



# Orders of the Day

The Publication of the Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia

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November 2022

## Former NDP cabinet minister Anne Edwards has died



Anne Edwards, a dedicated teacher, editor, feminist and author who served in the NDP cabinet of Premier Mike Harcourt, died Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>. She was 87.

Elected in 1986 for Kootenay – now Kootenay East – her main areas of interest revolved around natural resources and participant involvement. She was Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources from 1991 to 1996.

After provincial politics, she took great pride in her work to establish the Columbia Basin Trust, returning Columbia River Treaty benefits to the region that cradles the river. She also chaired the Kootenay Regional Advisory Group. After she retired, she chaired the BC Heritage Trust.

A long-time journalist, Anne warmly remembered Tommy Douglas. She knew him when she was a news reporter in Saskatchewan in the 1950s. She was editor-in-chief of a chain of community newspapers in the Kootenays for seven years and worked in radio, television and the print media, as well as freelancing for magazines.

Anne published *Seeking Balance: Conversations with BC Women in Politics*, which chronicles how women MLAs and MPs feel about serving as members in the BC Legislature or the national Parliament. She co-wrote three other books. She also worked as a college English instructor for 10 years. Edwards chaired an Unemployment Insurance Board of Referees and a regional district board of variance.

While she worked as a journalist, Anne followed a general rule that reporters should not belong to any party. When members of the NDP approached her to run in late 1984, she joined the party and began her campaign to win the nomination. She served as the representative for her constituency at Provincial Council. She won Kootenay from the sitting Social Credit candidate.

*continued on Page 4*

## BC Youth Parliament is in top gear this year

The 94<sup>th</sup> session of the BC Youth Parliament will convene in December and will be guided through its deliberations by Premier Abby Head, a Powell River student studying political science at UBC.

You will read on Page 6 that Abby's cabinet is currently writing legislation for the upcoming parliamentary session. "What's significant about youth parliament is that the session creates the agenda for the year, and we pass legislation that turns into service projects," she says. "My cabinet will be proposing to run Camp Phoenix again.

"We are also proposing to run a municipal service council, a project initiated last year to allow youth to come together, to plan service projects, and execute them in their communities." Additionally, regional youth parliaments are also a major project.

On Page 7, BCYP's Megan Ryan-Lloyd, Minister of Camp Phoenix, reports that this summer, BCYP hosted the five-day sleepover camp at Camp Barnard in Sooke on Vancouver Island, the first sleepover camp since 2018. Both the young parliamentarians and the 48 campers valued their shared experiences.

The primary goal of Camp Phoenix is to provide a summer camp experience for youth who, for social or financial reasons, could not otherwise attend camp.



BCYP Premier Abby Head



BCYP Minister of Camp Phoenix Megan Ryan-Lloyd

Her Honour

The Honourable Janet Austin, OBC

Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia

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

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

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

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

# Thank You and Miscellany

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

## Dues, Subscriptions and Donations

Linda Reid, Richmond

# From the Editor's Desk

This is a hard one ... saying farewell to Anne Edwards.

When I took on the job of editor of *Orders of the Day* seven years ago, Anne was an active participant on the newsletter editorial committee. Her background as a teacher equipped her well to watch over a sometimes-wayward wordsmith such as me.

Throughout my spotty journalistic career, I have historically scorned the dotting of tees and the crossing of eyes. At *The Columbian* newspaper in New Westminster in the '70s, where I was City Editor, my colleagues on the universal desk gave me daily grief for missing the small stuff. "I'm not here to close edit," I said in defence of my shortcomings. I've always been a big-picture guy.

So, when – in the latter days of my wordsmithing adventure – editing OOTD did not allow for any lack of close editing, Anne was a godsend. Her clinical reviews of the final newsletter drafts saved my editing butt. In the humbling process, I rediscovered why this woman was so universally respected and admired.

On a brighter note, this issue is chock full of good stuff: News from the amazing young people at the BC Youth Parliament who are gearing up for their first post-pandemic gathering at the Legislature in December, former Richmond-Steveston MLA Geoff Plant's adventures in Tuscany illustrated with his amazing photography, former Okanagan MLA Cliff Serwa's elder cycling triumphs in Utah, former Fraser Valley MLA Simon Gibson's reflections on the nuances of civic representation ... even a light-hearted moment as Speaker Raj Chouhan welcomes a fully House-broken feline to the Precincts.

Thanks to you all.

Special thanks to Royal Road's Dr. David Black, Associate Professor of Communications and Culture. David's thoughtful reflections on issues that matter to our readers are a welcome addition to the pages of OOTD. On Page 10, David looks back at BC's mid-October local elections and examines the fundamental disconnects that result in low voter engagement.

The submission deadline for the December issue of OOTD is on or about Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>. It would be great to get a bunch of Holiday/New Year's greetings for the issue. Please send them to me at: [ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com](mailto:ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com).

# The President's Report

On Pages 4 and 5 of this month's *Orders of the Day*, we pay tribute to Anne Edwards, who was a journalist, writer, educator, active in many community organizations as a volunteer, school board director for District 5 and MLA for Kootenay from 1986 to 1996.

She was BC's the first female Minister of Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources and a well-respected member of the community. Anne passed away on Oct. 15<sup>th</sup> at the age of 87. I was talking about Anne Edwards with my friend Lloyd Mackey who had a lot of fond memories of working with her as a journalist when she was a reporter and editor.

