



Legislative Reports



Saskatchewan

The Assembly returned for a shortened spring session on March 10th. Members first paused to reflect on the passing of nine former Members over the previous year and to adopt motions of condolence for each. Subsequent days were devoted to considering supplementary estimates and moving forward on the government's legislative agenda.

The following week saw Finance Minister **Rod Gantefer** deliver his first budget on March 19th. The budget focused on addressing many of the campaign promises made by the Saskatchewan Party in last fall's general election. A one billion dollar investment in capital and infrastructure improvements was announced as part of the *Ready for Growth Initiative*. In addition, the budget documents listed forty initiatives that would be funded as committed to during the election campaign. These included increased funding to create more positions in healthcare and policing, provide property tax rebates and enhance K-12 and post-secondary education programs.

The Opposition Finance critic, **Harry Van Mulligen**, criticized the

government's budget for not sharing the \$1.3 billion resources with average Saskatchewan families. The NDP identified four areas that could have been addressed, including immediately doubling property tax relief, doubling the number of new training seats, investing in affordable housing programs and funding green initiatives to help the province meet its climate change targets.

The budget debate was concluded on April 3rd with the Assembly defeating the Opposition amendment and adopting the budget motion.

Extended Hours Motions

After growing concerned that there were insufficient sitting hours to complete its agenda before the scheduled completion day of the spring session on May 15th, the government was prompted to introduce a motion to extend the sitting hours. The motion prescribed that the daily meeting on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesday would be from 10:00 am to 12:00 midnight, with a supper break between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. The Assembly would observe its usual morning sitting on Thursdays and then convene committee meetings from 2:00 p.m. until midnight and again on Fridays from 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

The Government House Leader, Mr. Gantefer, opened the debate and was followed by **Kevin Yates** of the Opposition. Mr. Yates continued to speak from early afternoon on April 7th until late the following

evening. Even a brief power outage that dimmed the lights in the Assembly did not curtail his stamina to continue. Mr. Yates concluded his remarks by moving an amendment to extend the sitting hours to 1:00 a.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

The Opposition's successful efforts to delay implementation of the extended sitting hours prompted the Government to give notice of their intent to move closure on the motion at the earliest opportunity on April 8th. The Opposition House Leader **Len Taylor** responded by raising a question of privilege on the decision to invoke closure. The basis of his submission was that changes to the standing orders of parliaments were traditionally only implemented after opposition parties had been consulted and their consent obtained or after a lengthy parliamentary debate. In the present circumstances, the two days of debate unduly limited the opposition's ability to consult their constituents or to develop and offer alternatives. Mr. Taylor also raised the concern whether the application of closure would contravene the Assembly's Rules requiring a minimum amount of deliberation on specified bills.

Speaker **Don Toth** delivered his ruling on April 9th. After noting that the purpose of the closure rule was to provide governments with a procedural device to bring debate on a question to a close and that it had only been invoked seven times in the province's history, he found that it was properly applied in the

present circumstances. Speaker Toth also noted that the Rules contain several instances where the Assembly has imposed limitations on debate or other means to curtail debate and that he, as Speaker, has no discretionary authority to intervene as a matter of privilege. Accordingly, he declined to find a *prima facie* case of privilege and prevent the closure rule being applied to the extended sitting hours motions. The questions on both the closure and sitting hours motions were subsequently adopted by the Assembly on recorded divisions.

The Assembly proceeded to sit in accordance with the extended hours until April 17th, when the sessional order was revised to return the House sittings to hours more akin to the usual times and to retain the extended hours as an option for committee meetings should the need arise.

Legislation and Committee Business

One of the first Acts to be passed by the Assembly during the spring session was a law implementing fixed election dates. A provincial general election will now be held on the first Monday in November every four years. Saskatchewan is now the ninth jurisdiction in Canada to have fixed election dates. The Assembly also approved *The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, 2008* which eliminates expiry dates on gift cards.

The two bills at the center of the extended hours disagreement have been the subject of considerable debate in the House and in the Human Services Committee. The Opposition had requested that public hearings be held on Bill 5 - *The Public Service Essential Services Act* and Bill 6 - *The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2007*. The government declined to do so and have instead made **Rob**

Norris, Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour, and his officials available for several hours of questioning in the committee.

Margaret (Meta) Woods

Clerk Assistant



The parliamentary proceedings of the first session of the 38th legislature, which were adjourned on December 19, 2007, resumed for the spring sessional period on March 11, 2008.

Spring marks the beginning of the budgetary process at the National Assembly and, last March 13, the Minister of Finance launched this process with the Budget Speech. The debate on the Budget Speech ensued, to be suspended in the Assembly and continued in the Committee on Public Finance. On March 18, 2008, the Assembly adopted a motion by the Government House Leader for the Assembly to give consideration to Interim Supply for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009. This budgetary stage concluded with the passage of Appropriation Act No. 1, 2008-2009, and the referral to the standing committees of the estimates of expenditure for the 2008-2009 fiscal year. On April 8, 2008, the Assembly resumed the debate on the Budget Speech and, at the conclusion of this debate, carried the motion by the Minister of Finance proposing that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the Government.

Interparliamentary relations

The members of the Eastern Regional Conference of the Council of State Governments (CSG/ERC) Executive Committee, who met in New Jersey from March 14-16, 2008, unanimously adopted a resolution marking the 400th anniversary of the founding of Québec City and recognizing the contributions of the population of Québec City to good North American relations. This resolution was presented on the proposal of the Québec National Assembly delegation, led by **Tony Tomassi**, Member for LaFontaine, Vice-Chairman of the Québec Section of the CSG/ERC and member of the Executive Committee.

Parliamentary simulations

From February 13-15 2008, the Québec National Assembly welcomed 114 students from Secondary 3 and 4 to the 6th Young People's Parliament. This parliamentary simulation brought together young people attending 32 public and private schools hailing from several Québec regions. During this simulation, the Members examined three bills that they had drafted prior to this event: a first bill promoting the prohibition of the sale of energy drinks to minors, a second bill proposing measures to foster the learning of French in Québec schools, and the last promoting healthy lifestyle habits among Québec's youth.

Other news

On April 9, 2008, **Roch Cholette** announced his resignation as Member for the Electoral Division of Hull. His departure increases to three the number of vacant seats in the Assembly, which is now composed as follows: Québec Liberal Party, 47; Action démocratique du Québec, 41; Parti Québécois, 34; vacant seats, 3.

On February 23, 2008, **Denis Lazure** passed away at the age of 82. He was the Parti Québécois Member for the Electoral Division of Chambly from 1976 to 1981, in Bertrand from 1981 to 1984, and in La Prairie from 1989 to 1994.

Last March 18, the President of the Québec National Assembly, **Michel Bissonnet**, inaugurated the all new Visitors' Centre at the National Assembly, in the Parliament Building. The opening of this centre falls within the institution's activities celebrating the 400th anniversary of Québec City. The objective of bringing the citizens and their National Assembly and its Members closer together prompted the creation of the Visitors' Centre. To reach the widest possible range of visitors, this reception area uses a variety of methods to broadcast information: scriptovisual panels, a display case, information terminals, a viewing room, etc. It mainly serves as a gateway to discovering the multitude of activities offered to the public at the Parliament Building.

The lights of the National Assembly buildings were symbolically shut off on March 29, 2008, between 8.00 p.m. and 9.00 p.m. Through this gesture, the National Assembly joined the vast worldwide movement to heighten awareness regarding global warming. Earth Hour is an initiative of the World Wildlife Fund and aims to raise the population's awareness so that special attention may be paid to the consequences of climate change.

The Young Democrats' Tournament, which was held on April 12 and 13 at the Petit Séminaire de Québec and at the Parliament Building, underlined in a special way Québec City's 400th anniversary. This quiz game, which the National Assembly has been organizing annually for sixteen years now,

brought together over 275 participants from Secondary 4 and 5 as well as college-level students from various regions throughout Québec representing 35 educational institutions. This special edition for the 400th anniversary was a privileged opportunity for these young people to profitably employ their knowledge on the history of Québec and of its parliamentary institutions.

On April 15 2008, the Library of the National Assembly held the sixth edition of *Political Book Day in Québec*, under the theme "Ideas within your reach". This event aims to encourage authors and students who produce works on political topics. The inauguration of the *Les trésors de la Bibliothèque* exhibit, a round table and a conference on the Capital, and the awarding of prizes to the recipients are featured among the Assembly's activities commemorating the 400th anniversary of Québec City.

The National Assembly now provides wireless network technology using Wi-Fi technology in parliamentary proceeding rooms as well as in several meeting rooms. Via Internet, persons using wireless laptop computers may access the Assembly's Extranet to log on to Outlook Web Access, Meridius, and the Portal and Clerks sites. For those with laptops equipped with an authentication token provided by the Assembly, they have access to all of the network services via a secure Extranet. Wi-Fi may also be useful to visitors: ministerial delegations, ministers, law clerks and other public servants; witnesses summoned to appear before parliamentary committees; official and protocolar delegates and other visitors.

Sylvia Ford

Secretariat of the Assembly

Standing committees

The Committee on Institutions was very active at the beginning of the year and held three consultations all during the same period. The Committee held public hearings, during the months of February, March and April, within the framework of the general consultation on the documents entitled *Evaluation Report on the Act to Reform the Code of Civil Procedure* and *The Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP)*.

