

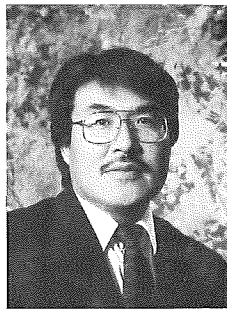
# Members of the 12<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly



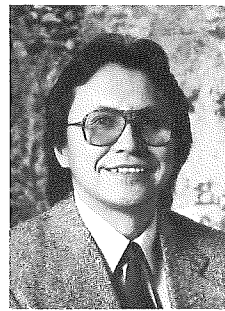
Speaker



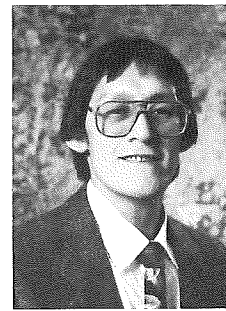
Jeannie Marie-Jewell  
MLA Thebacha



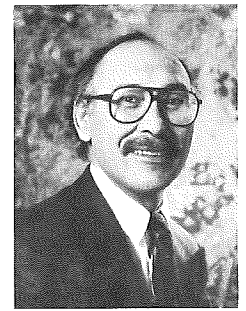
Titus Allooloo  
MLA Amittuq



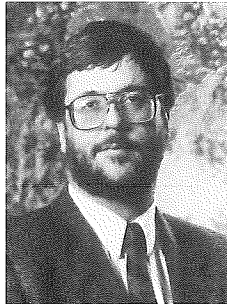
Jim Antoine  
MLA Nahendeh



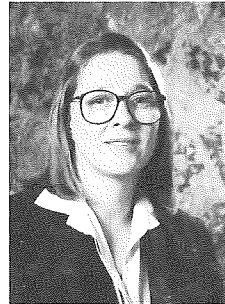
Silas Arngna'naaq  
MLA Kivallivik



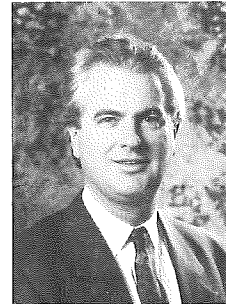
James Arvaluk  
MLA Aivilik



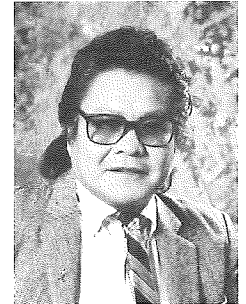
Michael Ballantyne  
MLA Yellowknife North



