

# SELF-DIRECTED GUIDE BOOK ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER (ELL)



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
*of* BRITISH COLUMBIA



## Welcome to the British Columbia Parliament Buildings.

This book will teach you about the history of the Parliament Buildings and about the government of British Columbia.

The Legislative Assembly of British Columbia meets in The Parliament Buildings. This area is the traditional territory of the Lekwungen people who are now called the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations.

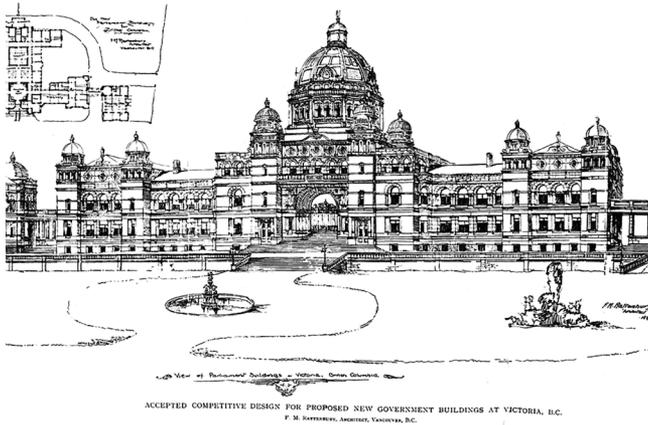
Enjoy your visit!



## THE BIRDCAGES

Workers built the first parliament buildings for British Columbia from 1859 to 1864. The buildings were a mix of Swiss, Chinese and Italian styles. People called these buildings “The Birdcages.”

British Columbia’s population began to grow very quickly. Soon, the Birdcages were too small for the government. In 1892, the government held a contest to design new, larger buildings. Francis Mawson Rattenbury won the contest with his design. He was only 25 years old. The new parliament buildings were his first major project. Rattenbury also designed the Empress Hotel, the CPR Marine Terminal, and the Vancouver Courthouse.

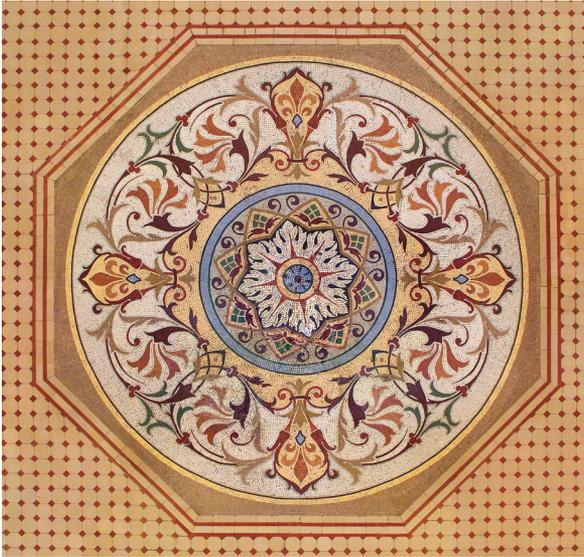


## PARLIAMENT BUILDING DESIGN

Workers built the Parliament Buildings in 4 years. They began construction in 1893 and finished in 1897. The Parliament Buildings officially opened on February 10, 1898. Workers constructed the Legislative Library and other rooms between 1913 and 1920.

The style of the Parliament Buildings is “free classical.” Francis Rattenbury designed the new buildings with rock from local islands.

By 1972 the Parliament Buildings had many problems, including leaky roofs, rotting wood, and old electrical systems. The Parliament Buildings needed to be repaired and a large renovation and restoration project started. Workers renovated the Parliament Buildings for more than 10 years.



## THE LOWER ROTUNDA

The first room inside the Parliament Buildings is called The Lower Rotunda. There is an Italian mosaic on the floor in the centre of the room. There is a canoe made by the Honourable Steven Point and Chief Tony Hunt. They gave it to the people of British Columbia.