I remember Anne Edwards when she was an MLA and Minister and a very active member of the board of the Association of Former MLAs of BC. I want to send our deepest condolences to her family and friends and say thank you, Anne, for everything you did for the community and our province.

I would like to congratulate David Eby, the new premier and leader of BC's NDP. He was the only leadership candidate approved by the party executive. I would also like to thank John Horgan for his service ... and his wife, Ellie, for allowing John to serve as the 36<sup>th</sup> Premier of BC from July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017, to this October and as MLA since May 2005. When John still had a high approval rating, he announced on June 28<sup>th</sup> that he would be stepping down.

This past summer, one of the hottest and driest in memory, is over, as are all the COVID-19 restrictions, but the effects of the pandemic will be felt by everyone for decades to come. Because of COVID-19 issues, we still have many problems to solve in our communities, province and country.

The results of the municipal elections in October shook many elected representatives across BC. In Metro Vancouver's 22 municipalities, 12 new mayors were elected, six incumbent mayors lost their seats, and many other municipal elected representatives lost. It seemed after COVID-19, voters wanted change. Almost all the municipal incumbents who were perceived as controversial lost their seats.

Former MLAs Richard T. Lee, Donna Barnett, Simon Gibson, and Kash Heed were elected as councillors; Brenda Locke was elected mayor of Surrey, and Leonard Krog was re-elected mayor of Nanaimo.

As we move forward, we need to work together, support each other, and learn from the challenges of the past three years.

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

Again, thank you for your service!!!

Dave S. Hayer, AFMLABC President



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Continued from Page 1

## Anne went into Premier Mike Harcourt's first cabinet

When the NDP formed government in 1991, Anne was included in cabinet. During her term, she served as a caucus representative to the Provincial Council. She was one of the delegates representing the Legislature at national parliamentary meetings, and she made two trips to Japan and Korea to expand our province's coal exports for the steel industry in Asia.

A native of small-town Saskatchewan, Edwards earned a BA and an MA in English from the University of Saskatchewan. Over the years, she served on the Kootenay Library Society; the district Girl Guides group; the provincial board of the Canadian Mental Health Association; the Cranbrook Archives, Museum and Landmark Foundation and the provincial executive of the BC Historical Federation.

She chaired the Columbia Basin Institute of Regional History. She volunteered with the BC Cancer Agency and, of course, worked on several provincial and federal election campaigns.

Anne once told *Orders of the Day* that "being a feminist presents some potholes on the road of life. But then, aren't we all used to potholes?"

Commenting on International Women's Day, she said: "The world has witnessed a significant attitudinal shift in both women's and society's thoughts about women's equality and emancipation. Many from a younger generation may feel that all the battles have been won for women, while many feminists from the 1970s know only too well the longevity and ingrained complexity of patriarchy.

"The unfortunate fact is that women are still not paid equally to that of their male counterparts; women still are not present in equal numbers in business or politics; and, globally, women's education, health, and the violence against them is worse than that of men," she said.

Anne leaves behind four children – Robert, Elizabeth, Greg and Allan, 12 grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, and a large extended family. She was predeceased by her husband, Mike Edwards, and her sister Mary-Leone DeVillenfagne.

Funeral services will be held in Cranbrook in August 2023. In living memory of Anne, a tree will be planted in the Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area in the foothills of Alberta.

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## Anne Edwards' wit, intelligence, and warmth will be missed

By Mike Harcourt

Anne Edwards' wit, intelligence and warm personality will be missed. She died Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>.

Anne played an important role as Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources from 1991 to 1996. She helped stabilize the metallurgical coal industry in the Elk Valley and the Northeast (Tumbler Ridge) after the price of coal dropped drastically from \$100 a tonne to \$50.

Our Japanese, Korean and other Asian trading partners switched to Australian supply after labour/management disputes interrupted coal shipments from Delta Port. She and I had to go to Asia to plead forgiveness. Anne and the coal industry achieved the successful return of our customers.

Anne oversaw millions of dollars being invested in stabilizing municipal taxes in Elkford, Sparwood and Fernie, as well as funds to provide income for workers moving to operating mines and for retraining.

On Anne's watch, eight new mines were approved and started producing, like Mount Mulligan and Kemess.

Her wise advice around the cabinet table and in the government caucus was appreciated and welcomed by her cabinet and caucus colleagues. Anne represented her East



*Kootenay MLA and Minister of Energy and Mines Anne Edwards signs the Columbia Basin Accord with Premier Mike Harcourt and Columbia River Treaty Committee Chair Josh Smienk.*

Kootenay constituents well. In particular, she helped put together the Kanaka purchase and development of the St Mary's resort. She also assisted the people of Kimberley recover from the Sullivan Mine closure.

After political office, Ann returned to the Cranbrook area to once again pursue success as an educator, writer and author. She will indeed be missed.

**(Mike represented Vancouver-Mount Pleasant from 1986 to 1996 and was premier from 1991 to 1996.)**

# Goal-oriented Anne taught us how to work together

By Corky Evans

Anne Edwards was my friend. I met her first as a writer when she came to write an article for Harrowsmith about a logging show I was working on. Next thing I knew, she was an MLA.

Then, in 1991, I got elected from the West Kootenay, Anne was re-elected from the East, Ed Conroy from the South and Jimmy Doyle from the North. Those regions had no culture of solidarity. We competed in everything as if life was a hockey game and you rooted for your territory and against your neighbour.

Even so, we all dreamed of doing something to rectify or somehow deal with our experiences with the Columbia River Treaty signed by Canada 30 years earlier.