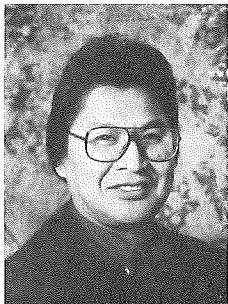
Nellie Cournoyea  
MLA Nunakput



Charles Dent  
MLA Yellowknife Frame Lake



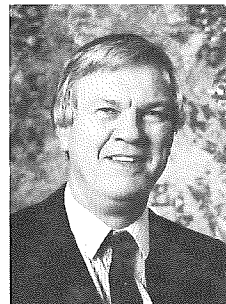
Samuel Gargan  
MLA Deh Cho



Stephen Kakfwi  
MLA Sahtu



Fred Koe  
MLA Inuvik



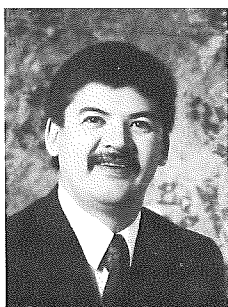
Brian Lewis  
MLA Yellowknife Centre



Rebecca Mike  
MLA Baffin Centre



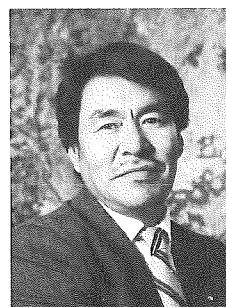
Don Morin  
MLA Tu Nedhe



Richard Nerysoo  
MLA Mackenzie Delta



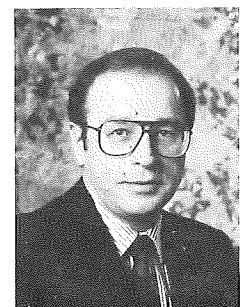
Kelvin Ng  
MLA Kitikmeot



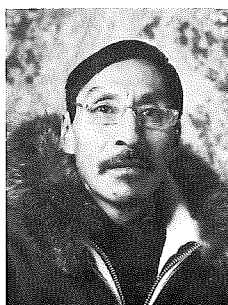
John Ningark  
MLA Natilikmiot



Dennis Patterson  
MLA Iqaluit



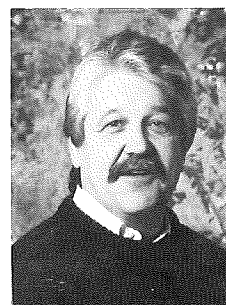
John Pollard  
MLA Hay River



Kenoayoak Pudlat  
MLA Baffin South



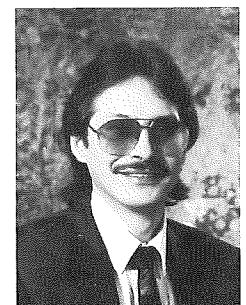
Ludy Pudluk  
MLA High Arctic



John Todd  
MLA Keewatin Central



Tony Whitford  
MLA Yellowknife South



Henry Zoe  
MLA North Slave

**Speaker of the Legislative Assembly**  
Hon. Jeannie Marie-Jewell

**Deputy Speaker**  
Brian Lewis

**Members of the 12th Legislative Assembly**

Titus Allooloo, MLA Amittuq  
Jim Antoine, MLA Nahendeh  
Hon. Silas Arngna'naaq, MLA Kivallivik  
James Arvaluk, MLA Aivilik  
Michael A. Ballantyne, MLA Yellowknife North  
Hon. Nellie Cournoyea, MLA Nunakput  
Charles Dent, MLA Yellowknife Frame Lake  
Samuel Gargan, MLA Deh Cho  
Hon. Stephen Kakfwi, MLA Sahtu  
Fred Koe, MLA Inuvik  
Brian Lewis, MLA Yellowknife Centre  
Hon. Jeannie Marie-Jewell, MLA Thebacha  
Hon. Rebecca Mike, MLA Baffin Central  
Hon. Don Morin, MLA Tu Nedhe  
Hon. Richard Nerysoo, MLA Mackenzie Delta  
Kelvin Ng, MLA Kitikmeot  
John Ningark, MLA Natilikmiot  
Dennis Patterson, MLA Iqaluit  
Hon. John Pollard, MLA Hay River  
Kenoayoak Pudlat, MLA Baffin South  
Ludy Pudluk, MLA High Arctic  
Hon. John Todd, MLA Keewatin Central  
Tony Whitford, MLA Yellowknife South  
Henry Zoe, MLA North Slave

*(over)*

## **Members of Cabinet**

### **Hon. Nellie Cournoyea**

Premier

Minister of Health and Social Services

Minister Responsible for the N.W.T. Power Corporation

Minister Responsible for the Women's Directorate

### **Hon. John Pollard**

Government House Leader

Minister of Finance

Chairman of the Financial Management Board

### **Hon. Stephen Kakfwi**

Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Aboriginal Affairs

Minister of Justice

### **Hon. Don Morin**

Minister Responsible for Public Works & Services

Minister of the N.W.T. Housing Corporation

### **Hon. Richard Nerysoo**

Minister of Education, Culture & Employment

Minister Responsible for the Science Institute of the N.W.T.

Minister of Safety and Public Services

### **Hon. John Todd**

Minister of Transportation

Minister Responsible for Workers' Compensation Board

Minister Responsible for the Public Utilities Board

Minister of Economic Development and Tourism

Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources

### **Hon. Rebecca Mike**

Minister of Personnel

Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs

### **Hon. Silas Arngna'naaq**

Minister of Renewable Resources



Secondary in importance is the Caucus meeting room, providing a space for a full seating of the MLA's. The Chamber, Caucus room, Library and Speaker's Office are enclosed on three sides with a low, massed wall of offices and support facilities. The offices radiate out from the Chamber and Caucus Room with each exterior space expanding towards views across the lake.

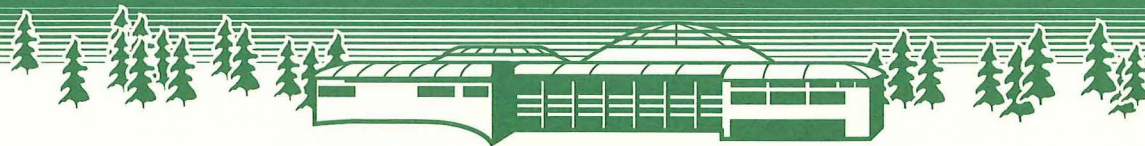
Artists from across the N.W.T. were invited to submit proposals to work in collaboration with southern glass and zinc artisans. Letia Lewis and John Farcey Jr. were selected to work on the zinc wall behind the Speaker's Chair.

Throughout the building, natural light emanates from the skylights surrounding the perimeters of the Chamber and Caucus Room. Glass partitions used to separate these areas offer an excellent opportunity to present northern artistic themes, rendered directly on the glass. Angus Cockney was selected to work on the translucent glass frieze that modulates natural lights coming into the Chamber, leaving occupants conscious of the changing daylight conditions outside.

The Capital Site area is representative of a variety of northern ecosystems. The foreground to the Legislative Assembly Building is a large, expansive peat bog abundant with native wildflowers and grasses. Immediately in front of the building is a small tamarack and spruce grove. Birch trees flank the building to the west and to the north the Precambrian Shield meets the edge of the lake.

The Legislative Assembly building belongs to all the people of the Northwest Territories. It is here that the members elected by the people carry out the people's business. The new legislature also provides an ideal setting for public ceremonies.

The building contains the offices of the Government Leader, the Executive Council, ordinary Members, the Speaker, and support staff. In addition, there are meeting rooms and public spaces to facilitate contact between MLA's, constituents, organizations and the people of the N.W.T.



# Fact Sheet

General Inquiries: (403) 669-2200 Fax: (403) 920-4735

## Remuneration for MLAs

Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories are entitled to the following remuneration:

• Basic Indemnity	\$39,514
• Ordinary Member's Constituency Indemnity	\$20,032
• Minister's Constituency Indemnity	\$ 6,677
• Speakers' Indemnity	\$62,275
• Deputy Speaker	\$ 6,000
• Deputy Chairperson of Committee of the Whole	\$ 3,500
• Chairperson of a Standing Committee	\$ 3,000
• Chairperson of Caucus	\$ 2,000
• Minister with Portfolio	\$62,275
• Leader of Executive Council	\$67,715

- Ordinary Members are entitled to \$223 for each day they attend a meeting of a Standing or Special Committee of the Legislative Assembly. This entitlement is only paid when the Assembly is not in session.

