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Background Paper 2009: 03 / December 2009

## **Political Families** **A List of Related BC MLAs**

At least 27 families in British Columbia have sent more than one member to the legislature. The family connections include spouses, in-laws and siblings, as well as parents and children. This is a list of known family connections in the B.C. Legislative Assembly, 1871 to present, as well as the colonial legislative councils.

Prepared by Emily Yearwood-Lee  
Reference Librarian  
Legislative Library of British Columbia

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## POLITICAL FAMILIES

Politics run in families “almost as much as features do,” it was once said. This is true in British Columbia, where at least 27 families have sent more than one member to the legislature. The family connections include spouses, in-laws and siblings, as well as parents and children. Relatives didn’t always run under the same political banner. They sometimes sat in the assembly at the same time. In one case, more than a century passed before a particular family returned a member to the legislature.

Below is a list of known<sup>1</sup> family connections in the B.C. Legislative Assembly, 1871 to present, as well as the colonial legislative councils.

**BARNARD, Francis Jones and John Andrew MARA.** Francis Jones Barnard was a prominent stage coach line operator who sat in the colonial legislative council from 1867 to 1870. His daughter married John Mara, who represented the Kootenay region from 1871 to 1875, then Yale until 1886. Mara was speaker for three years.

**BENNETT, W.A.C. and William (Bill) Richards.** Just three years separated the reign of the longest-running B.C. premier from that of his son. Sacred W.A.C. Bennett held the top job from 1952 to 1972. His son Bill became premier in 1975 and kept the job until 1986. Bill once described growing up in the Bennett household: “We were raised in a political environment – the whole conversation around the family was one of enjoyable argument.”

**BROWN, Donald and Buda.** Donald was elected a Coalition MLA in Vancouver-Burrard in 1945. He became a deputy speaker. He was defeated in 1952. His wife Buda was elected the Social Credit MLA for Vancouver-Point Grey in 1956. She was a minister without portfolio in the W.A.C. Bennett government. She died while still in office in 1962.

**BRYAN, John Melvin Sr. and John Melvin Jr.** Father and son were both Liberals – eventually. John Melvin Sr. won North Vancouver for the party in 1924. He didn’t run in the next election, but made a comeback in 1937 in the Mackenzie riding. He died in office three years later. John Melvin Jr. won the North Vancouver seat in 1956 for the Social Credit. He later joined the Liberals.

**CARSON, Robert Henry and Ernest Crawford.** It took a coalition to bring the Carson brothers together politically. Elder brother Robert was elected for the Liberals in Kamloops in 1933. Younger brother Ernest was a Conservative, first elected in Lillooet in 1928, then again in 1941. But in 1945, both brothers won their ridings under the Coalition banner.

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<sup>1</sup> It is possible that other family connections exist.

**CONROY, Ed and Katrine.** “Fifteen years ago, Ed and I debated who would run for the nomination at the time, and it was decided that for a number of reasons he would enter the race,” said Katrine in her maiden speech. Her husband was first elected in the riding of Rossland-Trail in 1991 and held the spot until 2001. In 2005, Katrine was elected to West Kootenay-Boundary. She was re-elected in 2009.

**DAVIE, John, Alexander, Theodore and Cyril.** The prominent Davie family produced two premiers and a speaker. Patriarch John Davie was the first to enter politics, joining the colonial legislative council in 1868. His sons, Alexander and Theodore, were both premiers. Alexander held the top office from 1887 to 1889. Theodore was premier from 1892 to 1895. Cyril Davie – a son of Alexander – was elected a Conservative for Cowichan-Newcastle in 1924. He was speaker for two years.

**DUNSMUIR, Robert and James.** The Dunsmuirs were a founding family of British Columbia and among its wealthiest and most controversial inhabitants. Father Robert was MLA for Nanaimo from 1882 to 1889. Son James was elected to the legislature for Comox in 1898. He was premier from 1900 to 1902. Nanaimo-area MLA **John BRYDEN** was married to one of Robert’s daughters.

**FRASER, John Anderson and Alexander Vaughan.** John was the Conservative MLA for Cariboo (1909-1916) the year his son Alex was born. John brought his children along on election campaigns and made them recite the names of Canada’s prime ministers. “If they couldn’t, they didn’t get dinner, or so [Alex] said,” a relative told a reporter. Alex ran for the Social Credit in 1969 in his father’s old riding and kept the seat until 1989, when he died in office. He was responsible for highways in the province for over a decade.

**GARGRAVE, Herbert (Bert) and Anthony (Tony).** Mackenzie voters knew the Gargrave brothers. Older brother Bert held the riding for the CCF from 1941 to 1949. He didn’t win a third term, but the Coalition candidate who unseated him lasted just three years. Younger brother Tony took back the seat for the CCF in 1952. “Bert gave me \$200 and told me to go for the Mackenzie seat,” Tony told a reporter. “He said I’d lose but the experience would be good for me. I won.”

**GIBSON, James Gordon and Gordon Fulerton.** Millionaire lumberman James Gordon first won the Lillooet riding for the Liberals in 1953. He resigned two years later, but ran and won again in North Vancouver in 1960. His son Gordon Fulerton won North Vancouver-Capilano for the Liberals in a 1974 by-election. The younger Gibson was also leader of the provincial Liberal party.

**HAGGEN, Rupert Williams and Lois Mabel.** Rupert was first elected for the CCF for the Grand Forks-Greenwood riding in 1949. He held the spot for seven years, but did not run in 1956 due to poor health. Lois ran in his place and won the spot. She was elected three times before being defeated in 1966.

**HOBBS, George and Margaret.** George – nicknamed “Tiny” for his large stature – won in Revelstoke for the CCF in 1960. He died of a heart attack in 1962. His wife Margaret – called the “Battlin’ Widow” in one newspaper headline – won his seat in the subsequent by-election, but was not re-elected in the 1963 general election.