How do you build a sense of working together among folks whose historical distrust of one another was in their way? You get Anne Edwards to do it. We built the Columbia Basin Trust over the course of the NDP mandate.

Each of us had our skills to bring to the project, but Anne was the one who gave the initiative credibility and taught MLAs and citizens how to hang together and work toward one objective. Anne was also the Minister of Energy who made it possible for the Trust to build three power projects that now make the CBT solvent and strong.

We should have named a power plant after her, the way the Socreds used to, so future generations would learn her name and be thankful.

**(Corky was a NDP MLA and cabinet minister representing Nelson-Creston from 1991 to 2001 and 2005 to 2009.)**



Anne retired but still campaigning ahead of the May 2013 election. Left to right: Anne Edwards, Darlene Marzari, Norma Blissett (NDP candidate for Kootenay East) and Corky Evans.

# Anne was a caucus buddy, a friend for life, a devoted mom

By Darlene Marzari

When I attended my first caucus meeting of the NDP in October 1986 in Victoria, I met Anne Edwards. Over the years, she became a close buddy and a friend forever.

For more than a decade, we shared rooms on Moss Street, attending caucus meetings all over the province, sitting through the ups and downs of being in the loyal opposition and then having the fun of handling two “dirt ministries.” For five years, she was in energy, and I was in sewers (Municipal Affairs) ... she dug gravel, and I handled sewer water. We sang from the same song sheet for a decade before we both retired in 1996.

For 22 years, we stayed in touch; her visiting me on the Coast once a year and me going to Moyie for a week once a year. We both suffered “PTSD” from our caucus years and rose above it all in time. Anne asked me to write a preface for her book, *Seeking Balance*, after she spent three years interviewing 120 women who had been elected to office in BC.

These things remain startlingly clear: Her unbridled love for her husband, Mike, and all their years together; her passion for her children and their children; and, lately, her great-grandchildren. It didn't matter where we were; Sunday morning was devoted to her children Robert, Greg, Liz and Allan. Never has there been a more devoted mother.

Anne was unique: As a colleague, as a caucus member, as a buddy, as a friend for life, as a mom; as a staunch NDP feminist; as a faithful member of the AFMLABC; and as a writer of women's history in BC.

I miss her voice, her advice, her opinions and her ability to manage everything that came her way. She was one of a kind.

**(Darlene was a NDP MLA and cabinet minister representing Vancouver-Point Grey from 1986 to 1996.)**



Anne at the “Seeking Balance” book launch

# BCYP Premier Abby Head ... her future is public policy

By Paul Galinski  
*Powell River Peak*

Former “qathet” region resident Abby Head will be serving as premier in the 94<sup>th</sup> British Columbia Youth Parliament this year.

Head was elected to the position of premier by acclamation after having been nominated for the position. She has been involved in the youth parliament for five years and served on the shadow cabinet for one year and on cabinet for three years.

“I was able to gain a lot of new skills through the organization,” said Head. “I felt that I would be able to put my skills to good use and help mentor future leaders in the organization through becoming premier.”

When she joined BCYP, Head was attending Grade 11 at Brooks Secondary School.

“I didn't think I would get accepted, but I thought I'd put my name in for fun to see if I could make it,” said Head. “I did get accepted, and I decided to attend in December of 2017.”

She attended again in Grade 12 and then went on to the University of British Columbia, where she enrolled in a political science program. She continued to attend the youth parliament, which for the past couple of years, was held via video conferencing because of COVID-19.

For her premiership, Head will be convening the BC Youth Parliament just after Christmas in the BC Legislature.

“I'm very excited to return to the Legislative Assembly this year and have our conversations in the physical chambers,” said Head.

The youth parliament is a nonprofit organization with a board of directors comprised of BC Youth Parliament alumni. Participants age out when they turn 21.

In terms of the coming parliamentary session, Head's cabinet is currently writing legislation. “What's significant about youth parliament is that the session creates the agenda for the year, and we pass legislation that turns into service projects,” said Head. “My cabinet will be proposing to run Camp Phoenix again.

“We are also proposing to run a municipal service council, a project initiated last year to allow youth to come together, to plan service projects, and execute them in their communities.”



*BCYP Premier Abby Head started with the Youth Council at Powell River City Hall*

Additionally, regional youth parliaments are also a major project. They are weekend-long parliamentary simulations for high school students to learn about parliamentary procedure and government.

There will also be a supply act, which includes youth parliament's financial practices, as well as budget and revenue plans.

Head is hoping qathet region students attend BC Youth Parliament this year. She said she loves to see the region represented at the session.

“The skills you learn, such as debating legislation, thinking critically, and breaking down big ideas – are worthwhile and can translate to so many different jobs and so many different roles that you will take on. It's a fantastic life experience.”

Head said great connections are made. Participants meet 97 youth from around the province, and it's an excellent way to network and connect with other youth, she added. “I've made some of my best friends through the BC Youth Parliament,” said Head.

In terms of parliamentary decorum, Head said those in the Legislature follow Westminster parliamentary procedure as well as their own standing orders. “We have a lot of fun, but we mimic the procedure of the Legislative Assembly. BCYP even has a Question Period, which is typically fun.”

BCYP appears to have laid the groundwork for Head's vocational aspirations. After completing her bachelor's degree in political science, she hopes to move on to a masters program in public policy. She would then like to work as a policy analyst, informing policy decisions.

