Access to Constituency Records: MLA Papers Archives

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I acknowledge that BC’s Parliament Buildings, where I work, and its surrounding areas, where I live, are located on the traditional territories of the Lekwungen People, now known as the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations.
Outline

• Legislative Library of BC
• MLAs’ Roles, Responsibilities, Records
• Constituency Records
• MLA Papers Archives
• Achievements to Date
• Next Steps
Legislative Library of BC

Mandate:
“support the information and research needs of the Legislative Assembly”

Our Services:
Time Sensitive - Confidential - Non-Partisan

Collection Scope:
• Extensive Subject-based Collection
• BC Government & Trade Publications
• Royal Commissions & Commissions of Inquiry
• Reference Collection
• Rare Books & Special Collections
• Archival Holdings
  ✓ MLA Papers Archives
  ✓ Alan J. Hodgson fonds
MLAs’ 3Rs: Roles, Responsibilities, Records

- Parliament: Assembly records, Legislative Assembly Archives
- Personal: Private records, Various Archives
- Constituency: Private records, MLA Papers Archives
- Political Party: Political Party records, Individual Party Archives
- Cabinet: Government records, BC Provincial Archives
- Caucus: Caucus records, Various Archives

Legislative Chamber, British Columbia
Constituency Records: Significance

- Capture aspects of citizens’ engagement in provincial democratic governance
- Document the political history of legislation
- Provide unique insights on Members’ individual contributions to the legislative process in relation to their respective communities
- Bring a holistic view to the work done by elected officials
- Complements government information
- Encourages accountability
Constituency Records: Types

Representing and Acting for Constituents

May include:
- Community files
- Events and public appearances files
- Individual constituents case files
- Issues files
- Media relations files
- Reference materials files
Constituency Records: Issues

- Jurisdictional Framework
- Election Transitions
- Recordkeeping Practices
- Nature of the Records
Objective:
- Acquire, preserve, and provide access to the documented heritage capturing the interaction between British Colombians and their elected officials representing them at the Legislature.

Significance:
- One specialized repository
- Complements and enriches existing Library services and collections
- Increases primary resources for research purposes
- Brings in new insights to issues:
  -✓ being debated at the Legislature
  -✓ facing citizens and communities across BC
Acquisition Strategy

Approach:
- Target different MLA groups
- Triggers: elections, retirements, leaving office
- Support election transition
- Promotion & Outreach

Process:
- MLAs – Donate Records
  - Sign agreement with Legislative Library
- Legislative Library – Secure Storage
  - We store all records intact for 5 years before archival processing
- Archives Program – Manage Records
  - Appraisal, protection, preservation, access
We DON’T acquire:

- MLA’s expenditures and constituency financial records
- Ministerial and cabinet records
- Political party records
- Parliamentary records
- Caucus records
Balancing Access to Records

• Public vs. Private
• Access vs.
  • Respect of individuals’ privacy
  • Confidentiality of communications/relations with constituents
• Restrictions – what’s reasonable?
Operational Challenges

- Getting transfer agreements signed
- Backlog building up
- Storage space
- Competing/negotiating with other archival repositories
- Emergence of electronic records
Achievements to Date

Extent:
- 17 MLAs’ collections

Engaging Early
- Archivist is a member of the Election Transition Committee
- Info in the Member’s Handbook and Constituency Office Portal
- Orientation sessions for new Constituency Assistants

Building Awareness
- Targeted publications in internal and external newsletters
- Speaking in professional forums
- On-demand orientation training sessions to Caucus Staff and Constituency Assistants
- Recordkeeping advice and assistance to caucus staff

Archivist in Action
- *Come & see the Archivist at work!* – processing architectural records
Next Steps

- Building relations with other archival institutions
- Developing policies and guidelines
- Developing research tools & finding aids
- Processing the collection
- Providing access to the collection
- Enriching outreach & archives awareness activities
Questions

Thank You!

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