Special consultations were held on Bill 50, *An Act to amend the Professional Code and other legislative provisions in the field of mental health and human relations*, during the month of March. This bill provides a new delineation of professional activities in the field of mental health for certain professions and a framework for the practice of psychotherapy.

Lastly, the Committee held special consultations on Bill 60, *An Act to amend the Police Act*. This bill enables municipalities to conclude agreements among themselves as regards particularly the provision of detention and the joint use of equipment, premises or space.

On March 12, 2008, the Committee on Education heard the Institut culturel et éducatif Montagnais, the Cree School Board, the First Nations Education Council and the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports. These hearings arise from the tabling in the National Assembly, in February 2007, of the Committee's report on the school success of Natives which contained recommendations.

Within the framework of orders of surveillance of public agencies (Standing Order 294), in March, the Committee heard the Comité consultatif sur l'accessibilité financière aux études and the

Comité sur les affaires religieuses. The Comité consultatif sur l'accessibilité financière aux études is responsible more particularly for advising the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports on financial aid programmes and tuition fees. The mandate of the Comité sur les affaires religieuses is to advise the minister on matters involving the place of religion in schools.

During the month of February, the Committee on Social Affairs held public hearings within the framework of the general consultation on Bill 63, *An Act to amend the Charter of human rights and freedoms*, which expressly states that Charter rights and freedoms are guaranteed equally to women and men.

In March, the Committee heard the Chief Executive Officer of the Conseil de gestion de l'assurance parentale to examine the management of this agency, in pursuance of the *Act respecting parental insurance*. It was the first time this agency came before a standing committee since its creation in 2005.

The Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Solidarity was also heard within the framework of the examination of the 2003-2004 to 2006-2007 reports on the activities funded by the Fonds québécois d'initiatives sociales, in compliance with the *Act to combat poverty and social exclusion*, and of the 2000-2001 to 2006-2007 reports on the activities of the Fonds d'aide à l'action communautaire autonome, pursuant to the *Act respecting the Ministère du Conseil exécutif*.

In February, the Committee on Labour and the Economy held public hearings within the framework of the general consultation with reference to the document entitled "Report of the Minister of Labour on the implementation of the *Pay Equity Act*". The *Pay Equity Act* obliges the Minister to present a re-

port to the Government on the implementation of the Act ten years after its adoption. The purpose of the *Pay Equity Act* is to redress salary disparities owing to systemic discrimination based on gender as regards persons working in employment categories predominantly held by women.

During the months of March and April, the Committee on Culture heard the three agencies established by the *Charter of the French language*, namely the Conseil supérieur de la langue française, the Office québécois de la langue française and the Commission de toponymie du Québec, within the framework of orders of surveillance of public agencies (Standing Order 294).

The purpose of the Conseil supérieur de la langue française is to advise the Minister responsible for the administration of the Charter on all matters relating to the French language in Québec. The purpose of the Office québécois de la langue française in particular is to ensure that the Charter is observed and to monitor the evolution of the linguistic situation by reporting thereon every five years to the minister responsible for the Charter. The purpose of the Commission de toponymie is particularly to make proposals to the Government regarding the standards and drafting regulations that are to be observed when naming localities.

On April 9, the Committee on Public Administration was given an order by the National Assembly for the second time since the beginning of the 38th Legislature, and in actual fact since its creation in 1997. The order stems from a motion moved by the Official Opposition House Leader at the weekly period set aside for business standing in the name of Members in Opposition (Standing Order 97). The Government House Leader tabled an

amendment to the motion. The amendment, as well as the amended motion, were adopted unanimously.

The motion reads as follows: That the Committee on Public Administration clarify the circumstances surrounding the dismissal of **Bruno Fortier**, Québec's former Delegate General in New York, and that for this purpose the Committee on Public Administration hear, no later than April 29, 2008, Mr. Fortier, and **Alain Cloutier**, Deputy Minister of International Relations, as well as any person it may deem necessary to summon, without, however, obliging a person who has lodged a complaint to appear against his or her will.

Furthermore, on February 13, the Committee on Public Administration heard the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services and the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation d'hébergement du Québec. The Deputy Minister was heard on April 2, along with the Director General of the Centre hospitalier universitaire de Sainte-Justine, the Associate Secretary General of the Conseil exécutif and the Executive Director of the management committee for projects to modernize the university hospital centres of Montréal concerning the watch over major capital assets projects of the Government.

Following the adoption of the order of initiative on residual waste management, the Committee on Transportation and the Environment held special consultations during the month of February. In addition to the 51 briefs received, the Committee received additional input on this matter owing to the 89 working papers and 225 answers to the questionnaire submitted within the framework of the on-line consultation.

As provided for in the Standing Orders (S.O. 272, 275 and 276), the debate on the Budget Speech, which began in the Assembly, continued in the Committee on Public Finance on April 1, 2 and 3. The Minister of Finance was a member of the Committee during its proceedings, as stipulated in the Standing Orders.

The Examination of the Estimates by the Standing Committees

As is the case each year, the standing committees received the order to examine the estimates of expenditure of the ministries and agencies. These estimates of expenditure were tabled in the Assembly by the Chair of the Conseil du trésor last March 18, while the calendar for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure was tabled by the President of the Assembly on April 1. At the conclusion of their mandate, the committees had spent 200 hours, from 10 to 25 April, on the examination and adoption of the estimates of expenditure for the 2008-2009 fiscal year divided into 44 different elements.

Anik Laplante

Secretariat of committees



House of Commons

When the House of Commons reconvened after the Christmas adjournment, election fever rose, as repeated tests of confidence in the Government punctuated the proceedings. The Government was

not defeated on any of these confidence motions as, in many cases, most Members of the Official Opposition did not vote.

A Liberal amendment to the budget, which was tabled on February 28, 2008, by the Minister of Finance, **Jim Flaherty**, was negatived on March 3, 2008. The main motion in support of the budget was agreed to the following day.

Another confidence question arose from a government motion to extend Canada's mission in Afghanistan. The Liberal Party made public a proposed amendment to the motion, which spelled out their conditions for supporting the mission's extension. On February 21, 2008, notice was given of a second government motion on Afghanistan, similar in content but incorporating some of the demands of the Official Opposition. The vote on the latter motion was held on March 13, 2008, and the motion was adopted with the support of the Official Opposition.

A further test of confidence took the form of a motion calling upon the Senate to pass Bill C-2, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*, by March 1, 2008. The motion was adopted on February 12th. Bill C-2 was passed by the Senate on February 27th and received Royal Assent on February 28th.

On March 10, 2008, an opposition motion introduced by NDP Leader **Jack Layton**, again tested the House's confidence in the government. The motion, pertaining to climate change, was defeated.

The next day, Mr. Flaherty tabled a notice of Ways and Means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in February. The government declared the motion to be a question of confidence. Liberal MP **Dan McTeague** then rose on a point of order to ask the Chair to

rule inadmissible the inclusion in the motion of provisions affecting Bill C-253, *An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (deductibility of RESP contributions)*, which he had sponsored. These provisions effectively stated that Bill C-253 would be nullified even if it passed. Bill C-253 is currently before the Senate.

On March 13, 2008, the Speaker delivered his ruling on the motion's admissibility. He concluded that it was not procedurally flawed and that there were precedents for the House voting on related or even contradictory bills in the same session. He accordingly ruled that the Ways and Means motion could proceed in its current form. The question was put on the motion and agreed to.

On April 10, 2008, Bill C-50, *An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 26, 2008 and to enact provisions to preserve the fiscal plan set out in that budget*, also tested the House's confidence in the government. Although the Bill was sharply criticized by the opposition parties with respect to the immigration provisions it contained, the motion for second reading of Bill C-50 was nevertheless adopted and the Bill referred to the Standing Committee on Finance. On April 17, 2008, NDP MP **Olivia Chow**, moved that it be an instruction to the Committee that it have the power to divide the Bill C-50 into two or more pieces of legislation. The motion did not come to a vote.

Committees

In recent weeks, the proceedings of a number of committees have been significantly disrupted. Many procedural arguments have erupted relating to filibusters, the scope of committees' mandates and challenges to rulings by committee Chairs.

The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs was effectively incapacitated as debate on a motion to investigate Conservative election expense claims led to a lengthy filibuster, which paralysed the proceedings. On March 6, 2008, a motion of non-confidence in the Chair, **Gary Goodyear**, was adopted. **Joe Preston** was elected to replace Mr. Goodyear, notwithstanding his refusal to allow his name to stand. Mr. Preston subsequently resigned.

The proceedings of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights ran into difficulties on March 11, when a Liberal motion proposed the study of the allegations in the **Chuck Cadman** affair. The Chair, **Art Hanger**, ruled the motion inadmissible on the grounds that it exceeded the scope of the Committee's mandate. When Members attempted to appeal the ruling, Mr. Hanger vacated the room and the Vice-Chair adjourned the meeting. The same scenario was repeated on March 12, April 1, 3, 8 and 15.

On February 27, 2008, the consideration of Bill C-377, *An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change*, by the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development led to a Conservative filibuster. The Committee agreed on April 17, 2008 to abandon its clause-by-clause consideration and to report the Bill back to the House with the amendments adopted to date. The Committee also prepared an additional report describing the circumstances that lead to this decision.

