

# Lest we forget



Photo courtesy of John Yanyshyn/Visions West Photography

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**Her Honour**

**The Honourable Janet Austin, OBC**

Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia

# Thank You and Miscellany

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

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

Or emailed to [ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com](mailto:ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com)  
or [ootd@shaw.ca](mailto:ootd@shaw.ca)

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

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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.*

## From the Editor's Desk

As a teenager – 60-odd years ago – I was a fully engaged member of RCSCC Iron Duke. Every Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> our sea cadet corps would apply an extra coat of spit and polish as we eagerly prepared to join local veterans and march to the Cenotaph in Burlington, Ontario. Every year I hoped we might be positioned close to the pipe and drum corps. The droning bagpipes and steady beat carried me with a sense of purpose I could feel even if not fully comprehend.

This year, in the grip of the second wave of the pandemic, local Cenotaphs around the country will be scenes of somber reflection about the great wars of the past and the current virus war that has us frozen in place. Much of the pomp and ceremony will be missing, a victim of COVID-19 paralysis and distancing protocols.

In this issue of OOTD, Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> is not forgotten. Our “Old Islander” Jim Hume takes us back to November, 1918 here in Victoria where joyful citizens got a four-day jump on Armistice celebrations (Page 4). On Page 5, the Royal Canadian Legion – in dire financial straits – shares plans for this year's National Remembrance Day Ceremony at the National War Memorial in Ottawa ... “smaller, yet heartfelt.” And, on Page 16, we dig into CBC's archives to return to the final days of the First World War as trench warfare finally gave way to a headlong pursuit of the retreating Germans.

I want to thank three former MLAs for contributing to this issue: Gordie Hogg, John Les and Gordon Wilson. Contributions like this give the newsletter authenticity. I hope more of you will contribute to the December issue. Your non-partisan thoughts on the election would be most welcome. We will review how Elections BC managed this challenging vote and hopefully pull together a look ahead to the next government.

This just in: Dominique Boutin, the manager of the Legislature Dining Room, informs me that seated dining has resumed. Reservations can be made at 250-387-3959. Face coverings and digital temperature checks are mandatory. Curbside take out continues at the front entrance.

# The President's Report

In my first report as your new President, I mentioned my intention to enhance and advance our mandated non-partisan collaboration with government. That work has begun.

On Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup>, OOTD Editor Brian Kieran and I met with the Clerk of the Legislature, Kate Ryan-Lloyd, in her chambers in the Leg. What a delight in these trying times to be able to meet in person albeit appropriately distanced.

I had the opportunity to share some of my recent coast to coast experiences meeting former provincial members in my role as BC representative and President of the Former Canadian Parliamentarians Foundation. Particularly, I wanted to emphasize that other associations of former parliamentarians receive much needed financial support from their governments to help fund their outreach programs – support our association most certainly needs.

We found in the Clerk a supportive friend. She clearly understands that we have a legislated mandate to put our non-partisan experience and knowledge at the service of the Legislature and the public. She wants us to be engaged with Members and we discussed some ways that can happen as a new government takes shape.

Ryan-Lloyd knows we recently approached the former Speaker for some interim funding and she invited us to prepare a more comprehensive request that could ultimately lead to an appearance before the Legislative Assembly Management Committee. She expects that LAMC will be resuming its committee meetings fairly quickly.

We also met with Hansard Services Director D'Arcy McPherson and Andrew Henry, the Manager of Broadcasting Services, to explore the possibility of our association gaining access to the government television channel. The idea is to interview former members about their service and show that on the Legislative channel during House breaks. They were very helpful but noted that the Hansard video feed is tightly regulated by the CRTC. I'm looking at this now.

Stay tuned and stay safe

Ian



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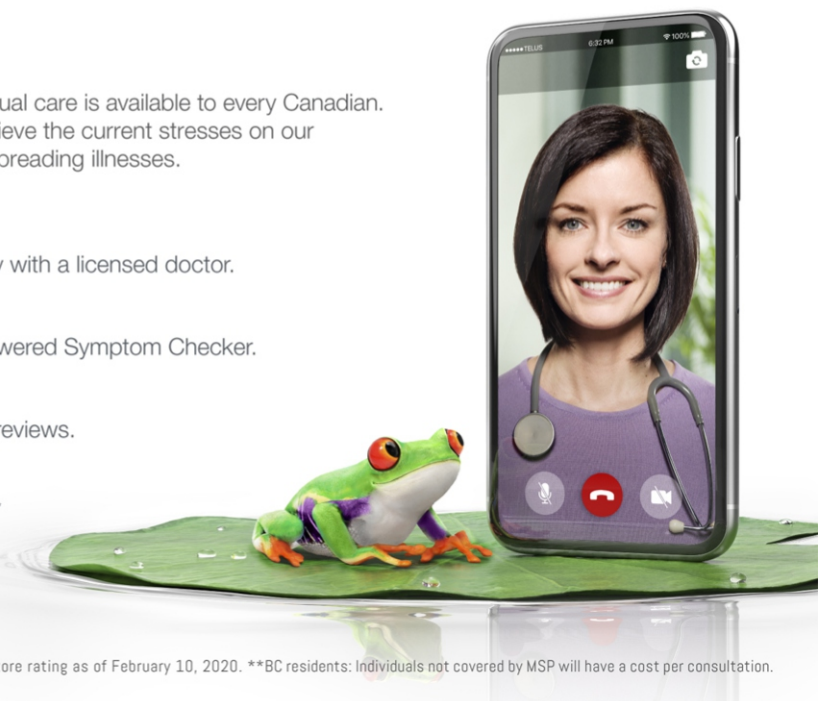
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# Nov. 11: “The spirit of memory brooded over it all.”

Nov 11, 1918, London, England: “The first stroke of eleven produced a magical effect.