**(“qathet” is the regional district encompassing Powell River.)**



# Camp Phoenix: First sleepover camp since 2018 is a success

By Megan Ryan-Lloyd,  
BCYP Minister of Camp Phoenix

Camp Phoenix is the annual project of the British Columbia Youth Parliament (BCYP) with one primary goal: To provide a summer camp experience for youth who, for social or financial reasons, could not otherwise attend camp.

This year, BCYP was very excited to host the five-day sleepover camp in Sooke on Vancouver Island. It was the first sleepover camp since 2018. Both the young parliamentarians and the 48 campers were thrilled to spend their days and nights together at Camp Barnard.

The running of this annual project is an essential focus for BCYP, inspiring our membership and helping us live our motto – “Youth serving youth.” Abby Head, our 2022/23 BCYP Premier, played a lead role in ensuring Camp Phoenix's success. A team of young parliamentarians took charge of everything from leading craft activities to planning outdoor adventures and more.

Details of the 2023 camp experience, including organizational planning and budgetary expenditures, will be scrutinized and debated at the annual BCYP parliamentary session opening Dec. 27<sup>th</sup> in Victoria.

As Minister of Camp Phoenix, I will be presenting the Camp Act in support of Parliament continuing this project. This legislation will be a key component of the annual session held at the Parliament Buildings. All members of the AFMLABC are very welcome to observe proceedings from the public gallery. BCYP members extend each of you a warm welcome!



*Happy campers – BCYP's first five-day post-COVID sleepover summer camp since 2018*



*Hitting the trail – BCYP camp counsellors and their young charges are off to explore*

## Please support BC Youth Parliament

The Association of Former MLAs of BC seeks your support for BC Youth Parliament and its annual session in Victoria. Donations can be made to the The Hugh Curtis BC Youth Parliament Fund, which is managed by the Victoria Foundation.

By phone: Call 250-381-5532 to make a donation by credit card directly.

By cheque: To the Victoria Foundation, #200 - 703 Broughton Street, Victoria, B.C., V8N 1E2.

**Make your cheque payable to The Victoria Foundation.** Note the name of the fund in the cheque memo line or in a cover letter.

Online: Go to [www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca](http://www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca). Click on “Giving” in the navigation bar and then on “Make a Donation.” After that just follow the prompts to find The Hugh Curtis BC Youth Parliament Fund.

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).

# Tuscany – magical sunlight on medieval stone

By Geoff Plant

It is a quiet late Sunday morning in Montepulciano, a hilltop town in Tuscany, where it is cool, wet and foggy. There's nothing quite as magical as sunlight on medieval brick and stone. But the same bricks and stones, holding up rain-drenched arches of ancient town gates, shining damply on street side storefronts, or glowing in wine caves lined with casks of *Vino di Nobile Montepulciano*, still have lots of charm. It means we are in Italy!

The town itself is Sunday-busy with lots of life in the streets: A young man showing the tricks he can do with his *contrada* flag; young couples with hands in pockets – that is, hands in each other's pockets; families with kids eating gelatos in strollers, and oldsters taking their time climbing the hilly streets – all happily exploring wine tasting rooms, wine bars and restaurants, all busy and crowded indoors, with only a few braving the streetside tables. Oddly, there were no signs – literal or otherwise – that it was national election day.

Monday. We made our way down the long hill to the stunning church at San Biagio, a standalone gem of high Renaissance architecture. It reaches for the sky with perfect proportions inside and out because it sits all by itself on its own plot of green space. You can admire it from all sides without any interruptions.

And, while we were doing that very thing, the sun came out and popped in and out of clouds for the rest of the day. So, we had lunch on the Piazza Grande, watching the world walk by and admiring the play of light on the buildings in the square. Then we climbed the city hall tower for views of the countryside – farms and winding cypress tree-lined lanes and olive trees, and distant villages, lakes and mountains.



*A classic Tuscan view from the terrace beside the convento Di San Francesco in Montepulciano*

Wednesday. Two days of walking, two days spent making our way along country roads from one old village to another with the rolling hills of the Val d'Orcia spread out around us and Mount Amiata, the ancient volcano, looming in the blue distance.

This is what we came for; nearly perfect walking conditions. Even though it's late in the season, there are still a few wildflower splashes of yellow and blue alongside us as we walk, and the red and pink rosebushes at the end of the rows of vines are still in bloom. Otherwise, the palette is all shades of green and earth brown, the rich ochres of Tuscan brick walls and tile roofs, and occasionally the mottled grey-white of travertine.

The towns are busy in the afternoon with tourists like us. It always seems odd to be sitting in a piazza in the heart of Italy, surrounded by Renaissance buildings, the legacies of 15th and 16th Century popes and dukes, and yet, the music is American and British pop and the conversation at the table next to us is about NFL football and the kids back home.

When night falls, or in the early part of the morning, the squares and streets are almost hauntingly deserted. Yesterday afternoon in the most beautiful square in Pienza, I could not get a picture without dozens of people in it. As we headed out for our day's hike this morning, I took another set of pictures of the same square without a soul in sight.

Thursday. We are in Montalcino, famous as the home of Brunello di Montalcino, a fabulous red wine made from Sangiovese grapes. We had a bottle of it for dinner tonight, and my goodness, it was tasty. All those great, carefully vinted red wine flavours: Dirty socks, old tobacco, some fruit you never heard of ... I'm kidding because it is absolutely splendid stuff.

