

QUEEN'S PARK INSIDER

SPRING 2023

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE ONTARIO LEGISLATURE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME



OLIP IS A PROGRAMME OF THE CANADIAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

Letter from the Editors

Dear readers,

Our ten months as OLIP interns have flown by, and what an incredible time it has been! From embarking on study tours, to starting our second placements, to visiting our Members' ridings, to progressing on our research papers, our second half has been packed with invaluable learning experiences—in other words, what political nerds like us call fun!

This winter saw us travel to the Northwest Territories' Legislature in Yellowknife, Quebec's provincial Legislature, and to our nation's Parliament in Ottawa to expand our knowledge of political contexts beyond Ontario. Many of us were also able to travel to our Members' ridings and learn about the needs of communities across the province. As the first cohort to visit a community outside of Yellowknife during our Northwest Territories tour and the first to have an intern visit Ontario's most northwestern riding of Kiiwetinoong, we gained a deeper appreciation of lived realities in parts of Canada beyond Queen's Park.

We began spring with our second placements in March, and for many of us this was an opportunity to bridge knowledge gained in our first placements with new observations on provincial politics. It has been invigorating to work on legislative and community projects large and small with our Members, and to "hear the other side," as the Legislature's motto encourages.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without your incredibly generous support. We would especially like to thank the Canadian Political Science Association, the Speaker, Hon. Ted Arnott, Clerk Todd Decker, our hardworking administrative team, our MPPs, and all alumni and partners for making OLIP a thrilling and enriching reality for us this year.

Now that we feel at home walking around Queen's Park and participating in the day-to-day bustle of Ontario politics, it is hard to believe that we were once fresh-faced interns intimidated by the grandeur of the building and the power it holds. We will miss the Pink Palace, but we will take lessons learned from the people we had the privilege of meeting, many of whom are featured in this magazine, with us into our careers following OLIP.

Sincerely,

Téah U-Ming and Sharon Lee, Co-Editors of *Queen's Park Insider*



THE COMMITTEES

Magazine
Sharon & Téah

Partnerships
Alia & Karissa

Meetings
Sky & Sophie

Receptions & Alumni Relations
Leah & Sky

Social Media
Lucas & Esma

Study Tours
Sophie & Leah

Recruitment
Esma & Lucas

THE ADMIN TEAM

Academic Director
Dr. Peter P. Constantinou

Programme Coordinators
Meghan Stenson & Michael Vidoni

Programme Manager
Munnka Vajpai

Archivist
Richard Sage

Letter from the Director

It is difficult to believe that the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme's 47th year is nearing its end. The interns are finishing their second placements, preparing to present their academic papers, and stepping into the next chapter of their careers with new experiences and knowledge. It is an exciting time, but also an opportunity to look back and pay tribute to the people who make OLIP such a special programme. As the Academic Director, I am honoured to highlight the individuals and organizations who have contributed to the memorable experiences of this year's interns.

On behalf of OLIP, I would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the Canadian Political Science Association and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for their continued support and generosity. Thank you as well to the Speaker, Hon. Ted Arnott, and Clerk Todd Decker, who have steadfastly supported the programme for many years. Todd Decker is retiring and I know he will be missed by many, but especially me—he has been a great friend to the programme! We hope to see him at events in the future.

We would not have had another successful year without the hard work and commitment of Programme Coordinators Meghan Stenson and Michael Vidoni, Programme Manager Munnka Vajpai, and volunteer archivist Richard Sage. Furthermore, many partners generously support the programme and ensure it provides a rich experience to the interns. I would like to express my gratitude for all of their contributions, large and small, to the growth and learning experience of the leaders of tomorrow.

It has been a pleasure to watch the interns evolve from Queen's Park rookies to more seasoned professionals. From embarking on study tours of legislatures in Canada and abroad to meeting with trailblazing leaders, the interns have had a transformative experience that will undoubtedly follow them wherever they go next. I look forward to seeing what they accomplish throughout their lives with the lessons they learned at the Legislature. I have no doubt that they will join the long line of impressive alumni that continues to support and contribute to the programme's success.

Best wishes,

Dr. Peter P. Constantinou
OLIP Academic Director



The Ontario Legislature Internship Programme was established in 1975. The Programme is administered by the Canadian Political Science Association and is supported by a substantial grant from the Ontario Legislative Assembly. The Programme is not associated with the Government of Ontario or with any political party. OLIP provides backbench opposition and government members of the Legislative Assembly with highly qualified assistants, while simultaneously giving interns academic and practical experience in the day-to-day work of the Legislature.

