before they were debated would have improved scrutiny by both those MPs not part of the negotiations and the general public.

Debate in public, please. Even if most of the decisions are made behind closed doors, the process of debating out in the open is inherently valuable, and helps Canadians understand context and rationale.

(The Samara Centre for Democracy is a non-partisan charity dedicated to strengthening Canada's democracy.)



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



The World Health Organization and pandemic politics

by David P. Fidler
writing for Think Global Health

From the start, the World Health Organization (WHO) has been at the center of the COVID-19 storm – and the target of criticism. The pandemic and the controversies associated with it have created an immediate crisis for WHO as COVID-19 rages on. But it's also created a prospective crisis because the outbreak and political reactions to it will shape the future of WHO.

The present back-and-forth between WHO's critics and defenders previews the coming tussle over how to repair global health governance and reform WHO in light of this disaster. Although the pandemic is not over, the pillory and praise of WHO are worth exploring now so that the coming tsunami of demands for change do not destroy the organization in order to save it.

Much of the criticism of WHO asserts that it failed to exercise global health leadership and instead became a tool of Chinese politics, power, and propaganda. This critique holds that WHO had the ability to question China's handling of the outbreak in Wuhan so that the organization could better prepare the world for a dangerous disease – but that WHO failed to act decisively.

The criticism raises questions about WHO's authority to challenge states during serious outbreaks for the good of global health. In contrast, praise for WHO often highlights how it has deployed scientific skills, epidemiological expertise, medical know-how, outbreak-response capacities, and global networks in helping China and other countries. These commendations emphasize the imperative for WHO to work with governments in battling outbreaks.

In essence, WHO's critics and defenders are talking past each other. But both perspectives are core to the International Health Regulations (IHR), the leading international agreement on infectious diseases and other serious disease events adopted by WHO member states in 2005.

The IHR's success depends on WHO using its scientific, medical, and public health capabilities to help countries prevent, protect against, and respond to disease events. Deploying these capabilities tends not to generate political problems because the focus is on fighting outbreaks with measures based in science, medicine, and public health. This pattern appears again in the COVID-19 pandemic.

The IHR also grants WHO the authority to take actions that can challenge how governments exercise sovereignty. First, the IHR authorizes WHO to collect disease-event information from non-governmental sources, seek

verification from governments about such information, and, if necessary, share the information with other states.

Second, the IHR grants the WHO director-general the power to declare a public health emergency of international concern, even if the state experiencing the outbreak objects.

Third, the IHR gives WHO the authority to reinforce the requirement that a state party shall provide the scientific and public health justification for trade or travel restrictions that do not conform to WHO recommendations or accepted disease-control measures.

Fourth, the IHR requires states parties to protect human rights when managing disease events – protections for which WHO, as a champion of a human-rights approach to health, is a leading guardian.

Criticism of WHO during the COVID-19 pandemic has emerged exactly in the context of these authorities. Claims that WHO turned a blind eye to China's dissembling about its outbreak suggest that WHO failed to act on information it had from other sources, including the failure to share that information with other countries. Critics pilloried WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus for declaring the COVID-19 outbreak in China a public health emergency of international concern at a time and in a manner that appeared indecisive and deferential to the Chinese government.

Explaining why criticism and praise of WHO's performance focus on different aspects of the IHR requires understanding how perspectives at WHO and among global health experts about the role of these regulations in global health governance have shifted. The initial decade of this century witnessed astonishing changes in global health that reflected heightened political interest from state and non-state actors, policy and governance innovation, and unprecedented levels of funding. These changes include the transformation of international law on infectious diseases accomplished with the adoption of the IHR in 2005.

The first test after the IHR entered into force in 2007 was the H1N1 influenza pandemic in 2009. The WHO Director-General, Margaret Chan, declared the world's first public health emergency of international concern and issued recommendations that, among other things, advised against trade and travel measures. WHO coordinated scientific, medical, and public health efforts to understand the H1N1 virus, share information, treat people, and develop a vaccine. Post-pandemic analysis identified problems with WHO's performance and the IHR's functioning, but, overall,

the response underscored the importance of WHO's leadership and functional capabilities and the IHR's role in global health governance.