*continued next page*



*Geoff and Janet's first night in Montepulciano. "So friendly!"*



Out on the trail was a different kind of quiet. No hikers. But we did find ourselves in the kind of farming country where people like to have dogs that bark loudly and constantly when you walk past their compounds. And never just one dog, always two, a barking dog duet.

But that's not the real highlight of the day. The real highlight was when our route map said we would have to ford a couple of rivers, and we expected a couple of charming mountain streams where you tiptoe elegantly across a few rocks as a small trickle of clear glacial water babbles its way underfoot. Instead, we had to ford two very busy, flood-engorged, muddy torrents of rushing rivers that were way too exciting for words. We spent the rest of the day hiking in soggy boots, finally ending our walk at the exquisitely beautiful Abbazia di Sant'Antimo.

Saturday. This morning the mist began to burn off as we left our agriturismo in Pieve a Salti for a short shuttle ride to the Abbazia di Monte Oliveto Maggiore. The idea behind the early ride was to get to the abbey before the tour buses. We were the first visitors of the day, and as I walked into the main church, the only other person in sight was a monk praying in the chapel. There was great peace in the stillness. And 800 years of history.

Two hours and a couple of kilometres later, we entered the small village of Chiusure and found a little restaurant that managed to capture the entire spirit of this lovely day. It was called "Paradiso," and the writing on the chalkboard in front made everything perfectly clear: Benvenuti in Paradiso.

Sunday. A few kilometres' march down the hill led us into Buonconvento, a small modern country town with an ancient walled village at its heart. We found the old church where Henry VII (of Luxembourg, not England) died in 1313. He was trying to conquer Italy but died of malaria. The door was open, and we sat down for a few minutes to enjoy some lovely organ music; the organist was probably practicing for morning mass.

Leaving Buonconvento, we walked a long way in the farmland of the Arbia River Valley. We eventually reached a tiny village called Murlo, famous as the town nearest to Poggio Civitate, site of a former Etruscan village and an important ongoing archaeological dig. Murlo has one trattoria and 17 inhabitants, as we learned from the man who seemed to be managing the museum that houses the Etruscan artifacts. He smiled, pointed towards a house and said his friend who lives there is 92, and it was his birthday, and next door is another friend, who is 86, and "then there's me, and I am 25." Okay, he might be off by two-thirds of a century.



Street market in Assisi, Umbria

Eventually, a car arrived and drove us to Siena.

Monday. This afternoon we toured Siena with Claudia, a fourth-generation Sienese with a degree in art history and a passion for her city. Claudia gave us the contrada tour of Siena, showing us the medallions on street corners that mark the neighbourhood boundaries, the flags, the drummers practising for the next occasion, the social clubs for retirees, the notice boards where the contradas announce births and deaths, the storage lockers where the drums and uniforms are kept, the museum where all the past victories in the Palio are recorded, and more. It was all a bit magical, as though the real Siena lies beneath the city you see and is the warp and the weft that holds the town together.

Later, after dinner, when we walked into the Campo one more time with the Palazzo Pubblico lit up and the sky framed black behind it, the restaurants and bars spread around, lights twinkling, and people just sitting on the pavement, I thought to myself, this was and is one of the most magical places in the world.

Methinks we will return to Siena. But for now, grazie Toscana, we are off to Umbria.



On the Campo, the Palazzo Pubblico

# Low municipal voter turnout – the joke is on us

By Dr. David Black  
Royal Roads University

Former Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi tells a joke about municipal politics that reveals all you need to know about why this least loved and most misunderstood plane of our political order has an importance that belies our indifference to it.



Imagine, he says, that the federal government simply disappeared from our lives. It'd take a few weeks before you noticed that customs and CRA no longer functioned, that CPP and EI had stopped paying, or that foreign diplomacy was no longer being done. The same goes for the provincial government; unless you had a doctor's appointment, were renewing your license, or had kids in school, a week might pass before you realized it was gone.

But if municipal government vanished, he says: "You'd have no roads, no transit, no parks, no green space, no clean water, no 911, no police, no emergency response, no fire department – and you'd notice pretty quickly because you'd be dead."

Civic elections may not rise to the level of being life-and-death matters. In fact, they attract markedly less attention from BC voters than do provincial and federal elections. Voter turnout in the province's 2022 civic election was 29.2 per cent, a six per cent drop from 2018's 35.6 per cent. Compared to BC voters' participation in the last provincial (54.5 per cent) and federal (75 per cent) elections, municipal races begin to make high school student council elections look like a veritable pageant of democracy.

The question of why municipal turnout is so low is much debated. Some of the answers derive from how municipal government is perceived and how civic contests are received by voters more familiar with how elections work at the loftier levels of politics.

Municipal government is often understood by voters more as a utility than a political enterprise. To read the list of responsibilities in the Community Charter, the legislation that defines core services amid other features of governance in BC's cities and towns, is to appreciate

the life-support system for a community. There are fire and police services, parks and roads, storm, sewer and water supply, zoning, and whimsically, explicit oversight of firecrackers and bows and arrows. Clearly, administrative competence remains central to a well-functioning civic government. (Vancouver and rural regional districts have separate governance frameworks embodied in the Vancouver Charter and Local Government Act.)

City and town halls are increasingly venturing into social and environmental policy concerns that require them not just to be service providers and good stewards of infrastructure and process but to make strategic decisions and assume an ideological posture that we might think more typical of the higher levels of government. That's because, whether it's reconciliation and land use, homelessness and zoning, climate change and parks, or mental health and policing, big problems are now part of decision-making for mayors and councils. It's not anymore, if it ever was, about fixing potholes.

