

Alberta

1st Session of the 29th Legislature – fall sitting

The fall sitting of the 1st Session of the 29th Legislature took place from October 26 to December 10, 2015. The 2015-2016 main estimates, delayed due to the 2015 spring election, were considered by the Legislative Policy Committees (LPCs) during two weeks in November and passed by Committee of Supply on November 25, 2015. Once main estimates consideration in committee had concluded the Assembly commenced morning sittings, from 10:00 a.m. until noon on Tuesdays and 9:00 a.m. until noon on Wednesdays and Thursdays, pursuant to recent Standing Orders amendments.

One of the most controversial Bills brought forward during the Fall Sitting was Bill 6, *Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act*. The Bill proposed making farms and ranches subject to occupational health and safety legislation, expanding Workers' Compensation Board coverage to paid farm workers, and making changes to include farms and ranches under other employment and labour relations legislation. Thousands of protesters made their views known online, at the Legislature, and in communities around the province, and Members debated the Bill at length in the Assembly. After considerable debate of Bill 6 at Second Reading, the Government moved and the Assembly passed time allocation motions to limit further debate of the Bill at Second Reading, during

Committee of the Whole consideration, and at Third Reading. The Bill received Royal Assent on December 11, 2015.

The sessional calendar released on January 15, 2016, indicates that the 2nd Session of the 29th Legislature will convene on March 8, 2016.

Changes to Caucus Membership

On January 8, 2016, it was announced that **Deborah Drever**, MLA (Calgary-Bow) would return to the New Democrat (ND) caucus. Ms. Drever was suspended from the ND caucus in June 2015 shortly after her election because of a series of controversial social media posts she made prior to her election. The success of having her Private Member's Public Bill passed with support from all sides of the Assembly has been credited for playing a major part in her return to the Government caucus. Bill 204, *Residential Tenancies (Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act, 2015*, makes it easier for victims of domestic abuse to break their leases without penalty in order to escape a violent situation.

Committee Business

After consideration of the 2015-2016 main estimates by the LPCs, the committees of the Assembly resumed their usual business.

The Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future is continuing its review of the *Protection of Personal Information Act*. It has put out a call to the public and to stakeholders for written submissions on the *Act* with a deadline of February 26, 2016.

The Standing Committee on Families and Communities is moving forward with its consideration of the *Mental Health Amendment Act, 2007*. The amendments under review relate primarily to the criteria for involuntary admissions of persons with mental disorders and the use of community treatment orders for persons requiring ongoing mental health services outside of medical facilities. After hearing from identified experts and interested parties the Committee is now advertising province wide for written submissions, which will be accepted through February 29, 2016.

The Assembly has referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship consideration of the 2014 annual report of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate. The committee must issue its report within

15 days after the commencement of the spring session.

On November 16, 2015, the Assembly referred Bill 203, *Election (Restrictions on Government Advertising) Amendment Act, 2015*, to the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee. The Committee had already been reviewing the province's whistleblower, conflicts of interest, and election legislation. Subsequently, the Committee received from stakeholders written submissions on whistleblower legislation. The Committee also decided to accept written submissions from stakeholders for the conflicts of interest and election legislation and from the public on all the legislation under review.

The Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing has been charged with assessing the function of the new morning sittings and must report its recommendations to the Assembly no later than October 27, 2016.

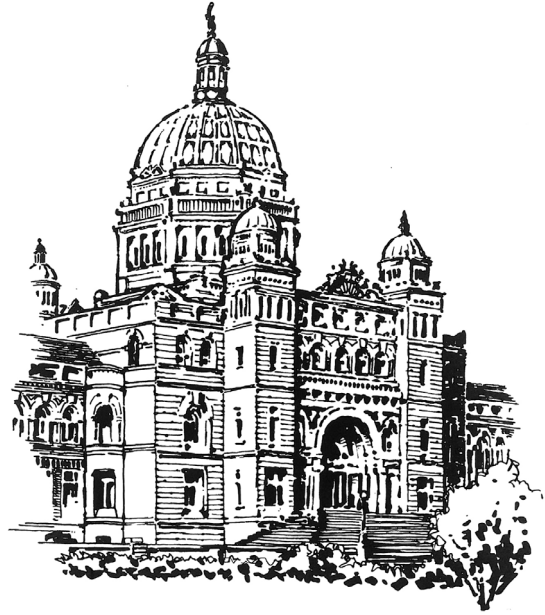
Magna Carta

From November 23 to December 29, 2015, the Legislative Assembly of Alberta had the great honour of exhibiting the Magna Carta (that is, one version of the document from the year 1300) and its companion document the Charter of the Forest. In addition to these two important historical documents, both of which were on loan from Durham Cathedral, the special exhibit included multimedia features, such as an interactive 3D globe tracing the influence of the Magna Carta around the world, touchscreens providing translations of the great charters, and activities allowing visitors to create their own Magna Carta clauses.

In Memoriam – Manmeet S. Bhullar, MLA

The usual business of the Assembly was delayed as Members, staff, and the public mourned the unexpected passing of **Manmeet S. Bhullar**, MLA (Calgary-Greenway). On November 23, 2015, Mr. Bhullar was killed in a highway collision after stopping to assist another motorist. Mr. Bhullar was first elected to the Assembly in 2008 and served in a number Cabinet positions during his time in the Government caucus. As a member of the opposition, Mr. Bhullar was well respected on both sides of the House.

Jody Rempel
Committee Clerk



British Columbia

Legislation

The Fall sitting of the Fourth Session of the 40th Parliament adjourned on November 17, 2015. Between October 28, 2015, the date of the previous report, and November 17, 2015, one government bill, the *Electoral Districts Act*, was introduced and received Royal Assent. The *Electoral Districts Act* (Bill 42) enacts the recommendations from the Electoral Boundaries Commission's report by creating two new electoral districts in Surrey and Richmond/New Westminster to reflect growing population in those areas. This statutory change will increase the number of electoral districts in the 2017 provincial general election to 87 from 85. The *Act* also changes the name of the Chilliwack-Hope riding to Chilliwack-Kent and reduces that district's size. Some other changes are made in regard to boundaries in the Chilliwack, Hope, and Fraser Canyon areas.

The Fourth Session prorogued at noon on February 9, 2016 and the Fifth Session of the 40th Parliament opened that afternoon with the presentation of the Speech from the Throne.

Parliamentary Committees

Several parliamentary committees, including the Legislative Assembly Management Committee, were active during the reporting period.

On December 7, 2015, the Legislative Assembly Management Committee released its *Accountability Report 2014-15: A Report to British Columbians*. This annual operational report highlights departmental progress at the Assembly in priority areas such as modernizing governance, transparency initiatives, ensuring accessibility, and business continuity preparedness. The report includes the Assembly's independently audited financial statements. For the second year in a row, British Columbia's Office of the Auditor General provided an unqualified audit opinion that the statements were reliable and fair. The inclusion of key performance indicators and a *Management Discussion and Analysis* section were new additions to this year's report. This new section complements the financial statements by providing additional analysis on the financial results of the Legislative Assembly.

The Special Committee to Review the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* public consultation process concluded on January 29, 2016. The Committee received over 200 submissions in response to its call for written submissions. Under provisions of the *Act*, a Special Committee is required to review the *Act* every six years. A report on the results of its review must be submitted to the Legislative Assembly by May 26, 2016.

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services released its annual budget consultations report on November 13, 2015, containing 63 recommendations. The unanimous report supported the goal of a balanced budget, proposed measures to promote and enhance BC's natural resource sector, and also recommended increased funding for programs and services for those who face mental health challenges; funding for literacy, Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language programs; and increased funding for transportation infrastructure and public transit. On January 20, 2016, the Committee issued its second report of the 4th session, a report on its annual review of the budgets of BC's eight independent statutory offices. Over the course of 2015, the Committee implemented a series of steps noted in its December 2014 report on how to enhance its review process and legislative oversight. The steps included: an expanded meeting schedule; the development of a new financial reporting template to ensure that financial reporting by all statutory offices is consistent and comprehensive; and encouraging statutory offices to move toward service sharing agreements to promote increased efficiencies.

Following two years of work including public consultations with individuals, youth and families, experts and organizations involved in the delivery of child and youth mental health services, on January 27, 2016, the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth released its final report, *Concrete Actions for Systemic Change*, in regard to child and youth mental health in BC. The unanimous report contains 23 recommendations which focus on greater coordination, better accessibility, and improved service delivery. The recommendations include: the appointment of a new Minister for Mental Health portfolio to lead and coordinate child and youth mental health services; more school- and community-based hubs where mental health professionals work together in child- and youth-friendly settings; and the development of a coordinated, integrated system where there are 'one child, one file' services for children, youth and young adults.

New Legislative Assembly Website

The Legislative Assembly launched a redesigned website at www.leg.bc.ca in October, 2015. The website features a new design, with improved site navigation, integrated content, search tools, and a layout optimized for mobile devices. For the first time, the website provides a combination of static and dynamic content about the work of the Assembly, including social media feeds. Facebook and Twitter accounts provide further opportunities to connect with British Columbians on the work of the Assembly and its parliamentary committees, including current and upcoming public consultations.

Cabinet Change

On December 11, 2015, **Mike Morris**, MLA, was appointed Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General. Mr. Morris took over this portfolio from Hon. **Suzanne Anton**, who remains Attorney General and Minister of Justice. These two roles had previously merged in 2012.

By-Elections

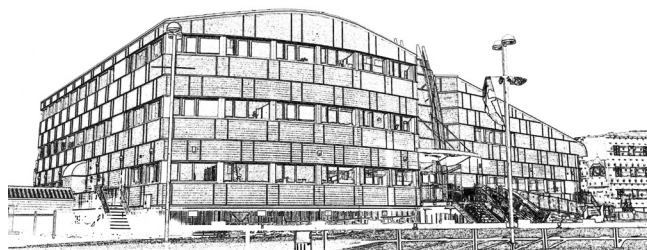
Two by-elections, in the ridings of Vancouver-Mount Pleasant and Coquitlam-Burke Mountain, were held on February 2, 2016 as a result of the resignations of **Jenny Wai Ching Kwan** (Vancouver Mount-Pleasant) and **Douglas Horne** (Coquitlam-Burke Mountain) who both resigned to run in the federal election last fall. Preliminary results indicate that the BC NDP candidates were elected in both ridings: **Melanie Mark**

in Vancouver-Mount Pleasant; and **Jodie Wickens** in Coquitlam-Burke Mountain. Melanie Mark is the first First Nations woman elected to the BC legislature.

