



## CPA Activities: The Canadian Scene

### 13th Canadian Presiding Officers' Conference

The 13th Canadian Presiding Officers' Conference took place in Whitehorse, Yukon on January 26 and 27, 1996, during a record-breaking cold spell. Delegates were treated to minus 48° celsius temperatures.

John Devries, Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly and host of the conference, welcomed delegates to the westernmost capital in Canada and to the Yukon Legislative Assembly Chamber which served as the site for the meeting.

The first business session dealt with the election of the Speaker by secret ballot. Camille Montpetit, Clerk Assistant (Procedural Services), House of Commons, led off with a description of the current procedure governing the election of the Speaker in the House of Commons and a summary of their experience with it. Delegates from the growing number of jurisdictions which have adopted the secret ballot election method provided details on the procedure followed in their

Houses and discussed the merits of this innovation.

W.H. (Binx) Remnant, Clerk of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, made a presentation on Question Period in which he focused on the common difficulties Speakers face during this portion of the Daily Routine. In the ensuing discussion, participants exchanged views on the allocation of questions and on the means of ensuring that neither questions nor answers are too lengthy.



Twelve of Canada's fourteen Speakers and five of the Deputy Speakers were in attendance; only one jurisdiction was not represented by a Presiding Officer. In total, there were thirty-five participants.

The Secretary-General of the National Assembly of Quebec, Pierre Duchesne, presented a paper on parliamentary privilege. He outlined the history and scope of privilege and then went on to offer some thoughts on its current-day application and limitations.

The fourth session, dealing with the activities of the Speaker as a constituency representative and as a candidate in general elections, was opened by George MacMinn, Clerk of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly. This topic, which is touched on in some form from year to year, centres upon the challenge of endeavouring to provide effective representation for a Presiding Officer's constituents without endangering the essential neutrality of the Chair.

In the fifth session, Gwenn Ronyk, Clerk of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, discussed the role of presiding officers in maintaining and enforcing order. Delegates were provided with a manual containing a compilation of comparative practices across Canada.

The last session of the conference covered the topic of the Speaker's responsibility for security and space. The Clerk of the Ontario Legislative Assembly, Claude DesRosiers, introduced the subject with a description of recent experiences at Queen's Park and of the steps being taken there to address the question of security. Delegates outlined events in and around their own Houses and reflected on the difficulty of achieving a proper balance between allowing an appropriate level of public access and providing an adequate level of security.

Before topics were open for general discussion, the respective Speakers present followed up immediately after the Table Officer who introduced a subject. Delegates then entered into lively debate on all of the topics and would gladly have spent more time on each of them. It seemed fairly clear, though, that ensuing discussions in less formal settings did cover the procedural landscape from coast to coast.

Because of the thick blanket of ice fog which enveloped Whitehorse during the conference, delegates left the Yukon having "seen" very little of it. However, many of them appeared to get on the plane with the sentiment in their heart expressed by the famous bard of the Yukon.

There's a land - oh it beckons and beckons,

And I want to go back - and I will.

Robert Service  
*The Spell of the Yukon*

### Regional Council Meeting

Following the Presiding Officers conference a meeting of the Canadian Regional Council of CPA was held. Among other things, Manitoba was confirmed as the site for the 1996 Regional Conference with Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec offering to host the conferences in subsequent years.

Quebec also announced it would be hosting an inter-parliamentary conference on free trade in America in 1996 to which representatives from Canada, Mexico, the United States and certain other countries would be invited. Several international parliamentary organizations including CPA would also be involved.

The Council decided that the 1996 CPA Regional Seminar would be held in New Brunswick and the Presiding Officers Conference for 1997 would be in Alberta.

Newfoundland was selected as one of the three Regional Representatives replacing New Brunswick.

### New Speaker of Saskatchewan

On February 29, 1996, Glenn Hagel became the third Speaker to be elected in Saskatchewan under the new rules and the first to win in a contested ballot.

Mr. Hagel was born in Beiseker, Alberta on August 17, 1949. He attended the Universities of Manitoba and Regina, convocating with a Bachelor of Arts. Mr. Hagel has spent most of his career as an adult educator and administrator, working in all three post-secondary education systems in Moose Jaw. He has also worked as a consultant.

Mr. Hagel was first elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1986. Of note during his first term was his success as an Opposition Member in having April 28 declared an official day of mourning in Saskatchewan for workers injured or killed on the job.

Mr. Hagel was re-elected in 1991 and 1995. During the previous legislature, Mr. Hagel held the position of Deputy Chair of Committees and chaired the Select Committee on Driving Safety. He was also the government caucus chair, a member of the Board of Internal Economy and a member of the government's Planning and Priorities Committee.