“The tram cars glided into stillness, motors ceased to cough and fume, and stopped dead, and the mighty-limbed dray horses hunched back upon their loads and stopped also, seeming to do it of their own volition.

“Someone took off his hat, and with a nervous hesitancy the rest of the men bowed their heads also. Here and there, an old soldier could be detected slipping unconsciously into the posture of “attention.” An elderly woman, not far away, wiped her eyes, and the man beside her looked white and stern.

“Everyone stood very still.

“The hush deepened. It had spread over the whole city and become so pronounced as to impress one with a sense of audibility. It was a silence which was almost pain.

“And the spirit of memory brooded over it all.”

(The Manchester Guardian, Nov. 12, 1918)

By Jim Hume  
The Old Islander

Half a world away on Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> newspapers here in Victoria reported that citizens had spilled onto the streets on the 7<sup>th</sup> to enthusiastically rejoice that First World War was over – and a day later confessed the joy was a little premature. It stays on record as “the false Armistice” based on a mistaken telegraph report which had “misconstrued the words of a German army delegation.”

The false report, that long awaited peace had arrived, reached the city around 10 a.m. on the 7<sup>th</sup>. “Ships and boats began blowing whistles and ringing bells, telephone circuits lit up, downtown offices emptied, workers downed tools despite effort by their foremen to keep them on the job.” Premier John Oliver declared the day a holiday.

The celebrations continued, only slightly muted, for two or three days then began anew on the real Armistice Day with forbidden crowds openly defying government health care regulations. Spanish influenza had arrived in BC in force in 1918. In October, the provincial government had ordered the closure of places of mass assembly. On the list were churches, schools, public

libraries, pool halls, dance halls, fraternal order lodges, skating rinks and public fairs. It also reserved the right to add to the list anything it might have missed.

The province had two medical health officers – Dr. A.G. Price based in Victoria and Dr. Frederick Underhill in Vancouver. They were often at odds on the best way to fight the epidemic. Dr. Price favoured shut-downs of anything attracting crowds. Dr. Ravenhill favoured less rigorous closures.

Dr. Price was quick to note that the spontaneous crowds on the street during the false armistice had resulted in a one day increase of 104 new cases. “The crowds are to blame,” he said. “If people will only realize that the instructions we have given are for their own good and not simply idle words ... we will have the epidemic mastered.”

Once we just remembered the Great First World War. Now, we remember more than one because we are slow learners. We remember, as we should, the heroes we once watched as, slow in step, they marched across the Causeway. We remembered them each year as their ranks grew thinner with the passing of the years, then swelled again after the Second World War. Then came Korea in 1950 and Viet Nam in 1961 and too many mini-wars since then.

And, we are reminded each year of our failure to find and keep the peace. As the last trumpet notes drift across the Inner Harbour and the crowd, however large, falls silent for a thimble-full of seconds, to think of what might have been ... if, only if?



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# Royal Canadian Legion goes smaller, yet heartfelt

OTTAWA – The global pandemic has directly affected the execution of this year's National Remembrance Day Ceremony at the National War Memorial in Ottawa. However, the Royal Canadian Legion is still planning for a much smaller yet heartfelt ceremony which will include a maximum of 100 participants.

“The importance of a live ceremony honouring our veterans and their sacrifices is considered paramount by the Legion, especially during the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War,” says Danny Martin, National Ceremony Director. “At a time when we have all been isolated for months by the pandemic, ensuring the symbolism of the Legion and community leaders paying homage to our veterans is more important than ever.”

For the first time, spectators will be discouraged from attending in person, due to the limited space and the requirement to physically distance. The smaller number of people participating will be required to remain two metres apart and will need to wear masks unless performing certain duties related to the ceremony.

Anticipated significant changes to this year's commemoration include: No veteran's parade, no Canadian Armed Forces parade, a reduced colour party, wreaths pre-positioned such that no wreath bearers or assistants will be required and no members of the cadets or junior rangers present.

Similarly, scaled back ceremonies will be organized by many Legion Branches across the country, to the best of their abilities given the current restrictions. Please contact your local Legion Branch for updated information. The Legion's National Headquarters will also continue to release national updates as more details become available.

The Legion will offer a Facebook live presentation of the National Remembrance Day ceremony, and additional broadcast plans are under consideration.

Founded in 1925, the Legion is Canada's largest veteran support and community service organization. It is a non-profit organization with a national reach across Canada as well as branches in the U.S., Europe and Mexico.

Sadly, the curtailment of Remembrance Day ceremonies just adds to the current crisis being faced by many Royal Canadian Legion halls that have been shuttered for months due to COVID-19. Now a number of them are facing the prospect of never being able to reopen. With most ineligible for the host of federal aid programs being offered to help keep other businesses and charitable organizations afloat, hundreds of these facilities could be forced to shut their doors forever without federal intervention.

Legions are often seen as the heart of many communities, but because the pandemic has put a pause on events, it has cut off crucial income streams, like facility rentals, that allow legions to keep their doors open to veterans and others.

“We're a 95-year-old organization. And, in that 95 years, we have prided ourselves on being self-sufficient, we have not reached out for funding. But these are unprecedented times,” National Executive Director Steven Clark says.

One reason the legions can't get funding is because their programs are not directly related to the fight against COVID-19, though thousands of businesses have been able to access billions of federal aid dollars to make ends meet amid the pandemic.

Local branches have been given some emergency reserve funding from the national headquarters and have turned to crowdfunding initiatives but still the money is running out. While millions of dollars are donated every year through the National Poppy Campaign, this money can't be used to cover the operational costs associated with keeping these facilities open.

It's estimated that about 124 of the 1,381 Royal Canadian Legion branches across Canada are likely to close permanently, and another 357 are facing financial hardship.