Spring MPP Placements

ALIA IS PLACED WITH MPP ADIL SHAMJI

LIBERAL PARTY



For my spring placement, I have the pleasure of working with MPP Adil Shamji, who represents Don Valley East. Working with MPP Shamji has been a joy and has provided me with insight on a variety of policy areas. He is the Liberal Critic for Health, Indigenous Affairs, Northern Development, and Colleges and Universities, and it has been exciting to learn so much about these portfolios in such a fast-paced environment. Being part of this office has allowed me to partake in a variety of projects, such as working on a Private Member's bill, petitions, casework, and assisting in press conferences. I also got the chance to visit his constituency office and better understand casework. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to work alongside such a wonderful team, and would like to thank MPP Shamji, Lorne Levy, Sombo Saviye, and Ahmed Patel for being so kind, warm, and welcoming!

KARISSA IS PLACED WITH MPP RIC BRESEE

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY



For my government placement, I am placed with MPP Ric Bresee, who represents Hastings—Lennox and Addington. MPP Bresee was elected in 2022 and is currently serving as the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. MPP Bresee comes to the Legislature with a very diverse background, from working as a systems analyst to teaching college courses to formerly serving as mayor in his riding. Having lived in his riding for most of his life, MPP Bresee's passion for his community and its members has made me eager to visit. In terms of Ministry work, MPP Bresee has given me the opportunity to research different environmental policies that the government is currently considering. Each day, I am learning fascinating facts about a topic I had no prior knowledge in, and I am thoroughly enjoying the process. Thank you to MPP Bresee and Joseph for welcoming me into the office!

ESMA IS PLACED WITH MPP LUCILLE COLLARD

LIBERAL PARTY

For my second placement, I am thrilled to be working with MPP Lucille Collard, who represents Ottawa—Vanier. MPP Collard was first elected in 2020 and she brings her experience as a lawyer to the role. She is the House Leader for the Liberal Caucus and the Liberal Critic for three different portfolios: Attorney General, Solicitor General, and Francophone Affairs. MPP Collard's diverse portfolio and many of her passions, including improving the justice system, have given me the opportunity to work on a variety of projects, such as leading work on Private Member's bills, writing Member's statements and briefing notes, and preparing questions for Question Period and the Public Accounts Committee. Special thanks to MPP Collard and Legislative Assistant David Nightingale for this warm welcome! It has been an incredible learning experience so far, and I look forward to continuing to work with MPP Collard and her team.



LEAH IS PLACED WITH MPP VIJAY THANIGASALAM

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY



For my second placement, I am working with MPP Vijay Thanigasalam, who represents Scarborough—Rouge Park. MPP Thanigasalam was elected in 2018 and has served in various roles including Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Transportation. Currently, he serves as Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Infrastructure. MPP Thanigasalam developed his passion for public service after immigrating to Canada from Sri Lanka at the age of 14, and becoming heavily involved in community initiatives. In his role as a Member, MPP Thanigasalam is community-oriented, and I have been able to assist with his work through correspondence, scheduling, briefings, and staffing for his events. One highlight was assisting the coordination of the Scarborough—Rouge Park job fair, which saw over 800 constituents attend. Thank you to MPP Thanigasalam, Saranja, Kevin, Tas, and Aaren for welcoming me to the team—I look forward to continuing getting to know Scarborough—Rouge Park!

Spring MPP Placements

LUCAS IS PLACED WITH MPP JOHN FRASER

LIBERAL PARTY



My second placement is with MPP John Fraser, who represents Ottawa South and is interim leader of the Ontario Liberal Party. Working in MPP Fraser's office has provided me with invaluable insight into the role of a party leader and the policymaking process. I've enjoyed the fast pace of the office and the trust MPP Fraser has placed in me, whether that means writing questions, researching policy, or engaging with stakeholders. I was grateful to visit Ottawa South and tour the diverse and unique riding. Having grown up in the riding, MPP Fraser is proud to know its geography and people like the back of his hand. I thoroughly enjoyed hearing the passion he has for his constituents and their issues. A big thank you to MPP Fraser and Executive Assistant and OLIP alumnus Eric Osborne for their warm welcome and trust.

SKY IS PLACED WITH MPP ERNIE HARDEMAN

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY



For my spring placement, I have the privilege of working with the second longest-serving current Member of the Legislature, MPP Ernie Hardeman, who represents Oxford. A former minister in three premiers' cabinets, he is one of most experienced MPPs, and is currently the Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Through my interactions with MPP Hardeman at Queen's Park and his constituency office, I quickly realized that he is a widely respected Member. During my visit to Oxford, his longevity in the community was evident, and I even witnessed several of his constituents stopping him on the street and asking to catch up over coffee. I am grateful to Mr. Hardeman and his team for their guidance, and I look forward to continuing to assist them with their day-to-day tasks.

SHARON IS PLACED WITH MPP LAURA SMITH

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

I am currently placed with MPP Laura Smith, who represents the riding of Thornhill and serves as Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. MPP Smith is also a member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy. It has been a pleasure to learn about these areas through MPP Smith's legislative interests. Throughout my placement thus far, I have had the opportunity to write Member's statements and speeches, as well as to accompany her at numerous community events. I have also been involved with the drafting of her Private Member's bill, which has been nothing short of eye-opening and exciting. It has been a pleasure to get to know Thornhill, which has the largest Jewish population in Canada. I look forward to learning more about this riding. Thank you, MPP Smith, Sheldon, Daniela, and Delia for your support and collegiality!