However, controversies about WHO's leadership, the organization's capabilities, and the IHR dominated the conversation over the next decade. Concerns began after the H1N1 pandemic as WHO and its member states struggled from the damage done by the Great Recession.

Then came the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014, which was a disaster for WHO and the IHR. WHO's response was so bad that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon created an ad hoc emergency response effort. WHO Director-General Chan failed to act on information that WHO had received from non-governmental sources, did not challenge governments that wanted to keep the outbreak quiet, and only declared a public health emergency of international concern after the epidemic was already a crisis.

The next major crisis was an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that started in late 2018. WHO's response to this outbreak demonstrated that it had re-invigorated its functional capacities even though it exhibited resistance to exercising the power to declare a public health emergency under the IHR.

Understanding WHO's behavior over the past decade helps us see that, before the novel coronavirus emerged in Wuhan, WHO was predisposed, for global health reasons, to exhibit leadership through deployment of its functional capabilities rather than by exercising authority it had to challenge governments politically.

Well before the Wuhan outbreak, China had imposed at home, and promoted abroad, a version of sovereignty intolerant of domestic dissent and foreign criticism. China's perspective on sovereignty constituted one of the most important features of the country's rise to great-power status and its global ambitions. For China, the outbreak's domestic and international implications were so serious that the response, including WHO's involvement, had to reflect China's position on sovereignty and its global stature.

Unsurprisingly, the official narratives from the Chinese government and WHO about the outbreak response scrupulously reflected China's political requirements and calculations. This outcome reflects the convergence of WHO's non-confrontational approach and China's intolerance of any divergence from the party line. This convergence meant China's political needs overwhelmed

WHO's desire to avoid politics in working with China in the interests of global health.

Other countries - especially the United States - that are wary of China's expanding power and intentions were also primed to interpret this disease event through a political lens. From the beginning, commentary in the United States framed the epidemic in China in geopolitical terms, used it to blame China's political leaders and system for the tragedy, and faulted WHO for complicity with China's perceived deception and propaganda.

Such criticism implies that WHO's interactions with China should have reflected U.S. political perspectives rather than China's. The lack of convergence between U.S. interests and WHO's actions left WHO exposed to attacks that intensified as the United States struggled with COVID-19 once it reached American shores.

(David P. Fidler is an Adjunct Senior Fellow for Cybersecurity and Global Health at the Council on Foreign Relations. Think Global Health examines the way changes in health reshape economies, societies, and the everyday lives of people around the globe.)



Proud supporter of the Provincial and Federal governments. Offering exceptional value year round with our special government employee rate. Ideally equipped to handle all your meeting needs; flexible meeting spaces with natural light, exquisite food, thoughtful amenities and superb service.

To book a room, or to find out more, call 1.800.661.7550, or email: reserve@hotelgrandpacific.com.

463 BELLEVILLE STREET, VICTORIA, B.C.
HOTELGRANDPACIFIC.COM
1.800.663.7550

Letters

Good governance is remote these days

Dear Editor:

We are definitely living in interesting times when it comes to “governing remotely.”

All members of the Legislature are there to support their constituents during these difficult times. I am in my Richmond office by myself a few days a week taking calls, but no face-to-face appointments. My staff are working from home during this time. Common questions in the constituency office relate to income replacement, business subsidies, rental support, ICBC, personal protective equipment (PPE) availability and contact with seniors in care homes.

Most days include conference calls and Zoom calls every hour, whether it is the Richmond COVID-19 Task Force; federal, provincial, municipal updates; Richmond Chamber of Commerce; Richmond School District; Vancouver Coastal Health Authority; and, the Better at Home Seniors Network. There are also daily briefings with Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry.



At least once a week there is a modeling joint presentation from Dr. Bonnie and Health Minister Adrian Dix who are both doing a splendid job under very trying circumstances. BC211 continues to offer excellent consumer-friendly information.