A dome rises 30.5m (100 feet) above the floor. A two-metre tall statue of Captain George Vancouver stands outside on top of the dome. The statue is made of copper and is covered in 14-carat gold.



## BRITISH COLUMBIA COAT OF ARMS



The British Columbia Coat of Arms represents British Columbia's history and British Columbia's natural beauty. The

crowned lion at the top represents Canada's Head of State, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The crowned lion is called the Royal Crest. The Royal Crest is the Queen's symbol. On the shield, the blue stripes represent the Pacific Ocean. The white stripes represent the snow on top of the Rocky Mountains. The sun on the bottom is a setting sun. The setting sun represents British Columbia's location in Canada. (British Columbia is the most western province of Canada). The stag on the left represents the former colony of Vancouver Island. The big-horned sheep on the right represents the former colony of British Columbia. The words at the bottom of the Coat of Arms are in Latin. "Splendor sine occasu" means "Beauty without end." The white flowers are dogwood flowers. The Pacific Dogwood is B.C.'s provincial flower. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II approved the Coat of Arms in 1987.

## HALL OF HONOUR

The Hall of Honour is used for announcements and special occasions. The floor is made of Douglas Fir wood. Douglas Fir is a type of tree that grows in British Columbia.



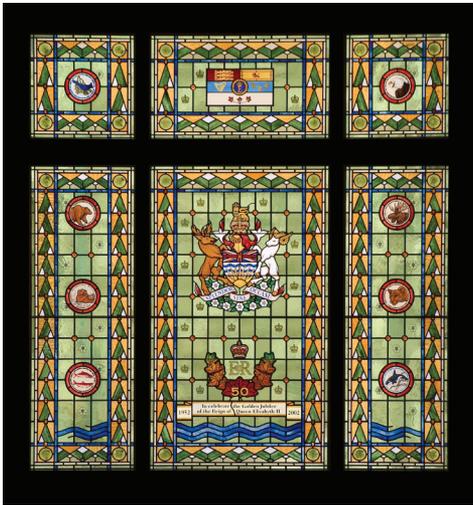
## PORTRAIT

The portrait shows Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen of Canada, on her Diamond Jubilee in 2012. Her Diamond Jubilee was the 60th year of her rule. Phil Richards painted the portrait and included many Canadian symbols.

Canada is a parliamentary democracy and a constitutional democracy. Democracy is a Greek word that means “rule by the people.” The people of Canada choose (elect) governments to make decisions and laws for the country and provinces. The constitution is a set of rules that governments must obey. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is Canada’s Head of State. The Governor General represents the Queen in all of Canada. A Lieutenant Governor represents the Queen in each province. There is a photo of B.C.’s Lieutenant Governor on the right of the Queen’s portrait.

# STAINED GLASS

## QUEEN ELIZABETH II'S GOLDEN JUBILEE WINDOW



In 2002, the people of British Columbia gave Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II the Golden Jubilee Window. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her Golden Jubilee, which means 50 years of her rule. Two artists from the city of Victoria made the window. The flag at the top is Her Majesty's Canadian Royal Standard. This flag is Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Canadian flag. This flag is only flown when Her Majesty the Queen is

visiting Canada. There is a blue bird at the top of the window. This bird is called the Steller's Jay. The Steller's Jay is British Columbia's provincial bird. There are green pieces of jade at the bottom of the window. Jade is British Columbia's provincial stone.

## QUEEN VICTORIA'S DIAMOND JUBILEE WINDOW

The Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee Window was created in 1897. In 1897, Her Majesty Queen Victoria celebrated 60 years of her rule. This celebration was called the Diamond Jubilee. The date on the left side of the window (1837) is when Queen Victoria became Queen. The date on the right side of the window (1897) was the date of her Diamond Jubilee. The letters



“V” and “R” stand for the Latin words “Victoria Regina”. “Victoria Regina” means “Queen Victoria”. Her Majesty Queen Victoria was the Queen when Canada was formed in 1867.

