

# Parliamentary Education Gazette

A Newsletter for B.C. Teachers

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Read Time: 6 minutes

## A Grateful Farewell: Reflections on 25 Years of Parliamentary Education



After 25 years of service, I am preparing to retire with a heart full of gratitude – and, I will admit, some reluctance to say goodbye. As I reflect on my time working in parliamentary education, what stands out most are not the programs or the milestones, but the people: the dedicated, inspiring

teachers from across British Columbia who brought the B.C. Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy (BCTI) to life year after year.

From every corner of the province, educators arrived with curiosity, commitment, and a deep belief in the importance of civic education. Through the Institute, I had the privilege of working alongside teachers who were eager to explore how parliamentary democracy works, not only in theory, but in practice, and how to translate that learning into meaningful experiences for their students.

The B.C. Teachers' Institute was never just about procedures or protocols. It was about fostering understanding, dialogue, and respect for democratic institutions. Watching teachers engage in thoughtful discussion, ask challenging questions and consider how best to bring parliamentary democracy into their classrooms was consistently energizing and affirming. Their enthusiasm reminded me why this work matters.

Over the years, I've been inspired by teachers who travelled long distances, sometimes on their own dime, to strengthen their understanding of democracy and citizenship. Many shared stories of students who became more engaged, asked sharper questions, or discovered a newfound interest in how decisions are made in our province. Knowing that BCTI played a small role in shaping those moments has been one of the great rewards of my career.

What I will miss most are the positive interactions – the conversations over meals, the shared laughter, the moments of reflection and the collective sense of purpose. Teachers brought generosity, openness, and professionalism to every session. Their willingness to collaborate and learn from one another created a space that was both intellectually rich and deeply human. I have made many great friends, too, and would also like to recognize the commitment of all who have participated in the Education Steering Committee over the years.

As I step into retirement, I do so with enormous respect and appreciation for B.C.'s teaching community. Your dedication to students and to democracy makes a real difference, far beyond the walls of any classroom or B.C.'s Parliament Buildings. It has been an honour to work with you and to learn from you over the past 25 years.

While my role may be coming to an end, my belief in the power of education, and in the educators who carry it forward, remains as strong as ever. Thank you for the memories, the partnerships, and the shared commitment to parliamentary democracy. If you would like to stay in touch, you can email me at [kaitken1542@gmail.com](mailto:kaitken1542@gmail.com). My final day is June 26th – a fitting last day in education. All the best.

*By: Karen L. Aitken, Director, Parliamentary Education Office, Legislative Assembly of British Columbia*



### Parliamentary Trivia

Q: In honour of National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21, 2026, who was the first Indigenous MLA elected in British Columbia on June 15, 1949?

The first correct answer will win a prize from the Parliamentary Gift Shop! Email [PEO@leg.bc.ca](mailto:PEO@leg.bc.ca) to submit. Good luck!

# School Travel Program: A Successful Launch

The Parliamentary Education Office is pleased to report the successful launch of the new School Travel Program for B.C. school groups. Depending on where school groups are travelling from, they may be eligible for funding to help support their trip to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, up to \$450.00 per student! So far, we have welcomed groups from Campbell River and Mayne Island, and in the coming months we will welcome groups from Merritt, Christina Lake, Houston, Vernon and Fernie!

The deadline to apply for the current school year has now passed. Please stay tuned to our [website](#) for the application dates for the 2026-2027 school year opening in August 2026 and for more information.

For school groups that have participated in our first round of the School Travel Program, we are actively seeking feedback on your experience.

Please email us at [tours@leg.bc.ca!](mailto:tours@leg.bc.ca)

By: *Adriana Ayers, Parliamentary Tour Officer, Parliamentary Education Office, Legislative Assembly of British Columbia*



Do your students have questions about parliamentary democracy in B.C.? Send us an email at [PEO@leg.bc.ca!](mailto:PEO@leg.bc.ca)

## Access Learning Resources & Programming



### NEW LEARNING RESOURCES AVAILABLE

#### SPOTLIGHT: [CLASSROOM ACT](#)

In this activity, students will explore how parliaments create laws and make decisions. Students will learn about parliamentary democracy and the democratic process by co-creating and voting on a classroom act.

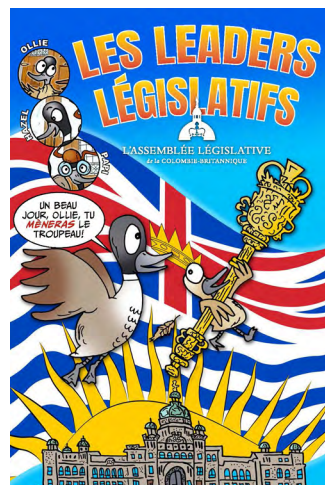
#### SPOTLIGHT: [REQUEST FOR LEGISLATION \(RFL\)](#)

In this activity, students will consider and describe the pre-legislative process that occurs before a bill is drafted and justify their own request for legislation proposal.

*Classroom activities are available in English and French on our [website!](#)*

#### LEGISLATIVE LEADERS COMIC BOOK: NOW AVAILABLE IN FRENCH!

*Legislative Leaders* tells the story of Ollie, a young Canada goose on his first migration. Ollie is nervous about flying at the head of the V, so his big sister Hazel teaches him leadership lessons on a whirlwind tour of the B.C. Parliament Buildings. This colourful, 24-page comic is perfect for middle-grade readers.



### NEW PROGRAMMING

#### PARLIAMENTARY PLAY AND TOUR: BRAND NEW PLAYS!



Educate and entertain your students with an interactive theatrical experience. Classes can meet architect Francis Rattenbury or discover parliament with a pair of eccentric owls. The Parliamentary Play and Tour is free and runs for approximately 80 minutes.