This expansion beyond the core services mandate means that when it comes to the business of electing municipal governments, voters must weigh matters that go to the very meaning of governance. The key ballot question, for example, in the recent civic election in the City of Victoria, was whether the next mayor and council should stick to core services or take positions and action on social and environmental issues.

This was debated by three types of candidates whose very presence elevated the philosophical and strategic predicates for mayor and council: Civic progressives, who embraced that larger mandate and offered left-of-centre solutions; civic traditionalists, who argued that council should stick with its core services mandate; and, civic populists (like members of the Vancouver Island Voters Association slate in Victoria) who argued for right-leaning answers and for an end to teaching sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) curriculum in area schools.

That said, other reasons for low voter turnout follow from the electoral side. While provincial and federal elections are party-centred, civic parties are mostly absent outside large cities like Vancouver, Surrey and Burnaby. Rather, it's the individual candidate and their independence and experience that make each person running for office their own "brand." Every candidate, albeit to a lesser extent if they were part of a civic party,

*continued next page*



invites the exhausting task of being evaluated as to who they are, what they believe, and what they will do if elected. Even when civic elections are distinguished by civic parties that may or may not function as bloc-voting slates, such as the 10 parties contending in Vancouver, votes are not whipped at city hall as they are in the Legislature.

Moreover, the left-right spectrum, a ready guide to identifying which party you affiliate with or policy you support, is less relevant at the municipal level where pragmatism largely prevails. Also, the first-past-the-post system does not apply at the councillor level, where a voter is invited to choose anywhere from four to 10 councillors and thereby elect a council, not a candidate. Add the homegrown nature of much candidate advertising, the absence of public polling in smaller cities and towns, and debates and meet-the-candidate events that are largely in-person and not widely available even when televised, and it's electoral politics by candlelight.

These characteristics of civic elections, which can make them difficult to decode for voters who base their idea of how electoral politics make sense on the provincial and federal models, are also their charm. At a time when public disaffection with liberal democratic values and institutions is high, civic elections are authentically grassroots and accessible. In most cities and towns, the candidates are not part of the professional political class but are family members, neighbours and friends who, if elected, will be paid little for working long hours and suffer a certain amount of unwelcome attention on social media. And as for accountability, upon election, mayors and councils are as close as the next public meeting or the line-up at your local bank.


Our collective failure of imagination in understanding the vital role and political character of municipal government and the different logic by which its electoral politics operates is further complicated by incumbency. Recent Canadian research on municipal incumbency indicates that sitting mayors and councillors have a 40 per cent electoral advantage. Compare that to senior levels of government, where serving politicians are just 10 per cent more likely to win than a first-time candidate.

The incumbency effect is the combination of name recognition, and a mastery of local issues learned on the job. This gives incumbents an edge in speaking to voter concerns in an election. Such a pattern is self-reinforcing,

as it keeps non-incumbent candidates from running and voters not confident that change is possible. It creates a high bar to entry in a level of politics where everything argues it should be low.

Nenshi has left the mayoral office in Calgary, but the truth of his punchline lingers. With the dramatic decline in turnout in 2022, it's still not evident that voters realize how consequential municipal government is and how, when turnout is this low, the joke is unfortunately on them.

**(Dr. David Black is an Associate Professor in the School of Communication and Culture at Royal Roads University in Victoria. He teaches political communication. His Ph.D. is in Social and Political Thought.)**




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**HELPING WHEN LIFE CHANGES** 

# Winning runs in the Serwa circle; Cliff cycles to senior gold in Utah

By Jordy Cunningham,  
Black Press Media

Who said you can't break athletic records at 86 years old?

Because that's exactly what Kelowna's Cliff Serwa did at the Huntsman World Senior Games in St. George, Utah in October.

In an event that features more than 11,000 athletes from more than 30 countries, Serwa capped off an outstanding year. He won four gold medals in cycling at the Games in the 85-89 age group and was also named the top performer in his age bracket.

"I'm of course, very pleased and, in a way, surprised," said Serwa. "I've worked very hard in the training program and had an exceptionally good year."

Earlier this year, the former MLA and co-founder of Big White Ski Resort also collected three gold medals at the 55+ BC Games in Victoria and three more gold medals at the 55+ Canada Games in Kamloops.

"The most meaningful thing for me is that I was able to break records in my age and class," said Serwa, who's going to be moving up from the "experienced class" (division two) to the "expert class" (division one) after this performance.

He set records in the hill climb, road race and time trial disciplines in his age division and recorded better times than competitors in division one.

"It was a very successful, rewarding, fulfilling experience, but the most exhilarating thing of all is to be in a group of bright-eyed, bushy-tailed people full of life and striving to be the best they can be," said Serwa. "It was an amazing event, and it took place in a very beautiful part of Utah. It was a great experience. The whole thing was extremely well done. It couldn't have been done any better."

While the Huntsman Senior Games was his last event for the calendar year, Serwa is looking forward to competing in division one at the games next year, as well as trying to take part in the American National Senior Games in Pittsburgh.

"We're always full of dreams; it's a great way to be, I think," said Serwa. "Sometimes you achieve the dreams, sometimes you don't."



*Cliff Serwa with granddaughter Kelsey at the L'Alpe de Grand Blanc race at Big White Ski Resort in 2015*

Serwa isn't the only athlete from the Okanagan Valley to hold records at the Huntsman Senior Games. Kelowna's Donna Nicholas and Vernon's Olav Stana also hold multiple records in different age groups at the games.