**HUNTER, Joseph and Joseph Douglas.** Joseph won a Cariboo seat in the province’s first election in 1871. He was married to the daughter of another MLA and eventual premier: **John ROBSON**. The couple’s son, Joseph Douglas, was elected in 1937 for the Conservatives in Victoria. Another Robson relative – **Helen Douglas SMITH** – also held office. She was first elected for the Liberals in Vancouver-Burrard in 1933 and re-elected in 1937, the same year as Joseph Douglas Hunter.

**KERGIN, William Thomas and Herbert Frederick.** Older brother William Thomas was elected in the Skeena riding for the Liberals in 1907. Younger brother Herbert Frederick, also Liberal, had a longer stint in the legislature, representing Atlin from 1920 to 1933. Many years later, their great-nephew **Greg HALSEY-BRANDT** brought the family line back to the legislature. He was elected in 2001 for the Liberals in Richmond Centre.

**LOVICK, Dale and Jan PULLINGER.** Dale and Jan married while both were serving as NDP MLAs for their Vancouver Island ridings. (Dale was first elected in 1986 in Nanaimo. Jan won a 1989 by-election in Nanaimo.) They both held spots in cabinet and Dale served as speaker. “We work very hard at being treated as individuals,” Jan once told a newspaper interviewer.

**MACDONALD, Malcolm Archibald and Alexander Barrett.** Father and son would both become attorney general. First elected in 1916, Malcolm Archibald represented the Liberals in Vancouver City. His son Alexander Barrett ran under a different political banner: first the CCF, then the NDP. He represented Vancouver East from 1960-1986.

**MCGEER, Gerry, Manfred and Patrick.** Brothers Gerry and Manfred were both Liberal. Older brother Gerry first represented Richmond in 1916. He won again in 1933 in Vancouver Burrard. Younger brother Manfred briefly had the Mackenzie spot after winning a 1940 by-election. The brothers’ nephew, Patrick, was in Victoria the longest, from 1962 to 1986. He started out a Liberal, but ran for the Social Credit in 1975. His posts included minister of education.

**POOLEY, Charles and Robert Henry (Harry).** Between them, this father and son duo represented Esquimalt for 50 years. A reporter wrote: “They were alike in many ways and particularly in their unswerving loyalties to the causes they supported and in their love of sport.” The father – Charles – married a daughter of **William FISHER** (a former MLA for Esquimalt). Charles was first elected in 1882 and kept the seat until 1907. He died in 1912, the same year that his son Harry won the Esquimalt riding for the Conservatives. Harry held the seat until 1937 and his cabinet posts included attorney general.

**ROBERTSON, Alexander Rocke and Gregor.** Alexander Rocke was elected in 1871 in British Columbia’s first provincial election. He represented Esquimalt for one term and served as provincial secretary. In 2005, his great-great-grandson Gregor brought the family name back to the legislature. Gregor represented Vancouver-Fairview for the NDP until 2008, when he left to successfully run for the job of Vancouver mayor.

**SLOAN, William and Gordon.** Father and son were both cabinet ministers. William Sloan was a provincial secretary and minister for mines during his 12 years as a Liberal MLA for Nanaimo (1916-1928). His son Gordon, also a Liberal, was attorney general during his one term in office (Vancouver Centre). Gordon went on to head two royal commissions on forestry.

**SMITH, Ralph and Mary Ellen.** The province’s first female MLA, Mary Ellen won a 1918 Vancouver City by-election to fill the spot vacated by her late husband. Ralph was elected there for the Liberals in 1916 and was minister of finance when he died. Mary Ellen ran first as an independent and later as a Liberal. She was a minister without portfolio under Premier John Oliver and thus she was believed to be the first female cabinet minister in the British Empire.

**TOLMIE, William, James and Simon Fraser.** William Tolmie was followed into politics by two sons, one of whom became premier. William was elected to the legislature in 1874. His son James won an 1888 by-election, but was not re-elected. Son Simon Fraser left the biggest mark as the Conservative premier from 1928 to 1933.

**TYABJI, Judy and Gordon WILSON.** Tyabji and Wilson first won their seats as provincial Liberals in 1991. Wilson (Powell River-Sunshine Coast) was leader of the Liberal party and Tyabji (Okanagan East) was later appointed Opposition House Leader. Both MLAs later switched to a new party, the Progressive Democratic Alliance. They married in 1994. Wilson later joined the NDP. Tyabji had another family connection in the legislature: her former brother-in-law, **John WEISBECK**, won the Okanagan East spot for the Liberals in 1996.

**WALKEM, George Anthony, William, George Alexander.** The most famous Walkem was George Anthony, who served twice as premier. He had the post from 1874 to 1876, then again

from 1878 to 1882. His brother William was elected in 1894 for one term. The brothers' nephew, George Alexander, held office from 1924 to 1933.

**WEBSTER, Arnold and Daisy.** Arnold became CCF provincial leader in 1953 and elected to the Vancouver East riding the same year. A widower, he married his second wife Daisy in 1955 – the couple met at the high school where both worked before Arnold went to the legislature. Arnold did not run in the next provincial election. In 1972, Daisy won the Vancouver South riding for the NDP. She also left after only one term in office, citing a desire to spend more time with her family.

**WINCH, Ernest Edward and Harold Edward.** Father and son were both elected for the CCF in 1933 and sat in the legislature at the same time for 20 years. Father Ernest represented Burnaby until 1957, while his son Harold held Vancouver East until leaving for federal politics in 1953. Parent and child were close, but never roomed together in Victoria. “Being father and son, there could be influence from one to the other, and we don’t want that,” Ernest once said.

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