**(Sources: Royal Canadian Legion and CTV)**

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# Show our elders we are not oblivious to their needs

By John Les

For most of 2020, we have been dealing with the advent of the COVID-19 virus pandemic. Initially, as we watched the struggles and mounting death tolls in places like Italy, New York and elsewhere, there was cause to fear a tsunami of illness and death right here in our own country and province.

Thankfully, we seem to have escaped the worst of the impact (so far), due in part to the skillful management of the pandemic by our Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry. Also, credit goes to all MLAs who have worked collaboratively, and without political grandstanding, to ensure an appropriate provincial response.

As I write this in late October, there is still no certainty around the availability of a vaccine. Also, it's clear the distribution of a vaccine (if developed) to something approaching most of the population will take months, not weeks. Thankfully, the treatment for those affected by COVID-19 has improved considerably as medical professionals have learned which treatments and therapeutics produce the best results.

In any event, it would seem we will be dealing with this virus for some time yet. For many, the impact on personal lives has been significant and serious. Jobs have been lost, businesses have closed down, and education has been disrupted. Many of these impacts will be irreversible and permanent.

Given the necessary response by government, the financial impacts on our provincial budget will be totally unprecedented. Where the accumulated provincial operating debt had been retired in recent years, we are going to be reinstating it at a pace of many billions per year for the next several years, at least. Let's not forget that our children and grandchildren will have to deal with this. In order to make economic recovery tenable, governments will be challenged to find fiscal policy levers and taxation adjustments that will support and energize economic growth.

While many of us have perhaps chafed at the restrictions on our ability to socialize, travel, work and live normally, it is our seniors – particularly those in care facilities – who have borne the brunt of COVID-19.

Firstly, elderly people have endured a much higher fatality rate due to the virus. This alone has created additional anxiety and concern. We all remember the multiple deaths in care facilities early on in the pandemic.



John Les

Secondly, the necessary measures to reduce exposure to the virus have resulted in an extreme degree of social isolation. While we have all experienced this to some degree, grandparents in care facilities have, in many cases, been unable to see their children and grandchildren at all. While many efforts were made to utilize new technologies such as FaceTime and Zoom, these are but a very limited replacement for in-person contact and interaction, especially for those affected by cognitive decline.

Given these impacts on seniors, one can't help but wonder if we shouldn't be thinking about more variety in models of seniors' care. Those options could include more encouragement for seniors to remain in their homes, support for family members to allow parents/grandparents to live in with family, and phasing out facilities with multiple-bed rooms. All options should be examined through a lens of enabling a more nimble and hopefully more socially satisfactory response to challenges such as we are now dealing with.

Everyone wishes to live to a ripe old age. Let's do our best to not only achieve quantity of life, but especially the best possible quality of life.

I hope these few paragraphs will help stimulate more discussion. Let's show our treasured elders we are not oblivious to their needs and to the lessons this pandemic has taught us.

**(John Les was the Mayor of Chilliwack from 1987 to 1999 and was the Liberal MLA for Chilliwack-Sumas from 2001 to 2013, serving initially as Minister of Small Business and Economic Development and later as Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General.)**

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# We face an uncertain future; we cannot simply reboot

By Gordon Wilson

This morning's sun is masked by thin grey clouds casting diffused light over the farm.

The air is filled with the shrill calls of Black Capped Chickadees and Waxwings while chattering Steller's Jays busy themselves at the feeder where whole peanuts provide a welcome feast.

Beneath the broad Cedar skirts, the Maremma guardian dogs seem unusually alert, their eyes fixed upon the bleating flock who, still angry from their forced incarceration prior to shearing, bleat out their displeasure as they stampede from the barn into the largest of the four fields available. They line up at the gate to the middle field, stomping their hooves, testing the fence and nosing the latch. They seem sure that the graze within that field is a better choice.

Even the three barn cats seem irritable. Tuxedo, unprovoked, clipped Chester's ears as he ascended the loft stairway to receive his breakfast, then proceeded to claw the hand that fed him.

There is an almost palpable disturbance in the air and I wonder if it's just me. I don't think so.

What began as the latest irritating craze we all believed would fade with summer's end has instead become the lexicon of modern parlance: Social distancing, the new normal, self isolation, self quarantine, fomites, super spreaders, masks mandatory.

And, of course, the second wave spawned by COVID-19 has filled the airwaves ad nauseum, causing an unprecedented economic shutdown with a faltering restart that, like a gas starved engine, threatens to stall again.

It has been a year in which Canadians have shouldered grief at a level last felt many generations ago when 730,000 men and women left their homes to fight in a foreign war with uncertain outcomes.

Mass murder in the Maritimes, the loss of Canadian Service personnel abroad, business bankruptcies and rising numbers of drug overdose deaths on our streets are woven into nightly news casts already saturated with reports of the spiking levels of infections from this pandemic.



Gordon Wilson

The silent toll on individuals, families, relationships, businesses and our communities will likely never be fully measured.

The impact on our approach to governance and democratic institutions will become more evident as we strive to define and agree upon what will constitute our "new normal." This is not an imagined video game where dividing the year 2020 by five to achieve a 404 error will let us reboot the year. We face a very uncertain future.

And, what really unsettles the soul is that all of this has come to pass not because of what was or is, but because of what might have been and may still occur.

I am sure of the sun's unmasking, that the softer call of the Collard Dove and the Wrens' playful chatter will bring harmony to the bird's chorus, and shorter days and cooler nights will bring a longer silence at the end of each day.

I am less certain about the prophets, pundits and profiteers who eagerly write about a new and better world order that, much like the sheep at the gate, would have us believe will lead to greener pastures.

It remains to be seen if that gate will open, and if it does who will go through and what they will find.

Stay safe, my friends.

