



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

First Session, 41st Parliament

**OFFICIAL REPORT
OF DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

Thursday, June 22, 2017
Morning Sitting
Issue No. 1

THE HONOURABLE STEVE THOMSON, SPEAKER

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PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Entered Confederation July 20, 1871)

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR
Her Honour the Honourable Judith Guichon, OBC

FIRST SESSION, 41ST PARLIAMENT

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Honourable Steve Thomson

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 West Vancouver-Capilano.....Ralph Sultan
 West Vancouver-Sea to Sky.....Hon. Jordan Sturdy

CONTENTS

Thursday, June 22, 2017
Morning Sitting

	Page
Election of Speaker.....	1

THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 2017

The House met at 10:04 a.m.

This being the first day of the first session of the 41st Legislative Assembly of the province of British Columbia for the dispatch of business, pursuant to a proclamation of the Hon. Judith Guichon, Lieutenant-Governor of the province, hon. members took their seats, after having taken the prescribed oath and having signed the parliamentary roll.

Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor requested to attend the House, was admitted to the chamber and took her seat on the throne.

[1005]

Hon. A. Wilkinson: I am commanded by Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor to announce that she does not see fit to declare the cause of her summoning you at this time and will not do so until you have chosen a Speaker to preside over your honourable body. Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor hopes to be enabled to declare, during the afternoon, her reason for calling you together.

Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor retired from the chamber.

Election of Speaker

Clerk of the House: Good morning, Members. Much has been said about the speakership in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia since May 9. A lot of what is being talked about is wrong. A lot of what has been examined by way of confidence motions, casting vote and the way this place functions is and has been wrong. This place has 87 members — 87 members who are equipped and skilled to run their own Legislature the way they see fit.

The Attorney General and Minister of Justice has just advised the House that pursuant to section 37 of the B.C. Constitution Act, the Legislative Assembly's first order of business, prior to the opening of a new parliament, is the election of a Speaker.

The Speaker is the highest office to which a member may be elected in this House. The person so elected represents and embodies the House in its relations with the Crown. This is the reason for the title "Speaker" — very early on, the need for the amorphous mass of commoners who formed the parliament to have one person who could report their opinions to the King.

The message read the by hon. Attorney General and Minister of Justice has been in use, with little variation, since 1713, during the reign of Queen Anne. Before that time, the Sovereign usually came down on the first day of a new parliament, and on one occasion, Queen Anne

came down three times — to open the parliament, to approve the Speaker and to declare the causes of summons in a Speech from the Throne.

The position of Speaker is at the heart of the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy. It is an essential element in our parliamentary system.

The Speaker of the House of Commons at Westminster was originally so called because their function was to speak for the Commons in all external proceedings, such as communication with the monarch.

[1010]

For over seven centuries, parliamentarians have recognized the need for a Speaker to impartially administer the rules of the House and to serve as the guardian of the rights and privileges of the House and all of its members.

The first known Speaker in the Commons at Westminster to whom the title was expressly given was Sir T. Hungerford, during the reign of Edward III.

The member who is elected Speaker does not become a non-party member of the Legislative Assembly. However, the Speaker does not play a politically partisan role and exercises restraint in any comments they make outside the House. The Speaker must be prepared to assert independence from the government to ensure that the rights of all sides of the House are protected in the course of the parliamentary process. This is reinforced by the Speaker not attending caucus meetings nor party conventions.

The Speaker also has a number of statutory duties to perform, including but not limited to vacancies in the membership, granting of exemptions to members from attending court proceedings relating to parliamentary proceedings and certificates regarding the stay of proceedings communicated under the authority of the House. The courts are enjoined to take judicial notice of the Speaker's signature.

The Speaker is also the conduit between the independent legislative offices and this House. Today in British Columbia, the Speaker presides over the sittings of the House and, as a presiding officer of the Legislative Assembly, acts with both authority and impartiality. The Speaker's authority needs to be respected, and rulings and decisions cannot be challenged.

Section 40 of the Constitution Act states: "The Speaker must preside at all meetings of the Legislative Assembly, unless, under the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly, the Deputy Speaker or another member presides."

Section 43 of the act states that "all questions must be determined by a majority of votes of the members present other than the Speaker," which further separates the speakership from the general membership of the House.

The role of the Speaker is always evolving to meet the requirements of each new parliament. In serving each parliament, the fundamental responsibility of the Speaker

is to administer the business of the House with fairness and responsibility and respect for all members.

The Speaker's role has also evolved to meet the growing administrative requirements of a modern legislature. The Speaker chairs the parliamentary management board, the all-party Legislative Assembly Management Committee, which approves financial and administrative policies and budgets for members, caucus services and assembly departments.

Members of the Legislative Assembly, today you will be electing British Columbia's 38th Speaker since our province joined Confederation.