William (Bill) R. Bennett 1932-2015

Former Premier **William (Bill) R. Bennett** passed away on December 3, 2015. The son of former Premier W.A.C. Bennett, Mr. Bennett first became a Member of the Legislative Assembly of BC in 1973 when he was elected to represent the constituents of South Okanagan. He became leader of the BC Social Credit Party in 1973 and won the first of three general elections in 1975. Mr. Bennett served the province as Premier from 1975 to 1986.

Jennifer Arril
Committee Researcher



Nunavut

House Proceedings

The fall 2015 sitting of the 3rd Session of the 4th Legislative Assembly convened on October 21, 2015. The last sitting of the calendar year was held on November 9, 2015.

The proceedings of the Committee of the Whole during the fall 2015 sitting were dominated by the consideration of the Government of Nunavut's proposed 2016-2017 capital estimates.

Nine bills received Assent during the fall 2015 sitting:

- Bill 1, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act*, No. 3, 2014-2015;
- Bill 2, *Supplementary Appropriation (Operations and Maintenance) Act*, No. 1, 2015-2016;
- Bill 3, *Appropriation (Capital) Act*, 2016-2017;

- Bill 4, *Write-Off of Assets Act*, 2014-2015;
- Bill 5, *An Act to Amend the Safety Act*;
- Bill 6, *Supplementary Appropriation (Capital) Act*, No. 3, 2015-2016;
- Bill 7, *An Act to Amend the Labour Standards Act (Minimum Wage)*;
- Bill 8, *Legislative Assembly Statutes Amendment Act*; and
- Bill 9, *An Act to Amend the Nunavut Elections Act and the Plebiscites Act*.

Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and Amittuq MLA **George Qulaut** appeared before the Committee of the Whole on the occasion of its clause-by-clause consideration of Bills 8 and 9.

Among other measures, Bill 8 amended the *Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowances Act* and the *Supplementary Retiring Allowances Act* to halt the accrual of pensionable service during the period in which a Member is suspended from the Legislative Assembly. Bill 8 also changed the length of the term of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly, from four to five years. A majority of independent officers of the Legislative Assembly have statutorily-prescribed terms of five years.

Among other measures, Bill 9 provides the Legislative Assembly's Management and Services Board with broader regulation-making powers in respect of elections and plebiscites, in addition to repealing the prohibition on the sale of liquor on election day.

The Legislative Assembly's winter 2016 sitting convened on February 24, 2016.

Mid-Term Leadership Review of the Executive Council

On November 7, 2015, the Mid-Term Leadership Review of the Executive Council was conducted under the auspices of the Nunavut Leadership Forum. The Forum is an informal body consisting of all Members of the Legislative Assembly. By convention, its decisions concerning such matters as the selection of the Speaker, Premier and Cabinet Ministers are ratified by way of formal motions in the House. The televised proceedings of the Forum take place in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly.

Similar mid-term reviews of the Executive Council were held during the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Assemblies. The

2015 review followed a similar process wherein Premier **Peter Taptuna** and his Ministers delivered statements and responded to questions from the Regular Members of the Legislative Assembly. The process culminated in all Members present being entitled to cast secret ballots expressing confidence or non-confidence in each member of the Executive Council.

The balloting resulted in an expression of non-confidence in Minister of Family Services and Netsilik MLA **Jeannie Ugyuk**, who subsequently announced her decision to resign from the Legislative Assembly on November 9, 2015, thereby precipitating a by-election in the constituency, which was held on February 8, 2016.

The Nunavut Leadership Forum reconvened on November 9, 2015. Iqaluit-Tasiluk MLA **George Hickes** and Arviat South MLA **Joe Savikataaq** were elected to serve on the Executive Council. Premier Taptuna subsequently announced their portfolio assignments on November 12, 2015.

Committee and Caucus Activities

The *Final Report* of the Legislative Assembly's Special Committee to Review the *Education Act* was presented to the House during its fall 2015 sitting.

The first report of the current Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and Privileges was also presented to the House during its fall 2015 sitting. The standing committee, which is chaired by Tununig MLA **Joe Enook**, made a number of recommendations for amendments to the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut*. The recommendations were accepted by the House and will come into effect on the first sitting day of the winter 2016 sitting.

The Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts has held a number of televised hearings in recent months concerning the annual reports and/or business plans of various entities.

From September 23-29, 2015, witnesses from the Nunavut Development Corporation, the Nunavut Business Credit Corporation, the *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Katimajit* and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Nunavut appeared before the standing committee to present the entities' most current annual reports and/or business plans. The standing committee's reports on

these hearings, as well as those that were held in June 2015 concerning Nunavut Tourism, were presented to the House during its fall 2015 sitting.

The Office of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut and the *Inuit Uqausinginnik Taiguusiliuqtiit* (Inuit Language Authority) appeared before the standing committee from November 24-25, 2015. These hearings were presided over by newly-elected Chairperson and Iqaluit-Niaqunngu MLA **Pat Angnakak**.

A formal motion was passed by the House during its sitting of November 3, 2015, inviting representatives from Calm Air, Canadian North and First Air to appear at a special televised meeting of the Legislative Assembly's Full Caucus, which consists of all MLAs, concerning codeshare agreements entered into by the airlines. The motion was moved by Government House Leader and Aggu MLA **Paul Quassa**. The motion was seconded by Rankin Inlet South MLA **Alexander Sammurtoq**. The special televised meeting was held on January 26, 2016. Representatives from all three airlines responded to questions and comments from Ministers and Regular MLAs.

This special televised meeting of the Full Caucus constituted the second initiative of its type since the establishment of the Legislative Assembly. In October of 2011, a special televised meeting was held concerning the federal Nutrition North Canada Program.

Order of Nunavut

On September 18, 2015, the Order of Nunavut Advisory Council announced that the 2015 appointments to the Order would be Messrs. **Tagak Curley**, **William Lyall**, and **Father Robert Lechat**. The investiture ceremony was held in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly on October 29, 2015. The ceremony was presided over by Commissioner **Nellie Kusugak** in her capacity as Chancellor of the Order of Nunavut and Speaker Qulaut in his capacity as Chairperson of the Order of Nunavut Advisory Council.

Tabled Documents Online

A total of 2,168 documents have been tabled to date in the Legislative Assembly since its first sitting on April 1, 1999. A recent initiative of the Office of the Legislative Assembly is making downloadable versions of tabled documents available on the

institution's website at: <http://www.assembly.nu.ca/tailed-documents>.

Netsilik By-Election

On February 8, 2016, a by-election was held in the constituency of Netsilik, which includes the communities of Kugaaruk and Taloyoak. Newly-elected Member **Emiliano Qirngnuq** was scheduled to take his seat on February 24, 2016.

Alex Baldwin

Office of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut



Manitoba

The Fifth Session of the 40th Legislature began on November 16, 2015 with the first Speech from the Throne delivered by Her Honour **Janice C. Filmon**, the newly appointed Lieutenant Governor. This was also the last Speech from the Throne before the April 19, 2016 general election, and the address highlighted a range of commitments and proposals, including:

- extending the province's core infrastructure plan by three years;
- working with the federal government to lift the cap for immigrants and refugees and strengthen settlement services;
- providing stable, predictable and long-term

funding to municipalities, including investments in education and infrastructure projects for the city of Brandon;

- forging new partnerships with Indigenous communities, business leaders and educators to provide more opportunities to Indigenous youth;
- creating a new trades training centre in partnership with the University College of the North to help northern students;
- investing in community-based strategies to expand the local production of healthy foods across the north;
- initiating a plan to move rail lines out of Winnipeg and supporting the city with \$1 billion under a new partnership over the next five years; and
- committing to partner on future phases of rapid transit;

Brian Pallister, the Leader of the Official Opposition, moved a non-confidence amendment to the Address in Reply motion, which noted that the provincial government:

- broke promises to balance the budget by 2014 without raising taxes and failing to respect the right to vote on tax increases;
- failed to recognize Manitobans are paying more in taxes and getting less in services, since front-line services like health care and education are being ranked last in the nation;
- caused the provincial debt to double since 2008, because of self-promotion and wasteful government spending, requiring Manitobans to pay more than \$800 million in debt interest charges; and
- threatens Manitoba's future, as money spent servicing the debt cannot be invested to protect essential front-line services, reduce health-care wait times or improve education results.

Mr. Pallister's amendment was defeated on November 26, 2015 by a vote of yeas 18, nays 32, while the main motion carried on a vote of yeas 32, nays 19.

The fall session saw the introduction of a number of bills, addressing various governance areas including:

Bill 3 – The Post-Secondary Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policies Act, which would ensure that post-secondary educational institutions have policies in place to counter sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Bill 8 – The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for

Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave), which would enable an employee who is a victim of domestic violence to take up to 10 days of leave, either intermittently or in a continuous period, as well as a continuous leave period of up to 17 weeks, with up to five days to be paid leave

Bill 11 – The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act, which would make a number of changes to the process for obtaining protection orders against someone who has engaged in domestic violence or stalking.

Bill 16 – Children’s Advocate Act, which implements recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into the death of Phoenix Sinclair to provide the Children’s Advocate with a broader mandate.

The House sat until December 3, 2015 before recessing for the holidays. In addition to the legislative package introduced in the fall, three bills have been re-instated from the 4th Session. Prior to the recess, the re-instated bills, together with other two bills, received second reading and will be considered by standing committees intersessionally.

The House resumed on February 24, 2016, sitting until March 15. Dissolution of the 40th Legislature for the next provincial general election can take place between March 15 and 22, 2016, with election day set for April 19, 2016.

Standing Committees

Since our last submission, Manitoba Standing Committees held numerous intersessional meetings to consider a range matters:

The Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs met in late November to complete the steps for the process for hiring a new Conflict of Interest Commissioner, Lobbyist Registrar and Information and Privacy Adjudicator. It also met twice intersessionally to consider annual reports from the Children’s Advocate and from Elections Manitoba.

The Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development also met in December to consider the last two *Annual Reports* of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy (All Aboard).

Finally, the Public Accounts Committee met before the end of the year to continue its consideration of Chapter 10 of the *Auditor General’s Report – Annual*

Report to the Legislature (dated March 2014) on the topic of Waiving of Competitive Bids. It also considered the Follow-Up Recommendations on the same topic, dated November 2015.

