

**Name:** Pugsley, William (Hon.)

**Riding:** Kings, County of

**Party:** Liberal

**Date Elected:** BY-EL 4 Jul. 1885. GE 26 Apr. 1886. BY-EL 12 Jan. 1890 (By ACCL). GE 18 Feb. 1899. BY-EL 27 Sept. 1900. GE 28 Feb. 1903.

**Positions Held:** Elected Speaker of the Assembly, 3 Mar. 1887 - 14 May 1889. Appointed Solicitor General, 14 May 1889 - 1892. Appointed Attorney General, 1 Sept. 1900 - 31 May 1907. Appointed Provincial Secretary Treasurer, 6 Mar. 1907 - 15 Apr. 1907. Premier of New Brunswick, 6 Mar. 1907 - 31 May 1907. Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick, 6 Nov. 1918 - 28 Feb. 1923.

**Cabinet Shuffle:**

**Retired:**

**Defeated:**

**Died:** Died at age 74 on 3 Mar. 1925, after a short illness, in Toronto, Ontario. Buried in Fernhill Cemetery in Saint John, NB.

**Notes:** Born on 27 Sept. 1850 in Sussex, Kings County, NB. Of Loyalist descent. Pugsley was a distinguished student at the University of New Brunswick where he won several scholarships and prizes, including the Gold Medal, before receiving his B.A. in 1868. Studying law, he received his B.C.L. in 1879. He would also later receive an honorary D.C.L. (1884) and an honorary L.L.D. (1918) from the same institution. Admitted to the New Brunswick Bar as an attorney on 22 Jun. 1871, and as a barrister on 27 Jun. 1872, Pugsley resided in Rothesay, and practiced law in Saint John. For ten years he was reporter for the Supreme Court of New Brunswick. In this capacity, he produced ""Reports of Cases Argued in the Supreme Court of New Brunswick, 1872-1883, vols. 14-22."" Achieving prominence as a lawyer, he was appointed a Queen's Counsel on 4 Feb. 1891. Pugsley was also at one time the owner and manager of the ""Saint John Telegraph"" and the ""Saint John Times"" newspapers.

Entering provincial politics, Pugsley sat as an MLA for Kings County first between 1885 and 1892, and later between 1900 and 1907. During his political career he developed a reputation as ""the Liberal strongman"" for his aggressive partisanship. The Conservatives in the Opposition benches referred to him as ""the evil genius of New Brunswick politics."" During the premiership of Lemuel Tweedie (q.v.), Pugsley was one of the most powerful figures in the government. In charge of the province's bankroll as Provincial Secretary-Treasurer, he dispensed patronage openly in order to win support for the Liberals. Pugsley often committed the government to financing projects - especially railways - of dubious merit. Writer Arthur Doyle notes of Pugsley's actions: ""He had committed the government to financing so many railway projects that, his opponents said, if somebody wanted to build a railway to the moon, Pugsley would guarantee the bonds."" The Conservatives were especially critical of his handling of the Central Railway.

An able parliamentarian, Pugsley earned top marks for his eloquence as a debater and ability to use his commanding personality to drive opponents into submission. Among other nicknames in the press and elsewhere, Pugsley was known to opponents as ""Slippery Bill"" and ""Oily William."" When Tweedie resigned the office, Pugsley assumed the premiership of New Brunswick. He served as First Minister for a brief three-month period. At the end of the 1907 Session, he resigned his seat to enter federal politics.

As the Member of Parliament for Saint John City between 18 Sept. 1907 and the dissolution of Parliament in 1917, Pugsley was appointed into the Laurier's cabinet. Appointed Minister of Public Works 29 Aug. 1907, he remained in that position until 21 Sept. 1911, when the federal Liberals lost that year's election. As a cabinet minister, Pugsley played a very large role in the development of the modern Port of Saint John.

After retiring from federal politics, Pugsley was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick, a position he held for five years. He was later appointed Chairman of the Reparations Commission in charge of settling war

claims, on 13 Mar. 1923 and served in this capacity until his death on 3 Mar. 1925.

For more information see also: ""The Premiers of New Brunswick"" (R 971.5 D754); ""The Port of Saint John"" (971.532 M145 NB Coll.); ""Prominent People of New Brunswick"" (Ref 920 M163); ""Prominent People of the Maritime Provinces"" (Ref 920 P965.5); ""Biographical Review New Brunswick, 1900"" (920 J12 NB Coll.); and ""Speakers of the Legislative Assembly Province of New Brunswick 1786-1985"" (328.71505 N532Sp NB Coll.)

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