Peninsula Residence in White Rock has created a balcony opportunity for residences to see and converse with their loved ones without putting their health at increased risk. Countless care homes have provided for Facetime and Skype visits for residents and their families to stay connected. I continue to connect care providers with people in need of specialized services.

Accolades to our health care teams, our teaching colleagues, our grocery store and delivery folks and everyone else on the front lines. Thank you to those who must step away from their families to step up for ours. We are grateful.

There are better days ahead. Stay warm, stay safe and stay apart.

Linda Reid,
MLA Richmond South Centre

This is the way ... working together

Dear Editor

Each night at 7 p.m., when I join my neighbours to make a sound to honour and thank our healthcare workers, I think of Dr. Bonnie Henry and Health Minister Adrian Dix. What a great job they have been doing keeping us all informed about the latest developments in the battle against the coronavirus pandemic.

I remember Adrian when he was a page in the House of Commons in Ottawa. Later, he was my chief of staff in Ottawa and former premier Glen Clark's chief of staff in Victoria. Glen and I both agree that Dix is the perfect person for this job right now. He loves issues, works his butt off and was always the best with the facts.

I also salute the fact that Adrian is reaching out to the government's opposition critic Norm Letnick. As well, he is speaking some French and that resonates across the country.

This is the way good politicians should work. Together.

Ian Waddell QC
Former MP, 1979 – 1993
Former MLA, Vancouver Fraserview 1996 – 2001



Views of our COVID-19 response often politicized

Dear Editor:

The notion that the risk of COVID-19 is overblown is usually linked to the contention that our government is over-reacting. This idea got a lot of traction from a piece foolishly published recently by the New York Times, written by someone who used to be the head of a health institute at Yale. It later became clear that the person who wrote it was a dietician, not an infectious disease specialist, but by that point the notion that this was all somehow not as bad as we were being told it was had been given all kinds of encouragement by the fact that the piece had appeared in a reputable newspaper.

There was also a piece in the Edmonton Journal that supposedly makes the case that Canada's response to the virus has been completely ineffectual. That is, Canada has not reacted strongly enough. The author of the article compares Canada's response to that of Taiwan. I'm the first person to congratulate any government that managed to contain the outbreak of this virus. But I'd be slow to compare Taiwan to Canada about anything. It must surely be easier to control your borders when you don't have any land borders. We have thousands of miles of land borders. Taiwan is an

island. Taiwan is also a unitary republic. Canada, on the other hand, is a federation, in which the provinces are responsible for the delivery of health care. Taiwan has a population density of 649 people per km². It is one of the most densely populated areas on earth. Canada, on the other hand, has a population density of four people per km². Taiwan is actually half of the size of New Brunswick, one of our smallest provinces.

You get the picture? Taiwan is profoundly different from Canada. The only reason someone would go to the trouble of trying to argue that its response to the coronavirus is comparable to Canada is because they are looking for an excuse – any excuse – to criticize our government. Their objective is not to inform but to politicize. That is, their objective is to undermine our confidence in the decisions our governments have been making. Viewed of course, with all the clarity that hindsight can bring to the table.

Geoff Plant
Former MLA
Richmond-Steveston
1996–2005



Ken's whiskers tell a story of isolation

Dear Editor:

With no meetings to go to, I have to shave only once a week. Can't take advantage of the low gas prices, as my car still has a full tank. There's nowhere to go!

Easter Sunday, our family had a meet on "Zoom" teleconferencing with family from Victoria, Kitimat, Smithers, Telkwa and White Rock.

Used my stay-at-home time on the phone and internet to invite members to renew or join our Association. I hope everyone else is doing the same!

Just finished attending our local council meeting, on-line. In a previous meeting, I texted one of the councillors while the meeting was on, and got an answer. Ah, the wonders of the social network, and still keeping two metres of separation.

This afternoon and several sunny days past, I have been recycling old fence lattice and 2x4s; now they are ready for the sealant and installation on the top of a previously recycled/rebuilt fence section.

Sundays, I have been attending church, singing hymns, listening to the sermon (without going to sleep), all on-line, while in my jammies and slippers. I used to usher. How things have changed!