Members not seeking re-election

Since our last submission, two Members have indicated that they would not be seeking re-election. **Jennifer Howard**, MLA for Fort Rouge, first elected in 2007, announced on January 27, 2016 that she would retire from politics once the 40th Legislature dissolves prior to the next provincial election. Ms. Howard served as a minister in several portfolios: from 2009 until 2012 she was Minister of Labour and Immigration and then she served for a year as Minister of Family Services and Labour. Following a cabinet shuffle, she was then appointed Minister of Finance, a position that she held until November 2014. In addition, throughout her time in cabinet, Ms. Howard was also the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities. Prior to becoming an MLA, Ms. Howard held a number of public positions, including: Executive Director of the Women’s Health Clinic, policy advisor to Premier Gary Doer on health care issues, and Chairperson of the Manitoba NDP Status of Women Committee.

On January 29, **Gordon Mackintosh**, MLA for St. Johns, announced that he would not seek re-election. First elected in a by-election in 1993, Mr. Mackintosh sat on the opposition benches before the NDP election victory in 1999, when he was appointed Minister of Justice. He served in this portfolio until 2006, when he was appointed Minister of Family Services and Housing. Next, he served as Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship from 2013 until 2015, when he was once again appointed Minister of Justice on April 29, 2015. Prior to his life in politics, Mr. Mackintosh served as Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba from 1980 to 1984 before practicing as a lawyer, including work with the Manitoba and Canadian Human Rights Commissions and later serving as an advisor to Elijah Harper during the Meech Lake debate in 1990.

New Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator

As mentioned above, on November 25, 2015, the Legislative Affairs committee recommended the appointment of a new Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator. Historically, the two positions have been held by the same person. In addition, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner has

also been invested with the role of Lobbyist Registrar, even though this is a direct cabinet appointment.

On December 2, 2015, Mr. Jeffrey Schnoor, Q.C., has been appointed, effective January 1, 2016, to serve in the above mentioned positions. He takes the place of Mr. Ron Perozzo, Q.C., who held the position of Commissioner since the beginning of 2010 and who was the first Adjudicator appointed when the position was created in October 2010.

Visit of the Grey Cup to the Legislative Chamber

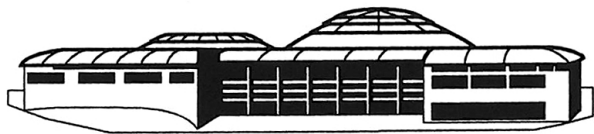
On November 25, 2015, the Grey Cup was brought to the Legislature for a ceremony held on the front lawn of the building. Following the ceremony, the House recessed for a brief period and representatives from each party accompanied the Grey Cup, held by two RCMP officers in Red Serge, into the Legislative Chamber where the Members could enjoy it for a few minutes. After the Chamber visit, a group picture was taken on the grand staircase. Next, the Cup continued its visit and was taken to Government House.

Current Party Standings

The current party standings in the Manitoba Legislature are: NDP 35, Progressive Conservatives 19, 1 Liberal, and 2 vacancies.

Andrea Signorelli

Clerk Assistant/Clerk of Committees



Northwest Territories

Territorial General Election

The *2015 Polling Day Act* passed by the Legislative Assembly in November 2014, provided that if, as of April 1, 2015, the federal and territorial election periods were scheduled to overlap, the territorial election would be postponed from October 5, 2015 to November 23, 2015.

The federal election was scheduled for October 19, 2015, and subsequently the territorial general election was held on November 23, 2015.

Seventeen of the 19 members of the 17th Assembly stood for re-election. A single candidate was acclaimed, with 60 candidates standing for election in the remaining 18 electoral districts.

In the electoral district of Nahendeh seven candidates stood for election, making it the longest ballot paper in the 2015 election. Ten women stood for election in nine districts, representing 17 per cent of the total number of candidates.

The election resulted in 11 new Members and eight returning Members, with two women elected.

In accordance with the *Elections and Plebiscites Act*, close polling results triggered judicial recounts in the electoral districts of Nunakput, Range Lake and Yellowknife North. The results of the three recounts upheld the unofficial results.

Legislative Assembly Priority Setting

All Members of the 18th Legislative Assembly were sworn in by the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, **George L. Tuccaro**, on December 7, 2015.

Following the swearing in and in accordance with the recently adopted *Process Convention on Priority Setting and Reporting*, all Members met to begin working collectively on establishing the priorities that will provide the basis for a government mandate. After extensive consultation with all Members, a draft mandate was scheduled to be introduced by the Executive Council for debate in the Assembly during its February sitting.

As part of the priority setting process, Members of the 18th Legislative Assembly held a roundtable discussion in the Assembly Chamber. In an important departure from past practice, the discussion was open to the public and the media, with live broadcasting on the Assembly television network and web streaming on the Assembly web site.

Territorial Leadership Committee

Members of the 18th Legislative Assembly agreed on a revised process for the Territorial Leadership Committee. The Committee met on December 9, 2015, allowing any Member who wished to run for the

position of Premier to announce their intention and deliver a speech in support of their candidacy. The Territorial Leadership Committee would then recess for one week to allow all Members to consult with constituents before voting on December 16, 2015. This is, once again, a departure from past practice. Meetings of the Territorial Leadership Committee are held in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly and are open to the public.

Two Members rose to put their names forward for the position of Premier; **Glen Abernethy**, MLA for Great Slave and **Robert R. McLeod**, MLA for Yellowknife South and Premier of the 17th Legislative Assembly.

The Territorial Leadership Committee reconvened on December 16, 2015. With the agreement of all Members, the first order of business was the election of the Speaker. The Members of the 18th Legislative Assembly acclaimed **Jackson Lafferty**, Member for Monfwi, as Speaker-elect.

Following a secret ballot election process, Mr. McLeod was chosen as Premier-elect, making him the first two-term premier in Northwest Territories modern history.

The final order of business was the selection of six Members, who, together with the Premier would form the Executive Council. This selection process followed the established practice of maintaining regional balance by selecting two Members to represent each of the three distinct geographic areas of the NWT; northern, Yellowknife and southern. Members put their names forward, and after several ballots the following Members were selected: **Robert C. McLeod**, **Alfred Moses**, **Wally Schumann**, **Louis Sebert**, Mr. Abernethy, and **Caroline Cochrane**.

First Session of the 18th Legislative Assembly

The First Session of the 18th Legislative Assembly convened on December 17, 2015 with motions adopted by the House to formally elect Mr. Lafferty as Speaker of the 18th Legislative Assembly, to formally appoint Mr. McLeod as Premier of the Northwest Territories, and to recommend all appointments to the Executive Council.

Further motions adopted by the Assembly established the Board of Management and the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning, a committee of all Regular Members.

During the one day sitting, the Assembly also debated and adopted a motion to formally invoke a new set of *Members' Conduct Guidelines*. The motion also directed that all Members sign the *Guidelines* and that signed copies be available for public scrutiny. Finally, the Assembly referred the *Guidelines* to the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures, once established, for a comprehensive and public review.

A final motion debated and adopted during the sitting directed the Assembly to conduct a public mid-term accountability review of the adopted mandate of the 18th Legislative Assembly, including the performance of the Executive Council and standing committees. This review shall take place in the Chamber prior to the fall 2017 sitting. The Assembly once again referred this matter to the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures to recommend a process for such a review.

The First Session of the 18th Legislative Assembly prorogued on December 17, 2015, with the Second Session scheduled to open on February 18, 2016.

New Speaker

Acclaimed as Speaker on December 17, 2015, Mr. Lafferty was first elected to the 15th Legislative Assembly in a by-election, was re-elected in the 2007 and 2011 general elections, and was acclaimed by his constituency of Monfwi in November 2015. He has served as Deputy Premier, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Minister Responsible for Official Languages, and Minister Responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission.

Mr. Lafferty was born and raised in the Tlicho community of Behchoko and is a dedicated advocate of language, culture and heritage revitalization for the North. Fluent in the Tlicho language, the Speaker committed in his opening address to the Assembly to promote the use and preservation of all aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories.

Committees

At its first official meeting, the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning elected **Tom Beaulieu** as its Chair and **Kieron Testart** as the Deputy Chair. The Committee met for several weeks in January to continue its orientation and receive technical briefings from a number of departments.

Gail Bennett

Principal Clerk, Corporate and Interparliamentary Affairs



New Brunswick

Throne Speech

Lieutenant-Governor **Jocelyne Roy Vienneau** opened the Second Session of the 58th Legislature on December 1, 2015 with the delivery of the Speech from the Throne. The speech emphasized that the government would focus the first part of the legislative session on the completion of their Strategic Program Review, a government initiative to evaluate departmental spending and control costs.

The speech outlined the need for job creation, economic opportunity, and investments in health and education. Highlights included the development of a new innovation strategy to increase competitiveness in the global economy; a revision of export strategies to benefit from the European Union's Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement and developing Asian markets; a strategy to increase immigration and to accommodate up to 1,500 Syrian refugees; the release of a Climate Change Action Plan; continued advancement opportunities with First Nations communities; the development of a 10-year education plan and aggressive literacy strategy; the requirement of four publicly-funded post-secondary institutions to appear annually before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts; and the development of a council on aging.

Reply to Throne Speech

On December 3, Official Opposition Leader **Bruce Fitch** gave his reply to the Speech from the Throne. Mr. Fitch highlighted a number of successful business start-ups such as RtTech and Resourceful Redneck. He also announced the appointment of **Brian Macdonald**, Fredericton West-Hanwell, to the newly created position of refugee transition critic for the Official Opposition. Mr. Fitch raised concerns about the Strategic Program Review, the public debt, the 10-year education plan, and the impact of the shale gas moratorium on natural gas prices and economic development. He also expressed his hope that a modified version of the Official Opposition's previously-introduced Bill, concerning the eligibility of first responders diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder to receive workers' compensation, would be introduced by the government during the session.

Capital Budget

The 2016-17 Capital Budget totals \$656.1 million, representing a \$53.4 million decrease from the planned spending projections announced last year. Specifically, \$413.3 million will be allocated for road and bridge construction, their maintenance, and building upgrades; \$108.6 million for K-12 schools; and \$72.1 million for the maintenance and improvement of healthcare facilities.

