

Legislative Assembly of Nunavut Frequently Asked Questions

How can I contact my MLA?

The Contact Directory page contains addresses, telephone numbers (constituency and office), fax numbers, and links to biographies for each of the members.

How can I visit the Legislature?

The Public is welcome to stop by. The Legislative Assembly building is located right in downtown Iqaluit, building #926.

Members of the public may sit in the Public Galleries to observe the proceedings in the Legislative Chamber at any time the House is in sitting. Contact Public Affairs by phone (867) 975-5000 or email leginfo@assembly.nu.ca, to find out when the next session will be.

Tours

Free tours of the Legislative Assembly are available throughout the year by appointment. Call 975-5106 for more information.

Television and Radio

When the Assembly is in session, the business of the House is broadcast live on Channel 33 in Iqaluit. In addition, the Assembly produces a nightly two-hour highlight show broadcast on APTN (Aboriginal Peoples Television Network) on their North of 60 feed.

What is Hansard?

Hansard is the official report of debates and proceedings in the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut. It is published after each Assembly sitting day. It is published in both Inuktitut and English.

Innirvik Support Services in Iqaluit employs a team of at least ten to complete this challenging task. Nunavut, along with New Brunswick and the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa, are the only three jurisdictions in Canada that produce a bilingual Hansard.

What is a Bill?

The assembly legislates by creating acts that will become law. A bill is simply a proposed act and it is the first step toward creating an act. See Bills and Legislation for what types of bills are created, the role of Standing Committees and the process of how bills become law.

What is the Orders of the Day?

The Orders of the Day is the official agenda of the house. Published by the Office of the Clerk for each sitting day, it is an overview of the status of business before the Legislature. The listing of the Orders of the Day explains the order of the proceeding in the House for that day. For example, the session generally begin with a prayer, then the opening address, the Ministers' and Members' statements, oral and written questions, reports and reviews of bills, motions and more.

What is the role of a Member of the Legislative Assembly?

The role of a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) can be described in two ways. One, MLAs act as spokespersons for the people in their constituency. Two, the Member acts as a representative of their constituencies, acting in sound judgment to defend their interests. MLAs play a critical role of keeping the people in their constituency informed of the work undertaken by the government and on the other hand, of keeping informed of their constituencies needs and reactions to the current issues facing the government.

Members of the Legislative Assembly contribute to the legislative process through debate in the Legislative Assembly, by introducing their own bills, and by participating in the committee system. Standing and Special Committee activities have become a major part of Members' responsibilities.

What are the Standing and Special Committees of the Legislative Assembly?

Standing and Special Committees of the Legislative Assembly are formed to look at various issues within a smaller group to allow for discussion of issues in greater detail. Procedural rules in the committees are much more flexible than those of the Legislative Assembly, and committee

members are allowed to hear the views and explanations of Ministers, officials, and other interested parties.

Standing Committees fulfill three important functions: the study of legislation, the examination of policy issues and the review of government spending proposals. Standing Committees deal with Assembly business of a continuing nature.

Special Committees may be created to undertake special tasks. Special Committees gather information and public input on particular issues or subjects and report to the Assembly, which debates and either adopts or changes their recommendations.

How is the Executive Council (Cabinet) selected?

The executive council or Cabinet is selected by Members of the Legislative Assembly from within the ranks of the Members of the Legislative Assembly. The Members of the Legislative Assembly come together in a form known as the Nunavut Leadership Forum. From within this forum Members nominate one another to the Executive council. Each nominated Member then has an opportunity to speak briefly before. A secret ballot is then held to finalize the selection of the Executive Council.

What is the role of the Executive (Cabinet)?

When we speak of "the government" we usually mean the Executive Council, or Cabinet.

The Cabinet 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 Nunavut Government and is made up of a Premier and seven Ministers, all of whom are elected by the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Whether during session of the Legislative Assembly or other times of the year, the Executive Council is responsible for the day-to-day administration of government. In this role, 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 objectives of their departments are achieved.

