



CPA Activities: *the Canadian Scene*

Twenty-fourth Annual Canadian Presiding Officers' Conference

Greg Deighan, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island was host to the 24th Annual Canadian Presiding Officers' Conference in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island from January 18 - 21, 2007. It was the first opportunity for PEI to host the Conference since 1992. Speaker Deighan was delighted with the turnout and participation in the program with forty-two delegates and eleven

Partners from every jurisdiction in Canada in attendance. Business sessions were held at the Delta Prince Edward Hotel on January 19th and 20th with presentations and discussion on the following topics:

- **Dr. David McNeil**, Clerk, Legislative Assembly of Alberta presented on Alberta's online 'Virtual Visit'. He demonstrated to delegates how this interactive web based application is navigated and how it was designed to enable students from areas remote to the capital city of Edmon-

ton (and others) to experience the beautiful Legislative Assembly Building of Alberta and learn more about their parliament.

- **Tim Mercer**, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories presented a paper on "Language Rights in the Northwest Territories". This very informative session on the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories' decision which led to the suspension of the production of *Hansard* on October 26, 2006 (presently under appeal) generated a great deal of interest.



- **Michel Bonsaint**, Director General of Parliamentary Affairs of the National Assembly of Québec and **Francois Gendron**, MNA, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly presented on the "Michaud Affair" which concerns the important matter of parliamentary privilege and the application of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to legislative assemblies.
- **Peter Milliken**, Speaker of the House of Commons lead those assembled in a round table discussion on decorum in the Chamber. This session proved to be very informative and entertaining – often illustrating the different approaches taken by Canadian jurisdictions in dealing with the thorny and delicate matter of decorum in the Chamber.
- **Dr. David Docherty**, Dean of Arts and Professor of Political Science at Wilfrid Laurier University and author of *Legislatures* (part of the *Canadian Democratic Audit series*) presented on "Effectiveness in Legislatures: Getting the message out". Delegates were treated to a learned presentation on the state of our legislative assemblies, the matter of compensation for members of Canadian Parliaments, the role of legislative assemblies and the general regard with which Canadians hold their parliamentary institutions.

Speakers **George Hickes** (Manitoba), **Bill Barisoff** (British Columbia), **Harvey Hodder** (Newfoundland and Labrador), **Myron Kowalsky** (Saskatchewan), **Cecil Clarke** (Nova Scotia) and **Eugene McGinley** (Deputy Speaker designate, New Brunswick) kindly agreed to serve as session chairs and did an excellent job of facilitating discussion and encouraging participation.

Aside from the business sessions there were opportunities for some social activities and friendship. After registration on the first day of the Conference, an "Island Welcome" Reception was held, providing an

opportunity for delegates to meet new friends and get reacquainted with their colleagues from across Canada. The Manorfield String Quartette provided beautiful background music and Island oyster shucker **Mike Pendergast** commanded the attention of those gathered as he offered exquisite Colville Bay oysters on the half shell from his well stocked dory! The next evening, delegates took a short bus ride through the rain to Province House for a reception, an opportunity see the Legislative Assembly Chamber up close and to walk the same halls as the Fathers of Confederation did in 1864. In fact delegates and guests received a special greeting by George Coles, Father of Confederation, as he descended the staircase of Province House to welcome those assembled! This was followed by dinner in Memorial Hall of Confederation Centre of the Arts, Canada's national memorial to the Fathers of Confederation. Provincial and territorial flags hang from the ceiling and the names of the delegates to the 1864 Conference are carved in stone above the entry – a fitting setting for our parliamentarians! Delegates were then treated to some traditional Island entertainment by fiddler **Sheila MacKenzie** and dancers.

On Saturday afternoon, delegates and guests were offered optional activities such as; a guided Island tour (including a drive over Confederation Bridge), an afternoon at the Charlottetown Driving Park for live harness racing or some shopping in downtown Charlottetown. The day culminated with a reception and dinner at the Culinary Institute of Canada where delegates and guests enjoyed the fine music of Este Mundo and an ample sampling of traditional Island fare prepared by some of the soon to be best chefs in Canada!

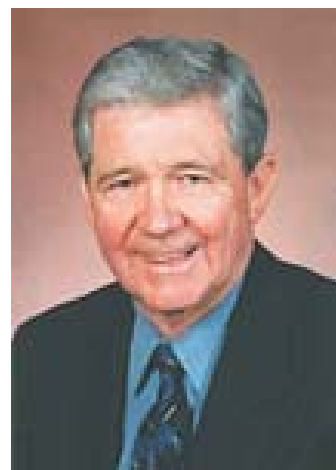
As stated by Speaker Deighan at the closing dinner, "it was a pleasure for the Presiding Officers' and staff of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island to once again have the opportunity to host the Canadian Presiding Officers' Conference. It is our sincere hope that delegates and guests in attendance found the experience as informative and enjoyable as we did!"

