



The choice of titles and abbreviations used by members of various Canadian legislative institutions would appear to be quite straightforward. On closer examination, however, there are some interesting nuances.

At the federal level the same term, Member of Parliament, and abbreviation (M.P.) have been used since Confederation. Theoretically the term could be applied to Senators since they are also members of parliament but in practice M.P. is generally used to designate members of the House of Commons.

In the provinces the situation is much more complicated. For example Quebec's parliamentary institution was known as the Legislative assembly until 1968 but the abbreviations M.L.A. (Member of the Legislative Assembly) or M.A.L. (*membre de l'Assemblée législative*) were used very little. During the last century and much of this one members preferred to refer to themselves as M.P.P.s (*membre du Parlement provincial*) although the term had no official status in any of the rules or documents of the legislature.

On November 8, 1955 Premier Maurice Duplessis introduced an act respecting the titles of members of the legislature. He said that the province had an assembly which possessed all the fiscal and constitutional attributes of a parliament and it was important to reflect this in the titles used by members. Thus in 1955 the official title became Member of the Provincial Parliament (*membre du Parlement provincial*) or M.P.P.

In 1968 the name of the legislature was changed to National Assembly (*Assemblée nationale*). At that time the title of members was changed to M.P.Q. Member of the Parlement of Québec (*membre*

*du Parlement du Québec*). No explanation for the choice can be found in the debate on adoption of the bill but the decision must be considered in the context of nationalist sentiment in the late 1960s which placed great importance on symbolism in the constitutional battle with Ottawa over jurisdiction in various sectors. The change also had the desired effect of eliminating "provincial" from the members' title.

The term M.P.Q. did not last long. In July 1971 bill 58 amended the Legislative Assembly Act, (Section 21) to establish the more logical M.N.A. (Member of the National Assembly) or M.A.N. (*membre de l'Assemblée nationale*) as the official designation for members of the legislature.

When the *Legislative Assembly Act* was replaced by the *National Assembly Act* in December 1982 the article relating to the title of members was omitted from the new legislation. Thus it appears that present Quebec legislators, after twenty-five years of seeking officially sanctioned terminology, have returned to the pre-1955 situation of using a term based entirely on usage.

In Ontario before Confederation, members of the assembly of the United Province of Canada were designated by the initials M.P.P. (Member of the Provincial Parliament). After 1867 a battle developed between federal and provincial politicians as to whether Ontario had a "parliament" or a "legislature". A side effect was the insistence by Ontario members of continuing to call themselves M.P.P.s. This title was eventually made official by the legislature on April 7, 1938. Thus while Ontario has a *Legislative Assembly Act* and official documents such as *Hansard* and the *Journals* refer to the Legislative Assembly, individual members still call themselves M.P.P.s.

The four western provinces pose no problems in this area. All have Legislative Assemblies and members are known as M.L.A.s. The two parliamentary institutions in Canada's northern territories are both designated as Councils under the *Yukon Act* and the *Northwest Territories Act*. As the Councils gradually became elected rather than appointed bodies (without any change in legislation) both adopted resolutions renaming themselves legislative assemblies and designating their members as M.L.A.s. In Yukon the change came into effect shortly after the 1974 election although the federally appointed Commissioner continued to refer to members as councillors until 1979. In the Northwest Territories the change from Council to Legislative Assembly took place in 1976. Once again the change was not formally recognized by the Commissioner until 1979.

Finally, in the Atlantic region two provinces, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, have legislative assemblies and members call themselves M.L.A.s. The other provinces, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland have Houses of Assembly but only Newfoundland uses the term M.H.A.

In Nova Scotia before abolition of their Upper House in 1928, the elected members used to be known as M.P.P.s to distinguish them from the appointed members of the Legislative Council. Since becoming a unicameral legislature the practice has developed of using M.L.A. rather than M.P.P. (or what would seem to be the more logical M.H.A.).

*Gaston Deschênes is Director of the Research Branch of the Library, Quebec National Assembly. Gary Levy is Editor of the Canadian Parliamentary Review.*