Committees

Auditor General **Kim MacPherson** met with the Standing Committees on Public Accounts and Crown Corporations on December 15, 2015 to release her *2015 Report*, Volumes III and IV. Volume III focuses on matters arising from the annual financial audit of the provincial government and Crown agencies including observations on pension plans, administration of school raised funds, and the financial audit of the New Brunswick Lotteries and Gaming Corporation. Volume IV presents performance reports including Public Debt, Centennial Building (civil service office space), and follow up on prior years' performance audit chapters.

On November 12, the Standing Committee on Procedure, Privileges and Legislative Officers met with seven of the Legislative Officers. The Committee was briefed on their respective roles and mandates. The Committee also received input from the Officers on how the Committee may serve as an effective forum in the future.

Legislation

Seventeen Bills were introduced during the fall session, including:

Bill 15 - *Regulatory Accountability and Reporting Act* - introduced by Premier **Brian Gallant**, is intended to reduce and better align regulations in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island to help create the conditions for economic growth and job creation. The bill requires each provincial government to take action on opportunities for regulatory reform and to measure and report on such actions.

Bill 11 - *An Act to Amend the Personal Health Information Privacy and Access Act* - introduced by Health Minister **Victor Boudreau**, clarifies an individual's right to receive an interpretation of his or her personal health information when the information is not available in the individual's language of choice; provides for the sharing of personal health information for the purposes of an appeal; and removes barriers to research using government administrative data sets.

Bill 12 - *An Act to Amend the Crown Construction Contracts Act* - introduced by Transportation and Infrastructure Minister **Roger Melanson**, exempts certain non-routine capital projects of NB Power from the application of the *Act*; permits the Minister to create standard terms for performance bonds and payment bonds furnished to the Crown in relation to a contract; and permits Crown entities to negotiate with the low or sole bidder on a contract.

Bill 16 - *An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicle Act* - introduced by Public Safety Minister **Stephen Horsman**, strengthens the ability to identify and deter alcohol-impaired driving. Amendments include escalating sanctions for short-term licence suspensions, creating an impoundment program, and introducing a mandatory component to the alcohol ignition interlock device program.

Bill 9, *An Act Respecting the Right to Work*, introduced by Fredericton-Grand Lake Member **Pam Lynch**, introduces amendments to protect government employees and service suppliers when changes are made to language requirements.

Bill 5 - *Green Jobs Act* - introduced by Green Party Leader **David Coon**, would create a new Crown Corporation called Renew New Brunswick Inc. to promote, develop jobs and invest in renewable energy, energy efficiencies, and public transportation.

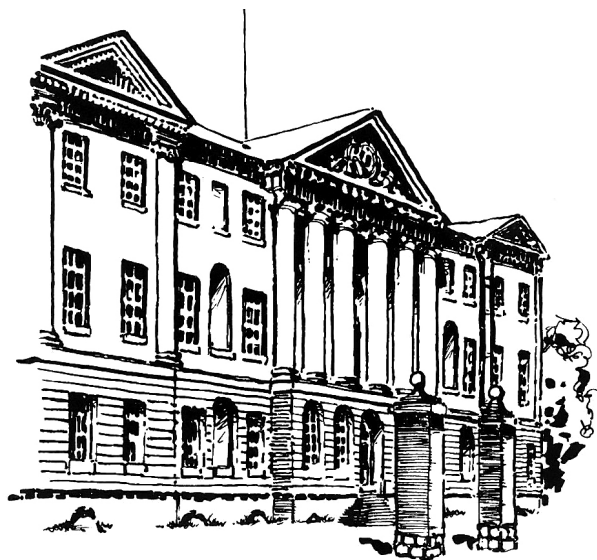
Conference

The 33rd Canadian Presiding Officers' Conference was hosted on January 28-31 in Fredericton. Business sessions included the Speaker's casting vote, democratic renewal in PEI, decorum in the House, challenges and opportunities of being a new Deputy Speaker, the Speaker's role regarding the Independent Member, and policies on preventing and managing harassment.

Standings

The Second Session of the 58th Legislative Assembly adjourned on December 15, 2015 to resume on February 2, 2016. The current House standings are 26 Liberal Members, 22 Progressive Conservative Members, and one Green Party Member.

John Patrick McCleave
Committee Clerk



Nova Scotia

The Fall 2015 sitting commenced on November 12 and ended December 18, 2015.

The sitting was highlighted by a variety of situations that in some cases were a bit out of the ordinary.

Emergency Debates

On the first sitting day, the Speaker received two Emergency Debate requests within 18 minutes of each

other. The Speaker determined that both requests met the threshold test set out in the Rules and he thus proceeded to put the request received first in time to the House. The House unanimously agreed that the matter would be debated at the time of adjournment and the first debate took place from 3:41 to 5:41 pm in accordance with the Rules. On November 13, the second day of the sitting, the Speaker put the second Emergency Debate request to the House to determine whether the debate would take place. As several “Nos” were recorded on the verbal vote, the Speaker, in accordance with the Rules, asked the Members who supported the motion to stand in their places and be counted – as more than 10 Members stood, the Speaker determined, in accordance with the Rules, that the debate would take place at the moment of adjournment that day. The debate commenced at 11:10 am and concluded at 1:04 pm

Parliamentary Privilege

In the days leading up to the commencement of the Fall sitting, the then Minister of the Environment, **Andrew Younger**, invoked his parliamentary privilege and chose not to testify at a criminal proceeding wherein he was the alleged victim of an assault. A series of events followed resulting in the Premier removing the Member from both Cabinet and the Government Caucus. On November 12, Mr. Younger took his place in the Chamber as an Independent Member. During Question Period on the first sitting day four of the 17 questions touched on the events surrounding Mr. Younger.

On November 13, each and every one of the 18 questions asked by the two Opposition parties during Question Period related to matters involving Mr. Younger.

On November 19, Government Notice of Motion # 2455 was passed unanimously in response to the release to the media of a partial recording of a taped conversation between Mr. Younger and the Premier’s Chief of Staff on February 12, 2015. The motion directed Mr. Younger to produce the entire tape recording of February 12, 2015 conversation to the Chief Clerk by noon on November 20, failing which the Speaker would issue a Warrant and authorize the Sergeant-at-Arms to obtain the recording from Mr. Younger and transmit it to the Chief Clerk who would copy it and provide it to any person requesting a copy.

On November 20, at the beginning of the proceedings at 9 am, Mr. Younger advised that he had delivered

the 2 minute clip of a recorded conversation between himself and the Premier’s Chief of Staff of February 12, 2015 to the Chief Clerk along with a sworn oath wherein he advised he did not have any additional recording of the conversation in question. Seven questions during Question Period were devoted to this ongoing matter.

At 12:07 pm on November 20, the Speaker delivered his ruling regarding Resolution # 2455. He concluded that the recording of the entire conversation of February 12, 2015 between Mr. Younger and the Premier’s Chief of Staff had not been delivered as required by the resolution and he advised he had issued the Warrant for the production of the entire tape recording by November 23, at 12 noon and had given the Warrant to the Sergeant-At-Arms who had served it on Mr. Younger.

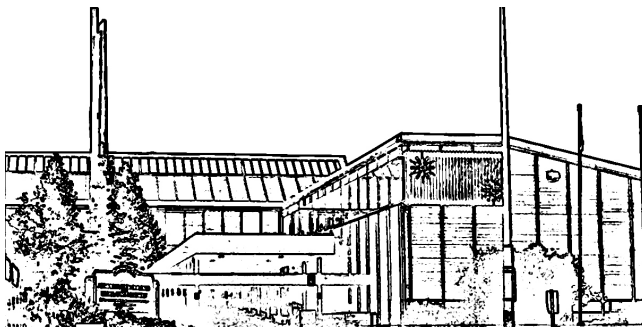
The House next sat at 1 pm on November 24 and the Speaker commenced the proceedings by updating the House on the Warrant he had issued on November 20 relating to Resolution # 2455. He advised that Mr. Younger had delivered to the Chief Clerk before 12 noon on November 23, a compact disc, a letter and an affidavit – it stated that notwithstanding his previous affidavit of November 20 he had located a file on the cloud backup system containing the entire recorded audio conversation of February 12, 2015 and it was contained on the delivered disc. The Speaker concluded that the Warrant had been complied with by Mr. Younger. During Question Period 10 of the 18 questions related to the recorded conversation between Mr. Younger and the Premier’s Chief of Staff. It is important to note that subsequent to the release of the entire audio recording, the Chief of Staff disclosed, in several media interviews that Mr. Younger suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder and a brain tumor. The Government House Leader stood up on each and every question and indicated that Mr. Younger had filed an official complaint regarding the disclosure of his personal health information and that no questions relating to the matter would be answered to allow the complaint process to unfold. At 4:22 pm on November 24 the Premier’s Office issued a press release advising that the Premier had accepted the resignation of his Chief of Staff.

During Question Period on November 25, a large number of questions related to the disclosure of private health information to the media by the Premier’s Chief of Staff.

Bill # 148

By December 14, 2015 all the Government Bills introduced during the Sitting had received 3rd reading. However, that evening the Government introduced Bill # 148 – the *Public Services Sustainability (2015) Act*. In the purpose clause it is stated that the *Act* creates a framework for compensation plans for public sector employees. The Bill was moved for second reading at 12:24 am on December 15, and debate ended with a recorded vote for second reading at 1:23 pm that day. The Bill was then referred to the Law Amendments Committee for public presentations. On December 16 at 7:03 pm Bill # 148 was reported back to the House from the Law Amendments Committee with the indication that a presenter would be heard before the Law Amendments Committee on the Bill the following morning. The Leader of the New Democratic Party raised a Point of Order indicating that it was highly inappropriate for the Bill to be reported back to the House before all witnesses were heard. Clause-by-clause debate on Bill # 148 commenced before the Committee of the Whole House on Bills at 1:53 am on December 17, 2015. The Bill contained 30 clauses and recorded votes were called in the Committee on 11 clauses. Twelve hours later the Bill was reported by the Committee to the House. On December 18, Bill # 148 was moved for third reading at 1:54 am and at 7:42 am a recorded vote was taken and the Bill passed third reading. At 9:31 am the Lieutenant Governor gave Royal Assent to all the Bills and the House rose to meet again at the call of the Speaker.

Annette M. Boucher
Assistant Clerk



Yukon

The 2015 Fall Sitting of the First Session of the 33rd Legislative Assembly began on October 22 and adjourned on December 15, after 29 sitting days.