SOPHIE IS PLACED WITH MPP FRANCE GÉLINAS

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY



For the spring term, I am lucky to be working with MPP France Gélinas, who represents the riding of Nickel Belt. This vast riding stretches from the French River to just south of Timmins, and is home to many Franco-Ontarians. Nickel Belt also contains a wealth of natural resources and is a key contributor to Ontario's mining industry. MPP Gélinas serves as the Official Opposition Health Critic, so I have been able to meet with stakeholders from various healthcare organizations and learn about current healthcare legislation. I have also been able to observe the Standing Committee on Social Policy as well as the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, both of which MPP Gélinas is a member. I would like to thank MPP Gélinas and her Executive Assistant Damien for welcoming me to the team. I am looking forward to visiting Nickel Belt this spring!

Spring MPP Placements

TÉAH IS PLACED WITH MPP DAWN GALLAGHER MURPHY PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY



Working with MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy of Newmarket—Aurora for my second placement has been an exciting glimpse at both her legislative work and community engagement, and it has been illuminating to see how the two connect. I was lucky to start my term by helping her prepare for second reading of her Private Member's bill—which would recognize June as Seniors' Month—a process that included gathering input from seniors' organizations across southern Ontario and writing her introductory speech. I have also been privileged to visit and learn about the needs of some of the community organizations and manufacturing facilities that Newmarket—Aurora is home to. MPP Gallagher Murphy is Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health, and I look forward to meeting healthcare stakeholders and delving into research on health policy. Thank you to MPP Gallagher Murphy, EA Martin, and the constituency team for welcoming and supporting me!

Fall Reception

In November 2022, we hosted the first fall OLIP reception in three years! Receptions have long been a cherished tradition for bringing the OLIP network together and, prior to the pandemic, they were held semi-annually. The event was a tremendous success as we hosted OLIP alumni, partners, MPPs, and Legislative Assembly staff, all of whom contribute to making OLIP the successful programme it is. We heard remarks from the Speaker, the Hon. Ted Arnott, our headline partners, and the Beef Farmers of Ontario, and we were grateful to share with our guests about our time working with MPPs and living political life to the fullest at the Legislature. We want to express our thanks to all partners and attendees; we are grateful for your support and are looking forward to the 2023 spring reception! Special thanks to our partner, the Beef Farmers of Ontario, for making this event possible.



Alumni Spotlight: Merging Passions

DAVID MYLES Musician

In 2022, David Myles won a JUNO Award; in 2003, he was an OLIP intern. Although music was always front of mind for him, David was also passionate about politics and pursued both, playing and writing music while at Queen's Park. When he finally accepted music as his calling, his underlying motive stayed the same. David was always interested in the societal forces that bring people together, and despite not pursuing a career in public service or politics, he continues to be a unifying force through his music. His time at Queen's Park challenged his worldview and gave him new considerations on partisanship, our political system, and the multitude of ways in which one can make social and political change. A highlight of his OLIP experience was visiting the constituencies of his respective Members, Norm Miller and Michael Gravelle, during which he learned about the barriers people face in accessing government services and about the differences between people's lived experiences in southern and northern Ontario. It was also during these visits that he wrote a song! We can only hope that we can hear that song one day, but



Photo: David Myles Powered by Shopify

for now we will eagerly listen to his latest single, "It's Only a Little Loneliness." Thanks to David for sitting down with the *Queen's Park Insider* co-editors and sharing his story.

CLARA PASIEKA CBC Journalist

For Clara Pasieka, Queen's Park was a change of pace, to say the least. Coming from years of acting in the film and television industry, she had a unique background entering the Legislature. However, one common thread remained: her love for storytelling. To the former actress, OLIP presented an exciting opportunity



Photo: @PasiekaOnPol on Twitter

to explore different ways to tell Canadians' stories and connect with the realities of the individuals she portrayed. During her time as an intern, she was drawn to journalism as a new way of storytelling and helping people understand how complex policies and legislation may affect them. Her successful post-OLIP career as a journalist was shaped by the experience of being an intern in more ways than one. For instance, during her first placement with MPP France Gélinas, she learned the importance of listening as she witnessed how the Member intently listened from the perimeter of media scrums. Her highlight, however, was attending the pre-Budget consultations during her second placement with MPP Doug Downey and starting her quest to visit every riding in Ontario. Now, Clara is an accomplished journalist whose piece on the April 2020 Nova Scotia mass shooting was a finalist for a Canadian Association of Journalists Award. Once an intern, she now frequents the halls of the Pink Palace as a journalist. She's not done with Queen's Park just yet!