- Members are also entitled to a living (expense) allowance while attending sittings of the Legislature, committee meetings or performing constituency duties.

- Members are also provided with a set operating budget to defray the expenses of travel and administration while undertaking work on behalf of their constituents.

- Indemnities and allowances for members are detailed in the *Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act*.

**For more information, call:**

Public Information Office, Legislative Assembly  
(403) 669-2230 or  
1-800-661-0784 (toll free)

November 1993



**Committee Stage** - A committee, consisting of Ordinary Members, studies the bill very carefully. They may ask experts in the subject matter of the bill to be “witnesses” and give their opinions on it. This review process is also open to the public. The committee often holds public hearings to hear from the public, or receives written submissions on bills. Based on these suggestions, the committee may decide to change or “amend” parts of the bill. The committee writes a report of all the changes it has made to the bill and sends it back to the Legislative Assembly. The committee has 120 days to complete its review and report back to the Legislative Assembly.

**Report Stage** - All Members can suggest other changes to the bill at this stage. Members vote for or against these changes and finally vote on when they will pass the bill at the report stage.

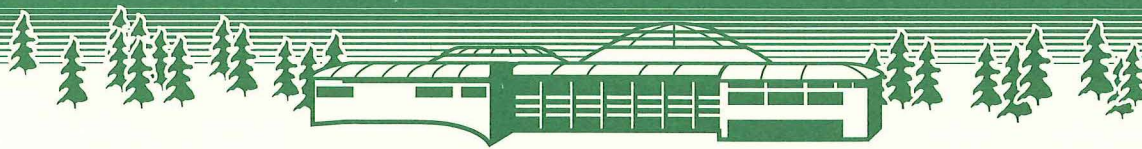
**Third Reading** - The Speaker asks Members whether the bill shall be read a third time and “passed” or approved. This is usually the last chance for Members to debate the bill. If the majority of Members vote to pass the bill, it proceeds to the final stage, Assent by the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories.

**Assent and Proclamation** - After a bill has been passed by the Legislative Assembly, it must be approved by the Commissioner before it can become law. This approval is called Assent. It is given in a ceremony held in the Chamber and attended by the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly.

*A bill can now become law.*

**For more information, call:**  
Public Information Office, Legislative Assembly  
(403) 669-2230





# Fact Sheet

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## The Mace

The Mace is one of the Legislative Assembly's most powerful symbols. The mace was presented to the Northwest Territories Council in 1956 by the Right Honourable Vincent Massey, Governor General of Canada. The mace is similar to traditional emblems carried in other jurisdictions throughout Canada and other Commonwealth countries, but it includes elements which represent the history and life of the Northwest Territories.

### *Description*

The Mace was made by eight Inuit craftsmen from Cape Dorset under the direction of well-known artist James Houston. It was completed in just 21 days. The Mace is made of many different elements. The most difficult detail of the Mace's construction was the crown at its head. A block of native copper weighing 36 kilograms was brought to Cape Dorset from the Central Arctic. The copper was pounded into sheets with rocks and a sledgehammer and these sheets were then cut and hammered into shape using rocks as forms.

When the crown was finished, one of its pieces broke off, but the copper, by then, was gone. However, all was not lost. One of the women in Cape Dorset donated a large copper kettle brought to the community in 1921 by reindeer herders from Lapland. The copper from the kettle was used to replace the damaged section and the woman later received a new kettle from the Governor General.

Above the crown is an orb made of whalebone left on the shores of Baffin Island a century earlier by Scottish whalers. Below the crown, also carved of whalebone, is circle of bowhead whales and another showing a muskox, polar bear, caribou, walrus, wolf, white whale, hunter and mother and child.

A third ring represents arctic fox pelts, a staple of the northern economy. As well, the head of the mace includes four muskox horns from the high Arctic and four discs of pure gold from Yellowknife gold mines. Two decorative bands of porcupine quillwork were made by a Dene woman from Fort Providence.

The mace's shaft is a narwhal tusk and at the foot is another set of rings, one of whalebone showing seals and another of oak. The oak was salvaged from the wreck of Sir William Parry's ship, HMS FURY, which ran aground on Somerset Island in 1825.

The Mace is 1.7 metres high and weighs 15 kilograms. It is now considered to be priceless and is kept at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife. A more rugged replica, built in 1959 to withstand the daily use is now used at all Legislative Assembly sessions.

### *The Speaker's Parade*

Long ago, people used a mace as a weapon. Later it became a sign of authority of the person carrying it and finally, it symbolized the authority of Parliament. Today, a mace is used only in ceremonies. At the Legislative Assembly, the Sergeant-at-Arms carries the Mace in the Speaker's Parade. This Parade take place every day that the Speaker opens a Legislative Assembly sitting. With the Mace on his right shoulder, the Sergeant-at-Arms leads the Speaker, a page, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and the Table Officers from the Speakers office to the Legislative Assembly Chamber. (See study card on the Speaker.)

The Speaker's Parade is a British tradition, but we are not certain how it began. The parade may have been a religious procession or it may have been a way of protecting the Speaker during the early - and more dangerous - days of Parliament.