Assent

During the course of the Sitting, a total of eight government bills were assented to by Yukon Commissioner **Doug Phillips** or (on one occasion) by Yukon Administrator **Gerald Isaac**:

- Bill No. 19, *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2014-15*
- Bill No. 20, *Second Appropriation Act, 2015-16*
- Bill No. 89, *Act to Amend the Municipal Act*
- Bill No. 90, *Land Titles Act, 2015*
- Bill No. 91, *Act to Amend the Elections Act and the Electoral District Boundaries Act*
- Bill No. 92, *Act to Amend the Travel for Medical Treatment Act*
- Bill No. 93, *Act to Amend the Oil and Gas Act*
- Bill No. 94, *Act to Amend the Education Act*

Elections Act and Electoral District Boundaries Act amendments

The *Act to Amend the Elections Act and the Electoral District Boundaries Act*, as outlined in Yukon's preceding Legislative Report, implements a major revision of key aspects of Yukon's electoral law. The revisions are based upon recommendations contained in a report by Yukon's Chief Electoral Officer, **Lori McKee**.

Yukon does not have a fixed date for its general elections. The current Legislative Assembly was elected on October 11, 2011 and will dissolve by law on October 14, 2016. However, in keeping with parliamentary practice, it is anticipated that the Premier will ask the Commissioner to dissolve the Legislative Assembly prior to that date.

United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21)

Yukon's delegation to COP 21, which took place in Paris November 30th – December 14th, included Yukon Premier **Darrell Pasloski**, Official Opposition Leader **Liz Hanson**, Third Party Leader **Sandy Silver**, and Council of Yukon First Nations Grand Chief **Ruth Massie**. Ms. Hanson, Mr. Silver, and Grand Chief Massie joined the delegation at the invitation of the Premier.

Territorial funding formula change

The current Territorial Formula Financing (TFF), through which the Government of Canada allocates funds to Yukon, the Northwest Territories and

Nunavut, is two years into a five-year funding agreement. In December, 2015, the federal government revealed that technical changes to the way that Statistics Canada calculates territorial funding would decrease federal base funding to the territories by two percent.

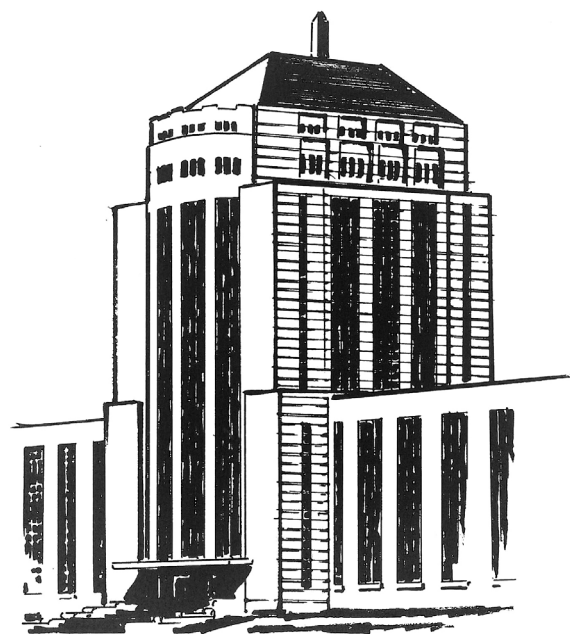
Although the revised TFF would not have seen Yukon's net federal grant decrease in 2016-17, it would have reduced the amount of the increase by \$23 million dollars. Premier Pasloski asked the federal government to reconsider the proposed reduction in grants to the territories. Similar requests were made by Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

On February 16, 2016, federal Finance Minister **Bill Morneau** announced that legislative amendments would be introduced to "improve the stability and predictability" of TFF payments and "address the impact of a recent Statistics Canada data revision." If adopted, the amendments would reduce by \$16.5 million dollars the anticipated federal funding shortfall for Yukon for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2016.

Yukon Government – Kaska framework agreement

On January 25, 2016, a resource-development framework agreement seeking to establish a cooperative, collaborative approach to land and resource management in the southeast area of Yukon was reached between the territorial government and the Kaska. The signatories to the agreement were the Premier, the chiefs of Yukon's two Kaska nations – Liard First Nation Chief **Daniel Morris**, and Ross River Dena Council Chief **Jack Caesar** – and Kaska Dena Council Chair **George Miller**. The framework agreement was preceded by months of reconciliation talks between the territorial government, and the two First Nations, and presents an alternative approach to preceding years of legal disputes.

Linda Kolody
Deputy Clerk



Newfoundland and Labrador

General Election 2015

At the dissolution of the 47th General Assembly which took place on November 5, 2015 the standings in the House of Assembly were: 39 Progressive Conservatives, 16 Liberals and 3 New Democrats. At the November 30, 2015 General Election the Liberals under Premier **Dwight Ball** elected 31 Members, the Progressive Conservatives 7 and the New Democrats 2. The 48th General Assembly comprises 30 men and 10 women and is evenly divided between re-elected and first-time Members. Included among the first-time MHAs are two former MPs.

The Members-elect were sworn before Lieutenant Governor **Frank Fagan** on December 18, 2015 in the morning. In the afternoon the House elected their Speaker. For the first time since the practice of electing the Speaker by secret ballot was introduced in 1999 two Members offered for the position: **Tom Osborne**, MHA, Waterford Valley and **Scott Reid**, MHA St. George's-Humber. The House selected **Tom Osborne**, MHA, Waterford Valley as Speaker. **Lisa Dempster**, MHA, Cartwright-L'Anse au Clair was elected Deputy Speaker and **Paul Lane**, MHA, Mount Pearl-Southlands was elected Deputy Chair of Committees.

Cabinet appointed

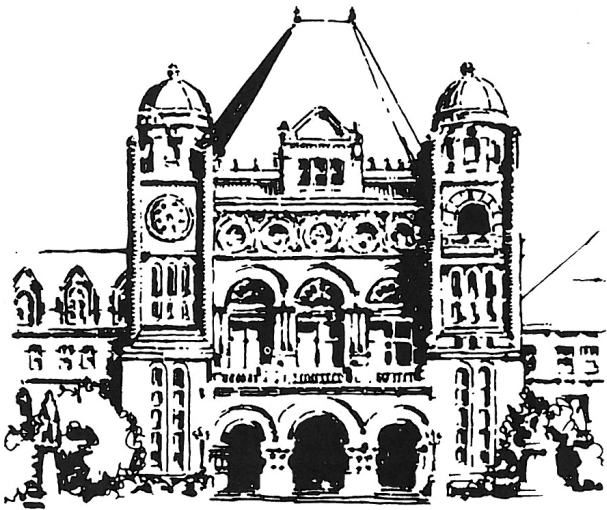
Premier Ball's 13-member Cabinet, comprising 10 male and 3 female Ministers was sworn on December 13, 2015.

Resumption of 1st Session of 48th General Assembly

The 48th General Assembly is expected to re-convene for the Throne Speech and continuation of the First Session in March.

Elizabeth Murphy

Clerk Assistant



Ontario

With the House scheduled to adjourn for the winter recess on December 10, the preceding weeks saw the House work to fulfill its fall legislative agenda, completing the consideration of all the bills it had included in a June 2015 “programming motion”, as well as many new bills. The House took advantage of a Standing Order which permits the Government House Leader to propose a motion to extend the hours of meeting during the last eight sessional days, and the Legislature sat late three nights to ensure the completion of its business prior to adjournment.

Much like a time allocation motion, the June programming motion had included provisions for the arrangement of business into the fall, including details at the Committee stage. Filed as a substantive motion,

it applied to four bills. Several later bills considered by the House in the Fall sitting were also subject to Orders of the House arranging their progress through the legislative stages, and the House would appear to have adopted regular use of such Orders. Of the 18 bills that received Royal Assent since November, all but four were subject to the provisions of either a time allocation or a programming motion.

While it is most frequently arranged that **Elizabeth Dowdeswell**, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, assents to bills in her Office, on December 10 Her Honour entered the Chamber, took her seat upon the Throne, and assented to the 17 bills passed in the last week of the fall sitting period, lending an air of ceremony to the Legislature's last sitting of 2015.

Parliamentary Officers

The House received *Annual Reports* from **Bonnie Lysyk**, Auditor General of Ontario; **Irwin Elman**, Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth; and **Barbara Finlay**, Acting Ombudsman of Ontario. The Assembly's newest Parliamentary Officer, **Stephen LeClair**, Financial Accountability Officer, tabled two reports: *An Assessment of Ontario's Medium-term Economic and Fiscal Outlook* and *An Assessment of the Financial Impact of the Partial Sale of Hydro One* (tabled at the end of October). Excerpts from the latter report formed the basis for an opposition day motion put forward by the New Democratic Party, that “in the opinion of the House, the government shall immediately stop the sale of any more shares of Hydro One,” debated on November 18, two weeks after the November 5 initial public offering of 15 per cent of the province's electrical transmission and distribution utility on the Toronto Stock Exchange.

On December 31, **Lynn Morrison** resigned as Integrity Commissioner. Ms. Morrison had held various roles within the Office of the Integrity Commissioner since its creation in 1988, and was appointed Acting Commissioner in 2007, then Commissioner in 2010.

On the Address of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, **Cathryn Motherwell**—Director of the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario—was appointed Acting Integrity Commissioner, to hold office from January 1 to 31, 2016; and **David Wake** was appointed Integrity Commissioner, for a term of five years, commencing February 1, 2016.

Accessibility

On December 3 – the United Nations’ International Day of Persons with Disabilities – the House adopted a motion to permit sign-language interpreters onto the Chamber floor to interpret the proceedings during Statements by the Ministry and Responses. In their statements, **Brad Duguid**, Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, and **Helena Jaczek**, Minister of Community and Social Services, remarked that 2015 marked the 10-year anniversary of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), and laid out the priorities of Ontario’s Accessibility Action Plan.

Under the AODA, the Government of Ontario has been developing mandatory accessibility standards that identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living. The standards apply to private and public sector organizations who, according to their size, have different schedules of deadlines by which they must be AODA-compliant, with the goal of making Ontario fully accessible by 2025.

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario has worked to meet its January 1, 2016 deadline for compliance with the AODA in ensuring its public spaces and public information are accessible. Following on improvements to the physical setting, such as the installation of accessible service counters, a number of improvements were made to the Assembly’s website, including behind-the-scenes modifications that allow assistive devices to read the web pages properly and, more visibly, a new interface for the Hansard indexes, an improved Hansard search function and a revamped sessional papers index. The *Orders and Notices* papers, the *Votes and Proceedings*, and Committee reports are all now accessible.