On March 14, 2008, events in the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics were the subject of a ruling by the Speaker. **Paul Szabo** raised on a point of order contending that the Committee had adopted a motion,

relating to Liberal fundraising practices, that exceeded its mandate. The Speaker noted that his predecessors had been reluctant to intervene in the proceedings of committees, except where exceptional circumstances warranted. He found that there were not sufficient grounds to usurp the role of Members. He also cautioned Members about the manner in which committee proceedings had been conducted since the commencement of the 39th Parliament; describing the proceedings as "verging on anarchy". He appealed to those to whom the management of the business of Parliament had been entrusted to take leadership and to work together to find a balance which enabled the parties to pursue their political objectives and allowed Members to continue their work.

Other committees have been more functional. The Third Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, presented to the House on February 12, 2008, found that **Barbara George**, RCMP Deputy Commissioner of Human Resources, had made misleading or untruthful statements in her testimony before the Committee in connection with the administration of RCMP pension and insurance plans. The Committee recommended that the Deputy Commissioner be found in contempt of Parliament but that no further action be taken, as this was sanction enough. On April 10, 2008, the Chair of the Committee, **Shawn Murphy**, raised a question of privilege asking the Speaker to find a *prima facie* case of contempt. The Speaker acknowledged that the report tabled by the Committee had been unanimous and that there was accordingly a *prima facie* case of privilege. Mr. Murphy moved that the House find Ms. George in contempt and the motion was adopted.

On February 12, 2008, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, **Peter Van Loan**, moved that Bill C-20, *An Act to provide for consultations with electors on their preferences for appointments to the Senate*, be referred to a legislative committee. The motion was adopted the next day. On February 27, 2008, the Speaker named Liberal MP **Albina Guarnieri**, Chair of the Legislative Committee on Bill C-20. The Committee's agenda is quite exhaustive, with a list of more than 60 witnesses submitted to the clerk of the Committee.

In addition, the motion concerning the Canadian mission in Afghanistan adopted on March 13, 2008, provided for the creation of a special parliamentary committee on Afghanistan. On April 8, 2008, an opposition motion by Liberal MP **Bob Rae** was adopted unanimously which called for the striking of such a special committee and the tabling of a list of its membership. On April 15, 2008, the first meeting of the Committee was held and Conservative MP **Pierre Lemieux** was elected Chair.

During the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage's study of Bill C-327, *An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act (reduction of violence in television broadcasts)*, six children aged 10 to 15 years were invited to testify further to a motion by Liberal MP **Mauril Bélanger**, who wanted to hear directly from those targeted by the Bill. The appearance of minors before a House of Commons Committee was a first in the annals of Parliament.

Rules of Order and Decorum

On February 29, Conservative MP **Ed Fast** rose on a point of order to ask Liberal MP **Shawn Murphy** to apologize for heckling him during statements by Members on Thursday, February 28, 2008. Mr. Fast al-

leged that Mr. Murphy, who sits next to him, made unparliamentary remarks about former Prime Minister **Brian Mulroney**, saying, "Hang Mulroney," and "Put a noose around his neck." On March 3, 2008, Mr. Murphy rose to accept responsibility for his inappropriate comments and to apologize.

On April 4, **Tom Lukiwski**, Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader, rose on a question of privilege in order to apologize for remarks he had made in 1991, which had been broadcast in the media the previous day. Mr. Lukiwski's remarks were nonetheless subject to much criticism during Question Period in early April.

On April 10, 2008 the Speaker ruled on a question of privilege raised on March 13, 2008 by NDP MP **Yvon Godin**, who had alleged that **Josée Verner**, Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, misled the House concerning an invitation to appear before the Standing Committee on Official Languages. The Speaker stated that the Minister's letter of reply to the Committee, in which she requested to appear at a later date, was somewhat ambiguous. He added that, although differences of opinion with respect to fact and details are not infrequent in the House, it would have been preferable for the Minister to resolve the matter by explaining her decisions more precisely. He concluded that it remained a dispute as to facts and that it did not constitute sufficient grounds for a finding of a breach of privilege.

Speakers' Rulings

On April 17, 2008, the Speaker ruled on the admissibility of Bill C-505, *An Act to amend the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (non-application in Quebec)*. According to Liberal MP

Derek Lee, who raised the point of order April 9, the Bill was anti-constitutional because it would contravene article 27 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Speaker stated that it was not for the Chair to pronounce on constitutional questions and that Bill C-505 was admissible in its current form.

On March 3, 2008, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, **Gerry Ritz**, tabled Bill C-46, *An Act to amend the Canada Wheat Board Act and Chapter 17 of the Statutes of Canada, 1998*. Liberal Agriculture critic **Wayne Easter** then rose on a point of order to question the legality of the procedure because, in his view, it contravened section 47.1 of the *Canadian Wheat Board Act*, which establishes the conditions for the introduction of such a bill in the House. The Speaker said he would take the matter under advisement, adding that questions of law are not normally matters for the Chair to decide. On March 6, 2008, the Speaker ruled that the Bill did not offend the requirements of section 47.1 of the Act and could therefore proceed.

Other Matters

Following by-elections held on March 17, **Rob Clarke** (Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River, CPC); **Martha Hall Findlay** (Willowdale, Lib.), **Joyce Murray** (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.) and **Bob Rae** (Toronto Centre, Lib.) took their seats in the House of Commons when it reconvened after the Easter adjournment, on March 31, 2008.

In March the Speaker informed the House that a vacancy had occurred in the representation of the House of Commons, for the Electoral District of Saint-Lambert, by reason of the resignation of Bloc Québécois MP **Maka Kotto**. Mr. Kotto left to be a candidate in a pro-

vincial by-election. On April 7, 2008, the Speaker informed the House that Liberal MP **Brenda Chamberlain** had resigned as the Member for Guelph.

Catherine Gérin-Lajoie

Procedural Clerk

Table Research Branch



Alberta

On February 4, 2008, Premier **Ed Stelmach** announced in the Legislature that he had sought the dissolution of the 26th Legislature and that a provincial general election would be held on March 3, 2008.

The main issues of the campaign included sustainable economic growth, environmental protection, affordable housing, and health care. It was also the first opportunity for the electorate to endorse or reject Mr. Stelmach's mandate to lead the provincial government.

At dissolution, the standings in the Legislative Assembly were 61 Progressive Conservatives, 16 Liberals, four New Democrats, one Alberta Alliance, and one Independent. Following the March 3 election, the standings in the Legislative Assembly are: Progressive Conservatives – 72, Liberals – nine, and New Democrats – two.

The Progressive Conservative party obtained 53 per cent of the popular vote, up from 47 per cent in the 2004 election, and gained 11 seats in the Legislative Assembly. The election marked the 11th con-

secutive victory for the Progressive Conservative Party. Voter turnout was 41 per cent, down from 46 per cent in 2004.

The Leader of the Alberta Liberal Party, **Kevin Taft**, was re-elected in his constituency of Edmonton-Riverview. Dr. Taft was first elected in the provincial general election of 2001. The Liberals obtained 26 per cent of the popular vote and lost seven of their previous 16 seats throughout the province.

The Leader of the New Democrat party, **Brian Mason**, was re-elected to the riding of Edmonton-Highlands. Mr. Mason was first elected to the Assembly in a by-election in June 2000. Rookie New Democrat candidate **Rachel Notley** was elected in the Edmonton-Strathcona constituency which had previously been held by retiring New Democrat MLA **Raj Pannu**. Ms Notley is the daughter of former Alberta New Democrat leader **Grant Notley**. Mr. Notley died tragically in a plane crash in 1984. Having lost two of their previous four seats in the election and receiving only nine per cent of the popular vote, the New Democrats are no longer a recognized party under the *Legislative Assembly Act*.

The Alberta Alliance Party and the Wildrose Party merged in January 2008 to create the Wildrose Alliance. **Paul Hinman**, the Member representing the rural constituency of Cardston-Taber-Warner, and the only elected Member of the Alberta Alliance, was selected as the leader of the new party. The Wildrose Alliance Party received seven per cent of the popular vote but did not win any seats in the Legislature. The constituency of Cardston-Taber-Warner was reclaimed by Progressive Conservative candidate **Broyce Jacobs** who held the seat before Mr. Hinman's election in 2004.

New Cabinet

Premier Stelmach announced his Cabinet on March 12, 2008. Several ministries were reorganized to reflect the government's priorities and four new cabinet posts were created. The number of Cabinet Members is now at 24, including the Premier. The new cabinet does not include any Associate Ministers but in an attempt to assist Ministers with the demands of their portfolios and to provide government Members with Ministry experience the Premier created 10 Parliamentary Assistant positions. Appointed by the Premier and responsible to the appropriate Minister, these Parliamentary Assistants receive administrative support from the ministry and are not part of Cabinet.

Some portfolio changes and additions include:

- the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation has been divided into two Ministries: Infrastructure which manages government-owned infrastructure and municipal infrastructure grants, and Transportation which focuses on the provincial highway network and municipal transportation grants;
- International and Intergovernmental Relations has taken on responsibility for investment attraction;
- the new Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs will take over responsibility for housing services from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs;
- the responsibility for Aboriginal Affairs has been transferred from International and Intergovernmental Relations to the new Ministry of Aboriginal Relations;
- the new Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit is responsible for community development, the voluntary sector, culture and heritage attractions, as well as several arts and culture funds.