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. Responding to the needs of the public, Ministers introduce legislation relating to their department's responsibilities. They must answer questions in the Legislative Assembly about their department's activities and budgets.

The role of the Premier includes chairing Cabinet meetings, assigning portfolios to Ministers and disciplining Ministers. The Premier also develops consensus with other Ministers and serves as their spokesperson on matters which do not fall within individual portfolios.

What is the role of the Premier?

The Premier of Nunavut is Paul Okalik. He is the MLA for Iqaluit West, Minister of Justice and the Minister for Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs. The Premier is selected by the Legislative Assembly from among the Members.

The Premier has several roles to fill. In addition to the many responsibilities of Premier, he also has responsibilities as an MLA and as a Minister.

The Premier is the Leader of the Government. The Executive branch of the Government of Nunavut (Cabinet) reports to the Premier. The Premier is responsible to coordinate the activities of Cabinet, assigning ministerial portfolios, guiding the process to identify the government's long term plans, and coordinating the activities of government departments, agencies and corporations to ensure that they operate consistently with government policy, legislation and priorities.

As Minister of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs, the Premier has additional responsibilities of informing the public of government initiatives and programs and coordinating the government's approach to

intergovernmental relationships with Canada, the provinces and the other territories.

What is the role of the Speaker?

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut is Jobie Nutarak, MLA for Tunnuniq.

For over 600 years, this position of Speaker has been one of the most important ones in democratically-elected legislatures around the world. As the official representative of the Legislative Assembly, the Speaker embodies the institution as the place where Nunavut's democratically-elected MLAs gather to deliberate. As the Presiding Officer of the Legislative Assembly, the Speaker is responsible for enforcing the Rules, presiding over the conduct of the House's business, and maintaining order and decorum. As the Chairperson of the Management and Services Board, the Speaker is ultimately responsible for the administration of the Legislative Assembly.

What is the role of the Clerk?

The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut is John Quirke. The position of the clerk is central to the functioning of the Legislative Assembly. The Clerk's role is both procedural and administrative. The Clerk acts as the principal advisor to the Speaker and all Members on matters of parliamentary procedure and privilege. The Clerk is responsible for compiling all official documents and records of the Legislative Assembly.

What is the role of the Sergeant-At-Arms?

In 12th century, the role of the Sergeant-At-Arms was to protect the King or Queen by using the mace as a weapon. Today, the Sergeant-at-Arms is in charge of ceremonially carrying the mace into and out of the chamber at opening and closing of each sitting day. He or she is also responsible for safeguarding the mace, keeping order in the Public

Gallery, directing Pages, ensuring the security of the chamber, and protecting Members and staff.

What is the role of the Commissioner of Nunavut?

The Commissioner of Nunavut is Anne Mikijuk Hanson. Federally appointed, the Commissioner acts by the direction of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The position of Commissioner is the symbol of security for the people and institutions of Nunavut within the Canadian Federation. It represents the checks and balances inherent to good government in a period of profound change during which the governmental foundations of Nunavut are being established.

The Commissioner convenes the sessions of the Legislative Assembly and holds the authority to dissolve the assembly at any time prior to the expiry of the Assembly's legal term. The Commissioner plays a mostly ceremonial role by appointing the Member of the Executive Council on the advice of the Legislative Assembly, and on the advice of the Premier, assigning departmental executive responsibilities.

What languages are spoken in the House?

Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun and English are the primary languages spoken within the House. French is also an official language of Nunavut and may also be spoken in the House.

What are the differences between the provincial and Nunavut governments?

The two major differences between the Provincial and the Nunavut governments are the system of government and the election process. Provincial governments are formed by elected Members who belong to a party such as the Progressive Conservative, Liberal or New Democratic parties. All provinces have a Premier. He or she is the leader of party that has the largest number of elected Members.

The Nunavut government operates on the consensus model, a system inherited from the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. This means that the government is formed by Members who are not members of a party, but are elected on an independent platform, in their constituency or riding. There are 19 constituencies in Nunavut and, therefore, there are 19 Members.