Constituency Visits

ESMA VISITED OTTAWA—VANIER



My visit to Ottawa—Vanier, the riding of MPP Lucille Collard, during my second placement was a trip to remember! I had the privilege of participating in several meetings and events in both English and French, including meeting with la Fédération de la Jeunesse Franco-Ontarienne and the board of the Youville Centre. A highlight was visiting a local high school where we conducted a Q&A session with students and teachers. We also worked on stakeholder engagement for a Private Member's bill. I would like to thank MPP Collard and her constituency staff for their warm welcome and an engaging visit.

KARISSA VISITED OTTAWA WEST—NEPEAN

Visiting MPP Chandra Pasma's riding of Ottawa West—Nepean in December was a privilege and nothing short of exciting. A highlight of my visit was helping MPP Pasma and her staff welcome constituents to her office for an open house. Along with the attendees, I learned about the services offered by the constituency office, met with community leaders, and spoke about local issues. These conversations helped me gain an understanding of these issues from constituents' perspectives, and truly brought more meaning to my work at Queen's Park. Thank you to Team Pasma and Ottawa West—Nepean for welcoming me into your community!



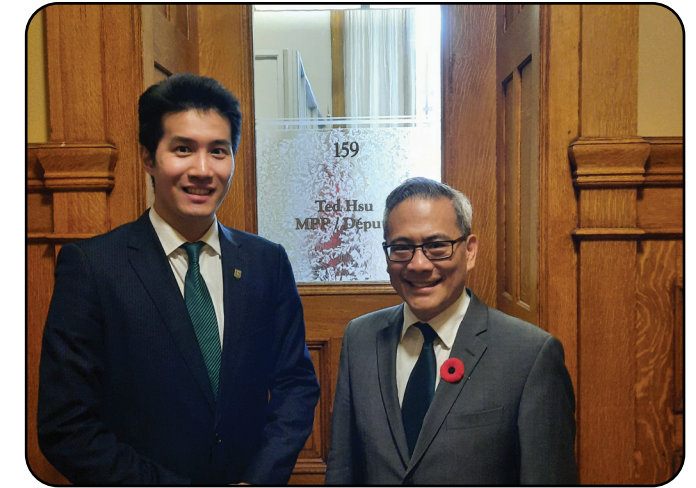
LEAH VISITED KIIWETINOONG



In January, I had the unique experience of being welcomed to my first placement's northern riding of Kiiwetinoong by MPP Sol Mamakwa and his staff. During my time in Sioux Lookout, we met with constituents and learned about community services including the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority and the Meno Ya Win Health Centre, which assist in delivering services to communities across Ontario's Far North. I also had the privilege of visiting two fly-in communities, Weagamow Lake and Muskrat Dam, located approximately 360 kilometres north of Sioux Lookout. Thank you to MPP Mamakwa and Kiiwetinoong for the warm welcome!

SKY VISITED KINGSTON AND THE ISLANDS

I was fortunate to spend time in MPP Ted Hsu's constituency of Kingston and the Islands as part of my first placement. I witnessed firsthand his day-to-day interactions with constituents and stakeholders in the largest municipality in southeastern Ontario. Under MPP Hsu's guidance, I visited the Royal Military College of Canada, and learned about Ontario's chemical industry at DuPont's facility, as well as some of the challenges the brewery industry is facing in Ontario. I am grateful to have learned the importance of working for one's constituents. Thank you to MPP Hsu and his staff for a memorable experience in Kingston!



SHARON VISITED OTTAWA CENTRE



During my visit to Ottawa Centre in my first placement with MPP Joel Harden, I had the opportunity to participate in several community initiatives. It was fulfilling to meet constituents and put faces and names to the people MPPs serve at Queen's Park. Witnessing MPP Harden address hands-on every issue constituents brought to his office, I quickly learned that there are various avenues through which MPPs can use their position, influence, and resources to improve the lives of their constituents, beyond their work at Queen's Park. Thank you to MPP Harden, Ethan, Ty, and Erica for welcoming me to Ottawa Centre!

SOPHIE VISITED WINDSOR—TECUMSEH

In January, I was lucky to visit MPP Dowie's riding of Windsor—Tecumseh to spend time at his constituency office. What made this visit particularly special were the incredible parts of Windsor I toured to learn more about the area: Willistead Manor, the Ambassador Bridge, the Ojibwe Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve, and WIFF Alley. In a Stellantis automotive research facility tour, I learned about the practical side of the industry's work. To finish my week in Windsor, I tried some famous Windsor-style pizza. Thank you to Team Dowie for hosting me!



Meeting Highlights

FORMER PREMIER DAVID PETERSON



David Peterson, former premier of Ontario, graciously welcomed us to his office at Cassels Brock & Blackwell LLP in downtown Toronto. We discussed his distinguished career in politics and beyond, including his fascinating tenure as premier of Ontario from 1985 to 1990. He shared life lessons and the kind of political stories that make being an OLIP intern so special. We particularly enjoyed his discussion on the dangers of political polarization and the importance of maintaining respect in political discourse. Meeting a premier is always a privilege, and Premier Peterson's generosity ensured this was no exception.