## *The Sergeant-at-Arms*

The Sergeant-at-Arms takes care of the Mace and carries it in front of the Speaker whenever he or she enters or leaves the Legislative Assembly Chamber. The Sergeant-at-Arms sits at the end of the Chamber opposite the Speaker. The Sergeant-at-Arms carries out the orders of the Speaker and is in charge of security at the Legislative Assembly.

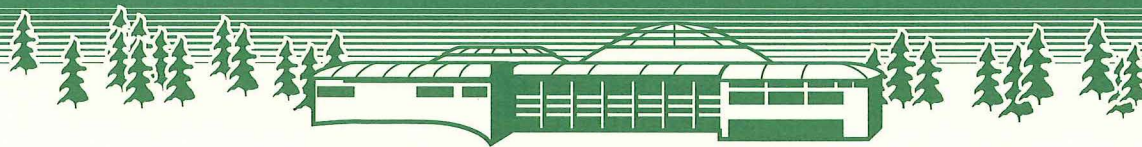
## *In the Chamber*

When he enters the Legislative Assembly Chamber, the Sergeant-at-Arms sets the Mace on a special pedestal in front of the Clerk's Table with the crown always pointing towards the government.

The Mace is a symbol of the authority of the Speaker and of the Legislative Assembly. It shows that the Legislature has the right to meet and carry out its business. It is so important that the Legislative Assembly cannot hold its proceedings if the Mace is not on or below the Clerk's Table. When the Mace is sitting in a holder below the Table, it means that Members are meeting as a committee.

Why do we need these ceremonies and rules? The use of the Mace in Legislative Assembly goes back over 600 years. The fact that it is still used shows that the Legislature's traditions have lasted and still have a place in today's Legislative Assembly.

**For more information, call:**  
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(403) 669-2230



# Fact Sheet

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## Sergeant at Arms

Sergeants-at-Arms first made their appearance as far back as the 13th century as bodyguards or “armed servants” of the Kings and Queens. By the 15th century, one Sergeant-at-Arms was appointed to the House of Commons on behalf of the Monarchy. Soon, however, the Commons was able to choose its own Sergeant-at-Arms to “attend” to the Speaker and Commons in general.

Today, the Sergeant-at-Arms still attends to the Speaker and the Legislative Assembly. He is also in charge of the Mace and is responsible for Security Services within the Legislative Assembly and on the grounds.

### *Care of the Mace*

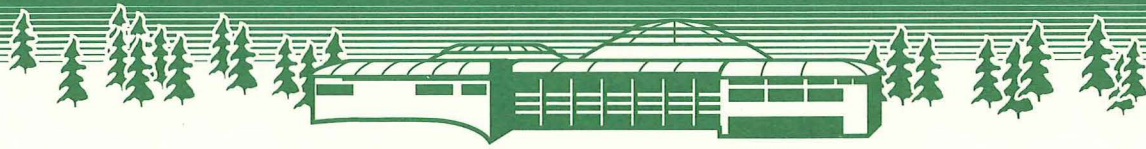
One of the main duties of the Sergeant-at-Arms is the care and custody of the Mace (See Fact Sheet on the Mace). In the Speaker’s Parade (or Procession) that begins each day’s session, the Sergeant-at-Arms leads the Speaker and Clerks from the Speaker’s office into the Legislative Assembly Chamber. He carries the Mace on his right shoulder and then places it in a special holder in front of the Clerk’s Table where it remains throughout the sitting as a symbol and the Assembly’s authority. When in the Chamber, the Sergeant-at-Arms sits at the end of the chamber opposite the Speaker.

### *Security*

The security staff on duty in the Legislative Assembly are under the direction of the Sergeant-at-Arms. The Sergeant-at-Arms is responsible for the security of the Speaker, Members, staff and guests of the Legislative Assembly.

**For more information, call:  
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# Fact Sheet

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## Operations of the Legislative Assembly

Although the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories does not have the same legislative powers as the Assemblies of provinces, it acts in most respects as a provincial legislature.

Legally, the Federal government still has power to disallow Territorial Acts for a period of up to one year after passage and the Commissioner, a civil servant reporting to the federal Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, is still the Chief Executive Officer of the Government of the Northwest Territories. However, although the Commissioner assents to laws, no Territorial Act has ever been disallowed by Ottawa.

Increasingly, elected members are assuming a leadership role and the Commissioner is assuming the role of Lieutenant-Governor. Ministers introduce bills and the Assembly has the power to approve or disapprove legislation. Private Members can introduce legislation other than money bills.

Members of the Legislative Assembly debate and pass motions giving advice to the Executive; discuss and enact legislation, including approving funds spent to provide various provincial-type public services; present petitions on behalf of their constituents; and, question the Executive to obtain information on its progress in carrying out their direction or on other matters of public interest.

Standing and Special Committee activities have become a major part of Members' responsibilities. Special Committees are set up by the Assembly to gather information and public input on particular issues or subjects and report to the Assembly, which debates and either adopts or changes their recommendations. Standing Committees deal with Assembly business of a continuing nature.

During its sessions, the Assembly operates according to standard parliamentary rules for debate, with some modifications to allow for Northern circumstances. The Assembly frequently refers questions to Committee of the Whole, for example, where a more informal discussion can take place. This is well-suited to an Assembly where Members do not represent political parties and decisions are made by consensus.