The Assembly has made great strides toward accessibility and, in the process of working to meet our AODA targets, staff have begun factoring accessibility considerations into increasingly more areas of their work, from producing accessible documents to piloting a sensory “touch tour” of the building for visually impaired guests. The January 1 deadline proved less of an endpoint than a milestone in making our Legislative Building truly barrier-free for all.

Condolences

On Wednesday, December 9, 2015, the House expressed its condolences on the passing of **Howard**

Nicholas Sheppard, Member for the riding of Northumberland from 1981 to 1987.

Committees

The Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly completed a 10-month review of the petition procedures currently in place at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The Committee was particularly interested in the use of e-petitions in other jurisdictions as a means to increase public participation in the Parliamentary process. The Committee is scheduled to Table its report when the House resumes in February.

The Standing Committee on Estimates met to review the 2015-2016 Expenditure Estimates of Ministries and Offices selected for consideration. The Committee completed the review of three Ministries over the course of 13 meetings and presented its report on November 26, 2015.

During the fall session, the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills met to consider nine private bills, as well as one government bill: Bill 85, *Strengthening and Improving Government Act, 2015*. Introduced by Attorney General **Madeleine Meilleur**, this bill proposed changes to acts falling under the jurisdiction of several ministries.

The Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment tabled its *Final Report* on December 10, 2015. The Committee chose to structure its report around recommendations found in the Ontario government’s initiative, *It’s Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment*, which was released in March 2015. The Committee’s report touches on issues it considers to be of particular importance based on the testimony it received during its hearings and provides further recommendations in areas that it believes were not fully addressed in *It’s Never Okay*.

The Standing Committee on Social Policy considered two government bills: Bill 73, *An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997* and the *Planning Act*, which makes various amendments relating to the growth of communities in the province; and Bill 115, *An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act*. This bill provides for 122 electoral districts in Ontario, to replace the current 107. The 11 northern electoral districts that were first established by the *Representation Act, 1996* are maintained, and the rest of Ontario is divided into 111 electoral districts whose names and

boundaries are identical to those of the corresponding new federal electoral districts.

Pursuant to an Order of the House, the Committee also considered four private members' public bills, with public hearings on all four bills taking place on November 30, and clause-by-clause consideration on December 1. All four of the following bills were passed by the Committee, reported to the House, and went on to receive Royal Assent:

Bill 12, *An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to tips and other gratuities*. Introduced by **Arthur Potts**, MPP for Beaches-East York, the bill amends the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* to prohibit employers from withholding tips or other gratuities from employees.

Bill 33, *An Act to reduce the abuse of fentanyl patches*. Introduced by **Vic Fedeli**, MPP for Nipissing, the bill required a person prescribing fentanyl patches to record on the prescription the name and location of the dispensing pharmacy and to notify the pharmacy about the prescription. It also sets out rules governing persons who dispense fentanyl patches. Bill 33 was amended in Committee, its provisions extended to other controlled substance patches, and its long title was changed to "*An Act to reduce the abuse of fentanyl patches and other controlled substances*."

Bill 117, *An Act to amend the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007 with respect to notices of critical injury or death*. Introduced by **Monique Taylor**, MPP for Hamilton Mountain, the bill was amended in Committee, resulting in a title change to "*An Act to amend the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007 with respect to notices of serious bodily harm or death*." The bill creates an obligation for agencies and service providers to inform the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth after they become aware that a child or youth has died or incurred serious bodily harm, and the child or youth or the child or youth's family had sought or received a children's aid society's service within 12 months of the death or incurrance of harm.

Bill 141, *An Act to require research to be undertaken and programs to be developed for pregnancy loss and infant death and to proclaim October 15 as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day*. Introduced by **Mike Colle**, MPP for Eglinton—Lawrence, the bill sets out a duty for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care with respect to pregnancy loss and infant death; and establishes a commemorative day.

During the winter adjournment the Committee held hearings in Peterborough, London and Toronto on Bill 132, *An Act to amend various statutes with respect to sexual violence, sexual harassment, domestic violence and related matters*. The bill is part of the government's *It's Never Okay* initiative.

In November 2015, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts tabled two reports on the following sections of the *2014 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General*: Section 4.01 (Cancer Screening Programs); and Section 3.11 (Smart Metering Initiative).

The Standing Committee on General Government considered the following two bills, which were both reported with amendment to the House, and went on to receive Royal Assent:

Bill 112, *An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998*. The bill prescribes requirements for electricity retailers and gas marketers to follow when determining the prices charged for electricity or gas, and sets out rules regarding the manner, time and circumstances under which a supplier or salesperson may advertise or market the sale of electricity or gas to a consumer at the consumer's home.

Bill 122, *An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996*. This bill amended the *Mental Health Act* to provide the Consent and Capacity Board with new order-making powers when confirming an involuntary patient's certificate of continuation. Among other things, the bill gives the Board power to direct the officer in charge of a psychiatric facility to provide different security levels, different privileges, and access to various services. The bill addressed the statutory deficiencies identified in December 2014 by the Court of Appeal in its decision in *P.S. v. Ontario*, in which it ruled that provisions of the *Mental Health Act* governing the review process for long-term involuntary patients were unconstitutional. The court had suspended the effect of its judgment for one year, to give the Legislature the opportunity to consider how best to deal with the issue.

On January 27, the Standing Committee on Government Agencies took advantage of its standing authority to meet under limited circumstances during an adjournment for the purpose of considering intended appointments to agencies, boards and commissions.

Sylvia Przedziecki
Committee Clerk



Prince Edward Island

First Session, Sixty-fifth General Assembly

The First Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly resumed on November 12, 2015 and adjourned to the call of the Speaker on December 2 after 12 sitting days. The First Session will be prorogued on April 1, 2016, and the Second Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly will officially open with a Speech from the Throne on April 5, 2016 at 2:00 p.m. in the Legislative Assembly Chamber, Hon. George Coles Building.

Significant Legislation

Twenty-six bills received Royal Assent during the fall sitting. These included:

An Act to Amend the School Act (Bill No. 42), which removes reference to the English Language School Board from the *School Act* in keeping with Government's plan to integrate the functions of the School Board into the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture. The Department will take full responsibility for the English language public education system. The French Language School Board will continue to operate under the *School Act*.

An Act to Amend the Electric Power Act (Bill No. 46), which requires that public utilities seeking to acquire new generating equipment or additional generating capacity lease that equipment or capacity from the PEI Energy Corporation if directed to do so by Government. It also requires Maritime Electric Company, Limited to consult with and involve the PEI Energy Corporation in any negotiations with a third party for the supply or generation of electrical energy from any source.

Two Private Member's Bills were put forward during the fall sitting:

An Act to Amend the Pesticides Control Act (Bill No. 100) would require inspectors to have reasonable and probable grounds to believe the *Act* has been or is being contravened in order to enter upon land, premises or vehicles for the purposes of inspection. This bill was promoted by **Jamie Fox**, Leader of the Official Opposition. It passed second reading but was not recommended in Committee of the Whole House.

Well-being Measurement Act (Bill No. 101) would begin a process to develop a series of indicators of economic, social and environmental well-being of communities, people and eco-systems in the province, and ultimately task the Minister of Finance with annually reporting the current state of well-being in the province based on these indicators. This bill was promoted by **Peter Bevan-Baker**, Leader of the Third Party. It was referred by motion to the Standing Committee on Health and Wellness for further consideration.

Capital Budget

On November 18, 2015 Government issued its capital budget for 2017-2018, with \$77.9 million invested in schools, health care and transportation. Highlights include new equipment for the Prince Edward Island Cancer Treatment Centre, wireless internet access and modern computers in Island schools, and further realignment of the Trans Canada Highway.

Special Committee on Democratic Renewal

After intensive study of electoral systems, a broad communications strategy and public consultation across the Island, the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal tabled its interim report to the Legislative Assembly, entitled "Recommendations in Response to The White Paper on Democratic Renewal", on November 27, 2015.

The committee heard from 112 individuals and groups on the subject of democratic renewal. Over 400 people attended public meetings across the province. Many strong arguments were made in favour of keeping PEI's current voting system, introducing moderate changes, or implementing an entirely different system. On the fundamental principles of democracy, witnesses often divided according to whether it is most important that individual members represent their constituencies or that the Assembly

as a whole be socially representative of PEI. Some witnesses favoured electoral systems that tend to produce strong majority governments empowered to carry out their mandates, while others preferred systems productive of coalition governments that must seek consensus. The various voting systems highlighted by witnesses were generally divided between single member constituencies (for example, first-past-the-post and preferential voting) and multi-member constituencies (for example, mixed member proportional representation and dual member proportional representation).

The desired outcomes of an ideal electoral system were discussed, and included proportionality, representation, responsibility, influence of voters, stable government, accountability and strong voter turnout. The committee is of the view that no single electoral system can perfectly deliver all of these outcomes in a balanced manner. Only a clear and neutrally-worded plebiscite question can gauge what Islanders want the most from their electoral system. To that end, the committee put forward seven recommendations, which can be summarized as follows:

That after further public consultation, the committee shall formulate a plebiscite question on PEI's voting system, and the question shall be in two parts, the first to gauge Islanders' interest in changing PEI's electoral system, and the second to indicate their preferred system among several options;

That four electoral systems shall be presented to the public for greater discussion alongside PEI's current first-past-the-post system; these are a first-past-the-post system with the addition of seats for political party leaders which receive a certain threshold of the popular vote; the preferential ballot method of selecting members of the Legislative Assembly; mixed member proportional representation; and dual member proportional representation;

That a plebiscite on PEI's electoral system shall be supervised by Elections PEI, and that Elections PEI shall consider alternative methods of voting in the plebiscite;

That the right to vote in the plebiscite shall be extended to Island residents 16-17 years of age; and

That additional public consultation shall take place in January to March, 2016; a plebiscite question shall be drafted in April, 2016 and presented to the Legislative

Assembly in May, 2016; an educational campaign on the voting options appearing on the plebiscite shall be carried out from June to October, 2016; and in November, 2016 the plebiscite shall be held.

The committee will also consider additional parliamentary reforms suggested by witnesses and the *White Paper on Democratic Renewal*. These include improvements to the role of members, election financing, and political party activities. The committee will submit recommendations on these and other areas in addition to its recommendations on the plebiscite.

