

member who died after the close of the session, William Harvey of Elgin East, was replaced in a special election held on 11 August 1874.

Five of the special elections held during the year were to replace members of the House of Commons who had resigned, but only two affected membership in the First Session of the Third Parliament. In Durham West, Ontario, a long-time colleague of Mackenzie and Edward Blake, Edmund Burke Wood, who had won re-election in January, resigned his seat on 11 March when he was appointed Chief Justice of Manitoba. Wood, therefore, did not sit in the opening session of the Third Parliament. On 10 April Harvey William Burk, another Liberal, was elected to succeed him. Another veteran Liberal who had sat in Parliament since Confederation, Ebenezer Vining Bodwell of Oxford South, resigned his place on 23 April to become superintendent of the Welland Canal. He was succeeded by Col. James A. Skinner, who assumed Bodwell's seat on 26 May, the final day of the First Session of the Third Parliament. Three other resignations occurred after the First Session. Two Liberal ministers, A.-A. Dorion and William Ross, resigned following the sitting to take up positions of emolument under the Crown, while a Nova Scotia member, E.R. Oakes of Digby, left the House in September to take up an appointment to the Legislative Council of Nova Scotia.

In addition, a by-election was required when Félix Geoffrion of Verchères was brought into the cabinet in July as minister of Inland Revenue. And then there was the case of the Métis rebel Louis Riel, twice elected for Provencher in Manitoba in 1874, actually sworn in once as a member, but forbidden to take his seat by order of the House.

The players

During the 1874 session the Liberal cabinet, headed by Alexander Mackenzie as prime minister, was composed of thirteen individuals, two of whom sat in the Senate. The cabinet was a disparate collection of Liberal/Reformers, few of whom had enjoyed previous experience in government.

Mackenzie himself, 52 years old in 1874, had served as the federal leader for Ontario of the Liberal/Reform group since 1867. In 1873 he had become the national leader of the Liberals, a party whose Ontario, Quebec and Maritime wings were slow to coalesce into a coherent political faction. Mackenzie was thus the first official Leader of the Opposition in the Canadian Parliament. When the Macdonald government fell on 5 November 1873 Mackenzie had been diffident about assuming the position of leader of the government, believing that his brilliant but unstable Ontario colleague, Edward Blake, possessed greater authority for the task. But Blake declined to assume the leadership and Mackenzie was obliged to head the new administration. Intent on eliminating waste in railway and canal contracts, Mackenzie himself also assumed the demanding portfolio of public works in addition to the post of prime minister.

Edward Blake even hesitated to enter the new cabinet in any definite ministerial capacity. Eventually he came in as a minister without portfolio but withdrew in February 1874, shortly before the new session began. Other prominent Liberals too were reluctant to serve in cabinet. Luther H. Holton, for example, a prominent and experienced Quebec Liberal, refused, for personal reasons, to become minister of finance.

The leader of the Nova Scotia Liberals, Col. Alfred G. Jones of Halifax, also declined to enter the ministry. Albert James Smith from Westmorland, a former premier of New Brunswick,