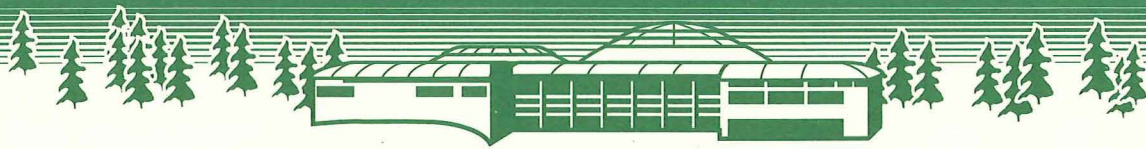
Sessions are held twice a year for a total of approximately 12 weeks, depending on the amount of business to be dealt with. The longest session of the year is the budget session, held in early spring when Members review the Government's annual budget.

In Yellowknife, the Assembly's facilities include the Chamber, meeting and caucus rooms, and offices for MLA's and staff. The Clerk of the Assembly and his staff provide professional advice on parliamentary procedures to the Speaker, chairman of Committee of the Whole and individual MLA's. The Office of the Legislative Assembly also provides services to Members in the areas of finance and administration, research and public affairs. An Inuktitut-speaking staff member provides assistance to Eastern Arctic MLA's.

English and the seven aboriginal languages of the Northwest Territories are used in the Legislative Assembly, with simultaneous interpretation provided by members of the Government's Language Bureau. This service, unique in North America, has been provided since 1975 when nine aboriginal Members were elected to the Assembly. Simultaneous interpretation is now used for all sessions of the Assembly and most committee meetings.

The Twelfth Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories is made up of 24 Members who represent areas considered small by southern Canadian standards, but which reflect the diversity of geography and climate in the North.

**For more information, call**  
Public Information Office, Legislative Assembly  
(403) 669-2230



# Fact Sheet

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## Committees of the Legislative Assembly

### *Introduction*

Committees have become an essential part of modern legislatures. They make the NWT Legislative Assembly more effective in its work, by allowing Members to look at issues in a more detailed way. They find out the facts of a case, hear witnesses, sift evidence, discuss in detail, and draw reasoned conclusions. Committees can also travel to various parts of the Northwest Territories - 'taking the Legislature to the people'. Committees can meet during sessions or between sessions.

The Legislative Assembly has three types of committees - Committee of the Whole, Standing Committees and Special Committees.

### *The Committee of the Whole*

This Committee consists of all the Members of the Assembly. It is the Assembly itself - but not as formal and with more flexible rules. Committee of the Whole is controlled by a Chairperson instead of by the Speaker. There are also two Deputy Chairpersons who take over when the Chairperson is absent.

The Legislative Assembly refers many matters to the Committee of the Whole. For instance, all Bills are brought to the Committee after Second Reading where they are looked at very carefully and may be changed. The Bills may also be forwarded to a standing committee or special committee. (See the Fact Sheet on the Legislative Process)

All business discussed in Committee of the Whole is reported to the Assembly by the Chairperson. The Assembly then decides whether to accept the Committee's report and whether to adopt the decisions made in Committee of the Whole.



## *Standing Committees*

Standing, or permanent, committees carry out much of the work of the Assembly, saving Members a considerable amount of time during sessions. They also help to ensure that all Members can give their opinions on each issue.

The Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories has six standing committees:

Standing Committee on Agencies, Boards and Commissions;  
Standing Committee on Finance;  
Standing Committee on Legislation;  
Standing Committee on Public Accounts;  
Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and Privileges; and  
Management and Services Board.

**The Standing Committee on Agencies, Boards and Commissions** advises the Legislative Assembly on the organization and operation of territorial agencies, boards and commissions.

**The Standing Committee on Finance** reviews the government's financial forecasts and estimates; reviews draft financial or tax bills; makes recommendations to the Legislative Assembly concerning the financial aspects of government programs and policies; provides direction on spending priorities; and carries out studies in areas which may affect territorial finances.

**The Standing Committee on Legislation** reviews all draft legislation, except financial bills, proposed by the Executive Council. The Committee makes recommendations on changes, additions or deletions to each bill. Often changes suggested by the Committee are incorporated by the Executive Council before a bill is considered in detail by the Legislative Assembly.

**The Standing Committee on Public Accounts** conducts annual reviews of the territorial accounts and the Auditor General of Canada's annual report to the Legislative Assembly and makes recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on the conduct of financial administration in government.

**The Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and Privileges** examines and makes recommendations to the Legislature regarding the powers, rules, procedures, practices and organization of the Legislative Assembly.

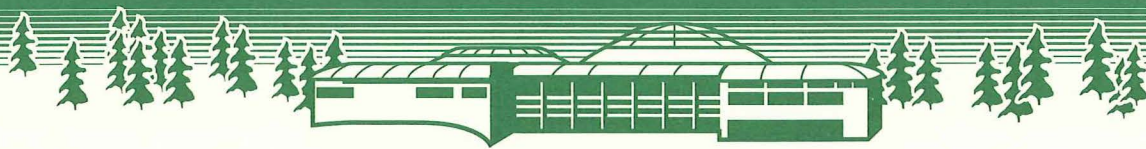
**The Management and Services Board**, chaired by the Speaker, administers the Assembly support services and advises the Legislature on matters such as Members' indemnities, benefits and allowances. The Legislative Assembly's staff forms a separate unit which reports to the Management and Services Board.