The interim report of the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal can be found at the committee's website, <http://www.assembly.pe.ca/democraticrenewal/>.

Changes to Cabinet

On January 7, 2016, Premier **Wade MacLauchlan** announced changes to the provincial Cabinet. **Doug Currie** moved from his portfolio of Health and Wellness; Family and Human Services to replace **Hal Perry** in Education, Early Learning and Culture. **Robert Henderson** and **Tina Mundy** were added to Cabinet in the portfolios of Health and Wellness, and Family and Human Services, respectively. Mr. Perry was not reappointed. Cabinet membership now stands at ten, whereas there were nine members prior to the changes.

Appointment of Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

On November 12, 2015 **Brian Weldon** was appointed Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms via unanimous resolution of the House. Frederick Fordham had held this position until his retirement on November 5, 2015.

Table Officers In-Training

During the fall sitting, as a new initiative of the Office of the Clerk, committee clerks **Emily Doiron** and **Ryan Reddin** worked at the Table as Table Officers In-Training under the supervision of the Clerk and Clerk Assistant. Both found the perspective from the Table to be unique and highly enjoyed the experience. An historical first also occurred on November 19 when Ms. Doiron and Clerk Assistant **Marian Johnston** formed the first all-female staffing of the Table in the PEI legislature.

Ryan Reddin

Clerk Assistant - Research, Committees and Visitor Services



Quebec

National Assembly proceedings

Composition of the Assembly

On October 22, 2015, Parti Québécois MNA **Stéphane Bédard** handed in his resignation as Member for the electoral division of Chicoutimi. Furthermore, the following candidates were elected in the by-elections held on November 9, 2015: **Paul Busque**, Québec Liberal Party candidate in the riding of Beauce-Sud, **Monique Sauvé**, Québec Liberal Party candidate in the riding of Fabre, **Martin Ouellet**, Parti Québécois candidate in the riding of René-Lévesque, and **Dominique Anglade**, Québec Liberal Party candidate in the riding of Saint-Henri-Sainte-Anne. The new Members officially took their seats in the National Assembly on November 17, 2015.

The composition of the Assembly is now as follows: Québec Liberal Party, 71 Members; Parti Québécois, 29 Members; Coalition Avenir Québec, 20 Members; 4 independent Members, three of whom sit under the Québec Solidaire banner; and one vacant seat (electoral division of Chicoutimi).

Bills passed

During the sessional period that ended on December 4, 2015, the Assembly passed 21 bills (17 public and 4 private). Notable among these are:

- Bill 20, *An Act to enact the Act to promote access to family medicine and specialized medicine services and to amend various legislative provisions relating to assisted procreation*;
- Bill 54, *An Act to improve the legal situation of animals*;
- Bill 78, *An Act to regulate the granting of transition allowances to Members who resign during their term of office*.

Directive and rulings from the Chair

Among the directives given by the Chair, the directive of October 21, 2015, followed a question raised by the Deputy Government House Leader on October 6, 2015, concerning written questions that were made public before being published in the *Order Paper and Notices*. The Chair indicated that jurisprudence is silent on whether the content of written questions placed on the *Order Paper and Notices* may be disclosed before the *Order Paper and Notices* is published. However, decisions have been handed down on whether a bill can be made public before it is introduced in the Assembly. A Member may definitely disclose the subject of a bill he or she intends to introduce and even release a broad outline. However, given that written questions must be placed on the *Order Paper and Notices* and that the *Order Paper and Notices* is confidential until published, the text of a written question may not be disclosed before the *Order Paper and Notices* publication. This way, all Members—Cabinet members and others—receive this information at the same time. However, as in the case of a bill, nothing prevents a Member from discussing the subject matter of a written question.

On November 3, 2015, the Chair handed down a ruling on the receivability of a motion to divide moved within the framework of the passage in principle of Bill 59, *An Act to enact the Act to prevent and combat hate speech and speech inciting violence and to amend various legislative provisions to better protect individuals*. Parliamentary jurisprudence has often recognized that, for a motion to divide to be declared receivable, a bill must contain more than one principle and each bill resulting from the division must be coherent, complete and able to stand alone. It appears that Bill 59 contains

more than one principle. First of all, the title of the bill clearly suggests two distinct principles. Furthermore, the bill's structure highlights these two principles. Given the importance of both parts, the Chair concludes that they must be considered separately, as two essential components of the bill, and that the motion to divide moved by the Member clearly seeks to divide these principles into two separate bills. In light of receivability criteria, the motion to divide was declared receivable.

On November 17, 2015, the Chair gave a ruling following a request for an urgent debate on the upcoming reception of Syrian refugees by Québec. According to the Standing Orders of the Assembly and jurisprudence, the request concerned a specific subject that undeniably fell within the jurisdiction of the Québec State. Furthermore, recent developments in the situation and the security-related considerations raised by the Member showed that the situation had worsened and that the scope of the issue met the criteria established by jurisprudence. Moreover, the timeline for the reception of refugees showed that the issue was relatively urgent in nature. Given that this was the last week of regular proceedings and that priority had to be given to legislation in extended hours of meeting, the Members would not have had any other opportunity to discuss the matter. Therefore, the request for an urgent debate by the Member was receivable.

National Assembly infrastructure improvement project

On November 12, 2015, the Office of the National Assembly unanimously approved the National Assembly infrastructure improvement project. It provides for the construction of an underground hospitality pavilion, detached from the Parliament Building, allowing for security controls to be carried out outside of the current building, in addition to improving the Assembly's hospitality infrastructure. Substantial infrastructure upgrading work will be carried out and two committee rooms adapted to the needs of parliamentarians, the media and the public will be built. The Parliament Building will thus be safer, while remaining accessible and welcoming.

The National Assembly will cover the full cost of the project, estimated \$60.5 million cost and is not requesting any additional budget for its completion. Excavation work is scheduled to begin in spring 2016 and construction will be completed in spring 2019.

Standing committee proceedings

Public consultations

A dozen public consultations were held in the fall and witnesses appeared before seven parliamentary committees to present their points of view.

Among the busier standing committees, the Committee on Labour and the Economy (CLE) held four public consultations during the fall sessional period. All of these consultations concerned public bills and dealt with matters such as the improvement of the regulation of tourist accommodation, supplemental pension plans and university-sector defined benefit pension plans. In the latter case, consultations began on December 1, 2015 and will continue when the House resumes in February. As regards the Committee on Transportation and the Environment (CTE), some forty witnesses expressed interest in sharing their positions on the Government's greenhouse gas emission targets for 2030, within the framework of an order of reference.

A number of orders of initiative were also held. The Committee on Public Finance (CPF) began hearing groups within the framework of its order of initiative on tax havens. Over a dozen experts, banking institutions and public bodies took part in the Committee's proceedings. Several Committee members also attended the TaxCOOP conference held in Montréal on November 3, 2015. TaxCOOP is an international conference on tax competition and the weaknesses of the current taxation system in the era of trade globalization and the web.

The Committee on Citizen Relations (CCR), on its own initiative, examined Aboriginal women's living conditions as affected by sexual assault and domestic violence, while the Committee on Institutions (CI) examined the restructuring plan announced by the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions as well as the policy directions, activities and administrative management of the Anti-Corruption Commissioner.

Clause-by-clause consideration of bills

More than 15 bills were examined by the standing committees between October and December. First, we should mention the conclusion of the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 20, *An Act to enact the Act to promote access to family medicine and specialized medicine services and to amend various legislative provisions relating to assisted procreation*. The Committee on Health and

Social Services (CHSS) held a total of 28 sittings on this bill's clause-by-clause consideration, which began in May 2015 and ended on October 28, 2015. The Committee members subsequently examined two other bills, undertaking the examination of a legislative proposal on funeral operations and completing another on tobacco control.

The Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries, Energy and Natural Resources (CAFENR) set aside 14 sittings for the consideration of over 100 sections introduced by Bill 54, which concerned animal welfare. A total of 48 amendments that had been discussed by the parliamentarians were accepted and integrated into the bill. This examination followed up on the hearings held a few weeks earlier with some 40 interested parties within the framework of special consultations.

The members of the CI also set aside several sittings for the consideration of Bill 51, which introduces legislative changes with regard to the administration of justice. Members examined this bill during 11 sittings held between September 30 and November 10, 2015.

Composition of committees

Changes were made to the composition of the steering committees of three standing committees. The members of the CAFENR elected the Member for Labelle, **Sylvain Pagé**, as Committee chair. This election had become necessary owing to the resignation of **Stéphane Bédard** as Member for Chicoutimi on October 22, 2015.

The Member for Rousseau, **Nicolas Marceau**, was elected vice-chair of the CI on October 28 in place of **Jean-François Lisée**. The members of the CPF appointed Mr. Lisée to the position of Committee vice-chair, which had been left vacant by Mr. Pagé's appointment.

Nicole Bolduc

Parliamentary Proceedings Directorate
Sittings Service

Pierre-Luc Turgeon

Parliamentary Proceedings Directorate
Committees Service



Saskatchewan

The fourth session of the twenty-seventh legislature closed on November 26, 2015. Seven bills received Royal Assent.

Significant Legislation

Several significant pieces of legislation were passed. *The MRI Facilities Licensing Act* will allow individuals to pay a private facility for an MRI scan. *The Saskatchewan Farm Security Amendment Act, 2015* clarifies who is eligible to own farm and ranch land in Saskatchewan and provides the Saskatchewan Farm Land Security Board with more power to enforce the legislation. *The Saskatchewan Employment (Essential Services) Amendment Act, 2015* brings current legislation in line with a recent Supreme Court ruling regarding essential services.

Expanded Mandate for the Provincial Ombudsman of Saskatchewan

Following an inquiry into a conflict of interest complaint regarding a former reeve of a rural municipality and a proposed development in that municipality, the legislature passed *The Municipal Conflict of Interest Amendment Act, 2015* to improve processes that address and prevent municipal conflict of interest situations. One of the changes expands the mandate of the Provincial Ombudsman to investigate complaints regarding council administrative processes, conflicts of interest, and code of ethics breaches at the municipal level.

Canadian Parliamentary Association Canadian Region Parliamentary Seminar

The Legislative Assembly had the honour of hosting the 37th Canadian Parliamentary Association Canadian Region Parliamentary Seminar from November 12 to November 15, 2015. Thirty-eight delegates attended from 11 Canadian jurisdictions.