**(Gordon Wilson was leader of the BC Liberal Party from 1987 to 1993. He represented Powell River-Sunshine Coast from 1991 to 2001.)**

# COVID-19 takes its toll on our quality of life

As COVID-19 cases surge and public health officials plead with Canadians to stay home and minimize their contact with others whenever possible, a new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute sheds light on the monumental shift in social behaviours in Canada this year and the corresponding effects it has had.

The unprecedented drop in community activity, from volunteering, to attending live concerts, to visiting local community centres and hubs, has taken its toll on Canadians. The percentage of those saying they have a good social life has dropped from more than half in 2019 (55 per cent) to just one-in-three (33 per cent) this year.

This study in late September, as with its predecessor in May of last year, sorts Canadians along two key dimensions: *Social isolation* (or the number and frequency of interpersonal connections a person has) and *loneliness* (or their relative satisfaction with the quality of those connections), to recreate our Index on Loneliness and Social Isolation (ISLI).

This year, the percentage of Canadians who can be categorized as “The Desolate,” those who suffer from both loneliness and social isolation, has increased from 23 per cent of the population to 33 per cent. Further, the percentage suffering from neither has dropped by nearly half, from 22 per cent to 12 per cent.

As Canadians have become more isolated, many are voicing concerns about their mental health. Last year, two-thirds (67 per cent) said their mental health was good or very good; this year just 53 per cent say the same. One-in-five (19 per cent) now share that their mental health is either poor or very poor, with three-in-10 young women (30 per cent) reporting this.

Older Canadians are by far the most likely to say that their mental health is holding up. Conversely, only two-in-five women under the age of 55 say their mental health is good or very good. Also notable is the role that job loss plays in one's self-assessment on this question. Those who lost work throughout the pandemic are twice as likely as those who have not lost work to say that their mental health is poor.

The COVID-19 outbreak forced Canadians into their homes and away from their communities, and consistently threatens to do so again as the country navigates rising and falling cases of the virus.



While finances have been the key challenge for many families as they try to keep food on the table and businesses afloat, there are myriad social connections that have been lost for the bulk of 2020. Birthday parties and celebrations over Zoom have become commonplace, and large events like Canada Day festivities and Thanksgiving have become smaller.

As the initial lockdown transitioned into public health guidance to stay home and limit gatherings, Canadians have seen a lot of their immediate household members. The good news is that for most, despite the extra time at home, those relationships are enduring.

Half of those with a spouse say they feel their relationship continues to be very good (51 per cent). This is down slightly from 2019 (57 per cent) but has largely been compensated by those saying their relationship is just good. Immediate family relationships are also largely unchanged. The vast majority of Canadians are getting by with their closest relatives without much tribulation.

That said, Canadians' relationships with their closest friends are subject to the most strain. There has been a nine-point drop in the number saying they have very good relationships with their close friends, and one-quarter (24 per cent) say their overall situation is only fair or worse.

At the community level, nearly all activities outside of socializing with neighbours have evaporated. Nine-in-10 Canadians say they did not attend a live event like a concert or play this summer, while the same number say they had no involvement in neighbourhood or community projects during that period.

*continued on Page 9*



The activity that has fallen off the least is socializing with neighbours. Evidently two-thirds of Canadians (67 per cent) took advantage of this proximity to enjoy a neighbour's company this summer, similar to the number that did so in 2019 (73 per cent). When it comes to broader community projects however, participation dropped from a typical level of 45 per cent to just 11 per cent.

Even more stark is the drop in participation for enriching events that people all over the country enjoy within their communities. Last spring, 76 per cent of Canadians said they were people who normally go out to events like live music or theatre; this summer just 13 per cent did so. More than half of Canadians had also said they volunteer for community clubs or groups and use the local community centre; just one-in-five did so this summer.

Canadians' interactions with nearly every social group in their lives have diminished during the pandemic. Even over the summer months, when many were taking advantage of outdoor spaces, beaches, and patios to expand their social circle beyond the household level, most made an effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 by avoiding personal contact with others.

Consider that over the past month seven-in-10 Canadians (68 per cent) say they did not see friends beyond one or two visits. Those between the ages of 18 and 34 are most likely to have seen friends weekly or more (40 per cent).

While family relationships remain strong, there is a clear contrast between now and 2019 when Canadians assess their social lives. The percentage who say this aspect of life is good or very good dropped from 55 per cent to just 33 per cent.

There are multiple ways that the pandemic can affect a person's time alone. For some, who may have already been alone often, this has been exacerbated. For others, who have been confined to fewer spaces, time alone has been hard to find. These new data suggest that the number of Canadians saying they are rarely or never alone has increased most, though it is also worth noting that the proportion of Canadians saying they are always alone, though relatively small, has doubled.

Examining this by age, one can see that it is older Canadians who are still most likely to be alone always or often, but all age groups are much more likely to have less alone time than they did before.

What is perhaps more important here is measuring how much a person would like to be alone. Those who are alone, while a smaller group this year than last, appear to have a more acute sense of that loneliness. Three-in-10 Canadians this year say they would rather be alone less, compared to 23 per cent last year.

It is troubling that the number of residents over 54 years of age who say they would rather see more of people has nearly doubled, from 18 per cent last year to 33 per cent. On the other end of the spectrum, those in the 35 to 54 age group are most likely to say they would appreciate some more alone time.

Looking at this with smaller age demographics it is evident that 35 to 44-year-olds are most likely to say they could use some more time alone, while at least one-quarter of all age groups say they would like less time alone.