### *Special Committees*

Special committees are created as needed by the Assembly. For example, during the Tenth Assembly, the Legislature set up two special committees - one on housing and one on rules, procedures and privileges to review the powers and organization of the Legislative Assembly (this committee later became a permanent standing committee.) The Eleventh Assembly established three special committees to deal with each of the following: the northern economy; constitutional reform; and aboriginal languages. The Special Committee on Health and Social Services was set up during the Twelfth Assembly.

The responsibility of these special committees is set by the Assembly.

**For more information, call:**  
Public Information Office, Legislative Assembly  
(403) 669-2230



# Fact Sheet

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## History of the Legislative Assembly

Before the turn of the century, the old Northwest Territories had government based on two key concepts of Canadian democracy - representation and responsibility. From 1881 its Legislative Assembly was fully elected and, from 1897, the Assembly had a formally constituted Executive Council which was accountable to the Assembly for the conduct of government.

The old Northwest Territories, which became part of Canada in 1870, included what is now the Northwest Territories, Yukon, Alberta, Saskatchewan, most of Manitoba, northern Ontario and northern Quebec. The Arctic Islands were added in 1880. In 1905, after pressure from the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly led the federal government to establish the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, the remaining Northwest Territories went back to the status of a colony run from Ottawa, as it had been in the early 1870s.

The Northwest Territories Act had provided for a four-member appointed Council to assist the federally-appointed Commissioner but no members were named to the Council until 1921. All were federal civil servants living in Ottawa. The NWT Act was again amended and six senior civil servants representing federal departments with an interest in the North were appointed to the Council. This Council acted more as an interdepartmental committee than as a legislative body.

No northerners were named to the Council until 1947 when J. G. McNiven of Yellowknife was appointed. In 1951, there was a tentative return to representative government when the Northwest Territories Act was amended to permit three elected Members from the Mackenzie District to join the five appointed Members. The Council began to alternate sittings between Ottawa and northern communities.

By 1966, elected Members formed a majority on the Council with seven elected and five appointed.

The first elected members from the Eastern Arctic, including the first Inuk, took their seats.

By this time, political awareness in the North had increased and there was strong dissatisfaction with the status quo. The Territorial Council asked for an inquiry into the North's political future and, in 1966, the Carrothers Commission, with former Commissioner John H. Parker as a member, submitted its report after travelling across the Territories to talk to residents.

Most of the Commission's recommendations were accepted by the Federal government early in 1967 and formed the basis for a gradual return to responsible government. The seat of government was moved from Ottawa to Yellowknife, a resident civil service was developed, many provincial-type responsibilities were devolved by Ottawa and the NWT Council began to move towards becoming a fully-elected Legislative Assembly.

By 1970, only four federal appointees remained on the 14-member Council. Amendments to the NWT Act allowed Council to decide the qualifications of electors and its Members, to set their indemnities and to develop a separate Consolidated Revenue Fund. By 1975 a standing committee system had developed and the Standing Committee on Finance was given the right to scrutinize the Territorial budget.

In 1975, the first fully-elected Council since 1905 took office. Dene, Metis and Inuit Members were a majority on the 15-seat Council. The Council, which was referred to as the Legislative Assembly after 1976, chose its own Speaker and named two members to the Executive Committee. The Commissioner no longer presided over Assembly sessions as he had done in earlier Councils. The Eighth Assembly amended the Council Ordinance and lobbied the Federal government for authority to set the number of constituencies between 15 and 25. The number was subsequently set at 22.

The 22 Members elected to the Ninth Assembly in October 1979 accelerated the movement towards responsible government. The Assembly named seven of its Members to sit on the Executive Committee (now called the Executive Council). Only three portfolios were still held by the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner and, by the end of the Ninth Assembly, two of those were transferred to elected Members. The Deputy Commissioner's position on the Executive Council was replaced by an eighth elected member in 1983.

The Assembly created a Special Committee on Education to review education in the NWT and a plebiscite was held on the question of dividing the Northwest Territories. Members played an active role in reviewing the Territorial budget and in setting spending priorities. The first Territorial Finance Minister was appointed and presided over the preparation of budgets. The Assembly lobbied strongly for the protection of aboriginal rights in the new Canadian constitution, travelling to Ottawa en masse, and received approval in principle from the Federal government for division of the Northwest Territories.

The Assembly accepted an electoral district boundaries commission report recommending that two of the larger constituencies be divided to create a total of 24 ridings. Territorial voters went to the polls on November 21, 1983 to elect 24 Members to the Tenth Legislative Assembly. It met for the first time in Yellowknife in January 1984. During the Tenth Assembly, Commissioner Parker announced he would no longer sit with elected Members in the House or participate in debates "as one further step toward fully responsible government."

On January 30, 1986, Commissioner Parker turned over chairmanship of the Executive Council to the Government Leader and transferred responsibility for the Public Service to the Executive Council. The Tenth Legislative Assembly was dissolved in 1987 and an election was held on October 5, 1987 to choose the 24 Members of the Eleventh Legislative Assembly.

At their first session, the Eleventh Assembly elected an Executive Council, or Cabinet, with a majority of Ministers of aboriginal descent. The Legislative Assembly also gave the new Government Leader authority for the overall management and direction of the Executive branch of government and the right to take any disciplinary action he or she deems necessary with respect to the conduct of Ministers.

The 24 members of the Twelfth Legislative Assembly were chosen in an election on November 15, 1991.