FORMER PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE

Former premier Kathleen Wynne graciously took the time to meet with us and share some of the lessons she learned throughout her esteemed career. She spoke particularly about her early activism and issues that brought her into politics. We also discussed some of the policies that came to define her tenure as school board trustee, MPP, minister, and then premier of Ontario from 2013 to 2018. We appreciated Premier Wynne's emphasis on respecting colleagues across the aisle and maintaining a level of respect in our politics that enables progress to be made for the betterment of all Ontarians.

FORMER PREMIER DALTON MCGUINTY



We had the honour of meeting with former premier Dalton McGuinty. He served as Ontario's 24th premier from 2003 to 2013, leader of the Ontario Liberals from 1996, and MPP for Ottawa South from 1990. Premier McGuinty spoke about the challenges of being a political leader, describing political leaders as the "liver" of the party in that they absorb all the toxins that come with party politics. Despite this, he says he misses being in a position where he was able to shape the future through public policy. Thank you, Premier McGuinty, for your invaluable insight and deep wisdom! We appreciate your long-standing relationship with our programme.

AMBASSADOR BOB RAE



In early February, we had the honour of meeting with former premier and now Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations, Bob Rae. We discussed Ambassador Rae's humble beginning as a graduate student searching for direction through to his time as premier of Ontario and his long diplomatic career since. Ambassador Rae shared his insights into his current role and how he maintains his faith in democratic institutions. Particularly, he emphasized believing in something bigger than yourself and the importance of supporting our friends and colleagues. We appreciate Ambassador Rae's generosity in meeting with us and sharing many lessons learned!

THE HON. ELIZABETH DOWDESWELL, LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF ONTARIO



We were honoured to meet with Lieutenant Governor of Ontario Elizabeth Dowdeswell. Our discussion focused on her role in fostering a positive relationship between the Crown and communities in Ontario that are often underrepresented in dialogue with and about the monarchy. It was not lost on us how deeply Her Honour cares about removing barriers and promoting dialogue with different communities. We also discussed environmental stewardship and ways that public policy can help protect the green spaces that make Ontario so special. Her vast knowledge coupled with her optimism for the next generation made for an enriching and powerful discussion, and we thank her for taking the time to meet with us.

MINISTER PAUL CALANDRA



We had the pleasure of meeting the Hon. Paul Calandra, Ontario's Government House Leader and Minister of Legislative Affairs and Long-Term Care, in his riding of Markham—Stouffville. Minister Calandra discussed the importance of improving long-term care homes in light of an aging population, as well as the decision-making and various tasks that his House Leader role involves. He also shared his experience as a former federal MP. It was delightful to hear his highlights of working on Parliament Hill and how this experience compares to being at Queen's Park. We thank him for his time, candour and storytelling, which helped make this meeting memorable!

Meeting Highlights

MINISTER CHARMAINE WILLIAMS



It was a privilege meeting with the Hon. Charmaine Williams, Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity and MPP for Brampton Centre. We discussed how Minister Williams' prior career as a therapist and behavioural consultant informs her current portfolio. She talked about her experience of having been the first Black woman elected to Brampton City Council in 2018, as well as of balancing being a politician and mother, which have fuelled her passion for creating a more equitable society with a focus on mental health supports for women and mothers. It was an honour to speak to Minister Williams about inclusivity and advocating for the needs of marginalized communities.

We had an excellent time speaking with the Hon. Vic Fedeli, MPP for Nipissing and Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. We learned about how Minister Fedeli's career in business has influenced his work as an MPP and for his ministry. Emphasizing the importance of connecting and meeting with people to find common ground, he shared his passion for serving his constituents in Nipissing and stories of being able to make a difference for people who visit his office in North Bay. Thank you to Minister Fedeli for an energizing discussion and for your support of OLIP!

MINISTER VICTOR FEDELI



MPP MIKE SCHREINER



We had the pleasure of meeting with MPP Mike Schreiner, who represents the riding of Guelph as Ontario's first and only Green Party member in the Legislature. In light of his unique position, MPP Schreiner discussed the importance of working across party lines to implement policy. He shared his passion for advocating on issues related to climate action, local food and water initiatives, and affordable housing. We are grateful that MPP Schreiner was able to take the time to meet with us and demonstrate how a single Member can make an impact in the Legislature.

MPP BOBBI ANN BRADY

We learned much about the political landscape of our province from discussions with so many people this year, and our conversation with Independent MPP Bobbi Ann Brady, who represents Haldimand—Norfolk, was no exception. When elected, MPP Brady was the only sitting Independent not affiliated with a party. She shared how, rather than hindering her work, this has motivated her to consistently push for change and how she is proud to represent her riding as a community member who can bring the concerns of rural Ontario to Queen's Park. Thank you to MPP Brady for taking the time to share your insights with us.