My wife hasn't killed me yet, but she has been giving it some thought, especially when I remind her that we have to stay at home. She has been a hiker, environmental guardian, shore keeper, skier and naturalist all her life; now we are telling her that she puts us and others at risk of contracting this deadly virus if she goes out for a multi-block walk.

I guess that's enough for now. Stay safe, give love, encourage, and listen to Dr. Bonnie Henry,

Kenneth "Ken" Jones
Former MLA
Surrey-Cloverdale
1991 –1996



We have discovered interdependence

Dear Editor:

As you all know, even the darkest of black clouds have a silver lining. I am not trying to minimize the impact of the pandemic, but I want to point out that even this most serious, world-wide dark cloud has a silver lining.

This past summer Lois and I drove once again to Inuvik and, with the new road extension open, we drove to Tuktoyaktuk as well. I mention the trip for a very special and important reason. The further north we went, the friendlier the folks along the way became. Time was not the critical factor that we, here in the well-populated south, believe it to be. We have been living life at a very accelerated pace.

The people of the north had time to talk and time to listen. When stopped alongside the highway most cars would slow down and many would stop just to make certain that we were okay. In a region with a harsher climate and a low population density they had a realization that we are missing down here. They recognize that they were interdependent and not independent as we tend to believe ourselves to be.

Well, the pandemic silver lining is that we are seeing great human qualities coming to the fore once again. The frenzy of life and living has abated. Cars are being driven at slower speeds; travel by air is greatly reduced; and, life continues at a more sedate pace.

Yes, it is a time of less quantity but, I see quality of life shaping up well. The COVID-19 virus has reminded us that we, like the northerners are interdependent, and must be mindful of our responsibility to each other.

Perhaps that is the reason that British Columbians have set such an enviable record in Canada embracing the reality that we are responsible for each other.

Cliff Serwa
Former MLA
Okanagan South & West
1986 –1996



Doc Bonnie has a friend in me

Dear Readers:

Years ago I took one of our grandchildren – can't remember which one, we have five – to see the animated movie "Toy Story." That movie features the song "You've got a friend in me." I really liked the tune, it has a nice lyric and a catchy melody.

When I thought of doing a song about Dr. Bonnie Henry that song came to mind. The modified lyrics were written pretty quickly. As I see it, Dr. Henry with her daily press conferences has done a superb job of guiding British Columbia through the COVID-19 pandemic.

She is obviously competent. But more than that, her kind, caring and genuinely sincere style of messaging has kept us on track and understanding the seriousness of the disease, the need to self-isolate and the absolute necessity to listen to what she's saying.

As we know, BC leads Canada in controlling and understanding this deadly virus. We can thank Dr. Henry for her leadership in keeping us safe, informed – and most importantly – alive.

DR. BONNIE HAS A FRIEND IN ME
A COOL CALM VOICE ON TV
I'M GETTING BORED BUT FEEL AT EASE
JUST FINISHED READNG WAR AND PEACE
THE DOCTOR HAS MY BACK IT'S CLEAR TO SEE
DR. BONNIE HAS FRIEND IN ME
AND YOU

THIS IS A VIRUS-ISOLATUS
A CONFINING MALADY
THE GOOD DOC SAYS THAT IN THIS INSTANCE
PLEASE STAY FRIENDLY BUT KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

AND AS THE YEARS GO BY
OUR THANKS WILL NEVER DIE
SHE GAVE GREAT ADVICE AND RIGHT ON TIME
WE STAYED HOME AND DOING FINE
TOASTING BONNIE WITH A GLASS OF WINE
DR. BONNIE HAS A FREIND IN ME
AND YOU

Bruce Strachan
Former MLA
Prince George South
1979 – 1991



(You can see a video on Facebook of Bruce performing his salute to Dr. Bonnie. Go to: <https://www.facebook.com/754798581/posts/10158234999153582/>)

So, this is the “New Normal”

Dear Editor:

Our “New Normal” is something to behold: Agriculture has been deemed an essential service. We all still have to eat to live. And, everyone is stepping up to the plate (no pun intended) to help and contribute in the most amazing ways.