**For more information, call:**  
Public Information Office, Legislative Assembly  
(403) 669-2230



# Fact Sheet

General Inquiries: (403) 669-2200 Fax: (403) 920-4735

## History of the Legislative Assembly

Before the turn of the century, the old Northwest Territories had government based on two key concepts of Canadian democracy - representation and responsibility. From 1881 its Legislative Assembly was fully elected and, from 1897, the Assembly had a formally constituted Executive Council which was accountable to the Assembly for the conduct of government.

The old Northwest Territories, which became part of Canada in 1870, included what is now the Northwest Territories, Yukon, Alberta, Saskatchewan, most of Manitoba, northern Ontario and northern Quebec. The Arctic Islands were added in 1880. In 1905, after pressure from the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly led the federal government to establish the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, the remaining Northwest Territories went back to the status of a colony run from Ottawa, as it had been in the early 1870s.

The Northwest Territories Act had provided for a four-member appointed Council to assist the federally-appointed Commissioner but no members were named to the Council until 1921. All were federal civil servants living in Ottawa. The NWT Act was again amended and six senior civil servants representing federal departments with an interest in the North were appointed to the Council. This Council acted more as an interdepartmental committee than as a legislative body.

No northerners were named to the Council until 1947 when J. G. McNiven of Yellowknife was appointed. In 1951, there was a tentative return to representative government when the Northwest Territories Act was amended to permit three elected Members from the Mackenzie District to join the five appointed Members. The Council began to alternate sittings between Ottawa and northern communities.

By 1966, elected Members formed a majority on the Council with seven elected and five appointed.

The first elected members from the Eastern Arctic, including the first Inuk, took their seats.

By this time, political awareness in the North had increased and there was strong dissatisfaction with the status quo. The Territorial Council asked for an inquiry into the North's political future and, in 1966, the Carrothers Commission, with former Commissioner John H. Parker as a member, submitted its report after travelling across the Territories to talk to residents.

Most of the Commission's recommendations were accepted by the Federal government early in 1967 and formed the basis for a gradual return to responsible government. The seat of government was moved from Ottawa to Yellowknife, a resident civil service was developed, many provincial-type responsibilities were devolved by Ottawa and the NWT Council began to move towards becoming a fully-elected Legislative Assembly.

By 1970, only four federal appointees remained on the 14-member Council. Amendments to the NWT Act allowed Council to decide the qualifications of electors and its Members, to set their indemnities and to develop a separate Consolidated Revenue Fund. By 1975 a standing committee system had developed and the Standing Committee on Finance was given the right to scrutinize the Territorial budget.

In 1975, the first fully-elected Council since 1905 took office. Dene, Metis and Inuit Members were a majority on the 15-seat Council. The Council, which was referred to as the Legislative Assembly after 1976, chose its own Speaker and named two members to the Executive Committee. The Commissioner no longer presided over Assembly sessions as he had done in earlier Councils. The Eighth Assembly amended the Council Ordinance and lobbied the Federal government for authority to set the number of constituencies between 15 and 25. The number was subsequently set at 22.



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The Clerk sits directly in front of the Speaker at the Clerk's Table. The Clerk is assisted at the Table by the Clerk Assistant, Clerk of the Committees and the Law Clerk. They keep the official records of the Assembly and advise the Speakers and Members on parliamentary and legal procedure.

Like all Members of the Legislative Assembly, Speakers are first elected in one of the territorial constituencies. Members elect the Speaker by secret ballot at the beginning of the first legislative session following a territorial election and the person who gets over 50 per cent of the vote wins.

In addition to his or her duties as Speaker, the Speaker also attends to the many tasks of being an MLA, such as responding to the concerns of his or her constituents.

The name "Speaker" was first used long ago in England. The original job of the Speaker was to "speak" to the King or Queen on behalf of the House of Commons. If Parliament's resolutions angered the monarch or threatened the monarchy's power, which they often did, the monarch sometimes took revenge by killing the Speaker. In parliamentary history, at least nine Speakers died violent deaths for telling kings and queens news they did not want to hear. Some historians even think that the original purpose of the opening procession was to provide Speakers with bodyguards to protect them from harm as they entered the Assembly Chamber.

The first Speakers were appointed by the monarch, not by Parliament. Over many centuries, monarchs turned over to Parliament many of their powers. During that shift of power, the Speaker's loyalty also shifted from the monarch to the House of Commons. By the end of the 17th century, the Speaker was an appointee of Parliament and not of the monarch.

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## Executive Council

When we speak of “the government” we really mean the Executive Council, or Cabinet. Like other forms of government, our parliament system has three branches: the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary. The legislative branch makes laws, the executive puts them into force, and the judiciary applies them through the courts. Executive Council is the executive branch, but because it is made up of the elected members of the Assembly, the executive and legislative branches overlap. The Executive Council is the senior decision-making body of the Government of the Northwest Territories and is made up of a Government Leader and ministers.

Whether during session of the Legislative Assembly or at other times of the year, Executive Council’s job is to put government policies into practice. In doing so, ministers work with the whole caucus, with other ministers, or as individuals. Throughout the year they discuss policy, consider new laws, and work on budget estimates. Individually they are department heads, making sure the laws administered by their departments are enforced.

The Executive Council is made up of eight Ministers, one of whom is named Government Leader and is elected by all Members of the Legislative Assembly. Each Minister is responsible for policies and programs within his or her department or agency.