ROBERT BENZIE



Photo: *Toronto Star*

We were privileged to meet Robert Benzie, Queen's Park Bureau Chief for the *Toronto Star*, who is known for his illuminating reporting on key events in Ontario politics. Mr. Benzie shared entertaining stories from his 25-year career in journalism and discussed his strategies for interviewing high-profile political figures. He also shared how he carefully picks his stories. Some of us had the honour of being interviewed by him after our conversation, and he graciously featured a story on OLIP's success in the *Star*. We are thankful for this opportunity to have an OLIP fan in Mr. Benzie!

STEVE PAIKIN



Photo: TVO

We had the pleasure of meeting with journalist Steve Paikin, host of TVO's current affairs program, *The Agenda*. His interviewees have ranged from Ontario premiers to former US presidents. We were impressed by Mr. Paikin's remarkable anecdotes from years of interviewing public figures in Ontario and around the world. We certainly enjoyed our time and will remember his advice on the importance of asking thoughtful questions to catalyse insightful conversations about public affairs. We thank Mr. Paikin for meeting with us, and for sharing his knowledge from years of experience in provincial journalism.

Meeting Highlights

ROBERT FISHER



This year marked OLIP's 40th annual meeting with legendary Ontario political journalist Robert Fisher, who has had a storied career covering current issues as Queen's Park correspondent for CBC and Global News. Having seen MPPs come and go and key policy decisions made, he shared with us how the culture of provincial politics has evolved over the years, especially regarding the participation of women. We also dug deeper into how technological advancements have impacted political journalism and the nature of politics. We would like to thank Mr. Fisher for this candid discussion and for his dedicated support of OLIP.

We had the privilege of meeting Professor Payam Akhavan, Member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague, Special Advisor on Genocide to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, and Senior Fellow at Massey College at the University of Toronto. Weaving in lessons on the strengths and weaknesses of the international legal system, he discussed the legal strategies he employed to successfully achieve the International Court of Justice verdict requiring Myanmar to cease acts of genocide against the Rohingya. His story served as a reminder that public service is ultimately about compassion. Thank you, Professor Akhavan, for this inspiring and honest conversation about international law and approaches to justice.

PROFESSOR PAYAM AKHAVAN



PROFESSOR JOSEPH WONG



We had our first academic session of the year with Joseph Wong, Vice President, International, at the University of Toronto, and the Roz and Ralph Halbert Professor of Innovation at the Munk School of Public Policy. Professor Wong's lecture focused on comparing welfare systems and labour dynamics internationally to understand who is being reached by public policy. He used concrete examples from his research and field studies to explain how the informal economy works and why marginal costs matter in public policy. Big thanks to Professor Wong sharing his knowledge and time, and for his thorough analysis of a critical issue.

PROFESSOR GRAHAM WHITE



Photo: University of Toronto

Our meeting with Dr. Graham White prepared us for our trip to the Northwest Territories as only this OLIP legend could. An OLIP alumnus (1976-1977) and former OLIP Academic Director (1987-1994), Dr. White is now an expert in political systems in Canada's territories. With his sharp wit and seasoned expertise, he briefed us on the Northwest Territories' unique demographics, consensus government system, Indigenous self-governance, and land claim agreements, as well as tips on northern sightseeing. Thank you to Dr. White for imparting his knowledge, and for his many contributions to OLIP over the years!

FORMER MPP AND MP JOHN BAIRD



Photo: Bennett Jones LLP

We had the pleasure of meeting with the Honourable John Baird, federal Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2011 to 2015, and member of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Cabinet in various other roles from 2006. Mr. Baird spoke about how his ten years in the Ontario Legislature prior to federal politics as Ontario's Minister of Community and Social Services, Minister of Energy, and as Government House Leader shaped his long-term political career. We are grateful that Mr. Baird took the time to meet with us and showed how an early interest in politics can blossom into a fruitful political career!

ACHÈV

In November, we were warmly welcomed by Achèv, an employment, newcomer, youth, and language services agency, at their downtown Toronto office. During the visit we met with Kristen Neagle, OLIP alumna and Government Relations and Strategic Partnerships at Achèv, about making a big impact even as a small government relations team, as well as navigating emerging challenges as a multi-faceted service provider. In 2021-22, Achèv served over 100,000 people at nine locations across the GTA, with over 50% of their clients being women and girls. We left feeling inspired by Achèv's service and thank them for their continued support of OLIP!



Study Tours: Ottawa & Quebec

OTTAWA



We had an incredible time on our January study tour of our nation's capital city! We were privileged to meet with MPs, Cabinet members, and policy experts who imparted on us invaluable insights into topics in Canadian politics, from national issues to the nature of federal-provincial relationships.

Our time opened with an energizing discussion with Carleton University political science professor and OLIP alum Jonathan Malloy on the factors of voter turnout, and the often contradictory interests at play in parliamentary democracies.

It was a pleasure to meet with Minister of International Development, Harjit S. Sajjan and Anita Vandenberg, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development (and MP for Ottawa West—Nepean). Minister Sajjan spoke with us about the importance of addressing local issues to facilitate international development, while MP Vandenberg shared with us the successes of partnering with communities across Africa.

