

Free tours of the Legislature Building begin at the Interpretive Centre and Gift Shop in the Legislature pedway north of the fountains. The Interpretive Centre highlights the building's history and parliamentary traditions while the Gift Shop offers Alberta crafts and souvenirs.

For details or to book a tour, call Visitor Services: **(780) 427-7362**.

Outside the Edmonton area, call 310-0000 and then enter the 10-digit phone number.

# The Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The Legislative Assembly is the focal point of our democratic process. It is where laws are passed, policies approved and programs developed, all of which affect our way of life in Alberta. There are 83 Members of the Legislative Assembly. They belong to political parties and each represents a different constituency. Following an election, the leader of the party having the most seats in the Assembly becomes the Premier and forms a government by choosing a cabinet from among the MLAs in that party. Each cabinet minister is responsible for a government department. The elected members from other parties form the opposition. Their job is to serve as a check on the government, criticizing and suggesting alternatives to its policies. The opposition party with the most seats is the Official Opposition.

## Terms commonly used in the Assembly

**Bill** - A proposed law. To become law, a Bill must pass three readings, committee study and be given Royal Assent.

**Cabinet** (*Executive Council*) - The heads of government departments, led by the Premier and chosen from the elected members of the party holding the majority of seats in the Assembly.

**Cabinet Minister** - A member of the cabinet; the head of a government department.

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

**Chamber** - The room where the Legislative Assembly holds its sittings.

**Committee of Supply** - A committee of all Members of the Legislative Assembly which meets to discuss the government's budget estimates in detail.

**Committee of the Whole** - A committee of all Members of the Legislative Assembly which meets to discuss bills in detail.

**Estimates** - The government's proposed expenditures for each government department.

**Government** - In the parliamentary sense, the cabinet (Executive Council), headed by the Premier.

**Hansard** - The official, verbatim record of parliamentary debates and proceedings.

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

**Legislative Assembly** - A lawmaking body of elected representatives; also called the House.

**Lieutenant Governor** - The representative of the monarch and formal head of state.

**MLA** - Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta; one of 83 elected representatives.

**Mace** - The ceremonial staff carried into the Assembly every day before the sitting begins. It symbolizes the authority of the Legislature.

**Opposition** - MLAs belonging to parties other than the governing party. In the House they sit opposite the cabinet and serve as critics of government policies.

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

**Private Member** - Any MLA who is not in the cabinet.

**Reading** - One of three stages of a Bill. The Bill is introduced at first reading and may be debated at second and third readings.

**Royal Assent** - A ceremony in which the monarch's representative, the Lieutenant Governor, gives final approval to a Bill.

**Sergeant-at-Arms** - Legislative Assembly officer in charge of security of the House and MLAs.

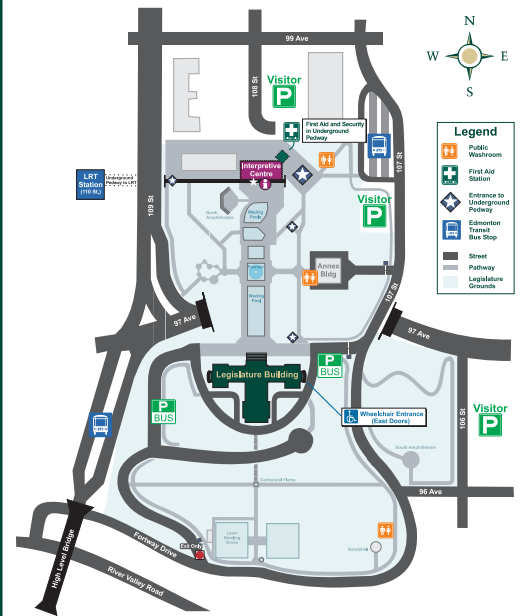
**Session** - A series of meetings of the Legislative Assembly opened by Royal Proclamation and closed by cabinet order. When the session is divided into spring and fall periods, these periods are called sittings, as are the daily meetings of the Assembly.

**Speaker** - An MLA elected by all other MLAs to maintain order.

**Speech from the Throne** - The speech delivered by the Lieutenant Governor which opens each new session and outlines the government's proposed spending and lawmaking plans for the session.



Legislative  
Assembly  
of Alberta



## 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:

- ◆ Financial Management and Administrative Services
- ◆ Information Technology Services
- ◆ Human Resource Services
- ◆ Legal Services
- ◆ Library Services
- ◆ Communication Services
- ◆ Visitor, Ceremonial and Security Services
- ◆ House and Committee Services

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

[www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca)

If you have questions about the Legislative Assembly, please contact Communication Services:  
801 Legislature Annex,  
Edmonton, AB T5K 1E4  
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# Alberta's Legislative Assembly Office (LAO)

The origins of Alberta's Legislative Assembly Office (LAO) can be traced to 14th century England, when parliament elected the first Speaker and appointed the first Clerk. Today the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly is the head of the LAO, and the Clerk is the Speaker's deputy. The *Legislative Assembly Act* of 1983 made the LAO's current name official.

The most common misconception about the LAO is that it is a branch of government and staff are government employees.

However, in the parliamentary system, the government is the executive branch, responsible for applying and enforcing laws; the Legislative Assembly is the legislative branch, responsible for establishing those laws. The LAO provides support to the entire Assembly — members of both government and opposition parties.

Although the LAO is sometimes called the Speaker's department, it is not a government department. 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 Speaker's chief administrative deputy 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 provides services to MLAs and the public.

The latter include: Financial Management and Administrative Services; Human Resource Services; Information Technology Services; House and Committee Services; Communication Services; Visitor, Ceremonial and Security Services; Library Services; and Legal Services.

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.