Administrative department heads, called deputy ministers, report directly to the Ministers. It is the Ministers’ responsibility to take the general directions established by the Assembly, develop policy which must be ratified by the Executive Council, make decisions on how the policies are to be put into action and ensure the administration follows through.

The Ministers introduce legislation on matters relating to their department's services and answer questions in the Legislative Assembly on their departments' activities and budgets. The portfolios of elected Ministers now cover most programs a provincial government would include.

The Executive Council has its own internal committees and support branches. There are several special and advisory secretariats for co-ordination and input in areas such as energy and resource development, aboriginal rights and constitutional development and regional operations.

There are three committees of the Executive Council.

The **Committee on Priorities and Planning**, composed of all Executive Council members and chaired by the Government Leader, considers and makes recommendations to the Executive Council on major policy issues, program changes and overall government priorities.

The **Financial Management Board**, chaired by the Minister of Finance, is responsible for the overall financial planning of the government and for providing direction on financial management to departments and agencies.

The **Committee on Legislation and House Planning** reviews all proposed legislation to ensure it conforms to the intent of the Executive Council, develops legislation requested by the Assembly and plans for tabling of legislation and the presentation of government business in the House.

The role of the Government Leader is to develop consensus with other Members and serve as their spokesperson on matters which do not fall within individual portfolios. The Eleventh Assembly also gave the Government Leader authority for the overall management and direction of the Executive branch of government. The Leader plays a role similar in many ways to the a provincial premier.

## *Changes over the Years*

The role of Commissioner, a federal appointee, has changed in the past few years as the elected Executive Council members assume increased departmental and executive responsibilities.

Since January 1986, the elected Government Leader has been Chairman of the Executive Council, a position formerly held by the Commissioner. As well, responsibility for all government departments is now in the hands of elected representatives.

Originally, the Executive consisted of only the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner, none of whom were responsible directly to the Legislative Assembly for the conduct of government.

This remained unchanged from 1968 until 1975 when the Legislative Assembly recommended that two elected Members sit on an Executive Committee. A third elected Member was added in 1976. These Members held department portfolios and advised the Commissioner on policy matters concerning their departments. Their involvement with policy at the executive level was an important step towards responsible government.

By 1981, both the number and responsibilities of elected Executive Committee members had increased, with seven elected Members, the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner forming the Executive. A major step was taken that year when one Member was named Leader of the Elected Executive and another, Minister of Finance.

Two years later, the Deputy Commissioner's position was removed from the Executive Council and an additional elected Member was added. The role of the Deputy Commissioner is now largely ceremonial. The title of the Leader of the Elected Executive was changed to Government Leader in 1985.

Other recent developments include a change in name from Executive Committee to Executive Council and, more recently, to Cabinet. The appointment of the Minister of Finance as chairman of the Financial Management Board is an additional change.

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## Members of the Legislative Assembly

Members of the Legislative Assembly are elected to represent one of 24 areas of the Northwest Territories, called “ridings” or “constituencies.” The people living in the constituency are called “constituents.”

Members are usually called “Members of the Legislative Assembly” or “MLA’s.” Members of the Legislative Assembly represent people at the territorial government level - different people are elected to serve Canadians in federal and municipal governments. MLA’s come to Yellowknife, where the territorial Legislature meets, and take their seats in the Legislative Assembly.

MLA’s help to create laws, act as spokespersons for their constituents, and help solve problems. Even if some constituents did not vote for the person who was elected, the Member still represents everyone.

1. MLA’s represent constituents and help to create laws by:

- making statements in the Legislative Assembly about issues important to the ridings or to the territories ;
- attending debates in the Legislature to exchange ideas with other MLA’s;
- asking questions of Executive Council (sometimes called Cabinet) Ministers to ensure accountability;
- stating their view on legislation being debated;
- introducing a bill about an issue important to the riding or the Member;

- sitting on committees: Ordinary Members, sit on **standing committees** which look at policy and spending in different areas of government such as Finance or Public Accounts; MLA's also sit on **special committees**, which are created as needed when certain important issues arise;
- meeting with staff and other MLA's;
- presenting petitions in the House which express public views about certain issues;
- meeting with groups who have special concerns such as fishermen or people concerned with housing;
- talking with the media so the public is kept informed;
- keeping in touch with constituents in person, by phone or by mail to find out what they think about issues;
- keeping generally informed by reading documents and reports, attending meetings and conferences and following current events

## 2. MLA's represent their constituents' views in the caucus.

All Members form a caucus. As a group they can plan strategy and consider items for debate in the Legislature. The caucus also gives all Members the chance to make the views of their constituents known.

## 3. MLA's help individual constituents when they have a problem or need information.

Constituents often ask their Members to help with housing, education or tax problems. The Members can try to help solve the problem by speaking to the proper government department or Minister. The MLA usually knows exactly who to call to avoid confusion and save time.

4. MLA' s take an active role in the community.

Members travel to their ridings very often. They have at least one office there where constituents can meet with them, discuss problems and find out information about Parliament or government agencies.

Members are often asked to visit the constituency, to open public buildings, make speeches to community groups and attend performances or anniversaries. They go to as many as possible. They want to meet their constituents as often as they can, in order to know how the people in their riding feel about the different issues debated by the Legislature.

Often Members' families stay in the riding while Members travel to Yellowknife to work in the Legislative Assembly.

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