Returning Cabinet Ministers with different portfolios include: **Ron Stevens**, Deputy Premier and Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations; **Lloyd Snelgrove**, President of the Treasury Board; **Dave Hancock**, Minister of Education; Iris Evans, Minister of Finance and Enterprise; **Ron Liepert**, Minister of Health and Wellness; **Luke Ouellette**, Minister of Transportation; **Gene Zwozdesky**, Minister of Aboriginal Relations; **George Groeneveld**, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development; **Janice Tarchuk**, Minister of Children and Youth Services; **Hector Goudreau**, Minister of Employment and Immigration; **Ray Danyluk**, Minister of Municipal Affairs; and **Cindy Ady**, Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

Ministers maintaining their previous portfolios include: **Doug Horner**, Minister of Advanced Education and Technology; **Mel Knight**, Minister of Energy; **Ted Morton**, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development; and **Fred Lindsay**, Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security.

Returning Members making their first appearance in Premier Stelmach's Cabinet include: **Mary Anne Jablonski**, Minister of Seniors and Community Supports; **Jack Hayden**, Minister of Infrastructure; and **Yvonne Fritz**, Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Three rookie Members have also been appointed to Cabinet: **Alison Redford**, Minister of Justice and Attorney General; **Lindsay Blackett**, Minister of Culture and Community Spirit; and **Heather Klimchuk**, Minister of Service Alberta.

The ten Parliamentary Assistants have been assigned the following portfolios: **Manmeet Bhullar** to Advanced Education and Technology; **Doug Griffiths** to Agriculture and

Rural Development; **Janice Sarich** to Education; **David Xiao** to Employment and Immigration; **Len Webber** to Energy; **Diana McQueen** to Environment; **Raj Sherman** to Health and Wellness; **Thomas Lukaszuk** to Municipal Affairs; **Robert Anderson** to Solicitor General and Public Security; and **Evan Berger** to Sustainable Resource Development.

Spring Sitting

The Spring Sitting of the 1st Session of the 27th Legislature commenced on April 14, 2008, with the election of the presiding officers. **Ken Kowalski** (P.C. Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock) surviving a challenge from **Laurie Blakeman** (Lib. Edmonton-Centre), House Leader for the Official Opposition, was elected for his fourth term as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Mr. Kowalski is the longest serving Member currently in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. **Wayne Cao**, (P.C. Calgary-Fort) was elected on the second ballot as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees. Mr. Cao has served in the Alberta Legislature since 1997. **Len Mitzel**, (P.C. Cypress-Medicine Hat) was elected Deputy Chair of Committees. Mr. Mitzel was first elected to the Assembly in 2004. Alberta elects its presiding officers by secret ballot.

On April 15, 2008, Lieutenant Governor **Norman L. Kwong** delivered the Speech from the Throne. The Speech, entitled "Taking Action for Today and Tomorrow," outlined plans for ensuring sustainable energy development and broadening the province's economy to provide current and future prosperity for all Albertans. Other highlights included:

- the pledge to play a leadership role in the creation of 14,000 new

child care spaces in the province by 2011;

- improvements to the efficiency and effectiveness of the health care system including the creation of new and expanded facilities;
- increased investment in provincial infrastructure with a significant focus on the provincial highway system and traffic safety;
- establishment of a government/industry council to advise on implementation of carbon capture and storage technology; and
- the creation of a Premier's Council on Arts and Culture.

On opening day, the Premier introduced Bill 1, *Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2008 (TILMA)*. The Bill provides the mechanics for the province to fulfill its legislative obligations for the application of *TILMA*, an interprovincial trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement between Alberta and British Columbia which eliminates barriers faced by skilled professionals or tradespeople when pursuing career opportunities in either province.

Standing Order Changes

On April 17, 2008, the Legislative Assembly approved temporary amendments to its Standing Orders. Some of the amendments were modelled on the temporary Standing Order amendments approved by the Assembly in the Spring of 2007 which were no longer in effect upon dissolution of the 26th Legislature.

Notable amendments include:

- changes to the procedure for the consideration of the main estimates. The Committee of Supply will consider the main estimates for 60 hours. At the conclusion of

the 60 hours of consideration, one vote is taken to approve the estimates unless additional votes are required on amendments or if a Member has provided notice that they would like the estimates of a particular department voted on separately;

- the establishment of five Policy Field Committees each consisting of 11 Members. The mandates of these five committees are based on the government's Cabinet Policy Committees and encompass the following subject areas: Community Services; the Economy; Health; Public Safety and Services; and Resources and Environment. The committees may review Bills, regulations or prospective regulations. The annual reports of each Government department, provincial agency, Crown-controlled organization, board, or commission are also permanently referred to the Policy Field Committees and may inquire into matters within their jurisdiction.

The amendments have effect until the conclusion of the 2008 Fall Sitting and will be reviewed by the Assembly's Standing Committee on Privileges, Elections, Standing Orders and Printing. The Committee must report to the Assembly with its recommendations no later than October 30, 2008.

Budget 2008

On April 22, 2008, **Iris Evans**, Minister of Finance and Enterprise, presented Budget 2008 and the estimates for the 2008-09 fiscal year. Revenue for the 2008-09 fiscal year is estimated to be \$38.6 billion and total resource revenue is expected to be \$11.7 billion. The Minister projected total expenditures of \$37 billion in 2008-09. Surplus revenue is estimated to be \$1.6 billion. The Budget increases the base budget for the Department of Health and Wellness by 9.1 per cent to \$13.2 billion. Funding for Advanced Educa-

tion and Technology, which oversees post-secondary education programs, will increase by 5.5 per cent to \$3.4 billion while program support for Education will increase to \$5.8 billion. Funding for the Department of Environment will increase by over to \$249 million. Another element of Budget 2008 was the elimination of health care premiums on January 1, 2009.

Other Events

On March 11, 2008, Speaker Kowalski hosted a ceremony in the Legislature Building Rotunda recognizing Alberta's Francophone community. *Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie* is a celebration of the province's French culture and history. Joining Speaker Kowalski during the recognition ceremony were Mr. Goudreau, Minister of Employment and Immigration; Mr. Taft, Leader of the Official Opposition; Ms Notley, MLA, representing the Third Party Opposition; and **Jean Johnson**, President, Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta.

Micheline Gravel

Clerk of Journals/Table Research

Jody Rempel

Committee Clerk



Manitoba

In accordance with a sessional order passed in June 2007, the second session of the 39th Manitoba Legislature resumed on April 9, 2008 to consider a new budget and legislative agenda. The session began with Finance Minister **Greg**

Selinger (NDP - St. Boniface) presenting the NDP government's ninth budget. The 2008-2009 total operating expenditure of \$9.8 billion represents an increase of 6% from 2007-2008. Highlights of the government's "opportunity and stability" budget included:

- Providing \$182 million in new personal, property and business tax relief.
- Investing more than \$100 million in capital projects at post-secondary institutions.
- Investing an additional \$5 million in child care to provide more spaces, a new training and recruitment fund and higher wages.
- Committing to a multi-year funding plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by supporting sustainable farm practices, trucking technologies, active transport initiatives and green heating technologies.
- Proceeding with the \$4-billion, 10-year plan to modernize highways and bridges across the province.
- Finalizing work on the Red River Floodway expansion project.
- Investing \$7.2 million to educate and hire more doctors.
- Providing an additional \$3 million to increase the number of nurses, health-care aides and allied health-care workers for personal-care homes in Manitoba.
- Providing \$8.8 million more to the Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation to reflect increasing crop values covered by production insurance.
- Funding \$60 million in loan supports for hog producers.
- Introducing disability insurance for volunteer firefighters in Aboriginal and Northern Affairs communities.
- Providing more than \$200 million in funding for the City of Winnipeg to provide local services in-

cluding transit services and public safety.

- Providing support for Renaissance Brandon to help revitalize downtown Brandon.

During his contribution to the budget debate on April 11, 2008 Official Opposition Leader **Hugh McFadyen** (PC - Fort Whyte) moved a motion expressing non-confidence in the government, which stated that the budget failed "to address the priorities of Manitobans by":

- Increasing Manitoba's reliance on other provinces through equalization payments.
- Increasing Manitoba's staggering debt load rather than reducing debt.
- Ignoring the priorities of Manitobans by failing to provide adequate resources to combat crime.
- Failing to end hallway medicine, as promised, while at the same time nearly doubling the health care budget.
- Ignoring the City of Brandon, Manitoba's second largest urban centre.
- Neglecting to better protect Manitoba's most vulnerable children in the care of the child welfare system.
- Failing to address the challenges facing the cattle and pork sectors as they deal with low commodity prices, the impact of the high Canadian dollar, rising input costs, pending Country of Origin Labelling, and the extension of the moratorium on the hog industry.
- Neglecting to reverse the misguided political decision to run BiPole III down the West Side of Lake Winnipeg.

On April 16, 2008 **Jon Gerrard** (Independent Liberal - River Heights) moved a sub-amendment to Mr. McFadyen's amendment. Dr. Gerrard identified a number of

other shortcomings in the government's financial plan, including:

- Failure to address climate change by running a carbon-neutral government or implementing a carbon-trading system in Manitoba.
- Neglecting the obvious need for rapid transit to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Failure to put patients first by continuing to base RHA spending on global budgets rather than services delivered.
- Failure to implement a plan to reduce child poverty rates in Manitoba.
- Failing to work with the hog industry to address environmental issues.
- Refusing to consider the feasibility of an underwater hydro line under Lake Winnipeg.

On April 21, 2008 Dr. Gerrard's sub-amendment and Mr. McFadyen's amendment were each defeated on recorded votes of yeas 21, nays 35, while the main budget motion carried on a recorded vote of yeas 35, nays 21.