You can see British Columbia’s first Coat of Arms at the top of the window. It has many of the same symbols as today’s Coat of Arms. The flowers are symbols of the United Kingdom. The purple thistle represents Scotland. The green shamrock represents Ireland. The pink rose represents England. The yellow daffodil represents Wales.

In 1897, the window was on the second floor of the Parliament Buildings. In 1912, workers placed the window in the basement to keep it safe during the construction of the Legislative Library. The window was forgotten for 62 years, until workers found it in 1974. Workers repaired the window, and moved it to the Reception Hall.

## STAIR WINDOWS

There are stained glass windows in the staircases. The words on the windows are quotes from famous writers and thinkers.



# THE MEMORIAL ROTUNDA

A memorial is a place to remember those who have died. The Memorial Rotunda has several war memorials for British Columbians who gave their lives for Canada.

The pillars and the banister in the Memorial Rotunda are made of marble from the United States of America. The walls are decorated with gold leaf. The floor is made of small pieces of marble and granite from Italy.

You can see four paintings in the Memorial Rotunda. The paintings represent the industries of farming, fishing, mining, and forestry. These were the first industries in the province of British Columbia.





## CEREMONIAL ENTRANCE

The Ceremonial Entrance leads through the Memorial Rotunda to the Legislative Chamber. The Ceremonial Entrance is only used by the Queen, her representatives to Canada, and visiting Heads of State. Each spring, the Lieutenant Governor enters the building through the Ceremonial Entrance to open a new session of parliament.

On December 2, 1998 Chief Joseph Gosnell used the Ceremonial Entrance. Since then, other First Nation Chiefs have entered the building through the Ceremonial Entrance.

# LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER



The Chamber measures 12 by 18 metres (40 by 60 feet). There are 22 columns in the Legislative Chamber. The columns are made of marble. The marble is from Italy. The ceiling of the Legislative Chamber is decorated with gold leaf and has stained-glass windows. The large lamps are copies of the original lamps from 1898.

The government of British Columbia meets inside the Legislative Chamber. Today there are 87 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). Government MLAs are from the political party that won the last election. The political party that came second is the Official Opposition. MLAs from other political parties and independent MLAs are also Opposition MLAs. Opposition MLAs ask Government MLAs questions.

MLAs discuss and pass new laws for British Columbia. MLAs also discuss the spending of the province's money and new ideas for British Columbia. They represent the people in their area (constituency) of British Columbia.

MLAs can introduce "bills" in the Chamber. A bill is an idea that can change a law or introduce a new law. After a bill is introduced, it is debated and studied. The MLAs then vote to accept it or reject it. If the bill is accepted or "passed," the Lieutenant Governor will come to the Chamber to give it Royal Assent. Royal Assent is the approval given by the Lieutenant Governor on behalf of the Queen. Once the Lieutenant Governor gives Royal Assent, the bill becomes a law of the Province of British Columbia.

## MEMBERS' DESKS

There are rows of desks in the Chamber. The members (MLAs) sit in these desks. Traditionally, the government sits to the Speaker's right, and the opposition sits to the Speaker's left. There are 85 desks for the 85 MLAs.

## SPEAKER'S CHAIR

The large seat at the end of the room is called the Speaker's Chair. The Speaker of the House sits on the Speaker's Chair. The Speaker is an MLA. The Speaker is responsible for order in the Legislative Chamber. The Speaker of the House makes sure that MLAs follow the rules. The Speaker must be fair to all MLAs. The MLAs elect the Speaker of the House.



## CLERKS' TABLE

The table in front of the Speaker's Chair is the Clerks' Table. The Clerk of the House helps the Speaker of the House and the MLAs with the rules of Parliament. The Clerk's Assistants also sit at the Clerk's Table.

## PUBLIC GALLERY

The seats above the Chamber are the Public Galleries. The public can watch the Legislative Assembly when the MLAs are meeting (sitting).