Now I would like to provide historical context on the speakership in this place. British Columbia has had 37 Speakers since the first, James Trimble of Victoria City, was elected in 1872. B.C. was the first Commonwealth parliament to elect a woman Speaker — Nancy Hodges, Victoria City — in 1950. And in 1994, B.C. elected the first black person to serve as Speaker — Emery Barnes, representing Vancouver-Burrard. The longest-serving Speaker was Norman William Whittaker of Saanich, who held the office from 1937 to 1947.

A Speaker often serves for a parliament until he or she resigns or, heaven forbid, they die in office. Even in death, the Speaker cannot escape the clutches of this place. Members are fond of referring to Speaker Higgins's photograph in the Speaker's corridor, where it was thought that despite his death, he was dressed, propped up and a photograph taken of him. I'm here to tell you that he was not dead then, although he looked like it, but he is now, having served as Speaker from 1890 to 1898.

Members of the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to Standing Order 11, it is my duty to inform you that only one candidate has declared his intention to stand for the election of the Speaker. Therefore, I wish to announce that Steve Thomson, the member for Kelowna-Mission, is declared elected Speaker for the duration of this parliament or up until a new Speaker is elected. [Applause.]

[1015]

I will also advise the House that the member for Kelowna-Mission provided my office with a copy of a letter dated June 21, 2017, in which he resigned as a member of the executive council, effective immediately.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Table, I would like to congratulate you on your new office. We look forward to supporting you with your new responsibilities.

Hon. S. Thomson took his place in the chair.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I'd like to humbly thank all the members of this assembly for the great honour that you've bestowed upon me today by asking me to be your Speaker. In keeping with the tradition of high office, I will endeavour at all times to carry out my duties with fairness and integrity in all aspects of the work.

I now ask for your patience while I declare a short recess in order to assume the appropriate attire.

The House recessed from 10:17 a.m. to 10:21 a.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, everybody. I'd like to recognize the Premier of British Columbia.

Hon. C. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Watch out for the button for the ejector seat there.

I have the honour of being the first person in this House to be able to congratulate you on your election and elevation to the role of Speaker. I know from having worked with you for six years now that you bring unique experience to this role. You've represented your constituents well and conscientiously in this House, and you have represented our entire country on the rugby field. You bring integrity. You bring compassion. You are a man who stands on principle, but a man who also finds a way to bring people together. As I often say, politics needs more rugby players.

I think all members will agree that even when this debate becomes contentious and the pressure has been on in question period and in other moments in the House, you have sometimes stood alone amongst us as someone who brought calm, who brought fairness of thought, who brought a level of decorum to this House that, sadly, has become a little unfamiliar over the years, and you've been an example to everybody here.

As the eyes of our province and our entire country are on this House like never before, I can't think of a better choice to set the tone or a bigger man to enforce the rules. I am very proud, Mr. Speaker, to call you a colleague and a friend. While it may take some time to get used to calling you "Mister," I know that you will bring all credit to this new role that you're taking on today. My very best to you, and congratulations on behalf of everyone in this House today. [Applause.]

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. Horgan: Well, thank you very much, hon. Speaker. It is the most important decision we can make today, and, of course, it is the most anticipated decision that British Columbians have been waiting for, for the past six weeks.

It has been a rocky time. In my 12 years as a member of this place, I've only known two Speakers. Tremendous respect for both of them, Bill Barisoff and the member for Richmond centre or north centre — the one over there. I've only known two Speakers, and I've had the highest regard for them and the challenges they face keeping this raucous place in order. I share the view of the Premier that, among us all, I could not think of a more respected and better person to take on this very

important challenge in the days and weeks and months and years ahead.

Now, I have to say, on behalf of my colleague from Oak Bay–Gordon Head, to have a rugby guy in the chair is absolutely appropriate for the raucous time ahead in the days and months and weeks and years.

[1025]

It is something that you and I have talked about in our four years as colleagues here. I've found you always to be respectful, as the Clerk suggested, and fair with all members during question period. Outside of this House, when there were issues in your files that needed to be discussed privately, you were always there. I greatly respected that, and I know all members of the House feel the same way.

There are 24 new members in this place, and they will see, through your leadership and your guidance and your deference and respect for all of us, the type of leadership we will need in the days and weeks and months and years ahead.

With that, I want to say that it's not just the cool hat you get to wear now — which is, I think, coveted by all members — but it's also our gratitude for taking on this challenge and our respect for the decisions you'll be making in the days ahead. Thank you so much for taking on the job.

Hon. M. de Jong: I move that the House do now adjourn until two o'clock, when the Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor will deliver the throne speech.

Hon. M. de Jong moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: This House stands adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The House adjourned at 10:26 a.m.

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