Business session topics included *The Officers of the Legislative Assembly Standardization Amendment Act, 2015*, the 2015 Alberta election, respect for the rights of linguistic minorities in Canada, the Commission for Public Administration and Parliamentary Control, and the implications of fixed election dates.

Upcoming Provincial Election

The provincial election is mandated for April 4, 2016. This will be the first election since legislation passed in May 2013 to adopt redefined electoral boundaries and add three new constituencies. This will increase the total number of MLAs in the next legislature from 58 to 61. Eleven members have decided not to seek re-election in the upcoming election.

Anne Drake
Committee Clerk



House of Commons

The First Session of the Forty-Second Parliament opened on December 3, 2015, adjourning for the winter break on December 11, 2015. The House resumed sitting on January 25, 2016. The information below covers the period from November 1, 2015, to February 2, 2016.

General Election and Party Leadership

As a result of a federal general election on October 19, 2015, a majority Liberal Government was formed. On November 4, 2015, the new Ministry was sworn in at Rideau Hall, including 30 Ministers and **Justin Trudeau** (Papineau) as Canada's 23rd Prime Minister.

Rona Ambrose (Sturgeon River — Parkland) was elected as Interim Conservative Party Leader and therefore interim Leader of the Official Opposition following the resignation of **Stephen Harper** (Calgary Heritage) as Leader of the Conservative Party. After failing to win his own seat in Laurier Sainte-Marie, **Gilles Duceppe** resigned as leader of the Bloc Québécois and on October 22, 2015, **Rhéal Fortin** (Rivière-du-Nord) was named interim leader.

Opening of Parliament: Election of a New Speaker and Speech from the Throne

The First Session of the 42nd Parliament opened on December 3, 2015. Its first order of business, pursuant to Standing Order 2, was to elect a new Speaker. **Louis Plamondon** (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour), the Member with the longest period of unbroken service in the House, presided accordingly over the election of the Speaker, which was accomplished, for the first time, by means of a preferential ballot. After the counting of ballots, it was announced that **Geoff Regan** (Halifax West) had been elected as the 36th Speaker of the House of Commons, the first Atlantic Canadian to be elected to the position in nearly 100 years.

Over the course of the next few sitting days, the other three presiding officers were appointed, including **Bruce Stanton** (Simcoe North) as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole, **Carol Hughes** (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking) as Assistant Deputy Speaker and Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole, and **Anthony Rota** (Nipissing—Timiskaming) as Assistant Deputy Speaker and Assistant Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole.

On December 4, 2015, Governor General **David Johnston** delivered the Speech from the Throne in the Senate Chamber to open the 42nd Parliament and outline the Government's agenda. The Standing Orders provide for six additional days of debate on the motion and on any amendments proposed thereto. On December 11, 2015, the third of six days of debate, a second subamendment was moved to the motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

This is a very rare occurrence but procedurally in order as the first subamendment had already been disposed of. The Speech from the Throne was adopted without amendment on January 27, 2016.

Financial Procedures

With fewer sittings due to the general election, the number of supply days in the period ending December 10, 2015, was reduced from seven to one sitting day in accordance with Standing Order 81(10)(b). Further, standing committees were not yet constituted to consider the Supplementary Estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016, tabled on December 7, 2015. As a result, on December 9, 2015, following the adoption of a motion by unanimous consent the previous week, the House resolved itself into Committee of the Whole for the consideration of all Votes in the Supplementary Estimates (B), and following debate, the considered Votes were deemed reported. On December 10, 2015, it being the only and final day of the supply period, and further to concurrence in the Supplementary Estimates (B), Bill C-3, *An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2016*, was considered and adopted at all stages.

Points of Order and Procedure

On December 4, 2015, during debate on the motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, **Pierre Poilievre** (Carleton) rose on a point of order regarding the absence from Bill C-3, *An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2016*, which had been adopted the previous day, of the schedule containing the actual amounts in the supplementary estimates – this notwithstanding the fact that the Government had assured the House that the Bill was in its usual form. **Kevin Lamoureux** (Winnipeg North), the parliamentary secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, speaking to the same point of order, informed the House that there was indeed an administrative error in the print of the bill that had been before the House. The Speaker informed the House that steps had been taken to remedy these administrative errors and that the Senate had been sent a corrected copy of the bill.

On January 26, 2016, **Mauril Bélanger** (Ottawa—Vanier) used text-to-speech software in the House of Commons. Mr. Bélanger has been diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease)

and used the voice generating software on his tablet to introduce his private Member's bill, Bill C-210, *An Act to Amend the National Anthem Act (gender)*. This marks the first use of voice generating technology in the Chamber.

Committees

On December 4, 2015, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs was constituted. On January 28, 2015, **Dominic Leblanc** (Beauséjour), Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, appeared before the Committee to discuss his mandate letter and areas for parliamentary and procedural reform that the Committee could consider, including Question Period reform, limiting omnibus legislation, enhancing the effectiveness of committees and ways to modify the sittings of the House or voting times to allow for a more family-friendly schedule.

On February 2, 2015, **Marc Bosc**, the Acting Clerk of the House of Commons, appeared before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to address initiatives towards a family-friendly House of Commons. The Acting Clerk provided an overview of past changes to the Standing Orders aimed at making the House more family-friendly, such as the elimination of evening sittings, modifications to voting times and the adoption of a fixed parliamentary calendar. Mr. Bosc also highlighted that technological advancements such as the e-notice system for written questions and motions have allowed Members to do a portion of their work remotely. Finally, he outlined areas for the Committee to consider during their deliberations, including further modifications to voting times, changes to days and times of sittings and the possibility of a parallel Chamber. In responding to questions, the Acting Clerk indicated that the impact of changes could be wide-reaching and touch many of the current procedures and practices. The Committee intends to pursue its study in the coming weeks.

On January 29, 2016, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented its First Report outlining the list of members and associate members for Standing Committees. The Report was subsequently concurred in by unanimous consent. The following week, committees began organizing with the election of committee chairs as the first order of business.

On December 11, 2015, it was agreed by unanimous consent that a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons be appointed to review

the report of the External Panel on Options for a Legislative Response to *Carter v. Canada* and other recent relevant consultation activities and studies, to consult with Canadians, experts and stakeholders, and to make recommendations on the framework of a federal response on physician-assisted dying. The committee met for the first time on January 18, 2016 and must present its final report no later than February 26, 2016.

Other Matters

On December 4, 2015, in recognition of the distinguished and faithful service of **Audrey O'Brien** as Clerk of the House of Commons, the House agreed to her designation as Clerk Emeritus and an Honorary Officer of the House of Commons with permanent entrée to the Chamber and a seat at the Table.

Moments of Silence

On December 4, 2015, Members observed a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the tragic events of December 6, 1989 at École Polytechnique in Montreal.

On December 8, 2015, during the debate on the subamendment to the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, **Luc Berthold** (Mégantic—L'Érable) called for the observance of a moment of silence in commemoration of the victims of the July 6, 2013 tragedy in Lac Mégantic. He did not seek unanimous consent but the House spontaneously observed a moment of silence and this was noted in the Debates.

On January 25, 2016, Members observed a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the mass shooting at La Loche Community School in Saskatchewan. During the same sitting, Members observed a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso and Indonesia.

Technology

Following the adoption of the 33rd Report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in the previous Parliament, the House of Commons began accepting electronic petitions on December 4, 2015. In addition to using the existing paper-based petitions system, Canadians are now able to create and sign petitions online and follow the progress of their electronic petition through the House of Commons e-petitions site. Government responses to electronic petitions will also be posted to the new website.

Organizational Changes

Luc Fortin, Deputy Principal Clerk (Committees) and Table Officer, retired at the end of 2015. Effective January 2016, **Guillaume LaPerrière-Marcoux**, Deputy Principal Clerk (Information Management Group), and **Natalie Foster**, Deputy Principal Clerk (Table Research Branch), were appointed as Deputy Principal Clerks with Table Duty. **Scott Lemoine** was appointed Acting Deputy Principal Clerk (without Table Duty) for Committees.

Stephanie Bond
Table Research Branch



The Senate

The Senate was summoned by Proclamation to meet on December 3, 2015. On this initial day of the First Session of the 42nd Parliament of Canada, a new Speaker was appointed by the Governor General on the advice of Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**. **George Furey** is a native of St. John's, Newfoundland, where he was an educator and lawyer. Before his appointment as Speaker, he was Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration.

In his statement on the appointment of Speaker Furey, the Prime Minister noted that the Senate would be undergoing important changes as it moved towards becoming a more independent and less partisan chamber. Speaker Furey demonstrated this by becoming an independent senator shortly after his appointment. Senators **John Wallace** and **Jacques Demers** have also recently become independents.

There is currently no Leader of the Government in the Senate. The government has indicated that it will choose a government representative from the first list of candidates submitted by the Independent Advisory Board for Senate Appointments. The lack of a government leader led to a question of privilege by Senator **Leo Housakos**. On February 4, 2016, the Speaker ruled that there was no breach of privilege as the appointment of a leader is a Crown prerogative.

Senator **Céline Hervieux-Payette** revived her question of privilege from last fall related to leaks of the content of the report of the Auditor General on Senate expenses. The Speaker ruled, on January 26, 2016, that a *prima facie* case of privilege had been established.

Committees and Legislation

The Standing Senate Committee on National Finance was created very early in the new session, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding its Rules, so that the Supplementary Estimates (B) could

be studied at the earliest opportunity. The Committee of Selection met thereafter to nominate the Speaker *pro tempore* (Senator **Nicole Eaton**) and to recommend the membership of the Senate's standing committees. Two other committees have been established this session: the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying and the Special Senate Committee on Senate Modernization.

Within a few days of the start of the session, the Senate received Bill C-3, based on the Supplementary Estimates (B). Almost immediately after proceedings in the Senate began, the absence of a critical Schedule was noted. After a suspension, the Speaker explained that the Senate had received a defective bill and leave was granted to declare proceedings on the bill null and void. Leave was then granted to consider the correct version of the bill, received by message from the Commons, immediately at second and third reading. The Governor General subsequently came to the Senate to grant Royal Assent.

The Senate gave first reading to a raft of Senate Public bills and debate on most of these bills is ongoing. Bill S-201, *An Act to prohibit and prevent genetic discrimination*, was read for a second time and referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights for study.

Céline Ethier
Procedural Clerk