Phones are ringing off the hook for local, born-and-raised, grass-fed beef; and for local fruit and veggies. A local supplier of women’s products is making masks for distribution to the downtown east side.

As gatherings, such as weddings, are now in limbo, people are determined not to lose heart. Couples are putting off until 2021 their “Big Day” in our heritage barn (with all the economic implications). Next year is going to turn into a huge

celebration nationwide that will help rebuild our lives and our economy. How fortunate we really are to have each other. We are rediscovering our neighbours and neighbourhoods.

Three cheers for all who make up our communities, our province and our country.

Val Roddick
Former MLA
Delta South
1999 – 2009



(And thanks, Brian and Rob – OOTD is getting better and better all the time.)

A unique and unforgettable moment in our history

Dear Editor:

The COVID-19 crisis is unlike anything I have experienced in my 25 years as an MLA, having been first elected in 1991. I had thought the wildfire season of 2018 was challenging, but COVID-19 has made that pale in comparison.

My MLA constituency office has always been open to walk-ins, and I like to take a relaxed approach to informal meetings. But all that has had to change; the office has had to adapt to the need to have in place measures to ensure everyone keeps their social distance, and we deal with constituents far more by phone.

The issues we deal with as MLAs outside the scope of regular government programs have increased. We now spend a lot of time helping constituents navigate new programs with rules often still being fleshed out.

At the beginning of the year, my ministry had an agenda and work plan in place to deal with the policy work and initiatives for the year. One of the critical areas of work was preparing for the flood and fire seasons.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown a massive curve at those plans, as ministry resources have had to be reprioritized to ensure we can meet the challenges and requirements stemming from the pandemic.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this challenge has been to see the response from our public service, not only in my ministry but across government. It has been nothing short of incredible, and we should all be immensely proud of the women and men of the BC public service.

As Government House Leader, I have the additional task of ensuring the Legislature functions on a day-to-day basis, ensuring legislation and the government’s agenda can be implemented. This means working with and having good communication with Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition as well as the third party.

When it became clear that COVID-19 would severely limit our ability to function as a House, the two opposition house leaders (Mary Polak for the BC Liberals and Sonja Furstenuu for the Greens) and I worked together along with the Clerk of the House to devise a way in which the House could function. Together, we developed a plan based on a minimum quorum of members being present in the Chamber and an agreed-upon agenda. This could only happen when all of us put aside partisan interests.

The result was something historic. On March 23rd, there was an unprecedented sitting of the BC Legislature. A quorum of just 12 MLAs met and held a Question Period and passed an interim supply bill to give government spending authority for nine months.

For all of us in the Chamber that day, it was a unique and unforgettable moment in the history of this province.

Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety & Solicitor General
Government House Leader



Legislature library goes digital to expand access

By Sheri Ostapovich
Technical Services Librarian
Legislative Library of BC

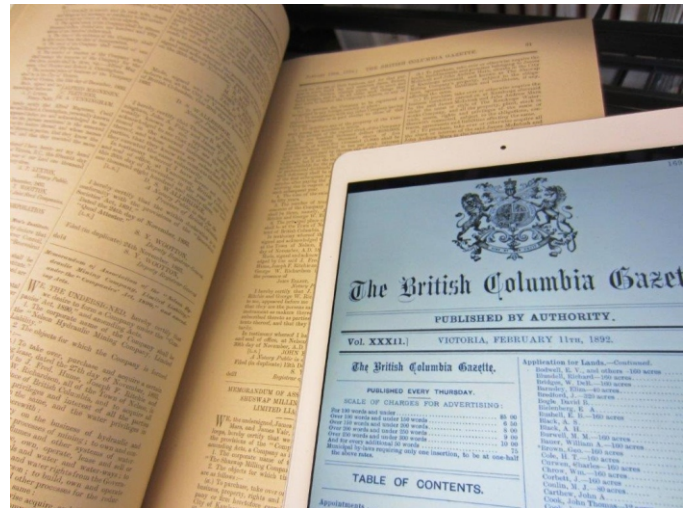
As part of its mandate to provide collections and research services in support of Members of the Legislative Assembly and their staff, the Legislative Library of British Columbia (LLBC) has undertaken various digitization projects in order to expand access to its collections.