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# “The public has no idea how hard we are working” – MP

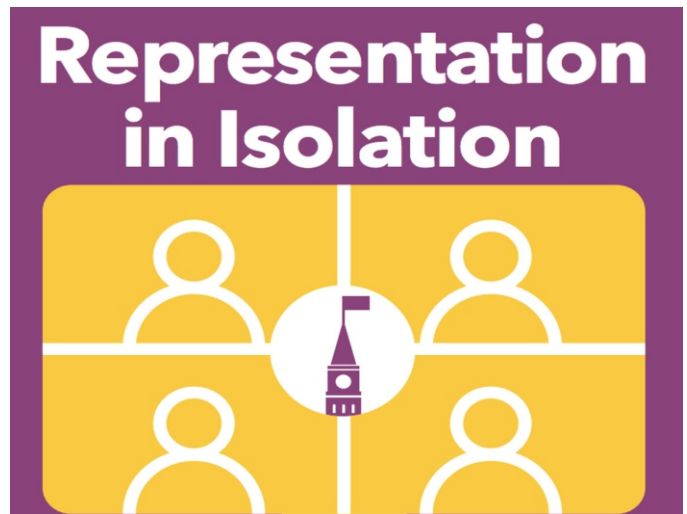
(Editor's Note: The Samara Centre for Democracy surveys Canada's MPs annually on democratic issues. The 2020 MP Survey provided an early opportunity to systematically hear about the democratic pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly 40 per cent of MPs anonymously shared their experiences of the new challenges they faced in their constituencies.)

***“I do not work at home; I live at work. For the first eight weeks I worked seven days a week, between 15-17 hours per day. Yes, really. It has dropped the last few weeks, but it is constant and unrelenting and draining. I have one staff person who is now on medical leave for burnout ... The public has no idea how hard we are working and this adds to the fatigue.”*** – Member of Parliament

MPs are often called on to plug service delivery gaps for the federal government. Under normal circumstances, up to half of an MP's time can go towards casework (assisting with employment insurance, immigration issues, or old age security, for example). When COVID-19 forced the closure of many workplaces, including Service Canada's public offices, and inspired a raft of major new programs, MPs and their staff were instantly flooded with constituents' requests for help.

Indeed, nearly 80 per cent of MPs indicated that they had much more constituency work than usual. Four out of five MPs said constituents reached out to them much more frequently. Although the survey focused on their workload during the first few weeks of the pandemic, MPs elaborated on the type of assistance that was sought quickly. As one MP described:

***“The workload came in waves. Initially it was rescuing people from remote places around the world. Some people were in life and death situations. I was putting airfares for constituents on my credit card and making complex travel arrangements at all hours. Then it morphed into economic impacts for individuals and small business.”***



According to MP respondents, normal casework (including immigration files) returned within two or three months, but the top issues MPs were involved with during the early period of the pandemic in Canada included financial assistance for individuals and families, financial assistance for businesses, and international travel or repatriation.

One MP was quick to emphasize that “inquiries” didn't capture the often-frantic requests for assistance that were coming from their constituents:

***“Most inquiries were far more intense. People were losing their businesses, their jobs, their life's dreams! The emotional intensity of the inquiries are so much higher that monitoring the mental health of my staff has been a new priority.”***

The second-most identified challenge was ensuring staff were able to continue working safely and effectively, with just over 40 per cent of MP respondents indicating this was one of the biggest difficulties. A number of MPs also highlighted the need to pay additional attention to averting staff burnout, by ensuring staff would take time for themselves and prioritize their mental health.

On a more personal note, MPs felt a heightened need to manage their own energy levels, learn how not to answer emails and calls at all hours of the day, and keep close tabs on their own mood. The juggle to balance the personal and the professional – often unsuccessfully – has been a trademark of political life.

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It's no surprise, then, that balancing work with personal and family obligations (like childcare) featured among the top operational challenges of the job.

Many MPs found that balancing childcare and homeschooling with the work of being a parliamentarian was the biggest challenge during the pandemic, but this wasn't experienced by all MPs to the same extent. Age was a greater factor than gender in determining whether MPs had difficulty balancing work with family obligations. While 35 per cent of female MPs and 28 per cent of male MPs indicated balancing the two was a top operational difficulty, younger MPs (under 55 years old) were nearly three times more likely than older MPs to mention this as an obstacle.

***“There is an enormous amount of information online about COVID, and about the policy responses of every jurisdiction on earth. This is by far the most data-rich crisis I have ever seen. We just have to learn where to look to find this information.”*** – Member of Parliament

In this time of deep uncertainty, to whom did MPs turn for information and advice, and did they get it?

MPs were largely satisfied with the support and guidance they received from the House of Commons administration. As one MP noted: “Equipment was an issue but the HoC responded so quickly and professionally.” Several MPs shared that they had still been able to turn to clerks and Library of Parliament researchers for information and guidance. MPs' happiness, with the support provided to them by the House of Commons administration, was only surpassed by their satisfaction with the support and guidance received from their own parties.

In search for information or advice during the pandemic, MPs were, characteristically, most likely to turn to their own political party – through caucus conference calls, research bureaus, updates from the leader's office, house leader, or whips, or certain spokespersons in the party. For example, the Bloc Québécois' “Information Whip” summarized the daily updates to federal government programs and provided question and answer documents to their caucus. MPs

also reported high satisfaction with the decision-making within their caucuses – though one MP noted that virtual caucus meetings “make it difficult for MPs to provide organized dissent.”

Satisfaction with the information shared by the federal government, however, was predictably mixed. Governing Liberal MPs were near-universally content, with 96 per cent satisfied, while Conservative MPs were most critical, with 80 per cent unsatisfied.

A number of MPs mentioned that it was extremely difficult to acquire precise, timely, high-quality information, which made it all the more difficult in turn to answer constituents' questions. While this may have been due to the dynamic nature of the pandemic, where everything was in flux and new information often overruled yesterday's news, some MPs described feeling like the federal government deliberately left them in the dark.

