



The Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The Legislative Assembly is the focal point of our democratic process. It is responsible for the passing of laws, the approval of policies and the development of programs, all of which affect our way of life in Alberta.

There are 87 Members of the Legislative Assembly. They belong to political parties, and each represents a different constituency. The Premier forms a government by choosing a cabinet from among the MLAs. Each Cabinet Minister is responsible for a government department. The elected members from other parties form the opposition. The opposition serves as a critical check on the government, questioning its policies and suggesting alternatives. The opposition party with the most seats forms the Official Opposition.



Free Guided Tours

Led by knowledgeable heritage interpreters, tours of the Legislature Building run 362 days per year.

Visitor Centre

Following a guided tour, visitors are encouraged to visit the Visitor Centre, which includes exhibits, retail services and interactive educational activities.

For details or to book a tour contact Visitor Services at visitorinfo@assembly.ab.ca or 780.427.7362.

Outside the Edmonton area, call 310.0000 and then enter the 10-digit phone number.

Terms commonly used in Alberta

Bill – A proposed law. To become law, a Bill must pass three readings and committee study and be given royal assent. A Bill may propose an entirely new law or amend an existing one.

Cabinet (Executive Council, the government) – The executive branch of government, including the heads of government departments, led by the Premier and chosen from among elected members of the party holding the majority of seats in the Assembly. Cabinet is responsible for the administration of the government and the establishment of its policies.

Cabinet Minister – A member of the Executive Council chosen from among existing Members of the governing party; the head of a government department.

Caucus – All the elected members from one political party; a private meeting of this group.

Chamber – The room where the Legislative Assembly holds its sittings.

Committee of Supply – The committee of all Members of the Legislative Assembly that meets to discuss the government's interim and supplementary budget estimates in detail and vote on the main budget estimates. It is presided over by the Chair of Committees or designate. The government main budget estimates are reviewed by policy field committees.

Committee of the Whole – The committee of all Members of the Legislative Assembly that meets to discuss specific clauses of a Bill. Amendments to the contents of Bills are considered during this stage. The committee meets after second reading and before third reading and is presided over by the Chair of Committees or designate.

Estimates – The proposed expenditures for each government department, consisting of main estimates, tabled annually, and supplementary and interim estimates, tabled as required.

Government – In the parliamentary sense the cabinet, or Executive Council, headed by the Premier.

Hansard – The official, substantially verbatim record of parliamentary debates and proceedings. *Hansard* is the name of the British family originally responsible for publishing the proceedings of the House of Commons in the United Kingdom. Most Commonwealth jurisdictions produce a *Hansard*.

House – The Legislative Assembly; also used to refer to the Chamber.

Legislative Assembly – A law-making body of elected representatives; sometimes called the House.

Lieutenant Governor – The provincial representative of the monarch and the head of state, a largely ceremonial position. The Lieutenant Governor is appointed by the Prime Minister for a five-year term and delivers the Speech from the Throne, grants royal assent and approves orders in council.

Mace – The ceremonial staff carried into the Assembly each day by the Sergeant-at-Arms at the beginning of a sitting. It is the symbol of the authority of the Legislative Assembly to make laws on behalf of the people. When the Assembly is sitting, the Sergeant-at-Arms places the Mace on the Table with the orb and cross facing the government side of the Chamber. When the Speaker leaves the chair and the Assembly sits as a committee of the whole House, the Mace is secured on the underside of the table.

MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) – A person elected to the Legislative Assembly to represent one of Alberta's electoral districts.

Opposition – The MLAs representing parties other than the governing party. Their role is to criticize government policies, suggest alternatives and make sure the public is aware of what the government is doing or plans to do.

Premier – The leader of the party holding the most seats in the Legislative Assembly.

Private Member (backbencher) – Any Member who is not in cabinet.

Royal Assent – The procedure by which the Lieutenant Governor or the Administrator gives final approval to a Bill. It may occur in the Chamber or in the Lieutenant Governor's suite.

Sergeant-at-Arms – The Legislative Assembly officer in charge of security of the Assembly, MLAs, constituency offices and visitors to the Chamber. The Sergeant-at-Arms also has custody of the Mace.

Session – A series of meetings of the Legislative Assembly opened by royal proclamation and closed by prorogation. It can include spring and fall sittings.

Speaker – The MLA elected by all MLAs by secret ballot to maintain orderly debate in the Chamber and to ensure that Members conduct their business according to parliamentary rules. The Speaker must serve all MLAs equally no matter what party they belong to, and all MLAs must accept his or her authority. The Speaker is also the head of the Legislative Assembly Office. Although Speakers are not Members of cabinet and the Legislative Assembly Office is not a government department, the Speaker's administrative duties are similar to those of a cabinet minister. The Speaker also chairs the all-party Standing Committee on Members' Services.

Speech from the Throne – The address delivered by the Lieutenant Governor which opens each new session and outlines the government's initiatives and law-making plans for the session.



Alberta's Legislative Assembly Office (LAO)

Established in 1983, the origins of Alberta's Legislative Assembly Office can be traced back to 14th-century England, when Parliament elected the first Speaker and appointed the first Clerk. The Legislative Assembly Office works hard to uphold and abide by parliamentary tradition while at the same time ensuring our operations are run in a nonpartisan manner and respond to the needs of the Members we serve.

It may come as a surprise to some, but the Legislative Assembly Office is not a government department. The government is the executive branch, responsible for applying and enforcing laws, and the Legislative Assembly is responsible for establishing those laws. The LAO is a unique entity separate from government with the dedication and commitment to provide all Members of the Legislative Assembly, regardless of party affiliation, with the support they need to represent and serve their constituents.

The LAO is overseen by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. The Speaker does not belong to the cabinet and cannot be asked questions during Oral Question Period or participate in the Assembly's debates. However, the Speaker does have administrative authority and responsibility similar to that of a minister of a government department.

The Clerk is the chief executive officer of the Legislative Assembly and has authority and responsibility similar to that of a deputy minister.

The Speaker has two distinct but related roles. In the Assembly the Speaker maintains order and ensures that MLAs conduct their business according to the Standing Orders of the Assembly.

Administratively the Speaker is responsible for the Assembly's records and for providing services to MLAs and the public.

The LAO as a whole has the same procedural and administrative roles. This is a unique characteristic and is evident throughout the office, particularly during session, when the normal duties, work hours and office locations of many staff change significantly.

The LAO's annual budget as well as statutory provisions for financial and human resource administration are under the purview of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services. As an all-party committee of the Assembly, the Members' Services Committee regulates constituency office support and Members' pay, allowances, benefits and group insurance plans, all of which the LAO administers. Traditionally the Speaker chairs the Members' Services Committee.

Services of the LAO

The LAO, under the authority of the Speaker, provides a number of administrative services to the Members of the Legislative Assembly and the public.

These services include:

- Office of the Clerk
- Communications Services
- Broadcast Services
- Parliamentary Counsel
- Interparliamentary Relations
- House Services
- Human Resource Services
- Information Technology Services
- Financial Management and Administrative Services
- Visitor, Ceremonial and Security Services
- Library Services

Map of the Legislature Grounds



For details about the Legislative Assembly of Alberta please visit our website

assembly.ab.ca