

Dave Barrett Memorial

Story

Victoria

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you everyone for being here today.

I'd like to start by acknowledging we are on the territory of the Lekwungen people including the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations.

It is a real honour to speak with you today about Dave Barrett, B.C.'s first New Democrat premier.

Dave focused every single day of his time as Premier, and as leader of the NDP, shining a light on the underdog, on those that did not have a voice.

He had a tremendous influence on me.

I remember the first time I was captivated by his words.

I was just out of university – waiting on tables.

A friend convinced me to go down to the legislature and see what was up.

Out came Dave Barrett onto the steps of the legislature.

He was full of energy. When he spoke he made people feel they could do anything.

I remember saying to a friend at the time, "I bet if that guy says 'I want you all to pick up this building and throw it in the Inner Harbour, we would have tried to do it'".

That was how powerful his words were.

I couldn't stop thinking about his speech – I was excited about what I had heard and seen - and so I became a member of the NDP.

The energy and influence of Premier Barrett's government is legendary. His government passed 387

bills in just 39 weeks.

We have all benefited from his legacy.

From public auto insurance to the agricultural land reserve, to Hansard and even Question Period

He shaped our province and our government, and he did it by putting people front and centre.

Good government is forged in public service.

Premier Barrett was a social worker. He understood the important role that government plays in people's lives.

Two of the first acts of his government were raising the minimum wage and increasing supports for seniors.

His government also brought in our modern ambulance service and got rid of for-profit hospitals – bringing them under public control.

In education, they abolished corporal punishment, brought in provincewide kindergarten, and gave teachers collective bargaining rights.

Just imagine how different our lives would be today without his leadership.

We owe Premier Barrett for many of the services we take for granted today.

Our province wouldn't be the same without his leadership.

Even our parks system was transformed by his government.

Up until the Barrett government mining was allowed in our provincial parks.

They didn't just increase protection for special places like Strathcona and Wells Grey – they added over 1.5 million acres to B.C. parks.

Premier Barrett was not afraid of controversy.

He didn't let it stand in the way of doing what was right and what was fair for everyone.

His government's approach to labour relations is a good example of how they stayed on course.

They brought in a labour code that delivered fairness for both workers and employers.

It didn't satisfy anyone. Everyone wanted the law slanted in their favour.

But Barrett's government forged ahead – and transformed labour relations – not just in B.C. but across the country.

A province that was once brought low by labour unrest – became a model of how to balance the needs of workers and businesses.

Despite the rhetoric at the time – Barrett's government had a truly balanced approach.

Ordinary people had been left behind by Social Credit and the Liberals.

For too long, government was slanted in favour of those at the top, to the detriment of everyone else.

Premier Barrett was fearless in confronting the rich and the powerful – and in demanding fairness for ordinary people.

The fact that so many of his policies remain in place today, is a testament to the balance his government brought to our province.

Dave Barrett transformed our province into a better place for everyone.

He showed the power government has to improve the lives of people.

He showed the role government plays in delivering fairness for everyone.

He did more to improve our province and our country in three years than most of us could hope to do in a lifetime.

His contributions to our province will never be forgotten.