The government introduced a number of Bills this spring session, including:

- Bill 15 - *The Climate Change and Emissions Reductions Act*, which would set targets for emissions reductions and require periodic reporting on Manitoba's progress in achieving those targets.
- Bill 17 - *The Environment Amendment Act (Permanent Ban on Building or Expanding Hog Facilities)*, which would prohibit the construction or expansion of confined livestock areas for pigs and pig manure storage facilities in specified areas of Manitoba.
- Bill 18 - *The Testing of Bodily Fluids and Disclosure Act*, which would enable a person who has come into contact with a bodily fluid of another person to get a court order requiring the other person to provide a sample of the fluid for testing.
- Bill 37 - *The Lobbyists Registration Act and Amendments to the Elections Act, the Elections Finances Act, the Legisla-*

tive Assembly Act and the Legislative Assembly Management Commission Act, which would introduce a range of amendments, including:

- Requiring the registration of people who lobby the government, government agencies or Members of the Legislative Assembly.
- Mandating that elections be held every four years on the second Tuesday in June;
- Restricting the mailing and printing privileges of Members before a fixed date election.
- Requiring that caucuses of registered political parties and Members who receive a payment for supplies and assistance under the Act file an annual financial report relating to the payments.
- Requiring rules ensuring that materials produced or distributed at public expense by caucuses and Members are non-partisan.
- Establishing an annual mailing expense budget for caucuses and Members.

Private Member's Bills introduced so far this session by the official opposition Progressive Conservatives include:

- Bill 229 - *The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Elimination of Benefits for Auto Thieves)*, which would deny benefits to a person for injuries received in an accident, whether or not the person was at fault, if he or she is convicted of stealing a motor vehicle involved in the accident, or of taking it without the owner's consent.

Private Member's Bills introduced so far this session by the independent Liberals include:

- Bill 223 - *The Non-Smokers Health Protection Amendment Act (Protecting Children From Second-Hand Smoke in Motor Vehicles)*, which would prohibit smoking in motor vehicles in the presence of children.

Standing Committees of the Manitoba Legislature have been occupied with a number of pursuits in recent weeks, including:

- The Standing Committees on Justice and Social & Economic Development met in April to hear public presenta-

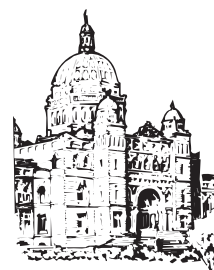
tions on government bills and consider legislation.

- The Standing Committee on Crown Corporations met in March 2008 to consider a series of reports from the Worker's Compensation Board.
- The Standing Committee on Public Accounts met in April and May 2008 to consider reports from the Auditor General covering a wide range of topics including a review of the Crown Corporations Council, and Audits of the Public Accounts. In cooperation with the office of the Auditor General, the Public Accounts committee continues to review and reform its procedures and practices.

In addition to specifying certain dates when steps in the budget and legislative process must be completed, the sessional order also states that the House will sit until to June 12, 2008.

Rick Yarish

Clerk Assistant /
Clerk of Committees



British Columbia

Lieutenant Governor **Stephen LPoint** delivered his first Speech from the Throne to open the 4th Session of the 38th Parliament on February 12, 2008. The Speech contained a number of initiatives to further the government's goals of healthier families and sustainable health delivery; educational excellence; safe, supportive communities; and a strong economy. With regard to environmental stewardship, the government's commitments include:

- A future investment of \$14 billion to improve transit and encourage higher density in population centres;
- A new green building code;
- A “Trees for Tomorrow” program to encourage reforestation, with a goal of zero net deforestation; and
- A Citizens' Conservation Council and a Youth Climate Leadership Alliance.

During the Throne Speech debate the Opposition expressed qualified support for the “greening of the province” but claimed that a number of important issues had been overlooked by the government. In particular, they argued that there was no specific mention of new initiatives to tackle child poverty and homelessness, or to raise the minimum wage.

Budget

Finance Minister **Carole Taylor** presented the budget on February 19, 2008. The government's emphasis on the environment continued, with:

- A new carbon tax, effective July 1, 2008;
- A \$100 payment to each British Columbian in June 2008 to offset the impact of the carbon tax;
- An investment of \$1 billion over four years to help make greener choices easier, more accessible and more affordable; and
- \$95 million to establish a Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions.

Also included in the budget was more support for low-income families, health care and the arts. The major changes to tax policy are a personal income tax cut of 5 percent on the first \$70,000 by 2009 and reductions in the general corporate income tax rate (to 11 percent) and for small business (to 3.5 percent).

Members of the Official Opposition were disappointed by the budget. They pointed out that the impact of the carbon tax will be borne by ordinary British Columbians. The opposition was also concerned that the budget appeared to contain no measures to make advanced education more affordable, to help parents find child care, or to help families “struggling to keep a roof over their heads.”

Environmental Legislation

During the spring sitting, the government introduced more legislation to deal with climate change, after having enacted the *Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets Act* last November. Bill 16, *Greenhouse Gas Reduction (Renewable and Low Carbon Fuel Requirements) Act* requires gasoline-class or diesel-class fuel suppliers to include biofuels in their products. Bill 18, *Greenhouse Gas Reduction (Cap and Trade) Act*, would put an absolute limit on the emissions responsible for global warming, and is designed to spur innovative and low-cost solutions to reduce carbon pollution.

The Opposition spoke out against both, arguing that they are enabling bills that simply lay out a framework for future action. Since the details of both will be decided by cabinet and announced through regulations, opposition energy critic **John Horgan** argued that the Legislative Assembly will have no oversight of these important measures.

On April 28, 2008, Ms. Taylor followed up on her key budget measure by introducing Bill 37, *Carbon Tax Act*. The tax will be revenue neutral and will apply to virtually all fossil fuel combustion emissions, representing about 70 percent of total emissions in British Columbia. Opposition environment critic **Shane Simpson**, though, claimed

the tax would penalize northern communities, public services and low-income families. He also pointed out that the 30 percent of emissions excluded from the tax are mainly produced by the oil, gas and aluminum industries.

Two other bills relating to the environment have recently been introduced. Bill 31, *Greenhouse Gas Reduction (Emissions Standards) Statutes Amendment Act, 2008*, requires reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from sectors including waste management and electricity generation and encourages development of a wood bioenergy sector. Bill 38, *Protected Areas of British Columbia (Conservancies and Parks) Amendment Act, 2008*, legally protects eleven new Class A parks and sixty-six conservancies with almost a million hectares of additional land.

Health Legislation

The government has introduced seven health-related bills this session. These include Bill 24, *E-Health (Personal Health Information Access and Protection of Privacy) Act*, which will enable B.C. to become the first province to legislate a framework governing access and privacy rules for health databases.

The subject of much debate is Bill 21, *Medicare Protection Amendment Act, 2008*, which incorporates in legislation the principle of sustainability. The Minister of Health, **George Abbott**, explained that the amending bill follows through on a commitment made in the 2006 Throne Speech to define and enshrine the *Canada Health Act's* five principles and add a sixth principle of sustainability for the province's public health care system. However, the Opposition health critic **Adrian Dix** suggested that Bill 21 is an attempt to shift toward more user fees and “a means

of limiting the scope of public health care.”

Committee work

Two parliamentary committees have been active so far this session. The Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth was reappointed on March 4, 2008, to continue its work focusing on the B.C. child welfare system. Over the last few months, the Committee has met to consider several reports including: the Representative for Children and Youth's review of the government's progress on implementing recommended changes to the B.C.'s child welfare policies; a report on the educational outcomes of children in care; and a referral report – with 11 recommendations to improve systems of child protection – stemming from an inter-disciplinary investigation into four historic child deaths in northern British Columbia.

The Special Committee to Review the *Personal Information Protection Act*, which was first appointed a year ago, has completed its statutory review. The committee chair, **Ron Cantelon**, tabled the report *Streamlining British Columbia's Private Sector Privacy Law* on April 17, 2008. Where appropriate the report's recommendations are consistent with those of the recent reviews of similar privacy laws in Alberta and at the federal level. To fill gaps in the B.C. law, the Committee urged government to consider requiring private-sector organizations to be responsible for personal information transferred outside Canada, as well as requiring mandatory notification of privacy breaches in certain circumstances.

Cabinet Changes

On March 28, 2008, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General **John**

Les announced his decision to step down from cabinet, pending resolution of an investigation into matters which occurred prior to his election to the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Les was first elected to the Legislative Assembly in 2001, and was re-elected in 2005. He previously served as Minister of Small Business and Economic Development. He will continue to represent his constituents as the Member for Chilliwack-Sumas.

John van Dongen has assumed the duties of Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, in addition to his existing portfolio of Minister of State for Intergovernmental Relations. Mr. van Dongen was first elected in 1995 and previously served as Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries.

Recognition

On Wednesday April 9, 2008, the precinct staff held a celebration in honour of **E. George MacMinn**, Q.C., Clerk of the House on the occasion of his 50th year of service to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. Mr. MacMinn is the longest serving table officer in the Commonwealth and has served ten Premiers, fourteen Speakers and hundreds of MLAs.

Kathryn Butler
Committee Researcher



Ontario

On March 17, the House resumed sitting after the winter adjourn-

ment, and resumed its debate on the Speech from the Throne. The Throne Speech was delivered on November 29, 2007 by **David C. Onley**, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. A number of newly elected Members presented their inaugural speeches in the Legislature during the debate.