We also heard the perspectives of different opposition party Members. MP for Kitchener Centre Mike Morrice



(Green) discussed the challenges and potential strategies for smaller political parties and stressed the importance of working with civil society. MP for Calgary Nose Hill Michelle Rempel Garner (Conservative) explained the critical role of opposition parties in the functioning and legitimacy of democracy, as well as the challenges and opportunities in creating strong environmental and economic policy. We also discussed issues facing Indigenous communities in Canada's North with MP for Timmins—James Bay Charlie Angus (NDP), finding ties to our observations back in Ontario.

Our last day included an insightful conversation with Supreme Court Justice Andromache Karakatsanis centering on how access to justice can be improved. We ended our tour with a visit to the United States Embassy, where we were welcomed with a discussion about the unique relationship between the US and Canada.

We would like to thank everyone we met with for contributing to our learning. We also extend our gratitude to the Parliamentary Internship Programme Interns for coordinating our study tour.

QUEBEC

Our study tour to Quebec City landed on a string of exceptionally chilly days, yet it could not have been more enjoyable. Carnaval would soon start, and the city would embrace its wintry atmosphere; meanwhile, the National Assembly bustled with exciting political action. Filled with enriching conversations and experiences, it was a highlight of our year to be able to explore the unique political and cultural context of our neighbouring province.

We were fortunate to meet with government Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) Christopher Skeete, Minister for the Fight Against Racism (MNA for Sainte-Rose) and Sylvain Levesque, Deputy Speaker (MNA for Chauveau), who welcomed us to the National Assembly over breakfast, as well as opposition Members Ruba Ghazal (MNA for Mercier, Quebec solidaire), and Elisabeth Prass (MNA for D'Arcy-McGee, Quebec Liberal Party). A major theme that weaved through each of these conversations was the comparison between Quebec's and Canada's approaches to welcoming newcomers and the preservation of the French language and Quebecois culture. Another common thread was understanding Quebec's multi-party system and discussions of using political strategy to make change, especially for Members from smaller parties.



We also learned about current political issues in Quebec and drew meaningful comparisons between the challenges facing the two most populous provinces. With Education Minister Bernard Drainville (MNA for Lévis), we discussed made-in-Quebec solutions to address the teacher shortage, as well as supporting French-language skills for francophone students immersed in an increasingly anglophone and globalized world. We were fortunate to meet with both Lieutenant Governor of Quebec the Hon. J. Michel Doyon and Associate Secretary General for Relations with First Nations and with Inuit, who emphasized the pluralistic and often paradoxical views of the Crown in Quebec, and how they work to build relationships with Indigenous communities.

We extend our appreciation to all at the Quebec National Assembly who took the time to meet with us and engage in these illuminating conversations. We would also like to thank the interns of the Fondation Jean-Charles-Bonenfant for their hospitality in coordinating our visit and supporting us throughout.



Study Tours: Yellowknife

PREMIER CAROLINE COCHRANE & CABINET



A particularly special part of our Yellowknife study tour was our lunch with Premier Caroline Cochrane and her Cabinet. Premier Cochrane shared how her twenty years of social work experience prior to entering politics has been valuable to this role, as she has firsthand knowledge of how political decisions impact the people she serves. She also emphasized that mastering the framing of issues makes one a much stronger advocate and change-maker. We also met with ministers who shared why they were attracted to consensus-style government, how this unique political system serves the Northwest Territories' population, their portfolio highlights, and initiatives they were advocating for. We are extremely grateful to Premier Cochrane and her Cabinet for sharing their experiences at the territorial Legislature over lunch with us. We will take these important conversations with us into our own careers.

CLERK TIM MERCER & SPEAKER FREDERICK BLAKE JR.



As a welcome to the territory, we were graciously invited to have lunch with the Speaker of the Northwest Territories Legislature, the Hon. Frederick Blake, and dinner with both the Speaker and the Clerk of the Legislature, Tim Mercer. We learned from Mr. Blake that debate can play out quite differently without a party system. He also discussed the way consensus governance attempts to reconcile the differences between issues that affect Yellowknife and those that affect more remote communities. Long-serving Clerk Mercer spoke with us over dinner about his experiences living and working in the Northwest Territories for over twenty years. Later in the week in his presentation on the intricacies of consensus government, he emphasized how the system offers every Member a voice, but also highlighted issues like accountability. Both Mr. Blake's and Mr. Mercer's kindness, wit, knowledge, and candour made our trip special and gave us a deeper understanding of the unique political context of the Northwest Territories. We thank them for their time, knowledge, and warm welcome!



BEHCHOKÒ SCHOOL



Visiting the Tłıchǫ community of Behchokò was a highlight for us, and a unique opportunity to witness life beyond the territory's capital city. We met with students at Chief Jimmy Bruneau School to discuss the differences in our respective styles of government, and our experiences as interns. However, the real learning came through informal conversations with the students about their lives and challenges, with which we were largely unfamiliar. It was energizing to see the students thinking about solutions for the future. A huge thank you to our hosts, teachers Mark Bartholomew and Katherine Joyce, and principal Dianne Lafferty, for their hospitality, as well as MLA Jane Weyallon Armstrong for connecting us to the school. We hope that future cohorts continue this tradition of visiting communities outside Yellowknife.