For example, one MP recalled how the government had publicized more funding to their riding, but the MP had personally not received any notice, nor details of the plan even following the public announcement. The government organized technical briefing calls, which were open to all MPs and held on a daily basis during the early stages of the pandemic. These briefings, often featuring public health officials or officials from other federal departments, were hailed by some MPs as “vital” and alternatively described by others as “not particularly helpful and did not address the concerns brought to their attention.”

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## Gordon Hanson remembered

Dear Editor:

I was saddened to hear about the passing of former NDP MLA Gordon Hanson.

Although we sat on opposite sides of the House we got along well. We were both members of the class of 1979 and I think that contributed to a mutual understanding.

Gordon was thoughtful, readily aware of the issues and tireless in support of his principals. Gordon had a fine sense of humour and his debating skills were well honed.

RIP Gordon Hanson.

Bruce Strachan

# Reni Masi: “The Coach,” inspired us to play better

By Gordon Hogg

I first met Reni when I was in Grade 11. He coached the Queen Elizabeth High School basketball team and we lost to them. I was impressed that he spoke to me after the game. I found out later that he spoke to many of the players on our team. He was thoughtful, friendly and complementary.

He was that same person each time I spent time with him.

When I was a probation officer and had youths attending his school, we discussed how to support and assist them. He was compassionate, supportive and caring.

He asked me to join his Thursday evening basketball team. I did and going to the bar after the games was always a highlight for me. We talked about our community, our province and our country and what it meant to be a “good citizen.” He was a great citizen and an immensely proud Canadian.

We maintained contact over the years. I was on White Rock City Council and became mayor and Reni was a mentor. When there was a byelection for Surrey-White Rock, he encouraged me to run. We became teammates in the Liberal Caucus and we started the BC Liberal Lakers basketball team and resumed our post-basketball pub gatherings.

Penny Priddy, then Minister of Education, often invited Reni and me to her legislature office to sample wine and discuss issues. Those evenings were wonderful, positive learning sessions.

Reni and I went to watch his son wrestle – it was professional wrestling and we were invited into the dressing room to watch the contestants rehearse prior to the show. It reminded us of Question Period preparations.

Reni seemed to know everyone and he was always greeted with a smile, a handshake and a “remember when” story.

When he left provincial politics, he went back to his first passion – education. He was elected a school trustee and he brought his experiences, caring and congenial approach with him.

He was always optimistic, inclusive and encouraging. He often referenced Susan and his family as sources of information, encouragement and support.

He was always “the Coach” ... engaging positively and inspiring us to play better.

**(Gordie Hogg was the Mayor of White Rock from 1984 to 1993. He served as the Liberal MLA for Surrey – White Rock from 1997 until 2017. He was the Minister of Child and Family Development from 2001 to 2004. He also served as MP for South Surrey – White Rock 2017 until 2019.)**



*Reni Masi*

## Reni died in late October at 87

He was a teacher for 15 years and a principal for 20 in Surrey. While he ran unsuccessfully provincially in Surrey in 1966 and twice federally (1980 and 1984), it wasn't until he retired from being a principal in 1991 that he began thinking more seriously about entering political life.

After a two-year stint coaching basketball at Holy Cross High School, Masi served as president of the BC Liberal Party from 1994 to 1995. A year later, he threw his hat in the ring to represent Delta North and served the constituency until 2005. In opposition, he served as the Official Opposition Deputy Critic for Advanced Education, Training and Technology.

In 2005, he became a member of Surrey's Board of Education and served three terms. Upon retirement he said: “Obviously, I was concerned about education, as an educator. My focus was education, not politics.”

Some of the other things Masi felt passionately about were establishing community schools and expanding the International Baccalaureate program. “That was important because it's an excellent program,” he said. “We've sent a lot of kids to major universities through that program – top, first-class universities.”

He also helped the board fight for – and eventually receive – equitable funding which, due to a flawed government formula, repeatedly left Surrey getting significantly less money than similarly sized districts such as Vancouver.

# Crystal Mason – the face of voter suppression in the U.S.

**(Editor's note: Regardless of the outcome of the U.S. presidential election, this vote will be remembered for the virtual collapse of voter equity.)**

Voting rights are under attack nationwide as states pass voter suppression laws. These laws have resulted in significant burdens for eligible voters trying to exercise their most fundamental constitutional right.

Since 2008, states across America have passed measures to make it harder for Americans – particularly black people, the elderly, students, and people with disabilities – to exercise their fundamental right to cast a ballot. These measures include cuts to early voting, voter ID laws, and purges of voter rolls.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has been engaged in advocacy and litigation across the country to get rid of these harmful voter suppression measures once and for all. One of the ACLU's most spectacular failed court challenges is the case of Crystal Mason, a Texas black woman jailed five years for attempting to vote in 2016.



Crystal Mason

On November 8, 2016, Mason drove to her polling place in Rendon, Texas. When she attempted to sign in, the volunteer could not find her name on the sheets and gave her a provisional ballot that would be counted if her credentials were valid. Written on the ballot was a statement that cautions individuals and explains that a person cannot vote if he or she is on supervised release from prison, as Mason was. Mason did not see the statement on the ballot, as an election worker was helping her.

She was convicted in 2018 of trying to vote in the 2016 election while on supervised release from her prior tax fraud felony conviction. During her initial trial, a probation official stated that he never told Mason that she could not vote, while Mason stated that she signed an affidavit that claimed she was an eligible voter.

Mason was represented by the Texas branch of the ACLU, the ACLU Voting Rights Project, the Texas Civil Rights Project, and two personal attorneys. In her appeal for the voter fraud conviction, Mason's defense team argued that it was unclear if Mason was truly ineligible to vote, or if she even voted since the provisional ballot was rejected and not tallied in the count.