On the first day of the spring sitting, Speaker **Steve Peters** made a statement regarding the conduct of business in the House. Through the following weeks, the Speaker took several more opportunities to draw the House's attention to matters of procedure and practice, making statements regarding the use of language, tone, and interjections by Members; and clarifying the rules around the use of supplementary questions during Oral Questions, and statements of purpose during Introduction of Bills.

Two sets of Supplementary Estimates for the 2007-2008 fiscal year were tabled in the House and deemed to be received and concurred in. On April 1 the Speaker announced that Royal Assent had been granted to Bill 45, *An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008*.

On March 25, **Dwight Duncan**, Minister of Finance, presented Ontario's 2008 Budget. The Budget forecasts total expenditures of \$96.2 billion, and a surplus of \$600 million. On April 2, after three days of debate, the House voted to approve in general the budgetary policy of the Government.

The Speaker ruled on a number of points of privilege that were raised in the House, concerning: a possible disclosure of Budget contents; Government announcements not made available to Opposition members; the proposed introduction of a tax not mentioned in the Budget; and

events that occurred during a meeting of a Standing Committee.

Prayer Panel

A panel of Members of Provincial Parliament, chaired by the Speaker, was convened to review the traditional practice of reciting prayers at the beginning of each day of the Legislature. The Speaker has invited the public's submissions on the subject, which may be filed on the Legislative Assembly's website. The panel is expected to hold consultations with the public.

Changes to the Standing Orders

The House debated and passed a motion to amend the Standing Orders that will revise, *inter alia*, the weekly meeting schedule of the Legislative Assembly. The start time of the daily (Monday-Thursday) House sitting will move to 9:00 a.m. from 1:30 p.m. Evening sittings will be eliminated, except during the last two weeks of either the spring or fall sitting. Oral Questions will move to the morning from the afternoon. The number of items of Private Members' Public Business that the House will consider weekly will increase from two to three. Also new is the addition of the proceeding "Introduction of Visitors" at 10:45 a.m. each day, at which time the Speaker will introduce guests in the Chamber galleries on behalf of the Members. It will be out of order for any other guests to be introduced by any Member.

The changes take effect on May 5 on a provisional basis until early in the fall sitting, at which time the House may extend or permanently adopt the provisional Standing Orders, with or without amendment. The Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly will meet during the summer adjournment to consider the changes and will re-

port its recommendations back to the House during the first week of the fall sitting.

Recall of the Legislature

On Saturday, April 26, in response to a strike by employees of the Toronto Transit Commission, the city's public transit provider, that began at midnight that day, an Order in Council was delivered to the Speaker, requesting him to reconvene the Legislative Assembly on Sunday, April 27. At this extraordinary session of the Legislature, the following bill was introduced, debated and passed with unanimous consent: Bill 66, *An Act to resolve labour disputes between the Toronto Transit Commission and Local 113, Amalgamated Transit Union, Lodge 235, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, and Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 2*. The Act received Royal Assent on Sunday afternoon, leading to the resumption of transit operations the same day.

Committees

The 2008-2009 Expenditure Estimates were tabled in the House on April 9 and deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates. The Committee selected the estimates of twelve ministries for review and sent the unselected estimates back to the House. On April 29, the Committee began its consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, the first ministry selected.

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs met during the winter adjournment to write its report on the pre-Budget consultations that it had conducted in January. The Chair presented the report to the House on March 17. The Committee met on April 24 for

clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 44, *An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters*.

The Standing Committee on Government Agencies resumed consideration of intended appointments to Ontario Government agencies, boards and commissions, pursuant to its permanent mandate. Twenty-four nominees were interviewed by the Committee during March and April. In addition, the Committee agreed on a work plan under its mandate to conduct reviews of the operation of agencies. During the summer and winter recesses of the coming year, the Committee will review the following 6 agencies (2 selected per caucus): Human Rights Legal Support Centre; Ontario Educational Communications Authority (TVOntario); Ontario Securities Commission; Ontario Infrastructure Projects Corporation (Infrastructure Ontario); Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario; and Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The Standing Committee on Justice Policy met on April 16 for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 16, *An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry)*, 2000. As per its explanatory note, the bill provides for the establishment and maintenance of a provincial sex offender registry and requires persons convicted of a sex offence or found not criminally responsible of a sex offence on account of mental disorder to register in person at their local police station on certain triggering events (for example, upon being released from custody for a sex offence) and annually thereafter. The Bill amends the Act by adding the following situations that will trigger a reporting obligation: being ordered to serve a sentence for a sex offence intermittently; and being released from custody pending the

determination of an appeal in relation to a sex offence.

On March 31, the Chair of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly tabled the Committee's report prescribing, pursuant to its permanent mandate, the ministries and offices assigned to certain Standing Committees of the Legislative Assembly. In April, the Committee invited **André Marin**, Ombudsman of Ontario, to appear before the Committee and brief the Members on his role. Mr. Marin spoke about his experiences to date and explained that he is "accountable to members of the Legislative Assembly and to the public for the way [he] approach[es] any given complaint and issues that may present themselves."

The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills met several times to consider applications for private legislation, many of which were requests for a corporate revival. At the Committee's request for information about the kinds of corporate dissolutions that need to be revived by private legislation, Senior Counsel from the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services appeared before the Committee and addressed the Members' questions on the subject.

Sylwia Przewdziecki
Committee Clerk



New Brunswick

The Second Session of the Fifty-sixth Legislature was re-

called February 13, 2008 to consider back-to-work legislation for striking CUPE workers. The House subsequently adjourned until March 11 following Human Resources Minister **Wally Stiles'** announcement that a tentative agreement with CUPE 1251 had been reached.

Budget

On March 18, Finance Minister **Victor Boudreau** brought down the 2008-2009 budget, noting that it was balanced with no tax increases and a surplus of \$19 million. Among the measures outlined: an increase of \$113.3 million in health-care spending; an increase of \$63.5 million in K-12 education; an additional \$12 million in financial assistance to universities; funding to hire 43 new social workers; an increase of 3.4 per cent for the Department of Social Development; continued phase-out of the large corporation capital tax; funding to complete a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment on the proposal by Irving Oil Ltd. to construct and operate facilities for a petroleum refinery; a request that government departments realize a total of \$15 million in program administrative savings; the creation of a trust fund for restoration of the Petitcodiac River; and new funding for the Fisheries Renewal Framework and for strategic investments in the agriculture and aquaculture industries. The government will table a green paper outlining options to reform the tax system focussed on personal income tax, corporate income tax, property taxes for individuals and businesses, consumption taxes, and fuel taxes. A select committee of the Legislature will be appointed to conduct consultations with stakeholders and report recommendations. The minister noted: "One of the pillars supporting our self-sufficiency objective is transfor-

mation of the tax system. New Brunswick's overall tax burden is competitive, but significant reforms will be required to support self-sufficiency."

In responding to the Budget Speech on March 20, Finance Critic and Opposition Leader **Jeannot Volpé** noted: "The Liberals have taken away the political and democratic process in New Brunswick by eliminating regional authorities, cutting prebudget consultations, and canceling public consultations on forestry."

The Opposition Leader stated that the budget failed to help children access the bilingual language training needed to access attractive job opportunities later on and failed to meet its objective of achieving self-sufficiency because, instead of moving away from federal transfers, it was becoming more dependent on them, as the 12.5% increase since 2006-07 indicates. Mr. Volpé stated that the budget failed to address all New Brunswick regions, including the northwestern part of the province.

The Opposition Leader noted that the Government was not living up to a number of promises: no tax increases, the HST rebate on home heating for all New Brunswickers, to help the fish plant workers, to add 12,000 new seats in community colleges, to implement a public automobile insurance and to remove territories, to have 3.5 hours of care for seniors after two years, to increase the silviculture program from \$8 million to \$10 million and spread it over 10 years, and to build 300 km of wildlife fencing along highway-collision hot spots within two years.

Legislation

The government introduced a number of noteworthy pieces of Legislation. The majority of debate centred

around the changes to the province's health care system.

An Act to Amend the Regional Health Authorities Act, introduced by Health Minister **Michael Murphy** proposed to reduce the province's Regional Health Authorities from eight to two; create a New Brunswick Health Council to provide residents with opportunities for meaningful input and dialogue on health matters; and to consolidate, under a new public sector company, selected non-clinical services now carried out by the health authorities. According to the minister, the consolidation is expected to generate savings of \$4.6 million a year within three years, \$19.4 million annually within five years which will be directed into new information and technology systems, including those needed to create the *One Patient One Record* vision.

Forty hours of House debate was spent on Bill 34, *An Act to Amend the Regional Health Authorities Act*. The majority of this time was taken up by Opposition Leader Volpé. In a general debate, Members may speak up to forty minutes under existing rules; there is, however, no time limit for either the Premier or the Leader of the Opposition. The House subsequently passed a motion to limit the debate on the Bill to three more hours at second reading, ten hours during Committee of the Whole, and two hours at the third reading stage.

The Minister of Health introduced the *New Brunswick Health Council Act* noting that a key component of the new and improved health system is the creation of a new, strong voice for citizens. It was noted that the Council will be a key citizen engagement mechanism, assessing population health and satisfaction with the health system. Comprised of up to 16 members representing communities, policy

makers, health managers, health professionals and academic institutions, the citizen-oriented, expert resource council will promote and improve health system performance through monitoring and public reporting and will provide evaluation and recommendations on how to improve the health system.