Registration information is available on our [website](#).

#### Program Dates:

May 19 to  
June 23, 2026

## SIGNIFICANT DATES

MAY 25  
1868

On May 25, 1868, Governor Frederick Seymour proclaimed Victoria as the capital city of British Columbia.

JUNE 14  
1960

The flag of British Columbia was adopted on June 14, 1960. It reflects B.C.'s Shield of Arms, which is the central section of B.C.'s Coat of Arms. The upper portion of the flag is the Royal Union Flag, which serves to symbolize the British past of the province. The lower section of the flag, which includes waving blue and white lines, symbolizes B.C.'s geographic location along the Pacific Ocean.

# Upcoming Parliamentary Programming

BCTI: RETURNING FALL 2026



## B.C. TEACHERS' INSTITUTE ON PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY (BCTI)

**October 20-24, 2026**

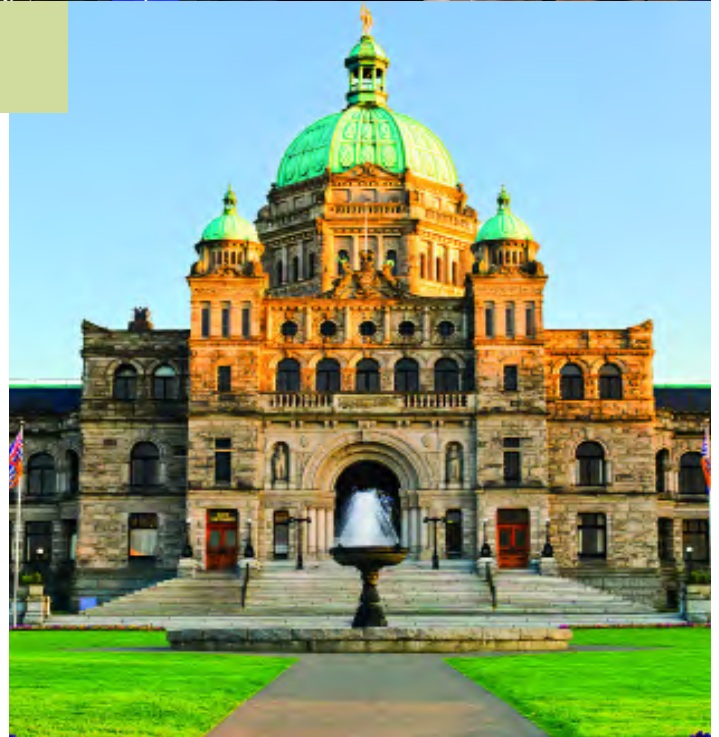
Participate in a unique professional development program at the Parliament Buildings in your provincial capital.

Learn about parliamentary democracy and become champions of citizenship education. Return to your school with an enhanced understanding of British Columbia's parliamentary system.

Meet with MLAs, Presiding Officers, senior public officials and have a behind-the-scenes tour of your Parliament Buildings. Collaborate and share with your colleagues from across the province.



Questions? Email [PEO@leg.bc.ca](mailto:PEO@leg.bc.ca) for more information!



**DEADLINE TO APPLY:  
JULY 31, 2026**



**APPLY ONLINE:  
<https://leg.bc.ca/learn/educational-programs-workshops/bcti>**

## What is Private Members' Time?

Private Members' Time on Monday mornings, between 10:00 a.m. and noon, gives Private Members (those MLAs not in Cabinet) the time to discuss important matters in their constituencies or the province at large that they may not necessarily get the chance to raise during other proceedings. It is comprised of Private Members' Statements, Private Members' Motions, and Private Members' Bills (also commonly called Public Bills in the Hands of Private Members).

**Private Members' Statements:** They are the first 30 minutes of Private Members' Time and are intended to provide MLAs with the time to discuss a wide range of topics related to their constituencies or to the province at large. They are not subject to amendment, adjournment, or vote. They are limited to five minutes each and must be confined to one matter, nor can they revive discussion on a matter that was previously discussed in the session.

**Private Members' Motions:** Private Members' motions provide MLAs the opportunity to raise issues, propose ideas and seek a formal opinion of the House. They are commonly used to highlight provincial issues and draw attention to emerging concerns, local priorities, or matters of public interest.

Members may move a motion after providing two days' written notice and read it aloud. The MLA then makes remarks

followed by any other MLA wishing to participate in the debate. Amendments may be proposed without notice but must be submitted in writing.

**Private Members' Bills:** Private Members' bills allow Members to propose new laws or amend existing legislation. They provide a way for individual Members to initiate legislative change, influence public debate and government policy, scrutinize existing laws and raise emerging issues. These bills are limited to measures which do not involve spending public revenue, introducing a tax, or touching on constitutional provisions.

Private Members' bills follow a different legislative process than government or private bills. The key difference is that the committee stage of the bill takes place in a parliamentary committee instead of the Committee of the Whole. The bill must also provide for two days' written notice before it can be introduced and read a first time.

You are encouraged to [book your school trip](#) to coincide with a visit to the public galleries on Monday mornings to observe these proceedings.

*By: Karen L. Aitken, Director, Parliamentary Education Office, Legislative Assembly of British Columbia*

## TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This publication was created in the Parliament Buildings, which are located on the traditional territory of the Lekwugen-speaking peoples. Now known as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, these Coast Salish peoples have a rich culture and history dating back thousands of years.

We are thankful to live and work here.

## CONNECT WITH US



[Educational Programs & Workshops](#)



[PEO@leg.bc.ca](mailto:PEO@leg.bc.ca)



250-387-8669