DEPUTY MINISTERS & DEPUTY SECRETARY



We were warmly welcomed by several Northwest Territories public servants, including Pamela Strand, Deputy Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Julian Kanigan, Assistant Deputy Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, and Shawn

DEPUTY CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER CHARLOTTE DIGNESS

Our discussion with Charlotte Digness, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer of Elections NWT, enriched our understanding of how the Northwest Territories prepares for elections and how elections operate within its consensus government system. She noted that while there may be less continuity without party platforms, this can motivate MLAs to ensure their mandate is continued. It was encouraging to hear that voter turnout is high despite challenges such as climate, literacy, and transportation, and how staff facilitate voting. We are thankful to have had this meaningful conversation with Ms. Digness.



McCann, Deputy Secretary of Indigenous and Intergovernmental Affairs. Each shared knowledge from their practices of working for the 33 communities of the Northwest Territories, which range in size from fewer than 100 people to over 20,000. Of interest to all was the Legislative Development Protocol, which ensures equal partnership with and recognition of Indigenous communities and the territorial government in legislation, policy, and practice. We also discussed efforts to address emerging issues such as climate change, resource development, and intergovernmental affairs within the unique perspective of Canada's North. Thank you to Deputy Minister Strand, Assistant Deputy Minister Kanigan, and Deputy Secretary McCann for your knowledge.

Remembering John Eichmanis

Ambassador, diplomat and, not least, an OLIP Coordinator, John Eichmanis passed away in December 2022. John was a proud Latvian-Canadian who grew up in Canada, but returned to Latvia when it achieved independence in 1991. There, he assisted in the creation of the Office of the President, where he served as Chief of Staff. Diplomatic and ambassadorial posts followed: Washington, Greece, NATO, and Spain. John was perfectly suited to the role: personable, fearless, and incredibly bright. Yet, despite all this, he never forgot the friends he made along the way. He will be missed by OLIP and its community of alumni and friends.

* * *

I first met John when we both served with the Legislative Research Service. Even then, he could be labelled “diplomatic,” always working to better understand the Members and their needs. After John moved on, we stayed in touch, and I visited him several times when he was posted to Washington. He would pick me up in the embassy Cadillac and we would head off to lunch where he would enlighten me on the latest twists, turns, and scandals inside the Beltway. He was a good friend who will be missed.

Richard Sage – former Research Librarian and OLIP Coordinator

I maintained friendship with John after he left the Assembly, and most importantly during his time as a distinguished Latvian diplomat. John was perfectly suited to work with politicians. He made a point of getting to know the officials he worked with. I saw him several times during his postings at the Latvian Embassy in Washington and we’d go for lunch in the embassy Cadillac. One of these visits was shortly after the 9/11 attacks and John explained how the city was in a total state of panic. During our drive, we met a senior American official



Photo: Timenote.info

and John rolled down the window to casually chat with him. Due to his Canadian background, John had perfect command of English and was aware of North American culture and mannerisms in addition to his Latvian heritage. This was invaluable in diplomacy. Later, as Ambassador and Plenipotentiary to Greece, he invited me when Greece hosted the Olympics—an opportunity I unfortunately didn’t take.

Jerry Richmond – former Research Officer

John was wonderfully cynical but always good-natured about his cynicism, a perfect combination for a future diplomat. Most importantly, he was an excellent mentor and, if asked, would never fail to offer sensible, pertinent advice. He will be greatly missed.

Lorraine Luski – former Research Officer and OLIP intern

Thanking our Partners

ONTARIO REAL ESTATE ASSOCIATION

We are thankful to have had such an uplifting and insightful conversation over lunch with Jason Lagerquist, Head of Government Relations at the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA), and Dia Mukherjee, OREA Government Relations and Communications Specialist—both OLIP alumni. Through its advocacy efforts, OREA works to reduce barriers to homeownership and improve equitable access to housing in Ontario. They spoke to us about their initiatives to help future generations of young Ontarians achieve homeownership, a goal that resonated with many in our cohort. We learned about how small wins can result in big policy changes in this sector, about initiatives in different jurisdictions, and what our province can learn from others. Thank you so much to Dia and Jason for treating us with both delicious food and important knowledge, and to OREA for its ongoing support of OLIP!



EVENT SUPPORTERS



We would like to sincerely thank two of our partners, the Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) and AMAPCEO, for helping us host a wonderful spring reception: BFO acted as our headline reception sponsor and provided us with our door prizes, and AMAPCEO enabled us to serve beverages. We certainly would not have been able to host such a successful event if it were not for the generosity of these strong supporters, as well as their gracious coordination with our Partnerships team throughout the year. We look forward to continuing these long-standing partnerships for years to come!

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