Changes proposed to the *Legislative Assembly Act* implement the majority of the recommendations of the *Report of the MLA Compensation Review Commission 2007*, (http://www.gnb.ca/legis/Promos/CRC_CER/index_e.asp) filed with the Speaker January 14, 2008. The Bill eliminates the member's non-taxable expense allowance, adds a taxable equivalent value to the annual indemnity, authorizes payment of a taxable and non pensionable sum for each day a Member is engaged in work of a committee; puts in place a mechanism for requiring that expenses relating to committee attendance be reimbursable upon the production of receipts; reduces the number of sessions of pensionable service that may be used to calculate the re-establishment allowance; provides a career counseling or re-training allowance for former members; links the salary of the Speaker, the Deputy Speakers, the Leader of the Opposition and other parliamentary office holders to a percentage of the Premier's salary and the salaries of members of the Executive Council. In addition, the Bill imposes higher monetary sanctions for absences from sittings of the Legislative Assembly and similar sanctions for suspensions, and requires that members who are absent for reasons other than those stated in the Act file a declaration with the Speaker. It allows members ineligible to participate in the member's pension plan to opt out of the

changes respecting the annual indemnity and the annual expense allowance, that is the changeover from a non-taxable plan to taxable income and provides for a mandatory review of members' compensation by an independent body at regular intervals.

An amendment to the *Executive Council Act* proposes increases in the annual salary of the Premier and Members of the Executive Council at the rates recommended in the Report of the MLA Compensation Review Commission, 2007, postpones the annual adjustment of these salaries until January 1, 2009 and proposes to make the changes effective April 1, 2008.

As rising flood waters threatened to inundate the Legislative Complex, New Brunswick's MLAs worked steadily through extended hours on April 29 and 30. While moving vans removed everything from basement levels in the event of a possible extended relocation of the Legislature, 23 government Bills were considered in Committee of the Whole. Prior to adjourning on April 30, two days earlier than scheduled, Lieutenant-Governor **Herménégilde Chiasson** gave Royal Assent to 27 Bills.

Following Prime Minister **Stephen Harper's** announcement to extend the term of Lieutenant-Governor Chiasson until September 30, 2009, a motion introduced by a government private member, requesting that the Prime Minister extend His Honour's term to allow him to represent the Crown and the province at the Congrès mondial acadien in 2009 in Caraquet, N.B., was withdrawn.

During the session and during the sometimes raucous and heated debates, one member was ordered to withdraw from the House for refusing to withdraw unparliamentary language. Question Period was

dominated by questions relating to Forestry (Forests/Forest Industry/Silviculture), Public Health Authorities; French Immersion; and Electricity-No Disconnet Policy.

Flood

The 1973 St. John River flood caused extensive damage to the Main Legislative Assembly Building, the Old Education Building, and the Departmental Building. Other buildings in close proximity which are now part of the complex were also hard hit.

In an effort to avoid a repeat experience when all indications predicted a similar scenario, Legislative staff organized flood plans for all branches of the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Administration Committee implemented part of the Business Continuity Plan to safeguard assets in the basement of the Main Legislative Building. As a result, the cafeteria and television broadcast system ceased April 30. Power was shut off to the Departmental, Old Education and Legislative Buildings including the Legislative Library. All buildings including Government Documents, and the Jewett and Edgecombe Houses, were evacuated until further notice. The Office of the Clerk was temporarily relocated to the University of New Brunswick Campus. Following decontamination and utility inspections, most staff were allowed to return on May 8. Although the buildings suffered little actual flood damage when pumps installed diverted the bulk of the rising water, the upheaval caused by the removal of tons of stored documents, books, technical equipment, furniture and appliances, led to the closure of the Parliamentary Channel (TV 70), cafeteria, and basement offices until further notice.

When the House resumed sitting on May 13, 2008, Premier **Shawn Graham** thanked all New Brunswickers who led the remarkable flood response: the government Departments of Public Safety, Transportation, Health, and the Emergency Measures Organization, local governments and local authorities - police and firefighters, the Red Cross and the hundreds of volunteers who worked so that people could be safe during the flood and who continue to work during the recovery period. Premier Graham stated "The spirit, the selflessness and the determination shown by New Brunswickers has been truly inspiring."

The Premier noted that the province's recovery package involves three elements:

- complementary assistance, including water and electrical testing to ensure safety;
- health and safety inspections, to assess damage and determine what repairs are required for residents to safely return to their homes;
- disaster financial assistance, which will be available to cover the costs of repairs.

The House is expected to rise for the summer recess in late May or early June.

Diane Taylor Myles

Researcher and Journals Clerk



Prince Edward Island

The Second Session of the Sixty-third General Assembly

opened on April 4, 2008, with the Speech from the Throne delivered by **Barbara A. Hagerman**, Lieutenant Governor of Prince Edward Island. The speech, with its theme of "One Island Community – One Island Future," outlined a number of initiatives to be undertaken over the next months and years: the relocation of two government departments outside of the capital city by 2010, the provision of high speed internet services to all areas of the province, the establishment of the George Coles Bursary, valued at up to \$2000, available to every first-year Island student entering a provincially-funded post-secondary educational institution, the unveiling of a "Buy PEI" campaign, the appointment of a Commissioner on Land and Local Governance, and the declaration of a new public holiday on the second Monday in February of each year as "Islander Day," among other measures.

Budget

Wes Sheridan, Provincial Treasurer, introduced his second budget on April 23, 2008, which contained expenditures of \$1.387 billion. Health continued to account for the largest share of provincial expenditure at just over \$398 million, followed by Education and Early Childhood Development at \$294 million, and Social Services and Seniors at \$119 million. A deficit of \$34.9 million is projected for the current year.

There was only one tax measure announced in the budget speech which was to raise the tax on tobacco by five dollars per carton.

Smoke Free Places Act Consultations

Proposed amendments to the *Smoke Free Places Act* were tabled by **Doug Currie**, Minister of Health on April 9, 2008, as a consultation document.

The amendments include changes to the existing legislation that will prohibit smoking in motor vehicles when minors are present. Government is also proposing amendments to the Act that will prohibit smoking on hospital grounds and will eliminate indoor smoking areas in long term care facilities. The amendments proposed to the regulations made under the Act will also limit outdoor smoking areas in certain public places where smoking is currently allowed, such as provincial parks and patios and decks of eating establishments and licensed premises.

"Consultations will take place to discuss how the legislation will be implemented," said Minister Currie. "Any changes to the current legislation that impact business owners will be phased in to give them time to comply with amendments to the Act."

Significant Legislation

A number of pieces of significant legislation were considered during the Second Session of the Sixty-third General Assembly. Among them:

- *An Act to Amend the Election Act* (Bill No. 7) which changes the date of general elections from the second Monday in May to the first Monday of October in every fourth calendar year. This sets the date of the next general election on Monday, October 3, 2011.
- *An Act to Amend the Pharmacy Act* (Bill No 10) amends the definition of the term "practice of pharmacy" to recognize that it may include the prescription of drugs.
- *Beverage Containers Act* (Bill No. 14) was perhaps the most widely-anticipated piece of legislation of the spring sitting. It ends the province's prohibition on the sale of flavoured, carbonated beverages in non-refillable containers. As of May 3, 2008, Islanders may legally purchase pop and

beer in cans for the first time in several decades. The legislation implements a deposit and return system for all beverage containers, except dairy containers, sold at Island retailers.

Change in Government Departments

Major changes concerning three government departments were announced on April 3, 2008. Premier **Robert Ghiz** said, "The changes in ministerial duties and departmental responsibilities reflect the need to improve the way services and programs are provided to Islanders." He indicated that a new emphasis on rural development will assist many communities in the province to thrive in a changing world.

The Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development has been given the mandate of contributing to the growth of a sustainable, prosperous fishing and aquaculture industry and to provide policy leadership in development new approaches to rural community development, service delivery and employment programs. The Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning will foster and promote the development of the province's knowledge economy by integrating the innovation agenda with government's advanced learning activities, developing a pro-business investment climate and providing policy leadership and direction. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will be responsible for focusing its efforts on advancing the quality of public education and integrating early childhood development for the long term benefit of the province's youth.

Allan Campbell is the Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development; **Richard Brown** is the Minister of Innovation and Ad-

vanced Learning; and **Gerard Greenan** is the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Committee Activity

The various standing committees maintained a busy and productive schedule during the winter of 2008. They held a total of 34 meetings, and filed nine reports with the Legislative Assembly.

On November 1, 2007, a motion was passed in the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island giving the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Environment a mandate to review the implementation and potential impacts of a province-wide ban on the use of cosmetic lawn pesticides. In carrying out its work, the committee held seven meetings to consider the issue, and received briefs and heard presentations from a total of 173 groups and individuals. In addition, the committee reviewed briefing notes prepared by its staff researcher; and examined other information provided by the various presenters in support of their testimony. Committee members also received numerous telephone calls, emails, and had many personal contacts which served to reinforce the importance of the issue to the people of Prince Edward Island.

Public input included a number of issues related to cosmetic pesticides, including short-term and long-term impacts on human health; environmental concerns; degrees of risk associated with various ingredients or components of pesticides; ethical considerations; and economic consequences. In the main, the testimony and written briefs focused on the desirability or necessity of instituting restrictions on the use of cosmetic pesticides, rather than concentrating on potential impacts and implications if such

restrictions were implemented. The relative safety versus potential dangers of using pesticides for cosmetic purposes was a common theme.