The Library has the largest collection of British Columbia government publications in existence, with documents dating back to the 1800s. The collection includes ministry and Crown agency reports, financial statements, journals and sessional papers, as well as reports from the Assembly, committees, and statutory offices.

The Library's 2015-2020 strategic plan lists "expanding digital access" as one of its key strategic goals, and in 2015 the Library increased its digitization budget and began a systematic approach to its digitization program. What better place to start than digitizing historical government documents? In addition to contributing to strategic goals, there are numerous benefits to digitizing historical government documents.

To start, digital documents expand access to the materials. Anyone with an internet connection, can view the documents online via the Library's online catalogue and use them for research, teaching, or general interest. Digitization also plays an important preservation role. By creating a digital copy for everyday usage, handling of the original document is significantly reduced, thereby keeping older, fragile, rare, and damaged documents safe. For anyone concerned that digitizing means getting rid of print documents, worry not! Our print collection is valuable and remains in place. Digitization helps keep the paper copies preserved and available into the future.

Currently, the Library is undertaking a project to digitize all of the historical documents listed in "Publications of the Government of British Columbia, 1871-1947", a bibliography compiled by Marjorie Holmes, who was assistant provincial librarian of the BC Legislative Library from 1935 to 1954. The Holmes bibliography was selected as a digitization project due to the age of the documents and them being out of copyright, as well as the need to provide alternative points of access to these unique materials, some of which are in fragile condition.



(Photo by Marilyn Carr-Harris)

The digitization process involves several steps: Scanning print documents to make stable, authentic, trustworthy, and reliable digital copies; creating metadata to ensure the digital version is findable in the Library catalogue; running Optical Character Recognition software to make the digital copy text searchable; and finally, making the digital version available online. LLBC sends out the majority of its material for digitization to a vendor that specializes in document scanning. The vendor has the necessary equipment to perform various types of scanning (for example, large format or non-destructive scanning). LLBC uses the government's procurement process in order to select a vendor and negotiate a multiyear year contract and pricing.

To date, more than 3,500 publications from the Holmes bibliography have been scanned and can be accessed through the Library catalogue. The Library's collection of digital government publications is also now available via a custom search portal that was designed and built by the Library's systems team. This portal allows for full-text searching of the Legislative Library of British Columbia's collection of digital government publications.

As work continues to complete the digitization of all the government publications in the Holmes bibliography, it is exciting to think about how the Library is continuing to expand on the work done by previous generations of Legislative Library staff, as well as make accessible the work done by past governments. By digitizing historical government publications, the Legislative Library is helping to preserve a piece of British Columbia's parliamentary history for future generations of British Columbian legislators, researchers, and citizens alike.

Question Period

offbeat news, humour, and things that make you go "hmm..."

What's Tory blue and invisible at night?

TORONTO (NPR) – Ontario's newly-designed license plates have hit a political speed bump. Call it plate-gate.



The province's new design was unveiled by the provincial government and immediately people said they look cheap and like Q-tip boxes. The plates also had a new slogan – "A Place to Grow" – which drew the ire of some critics who preferred the previous "Yours to Discover."

Critics also noticed that the new plates had the same blue color scheme as Premier Doug Ford's Progressive Conservative Party. But the real problems began once the plates went into use. They are totally unreadable from a distance at night.

This baker is really on a roll

HELSINKI (Reuters) - A quick-thinking Helsinki bakery has saved itself from financial ruin due to the new coronavirus pandemic by creating a cake that looks like a toilet roll.

The dismayed staff at the Ronttosrouva bakery found all their orders cancelled last month, at the same time as panicked consumers began to hoard toilet paper. This sparked the idea of a toilet roll cake made of oat batter, passion fruit mousse and covered with white fondant.