Cliff continues to cycle around Kelowna with a group he said is loosely called 'The Posse,' who ride anywhere from 50 to 100 kilometres a week.

Serwa is the grandfather of Kelsey Serwa, who won gold in the women's ski cross at the 2018 Olympic Winter Games in Korea.

**(Cliff, the Social Credit MLA for Okanagan West, served in the Legislature from 1986 to 1996.)**

A decorative graphic featuring a red ribbon that loops around the text. In the top left corner, there is a sprig of holly with green leaves and red berries. The text is centered within the ribbon's frame.

**Send us your  
holiday stories  
and greetings**

The submission deadline for the December issue of OOTD is on or about Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>.

Please send them to :  
[ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com](mailto:ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com).



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# What does being a "representative" really mean?

By Simon Gibson

For those of us who have had the privilege of serving in elected office as an MLA, there can be a sense that we have regarded ourselves as a "representative." It is, after all, a word that has currency in our democratic society.

I would suggest, however, that representative is perhaps a somewhat complicated word that requires scrutiny and analysis. It implies a measure of consultation that may not be the case or even possible.

A representative supposedly advances constituents' views, but what does this mean? How are these views obtained, and do they represent a sample or identifiable group?

Political parties tend to have platforms and policies that may be adopted at conventions and subsequently can become legislation. What if a group of well-regarded – and influential – constituents adopts a contrary view and requests that their MLA represent them?

MLAs are frequently called upon to make speeches in the Legislature using content generally selected by the party leadership. Although these presentations may not command a large audience of constituents, there is, nonetheless, the assumption that any views will be consistent with the "people back home" in the riding. This may not be the case.

In addition, the concept of representative may be contested in the case of the expected bifurcation between government and opposition. Constituents may not appreciate this traditional division and expect their MLA to oppose or support legislation, notwithstanding their relatively rigid partisan views.

The party leader – premier or leader of the opposition – will have a measure of autonomy to speak to a particular issue, sometimes with requisite spontaneity given an emerging crisis or news story. The MLA will consequently need to embrace these views and defend them to their constituents.

Interestingly, MLAs are sometimes presented with petitions from a group of constituents who wish to have their views formally presented on a particular issue. Such petitions are recorded in Hansard and are properly received. MLAs, depending on their sentiments, may present the petition with little comment or words of endorsement.

It is possible that, in some instances, an MLA might hold personal views contrary to the party's public persona. These might be shared with family or close friends, but never beyond this intimate circle. Similarly, these could lack congruency with the role of representative and require tact and understanding when receiving requests from constituents.

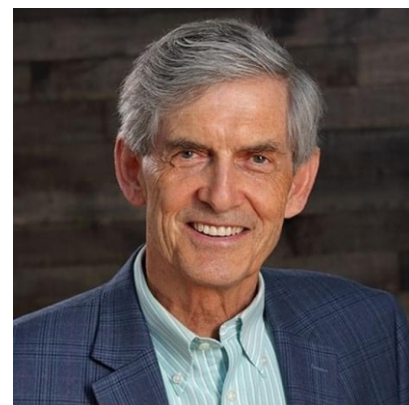
On reflection, I believe MLAs can be representatives, but such an appellation needs to be understood in the context of our parliamentary system of government. Even politicians serving in the U.S. House of Representatives are inhibited from being pure representatives with little regard for partisan modalities.

Speaking personally, I have embraced the spirit of representative but am not deluded into thinking that I was predominantly an advocate for constituents to government – or opposition.

Within the walls of the caucus room, I sought the opportunity to identify constituency issues, but this was a confidential environment with restraints on public disclosure. In fact, the privacy of the setting produces a degree of candour that would never be replicated elsewhere.

Being a representative, then, is a theoretical ideal to some extent. MLAs may need to acquaint constituents with the limitations of the term and yet, at the same time, acknowledge the capacity to provide a conduit to political leadership.

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



# Speaker Raj Chouhan unleashes a new 'cat' in the House



During the opening of the fall session of the Legislature, Speaker of the House Raj Chouhan informed Members that after much campaigning in the building, he had decided to follow the Alberta Legislature's lead and allow a cat to roam the Precincts. Chouhan then produced "Miss Hansard," named after the kitten in Edmonton, but she was not exactly what members were expecting.