Soon after a general election, the Members elect, from among themselves, one Member to the position of Speaker and another to Premier. They also choose seven other Members to be Executive Council Members, also called Cabinet Ministers. The absence of party structures allows each Member to vote as he or she wishes on any subject matter. Approval of any decision requires agreement by the majority of Members. The Cabinet always sits in a minority position in the House, increasing the voting power of the Members.

The two major differences between the legislative powers of the Territories and that of provinces are the power of provinces to amend their constitutions and their control of the management and sale of public lands.

The Constitution Act of 1982 allows each province to make laws amending the constitution of the provinces. The "constitution" of Nunavut is the Nunavut Act, which is a federal statute.

Therefore, only the Parliament of Canada has the right to amend the provisions of the Act and, as a result, the Territory does not have authority in these areas.

The provinces control the sale and management of public lands. Most land in the Territory remains Crown (or federal) land. The Nunavut Land Claim Agreement and the Nunavut Act were passed through the federal Parliament in 1993, ensuring the creation of Nunavut and Inuit title to 355,842 sq km of land, of which 35,257 includes mineral rights. The rest of the land in Nunavut remains Crown land. Unlike a province, the Territory does not have the power to deal with all lands within its boundaries.

Nunavut's Commissioner is Peter Irniq. Federally appointed in the Territories, his role is similar to that of a Lieutenant Governor in the Provinces.

There are several other areas in which the power of the Territories is not the same as that of the provinces. A province is allowed to borrow money solely on credit, while the Nunavut's power to borrow is subject to approval of the Governor-in-Council. As well, the power of the Territory to incorporate companies is restricted so that certain companies, such as those in the telephone or air transportation business, cannot be incorporated under a Territorial Act.

When the Territories are ready for provincehood, it will be necessary to amend the Constitution of Canada. This will require the consent of the Parliament of Canada and seven of the ten provinces with at least 50 per cent of the population of all the provinces.

How was Nunavut created?

The creation of Nunavut was the result of over thirty years of hard work on the part of individuals, organizations and government joined by a vision and by their determination to realize a dream.

The concept of dividing the NWT dates back to the 1950s when non-aboriginals in the Mackenzie Valley in the western part of the NWT pushed to divide the territory, arguing the move would allow the West to move more rapidly to responsible government.

The idea to split the Northwest Territories into two territories was first introduced as a bill in the federal House of Commons in 1963. The bill was, at this time, however, cancelled after the first reading.

In 1971, the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) was formed with the responsibility to pursue and negotiate a land claims agreement with the federal government for the Inuit of Northern Canada. In 1973, Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) began a study of Inuit land use and occupancy, which formed the geographic basis for the new territory. Three years later, ITC formally proposed the creation of a Nunavut Territory.

The argument for creating two new territories in Canada's North centered around the desire of people in Nunavut to have their own government, one that is closer to the people and more culturally-based including the use of Inuktitut as the working language of the new government.

In 1982, the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN) was incorporated to pursue land claims negotiations on behalf of the Inuit of Nunavut, taking the mandate from the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.

In a boundary plebiscite, 56% of voters in the Northwest Territories voted in favour of creating Nunavut on April 14, 1982 and in November of that year, the Canadian government announced that Nunavut would be created.

On May 14, 1992, the majority of N.W.T. residents voted in favour of the proposed boundary between Nunavut and the Western Arctic.

The Inuit of Nunavut ratified the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement in November of 1992. subsequently, the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement was signed by the Prime Minister of Canada on May 25, 1993 in Iqaluit, and passed through the Canadian Parliament in June of the same year. The \$1.1 billion Nunavut Land Claims Settlement Agreement was proclaimed at a special ceremony in Kugluktuk on July 9, 1993. As part of the Nunavut Act, the Government of Canada agreed to provide \$150-Million to cover the costs associated with the creation of Nunavut. The Territory of Nunavut was created on April 1, 1999. New boundaries were drawn in Canada's North created two new territories, a new NWT and Nunavut (which means "our land" in Inuktitut). With this change, the map of Canada was redrawn for the first time since 1949, when Newfoundland joined confederation.