The first five cakes sold within an hour, baker Uliana Timofeeva told Reuters, and the cake became a social media hit. The bakery now has hundreds of orders.



Get healthcare from home.



TELUS Health is working tirelessly to ensure innovative virtual care is available to every Canadian. **Babylon by TELUS Health** is a free app that can help relieve the current stresses on our healthcare system while reducing the risk of catching or spreading illnesses.



See a doctor from your phone.

British Columbia residents can video chat directly with a licensed doctor.



Check your symptoms 24/7.

Canadians across the country can use the AI-powered Symptom Checker.



4.9/5 App Store rating*

Loved by Canadians with thousands of five-star reviews.



At no cost to you.

Consultations for BC residents covered by MSP.**

Download the free app.



*App Store rating as of February 10, 2020. **BC residents: Individuals not covered by MSP will have a cost per consultation.

100 years ago

The Group of Seven held its first exhibition

The Group of Seven was a school of landscape painters. It was founded and held its first exhibition in 1920 as an organization of self-proclaimed modern artists, and disbanded in 1933. The group presented the dense, northern boreal forest of the Canadian Shield as a transcendent, spiritual force.

Their depictions of Canada's rugged wind-swept forest panoramas were eventually equated with a romanticized notion of Canadian strength and independence. Their works were noted for their bright colours, tactile paint handling, and simple yet dynamic forms. In addition to Tom Thomson, David Milne and Emily Carr, the Group of Seven were the most important Canadian artists of the early 20th Century. Their influence is seen in artists as diverse as abstract painter Jack Bush, the Painters Eleven, and Scottish painter Peter Doig.

The original members of the Group of Seven were: Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Franz Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald and F.H. Varley. Tom Thomson was a peer and a leading influence but died before the group was formed. All except Harris made their living as commercial artists. Harris, heir to the agricultural implements manufacturer Massey-Harris, was independently wealthy.

In 1926, after Franz Johnston's resignation, A.J. Casson was made a member. The Group realized they could hardly call themselves a national school of painters as long as they all lived in Toronto. They admitted Edwin Holgate of Montreal in 1930 and L.L. FitzGerald from Winnipeg in 1932 to give the Group a wider geographic base.

Emily Carr, famous for her paintings of the wilderness and Indigenous culture of the Northwest Coast, was influenced by the Group, and particularly by Lawren Harris. He once told her: "You are one of us." However, she was never an official member.

Four decades after Confederation, when the Group of Seven came on the scene, Canada was finding its feet as a nation – politically, socially and economically. In the realm of culture, however, it had not yet wrested its independence from Old World traditions. Canadian landscape art consisted primarily of anonymous views seen through the cloudy screen of European academia.



Members of the Group of Seven at the Arts & Letters Club in Toronto, clockwise from the left: A.Y. Jackson, Fred Varley, Lawren Harris, Barker Fairley, Franz Johnston, Arthur Lismer and J.E.H. Macdonald.

Courtesy Art Gallery of Ontario.

In this atmosphere, these painters and commercial artists befriended each other in Toronto between 1911 and 1913. They were drawn together by a common sense of frustration with the conservative quality of most Canadian art. They began meeting as a kind of mutual support group, often having lunch together at the Arts & Letters Club of Toronto. They would look at one another's paintings, share ideas and discuss technique.

Despite their emphasis on the need for a specifically "native" expression, the Group was aware of and drew inspiration from French Post-Impressionists, such as Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin. Other post-impressionists, such as Edvard Munch and Émile Bernard, were also key influences.

However, the turning point in their search for a style came in 1912, when MacDonald and Harris travelled to Buffalo to see an exhibition of contemporary Scandinavian painting. The men were struck by the approach of the Scandinavians. They used simple areas of flat, bright colour to create vivid depictions of a landscape.

Macdonald and Harris realized that the subjects of these paintings could as easily have been Canada's northern wilderness. The synthesis of northern subject with this new approach created the distinctive images that would become the hallmark of the Group of Seven.

(Source: The Canadian Encyclopedia)