## PRESS GALLERY

The first row of seats above the Speaker's Chair is for the media.

## THE MACE

The Mace represents the authority of the House (MLAs) and the Speaker of the House. The Mace is placed on the Clerk's Table when the MLAs meet in the Legislative Chamber. The Mace was created in Victoria in 1954. It is made of British Columbian silver, and is covered with 24-carat gold. The Sergeant-at-Arms takes care of the Mace. The Sergeant-at-Arms is in charge of security in the Parliament Buildings. The Sergeant-at-Arms sits in the Legislative Chamber and helps the Speaker of the House.





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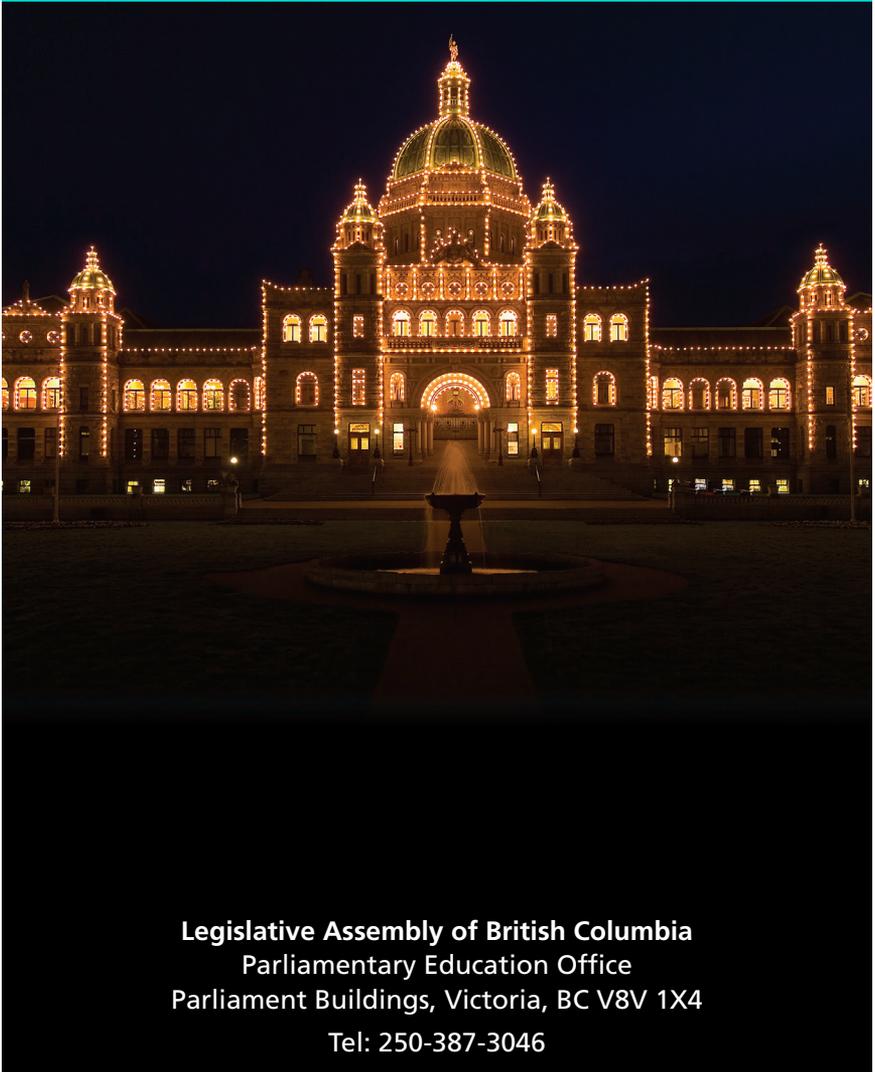
Thank you for visiting the Parliament Buildings.

You can find more information on the  
Legislative Assembly's website at

**[www.leg.bc.ca](http://www.leg.bc.ca)**



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