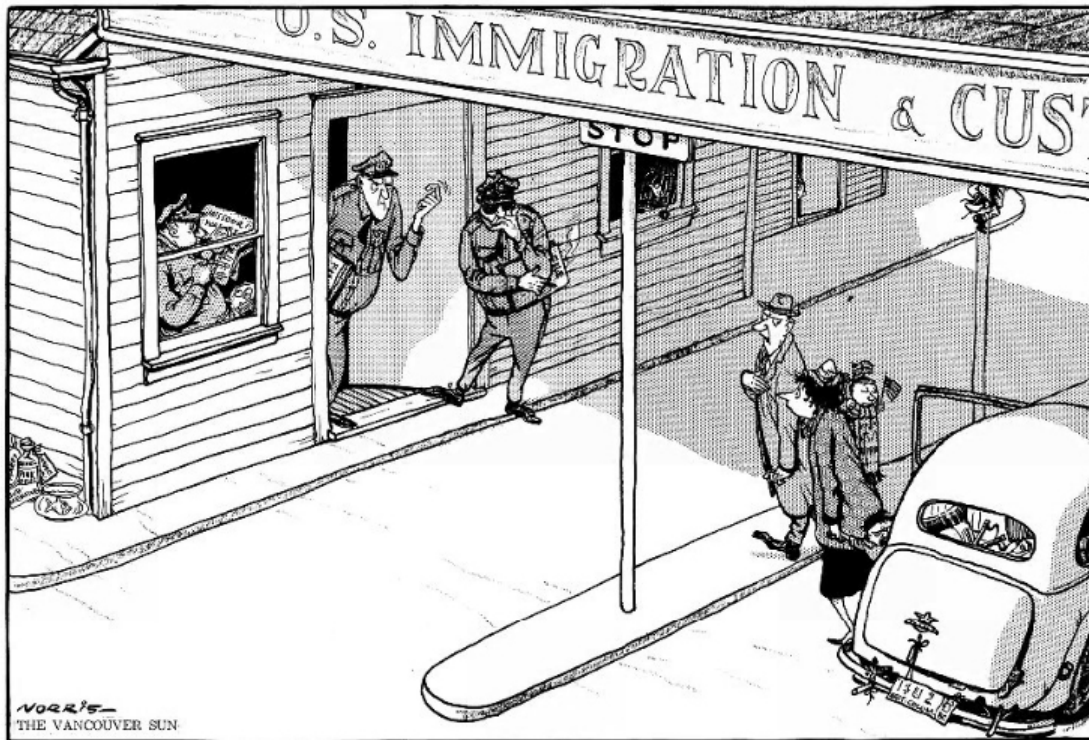
"I consulted with the Premier. I consulted with the Minister of Jobs and Economic Recovery. I consulted with the Minister of Health. I consulted with the four-year-old daughter of the member for Langley. I consulted with the son of the Deputy Speaker and many other people in the opposition parties as well. Today I have decided that we will have a cat," the Speaker proclaimed.

"This cat will be residing in my office ... If anybody needs some cuddling, please come and visit her. She is fully trained in counselling."





# Len Norris



November 13, 1953

“... if they happen to ask who their former president was, better let on you don't know ...”

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90 years ago

## Stalin's Ukrainian legacy – genocide by hunger

In the last week of November, Canadians remember and honour the millions of victims of the Holodomor, the famine-genocide deliberately inflicted on the Ukrainian people in 1932 by Joseph Stalin.

The Holodomor, which means "death by hunger" in Ukrainian, was deliberately perpetrated by Stalin to systematically destroy the unique identity of the Ukrainian people, along with their aspirations for freedom and independence. As we know too well, Ukraine continues to fight for its independence today.,

Holodomor claimed the lives of four million people, about 13 per cent of the population. More than 28,000 Ukrainians died per day at the height of Holodomor; 30 per cent were children under the age of 10.

There was no drought nor any shortage of grain in the fields. The Holodomor took place in a time of peace. While millions of men, women and children were dying in Ukraine, the government of the Soviet Union confiscated wheat and other grains from Ukraine to be exported and sold to other countries and to feed its own population in industrializing cities.

At the height of the 1932 Ukrainian famine, starving people roamed the countryside, desperate for anything to eat. In the village of Stavyshe, a young peasant boy watched as the wanderers dug into empty gardens with their bare hands. Many were so emaciated, he recalled, that their bodies began to swell and stink from the extreme lack of nutrients.

"You could see them walking about, just walking and walking, and one would drop, and then another, and so on it went," he said many years later in a case history collected in the late 1980s by a congressional commission. In the cemetery outside the village hospital, overwhelmed doctors carried the bodies on stretchers and tossed them into an enormous pit.

Ninety years ago, Ukraine – a nation slightly smaller than Saskatchewan along the Black Sea to the west of Russia – was part of the Soviet Union. In 1929, as part of his plan to rapidly create a communist economy, Stalin imposed collectivization, which replaced individually owned and operated farms with big state-run collectives. Ukraine's small, mostly subsistence farmers resisted giving up their land and livelihoods.



*When Ukrainian farmers resisted Stalin's collectivization their grain was seized*

In response, the Soviet regime derided the resisters as "kulaks" – well-to-do peasants the Soviets considered enemies of the state. Soviet officials drove these peasants off their farms by force, and Stalin's secret police made plans to deport 50,000 Ukrainian farm families to Siberia.

"Stalin appears to have been motivated by the goal of transforming the Ukrainian nation into his idea of a modern, proletarian, socialist nation, even if this entailed the physical destruction of broad sections of its population," says Trevor Erlacher, an historian and author specializing in modern Ukraine.

Collectivization in Ukraine didn't go very well. By the fall of 1932 – around the time that Stalin's wife, Nadezhda Sergeevna Alliluyeva, who reportedly objected to his collectivization policy, committed suicide – it became apparent that Ukraine's grain harvest was going to miss Soviet planners' target by 60 per cent. There still might have been enough food for Ukrainian peasants to get by, but Stalin then ordered what little they had confiscated as punishment for not meeting quotas.

Stalin arrested tens of thousands of Ukrainian teachers and intellectuals and removed Ukrainian-language books from schools and libraries. The Soviet leader used the grain shortfall as an excuse for even more intense anti-Ukrainian repression. A 1932 decree targeted Ukrainian 'saboteurs,' ordered local officials to stop using the Ukrainian language in their correspondence, and cracked down on Ukrainian cultural policies developed in the 1920s.

Not much has changed in 90 years.

**(Source: History.com)**