In March 2020, three Texas judges rejected her appeal. Judge Wade Birdwell wrote the decision for the three judge panel, stating that the fact that Mason did not know she was legally ineligible to vote was irrelevant to her prosecution and that the state only needed to prove that she voted while

knowing that she was under supervision and therefore ineligible. Tarrant County District Attorney Sharen Wilson, offered Mason and her attorneys the option of probation instead of a jail sentence or a continued legal battle but Mason refused.

Supporters of Mason and other voter rights activists have pointed out the discrepancy between Mason's sentencing and the sentencing of Terri Lynn Rote, who tried to vote twice for Donald Trump, and Justice of the Peace Russ Casey, who admitted to forging signatures to get on the primary ballot. Both Rote and Casey received probation instead of Mason's five year sentence to jail.

Shortly before entering the White House, Donald Trump claimed that three million illegal ballots had been cast in the 2016 election. In 2016, about 40,000 people in Texas cast provisional ballots that were later rejected. Additionally, in Tarrant County where Mason voted, more than 12,000 people have voted using a provisional ballot since 2014 with 88 per cent of those ballots rejected.

**(Source: American Civil Liberties Union and The Guardian)**



## 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](http://bcbroker.ca).

HELPING WHEN LIFE CHANGES



## Oh to be a fly on ... a head of state?

SALT LAKE CITY (CNN) – When a fly landed on Mike Pence's head during the vice presidential debate and stayed there for nearly two minutes, Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden jumped on the viral moment immediately. Within minutes, the Biden campaign was selling fly swatters, branded with the Biden-Harris logo, and they sold out overnight. Nearly 35,000 swatters have been sold, according to the Biden campaign.

The campaign capitalized on the fly moment with Biden's tweeting a photo of the former vice president with a fly swatter. "Pitch in \$5 to help this campaign fly," the tweet read.

Biden's account then tweeted a link to flywillvote.com. The website redirects users to iwillvote.com, a voter registration site paid for by the Democratic National Committee where people can check if they're registered, request a mail-in ballot and learn more about voting.



## Imagine a U.S. vote without 'witchcraft'

LIMA (Reuters) – With incense smoke, flowers and photos of President Donald Trump and Democratic rival Joe Biden, Peruvian shamans have performed an ancestral ritual for the U.S. elections, but there was little agreement about who would win the presidential vote.

Chanting and blowing a traditional Andean shell instrument, the shamans, dressed in multicolored garb, invoked the "Pachamama", or mother earth, for the U.S. vote to take place in peace, without attacks or any witchcraft between the rivals.

During the ritual held in an old building in downtown Lima, Shaman Ana María Simeón said she was in favour of Biden.



## Ponder your pandemic fate in India

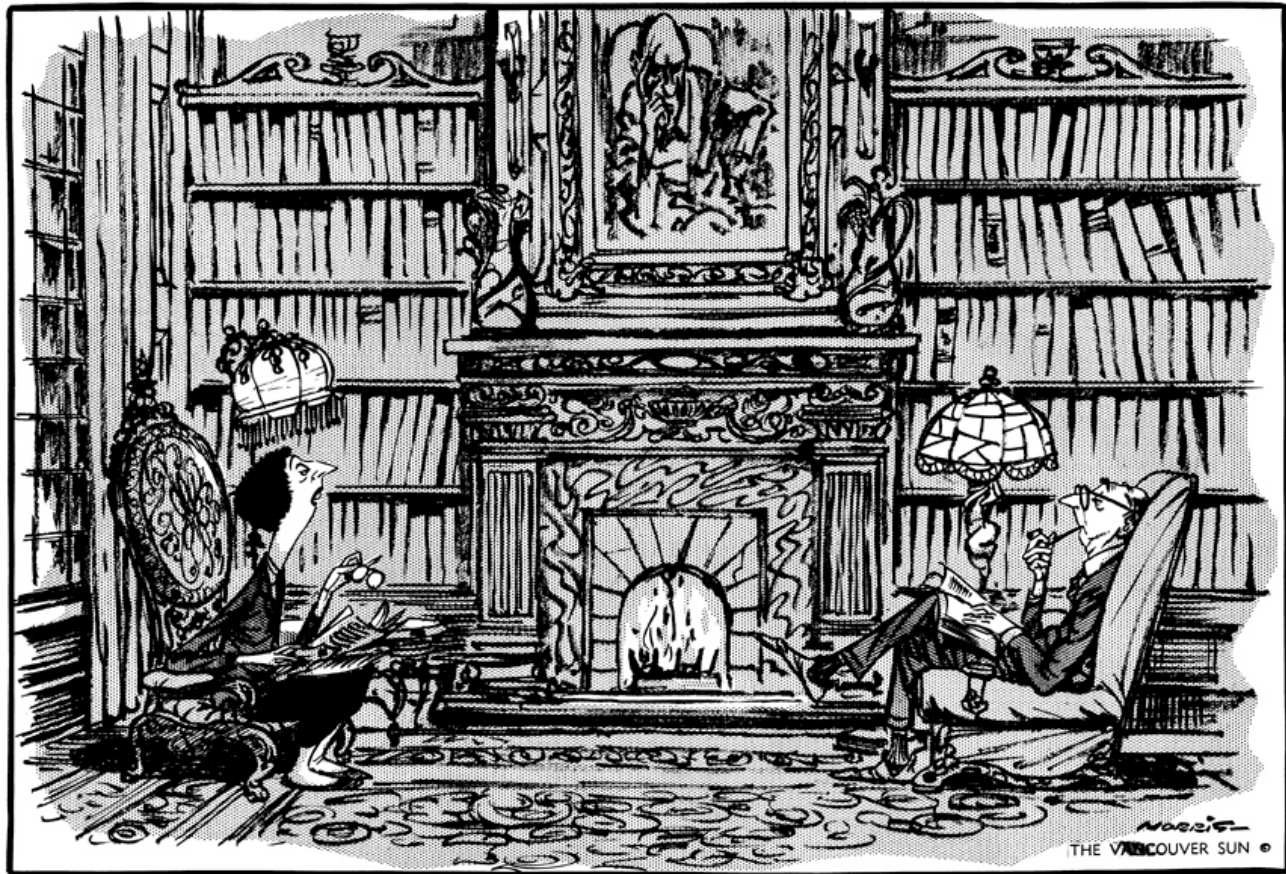
NEW DELHI (Reuters) – In his golden-hued office, decked out with peacock feathers and crystal balls, Indian mystic healer and astrologer Sanjay Sharma is busy offering his clients a peek into their future as the COVID-19 pandemic has muddied their present.

