



Fact Sheet

Role of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

In the year 1377, Sir Thomas Hungerford was named the first Speaker of the English Parliament. For over 600 years, this position has been one of the most important ones in democratically-elected legislatures around the world.

In the past, the position of Speaker was often a dangerous one. As Parliaments struggled to exert their democratic supremacy, Speakers were often the targets of a monarch's displeasure. In fact, the first Speaker to meet an untimely fate was beheaded in 1410.

Today, the position of Speaker in Canadian legislatures is one of significant authority and prestige. 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. The Speaker is responsible for enforcing the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly*, presiding over the conduct of House 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 Office of the Legislative Assembly and has jurisdiction over the Legislative Assembly Precinct.

Members of the Legislative Assembly formally elect the Speaker on the first sitting day after a general election. The Speaker holds office at the pleasure of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker ensures that the proceedings of the House are conducted according to its Rules, acting, in effect, as the "referee" of the Legislative Assembly. The Speaker is expected to remain impartial and neutral on matters before the House.

The primary duties of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly include:

- Acting as the official representative of the Assembly;
- Representing the Legislative Assembly at national and international events;
- Presiding over the deliberations of the House in an impartial manner;
- Upholding the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly*;
- Ensuring order and decorum in the House;
- Chairing meetings of the Management and Services Board;
- Administering, subject to direction from the Management and Services Board, the *Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act*;
- Entering into agreements and contracts on behalf of the Legislative Assembly; and
- Formally appointing officers and employees of the Legislative Assembly.

The Legislative Assembly's Presiding Officers also include:

Deputy Speaker

The Deputy Speaker is appointed by the Legislative Assembly. The Deputy Speaker exercises the powers and performs the duties of the Speaker in circumstances where the Speaker is absent, incapacitated or unable to act. The Deputy Speaker acts as Chairperson of Committee of the Whole.

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Deputy Chairpersons of Committee of the Whole

Two Deputy Chairpersons of Committee of the Whole are appointed by the Legislative Assembly. Deputy Chairpersons chair the Committee of the Whole when the Chair is not acting in this capacity.