Over the course of the public consultations, the committee found that positions on the use of cosmetic lawn pesticides were relatively entrenched. Arguments were advanced on both sides regarding the effects and safety of pesticides. There were those who believed that consumers benefit from reasonable access and use of cosmetic pesticides; others held the view that benefits are transient, while the population as a whole may have to bear health and environmental risks.

The committee did not comment on the relative safety or risks associated with cosmetic pesticides, nor did it decide in favour of or against banning the use of those chemicals. Instead, assuming that if a provincial ban on the use of cosmetic lawn pesticides became a reality, the committee deliberated on how such restrictions might be implemented and what the effects or potential impacts of a ban would be.

In its report, dated April 22, 2008, the committee made seven recommendations to be effective if restrictions on the use of pesticides for cosmetic reasons are implemented: that agricultural use of pesticides be unaffected; that restrictions be province-wide, rather than the responsibility of a municipality; that a three-year phased in approach be used; that exemptions be put in place for golf courses and to deal with emergency situations; that potential restrictions be extended to the sale of pesticides used for cosmetic purposes; that government lead by example by using alternative pest management strategies on provincially-owned property; and that professional lawn-care compa-

nies be offered financial supports for training in pesticide-free methods of lawn care during the phase-in period.

The Standing Committee on Community Affairs and Economic Development was charged, by motion, on October 26, 2007, with conducting public hearings on Sunday shopping to solicit the views of Islanders. As previously reported, Prince Edward Island defines "holiday" to include every Sunday that falls between December 25 of any year and the Friday before Victoria Day of the following year, and retail business are not permitted to be open, although this does not apply to a variety of operations, including gas stations, convenience stores, restaurants, and pharmacies.

A total of 36 individuals and groups made personal presentations to the committee, and an additional 124 written submissions were received. As a result of its consultations, the committee made three recommendations to the Legislative Assembly: (1) that retail stores be granted the option to open on Sunday year round, if they so choose; (2) that retail stores be prohibited from opening for business until 12 noon on Sundays; and (3) that the provisions of the *Employment Standards Act* and the *Youth Employment Act* continue to be upheld by both employers and employees.

On November 1, 2007, a motion was adopted by the Legislative Assembly instructing the Standing Committee on Fisheries, Intergovernmental Affairs and Transportation to conduct a thorough review of the collapse of Polar Foods International Inc., a business failure the Auditor General identified as costing Island taxpayers approximately \$31 million. To date, the Committee has held seven public hearings, received input from 18 individuals

and groups on the topic, was briefed on three occasions by the Auditor General, and reviewed in excess of 900 pages of background materials. Work is continuing on the file, and the Committee expects to make a final report later this year.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts reviewed, in detail, the annual *Report of the Auditor General to the Legislative Assembly*, as well as the *Small Claims Process Audit Report June 2007*, dated March 11, 2008. The Committee is awaiting a report prepared by the Public Service Commission concerning the 2005 workforce renewal program which offered incentives to employees to leave government voluntarily through early retirement or voluntary severance opportunities.

The Standing Committee on Social Development met with a number of organizations throughout early 2008 on a wide variety of social issues. After reviewing all submissions and careful deliberation, the Committee put forward several recommendations, perhaps most importantly that a dedicated minister be considered for the department of Social Services and Seniors, to be called the Minister of Social Services and Seniors. Currently, there is one minister responsible for health, and social services and seniors. The Committee also recommended the creation of a Disability Secretariat be considered, and that government consider pursuing a thorough review of the Department of Social Services.

The Standing Committee on Rules, Privileges and Private Bills is continuing its work on reviewing the rules of the Legislative Assembly. In its April 2008 report, the Committee recommended the adoption of a parliamentary calendar, a historic first for Prince Edward Island. The spring sitting of the Assembly will commence dur-

ing the first week of April each year, and the fall sitting will open on the first sitting day following Remembrance Day each year.

Other Matters

Longer days and warmer temperatures, the appearance of the first daffodils and robins are all welcome signs of spring. Prince Edward Islanders, along with all Canadians, look forward to these harbingers of the season. But in this province, there is one more sign that winter has ended and that is the annual announcement in the House of the opening of Gillis's Drive-In, a 1950s-style eating establishment located in Montague, Prince Edward Island. The tradition of welcoming Islanders to enjoy home-made pies and old-fashioned milkshakes, among other treats, originated in 1994 by the member from the area, **Peter Doucette**. This year marks the 15th anniversary of the tradition which is being carried on by the present member for Montague-Kilmuir, **Jim Bagnall**.

Prince Edward Island will host the 27th Atlantic Provinces Parliamentary Conference in Charlottetown from June 19-22, 2008.

Marian Johnston
Clerk Assistant and
Clerk of Committees



Senate

Fifteen bills received royal assent from February to April of this

year. Of that number, two deserve special attention as a result of the unusual practices surrounding their adoption. Bill C-3, among others, was introduced in response to the Supreme Court of Canada's February 2007 ruling that the procedure for judicial approval of security certificates was incompatible with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and was therefore inoperative. The Court suspended its declaration for one year (until February 23, 2008) to enable Parliament to amend the procedure.

Given its urgent nature, senators lost no time in studying the bill and referring it to committee. The Special Senate Committee on Anti terrorism reported to the Senate on February 12. In the brief time allotted to them to study the bill, committee members sat for more than 10 hours and heard from nearly 40 witnesses and reported the bill without amendment, but with certain observations. The bill was read for the third time and passed, on division, and received royal assent on February 14.

Bill C-2, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*, combined five bills that had been handled separately during the 1st Session of the 39th Parliament. This was a priority bill for the government consistent with the objectives of the Throne Speech. The bill had moreover been the subject of a vote of confidence in the House of Commons. While it was being studied in committee, the House of Commons sent a message to the Senate urging it to give Bill C-2 priority and to pass it before March 1. The bill passed on third reading by a recorded vote in which 19 senators voted for it, 16 against and 31 abstained. Bill C-2 received royal assent by the Governor General on February 28 in the traditional ceremony in the Senate.

Senate Public Bills

Bill S-220, *An Act respecting a National Blood Donor Week*, received royal assent on February 14. This was the first private senator's public bill to receive royal assent since the end of the 1st Session of the 38th Parliament. It was followed by public bill S-203, which received royal assent on April 17.

A total of five bills received royal assent between February and the end of April. The Governor General granted royal assent to three government bills – C-8, C-2 and C-44 – at the traditional ceremony in the Senate Chamber. **Marshall Rothstein** and **Morris Fish**, Puisne Judges of the Supreme Court of Canada, in their capacity as Deputies of the Governor General, also granted royal assent to appropriation Bills C-48 and C-49, as well as Bills C-9, S-203, C-298, C-37 and C-40 by written declaration.

Committee Reports

As always, the Senate committees play a leading role in the study of legislation and of the various social issues relating to their mandate. Over the winter of 2008, certain standing and special committees completed special studies worthy of note. Among others, on February 7, the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications tabled the report on its study of *Industry Canada's Proposal for a Spectrum Licence Fee for Broadband Public Safety Communications in the Frequency Band 4940 4990 MHz*.

In March and April, the Subcommittee on Population Health of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology tabled its Seventh, Eighth, Ninth and Tenth interim reports. The Subcommittee focused particularly on the measures the federal govern-

ment should take to implement a population health policy.

On March 4, the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources tabled its Sixth Report on its review of the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* (1999, c. 33) entitled *The Canadian Environmental Protection Act* (1999, c. 33) - Rx: *Strengthen and Apply Diligently*.

In March, the Special Senate Committee on Aging published an interim report entitled *Issues and Options for an Aging Population*, in which it identified the key public policy issues respecting the aging of the population and presented a set of potential options for addressing them.

Points of Order / Speaker's Rulings

On February 14, Senator **Gerald Comeau** rose on a point of order concerning Bill S-224, *An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (vacancies)*, which, in his view, required royal consent before it could pass in the Senate. The Speaker took the matter under advisement and,

on April 17, ruled that royal consent was not necessary since the bill affected no prerogative.

On March 11, Senator **Lowell Murray**, P.C., also rose on a point of order concerning the conduct of question period during certain sittings of the Senate. In his view, a number of questions concerning a vote of confidence held in the House of Commons in May 2005 should not have been asked because they concerned matters not within the administrative responsibility of the government and a vote held in the other place, and thus a situation that the Senate should not discuss.

After taking the matter under advisement, the Speaker ruled that, under the Rules of the Senate, the Leader of the Government in the Senate should have answered questions concerning "public affairs" in general. That is a very broad expression and, in view of the fact that the Senate favours the exchange of information, the Speaker ruled that it would have been improper to rule the questions concerned out of order unless they had been clearly inappropriate. As regards the second point raised by the senator, the

Speaker ruled that it was customary for the Senate to focus on what takes place in its precincts and outside Parliament, and not to engage in discussions about the proceedings or procedures of the other place.

Other Notable Events

On February 28, the Senate extended the period of statements by senators to pay tribute to **Jacques Hébert**, who had died on December 6, 2007. Appointed by Prime Minister **Pierre Elliott Trudeau**, Mr. Hébert was a member of the Senate from 1983 to 1998. He was an author, editor and journalist. In the Senate, he held the offices of government whip and opposition whip.

The motions of Senators **Tommy Banks** and **Hugh Segal** were adopted on February 13 and April 16, concerning respectively the future of the institutions of the Parliament of Canada and the negotiations for a free trade agreement with the European Union.

Marie-Eve Belzile
Procedural Clerk