New Speaker in New Brunswick

The New Speaker of the New Brunswick Legislative Assembly is **Eugene McGinley**.

Elected in the provincial election held June 9, 2003 to represent the constituency of Grand Lake during the 55th Legislature, he was a member of the Standing Committee on Private Bills, and the Standing Committee on Law Amendments. As a member of the official opposition, he was the critic for matters relating to seniors. Re-elected in the provincial general election held September 18, 2006, he was elected Speaker on February 6, 2007.

Born in Chipman, Mr. McGinley graduated from high school there. In 1957, he graduated from UNB. with his B.A. (Honours in Econom-



Hon. Eugene McGinley

ics) and, in 1958, he obtained a Master of Arts Degree (Economics). He was a Sir James Dunn Scholar. He earned his Bachelor of Civil Law Degree from UNB in 1962 and he studied international and civil law in Texas. From 1963 to 1991 he practiced law in Bathurst and he was honoured with the designation of Queen's Counsel in 1985.

Previous to his election in 2003 he completed five years as Chairperson of the New Brunswick Labour and Employment Board. He was the MLA for the city of Bathurst from 1972 to 1978 and has been actively involved in Liberal politics since he was a teenager. He was president of the Lions Club, New Brunswick Lung Association, Victorian Order of Nurses, and the Multiple Sclerosis Society. He chaired the Bathurst Planning Appeal Board and was research economist with the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council.

New Clerks in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador

The new Clerk of the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly is **William (Bill) MacKenzie**. His appointment was effective October 30, 2006. Mr. MacKenzie has been Deputy Minister, in an acting capacity, of the Department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development since January 2006. Before assuming that responsibility, he was Assistant Deputy Minister of trade and investment with the same department, with responsibility for overseeing government's trade policy, export development and investment attraction. From 1996 to 2001, he was

Assistant Deputy Minister (Regional Development), overseeing the department's network of 22 offices throughout the province.

He has also served in other executive and management positions with government departments and agencies. From 2001 to 2004, he was Assistant Deputy Minister of the Department of Government Services, with responsibility for motor vehicle registration, vital statistics, the Queen's Printer and the overall operation of Government Service Centres. He also worked with the Department of Development, and Enterprise Newfoundland and Labrador Corporation, first as Regional Coordination Consultant, and later as Director of Human Resources.

Mr. MacKenzie was a high school teacher for 10 years. He has a Master of Arts from the University of British Columbia, a bachelor of education from the University of New Brunswick, and a bachelor of arts from Mount Allison University. He replaced **John Noel** who retired as Clerk in August 2006.

In Saskatchewan the new Clerk is **Gregory Putz**. He was born in Moose Jaw and educated at the University of Regina and the University of Western Ontario. He worked as a researcher with the Canadian Institute for Historical Micro Reproductions in Ottawa from 1984-1986 before joining the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in 1987 as a Clerk Assistant.

He is a member of the Association of Clerks-at-the-Table in Canada, the Canadian Study of Parliament Group, the Canadian Aviation Historical Society and a former President of the Roland Groome Chapter

and a member of the National Board of Directors of the CAHS. He replaces **Gwenn Ronyk** who retired in December 2006.

On December 6, 2006, the Government House Leader **Glenn Hagel** asked leave to permit Ms Ronyk to address the House. She noted that Saskatchewan has a very vibrant parliamentary democracy but there is room for improvement.

Some very significant reforms have recently been done, especially the new committee system that was designed to strengthen the role of private members and to increase citizen participation in the legislative process. But now you have to make those reforms work. You have to use those committees to involve the public and to enhance the roles of members and to strengthen the accountability of the legislature. And for our committees to really work, they must have more resources. One of Chief Justice Gomery's chief findings in his review of the sponsorship scandal in Ottawa was that parliamentary committees needed to have more resources if they were to be effective in holding government accountable. And if it's true there, it's very true here. I believe strongly that our legislature is too small. We need more members to have an active committee system and to have a strong and an inclusive legislature. And this isn't just my opinion, there's lots of sound research to support the idea that a critical mass of legislators is needed in a modern and effective legislature. The taxpayers association may not understand this, but you don't get smaller government by weakening the legislature, you only get a weaker watchdog. That is not in the public interest.