"Right now people are really frightened about their future," said Sharma, with flowing hair and a big vermilion dot on his forehead, as smouldering incense sticks spread their fragrance over an Apple laptop on his desk.

Indians are flocking to astrologers, tarot card readers and faith healers as they seek to know what lies ahead and find solutions to current health, financial and mental problems in a country where coronavirus cases have rocketed to 7.7 million with more than 117,000 deaths.



# Len Norris



November 4, 1960

"Good news, Bertram ... there appears to be another channel we can admit to never looking at."

## An invitation to donate to the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund

The Victoria Foundation looks forward to receiving donations to the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund from all of Hugh's well wishers and friends.

**By phone:** Call 250-381-5532 to make a donation by credit card directly via the Victoria Foundation.

**By cheque:** Send cheques to the Victoria Foundation at #200 - 703 Broughton Street, Victoria, B.C., V8N 1E2. Please ensure they are made out to The Victoria Foundation. Note the name of the fund in the memo line or in a cover letter.

**Online:** The Victoria Foundation's mechanism for online donations is [CanadaHelps](#) and the steps are:

- Go to [www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca](http://www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca)
- Click on the [Make a Donation](#) button and then on the "Online" link and then the [CanadaHelps](#) link which will take you to the Foundation's page on the CanadaHelps web site.
- Click to indicate whether you want to donate now or monthly and you will be taken through the steps to make your donation.
- In the section for designation of your gift, click on the drop down menu to select the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund.
- You may pay with VISA, MasterCard, American Express, Interac or through a PayPal account.
- After you pay for your gift, CanadaHelps.org will send you an online receipt.
- There are several privacy permissions available. If you choose to include your name and address in the information which is sent to the Victoria Foundation, the Association will be pleased to acknowledge your gift.

If you have any questions about how to make a donation to the Victoria Foundation, please contact Sara Neely, Director of Philanthropic Services, at 250-381-5532 or [sneely@victoriafoundation.bc.ca](mailto:sneely@victoriafoundation.bc.ca)

Armistice signed Nov. 11, 1918

# Exhausted soldiers barely comprehended war's end

They called it "The Great War" and "The War to End All Wars" – though of course it didn't. After weeks of crisis in Europe in 1914 and a German invasion of neutral Belgium, Great Britain declared war on Germany. Canada was automatically committed and sent out a call for volunteers. Tens of thousands immediately enlisted.

The cost was terrible: More than 60,000 Canadians were killed and 172,000 wounded. There are no more Canadian combat veterans alive to recall the horrors of the First World War, but their voices and memories live on.

By November 1918, as the war wound down, trench warfare finally gave way to a headlong pursuit of the retreating Germans.

Canadian troops, under Sir Arthur Currie, were tasked with liberating Belgian villages where house-to-house fighting with the desperate Germans was fierce. Then a rumour spread: The war is over! The news seemed too good to be true. Even when an armistice was confirmed, the exhausted soldiers could barely comprehend the new reality: Death one day, peace the next.

The final destination for Canadian troops was the city of Mons, which was also the scene of the first battle between German and British troops in August 1914.

In 1914, the British were forced to withdraw and the Germans occupied the town. But, a peculiar legend emerged from the Battle of Mons – retreating British troops claimed to see the "angels of Mons," visions of St. George surrounded by angels and cavalry in the sky. (Skeptics attribute the vision to battle exhaustion. A similar fictional story by Arthur Machen called *The Bowmen* was published in the *London Evening News* soon after the battle.)

Victor Maistrau, Bourgmestre (Mayor) of Mons, is said to have written the following of the Canadian entry into the city: "At five in the morning of the 11th, I saw the shadow of a man and the gleam of a bayonet advancing stealthily along that farther wall, near the Café des Princes. Then another shadow, and another. They crept across the square, keeping very low, and dashed north toward the German lines.

"I knew this was liberation. Then, above the roar of artillery, I heard music, beautiful music. It was as though the Angels of Mons were playing. And then I recognized the song and the musician. Our carillonneur was playing 'O Canada' by candlelight. This was the signal. The whole population rushed



into the square, singing and dancing, although the battle still sounded half a mile away."

Hostilities formally ended "at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month," in accordance with the armistice signed by representatives of Germany and the Entente between 5:12 and 5:20 that morning. ("At the 11th hour" refers to the passing of the 11th hour, or 11 a.m.)

Canadian soldier George Price became one of the final casualties of the war. He was shot by a German sniper at 10:58 a.m. on Nov. 11, just two minutes before the war ended.

The First World War officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1919.

The tradition of Remembrance Day evolved out of Armistice Day. The initial Armistice Day was observed at Buckingham Palace, commencing with King George V hosting a "Banquet in Honour of the President of the French Republic" during the evening hours of Nov. 10, 1919. The first official Armistice Day was subsequently held on the grounds of Buckingham Palace the following morning. During the Second World War, many countries changed the name of the holiday. Member states of the Commonwealth of Nations adopted Remembrance Day, while the U.S. chose Veterans Day.

(Source: CBC Archives and Wikipedia)