


Legislative Reports



Manitoba

The 2nd session of the 39th Legislature adjourned to the call of the Speaker on October 9, 2008 following a busy fall sitting.

A number of Bills held over from the spring session proceeded this fall through Report Stage and Concurrence and Third Reading. The House spent a great deal of this time on Report Stage, with close to 100 Report Stage Amendments being considered in September and October.

Several Government Bills received Royal Assent before the end of the session, including:

- Bill 17 – *The Environment Amendment Act (Permanent Ban on Building or Expanding Hog Facilities)*, which prohibits the construction or expansion of confined livestock areas for pigs and pig manure storage facilities in specified areas of Manitoba.
- Bill 37 – *The Lobbyists Registration Act and Amendments to the Elections Act, the Elections Finances Act, the Legislative Assembly Act and the Legislative Assembly Management Commission Act*, which introduces a wide range of amendments, including:

-Requiring the registration of people who lobby the government, government agencies or Members of the Legislative Assembly.

-Mandating that elections be held every four years in October;

-Establishing an annual mailing expense budget for caucuses and Members.

- Bill 38 – *The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act*, which replaces *The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Accountability Act* and establishes new requirements for fiscal accountability and balanced budgets.
- Bill 45 – *The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act* – which changes the Teacher's pension cost-of-living adjustment through the pension adjustment account.
- Bill 47 – *The Centreport Canada Act* – which creates CentrePort Canada, a private-sector focused corporation focussed on developing and promoting Manitoba's inland port. The corporation will build on the province's well-established network of air, rail, sea and trucking routes.

Additionally, the House passed the following Private Member's Bills:

- Bill 232 – *the Public Schools Amendment Act (Anaphylaxis Policies)* (sponsored by **Erin Selby** – NDP, Southdale) which requires school boards to develop an anaphylaxis policy to meet the needs of pupils who have serious allergies.
- Bill 300 – *the Royal Lake Of The Woods Yacht Club Incorporation Amendment Act* (sponsored by **Heather Stefanson** – PC, Tuxedo) which amends the object of the club and repeals provisions about issuing stock in the club.

The House also devoted some time to the consideration of two Matters of Urgent Public Importance, debated with the unanimous agreement of the House. On Sep-

tember 8, 2008 **Ralph Eichler** (PC – Lakeside) brought forward a motion to debate the issue of flooding and excess moisture conditions which had created severe challenges in several regions of Manitoba, including the negative impact on the agriculture sector, local governments, businesses and citizens. On September 10, 2008 **Kevin Lamoureux** (Independent Liberal – Inkster) initiated a debate on Air Canada's announcement of plans to close its flight attendant base in Winnipeg.

The Manitoba Public Accounts Committee met in September and October to consider Auditor General's reports on Hecla Island Land and Property Transactions, a review of the Workers Compensation Board, as well as the Manitoba Public Accounts for the last fiscal year. The Committee expressed a desire to meet again before the end of the year.

From October 16 to 19 2008, Speaker **George Hickey** hosted the 30th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Canadian Regional Seminar. Held at the Fairmont Hotel and the Manitoba Legislature, the seminar featured business sessions covering the following topics:

- ♦ Urban Rural Disconnect
- ♦ Newfoundland and Labrador Audit Committee
- ♦ Rural Development Initiatives in Prince Edward Island
- ♦ Nurse Recruitment and Retention
- ♦ The Role of Private Members' Legislation and Public Policy

The 3rd session of the 39th Manitoba Legislature began on Thursday, November 20, 2008 with a Speech from the Throne.

Rick Yarish
Clerk Assistant /
Clerk of Committees



Saskatchewan

One week before the scheduled fall opening, the Leader of the Opposition and former Premier, **Lorne Calvert**, announced that he would be stepping down as leader of the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party. Mr. Calvert first entered the Assembly in 1986 and served in the cabinet of **Roy Romanow** before himself becoming the NDP leader and Premier in 2001. He represented a Moose Jaw constituency from 1986 until 1999 and has been the MLA for Saskatoon Riversdale since 2001. Mr. Calvert will continue to lead his party until a new leader is chosen at a convention in June 2009.

Fall Sitting

Saskatchewan politicians reassembled in Regina early on October 22nd to welcome a new colleague and to prorogue the first session. **Doyle Vermette** was formally presented in the Assembly by Mr. Calvert and deputy leader **Pat Atkinson** before taking his seat to hear Lieutenant Governor **Gordon**

Barnhart read the prorogation speech.

The second session of the Saskatchewan Assembly opened later that afternoon. Under the title "A stronger Saskatchewan, a better life", The Lieutenant Governor outlined the government's plans for ensuring continued economic growth and the participation of all Saskatchewanians in the province's new prosperity.

Premier **Brad Wall** laid the foundation for his administration's plans a day earlier with the announcement of income tax reductions, an additional \$1 billion to pay down the provincial debt and a 50% increase in infrastructure investments. The Throne Speech enumerated a number of further initiatives, including:

- New educational and training programs particularly targeted at engaging First Nations and Métis people and a commitment to enable libraries to expand their services and programs;
- Equitable income support and services for persons with disabilities;
- Environmental programs to control greenhouse gas emissions, a comprehensive water management plan and exploring further the potential of clean coal and nuclear energy;
- Democratic reforms to restrict government advertisement prior to provincial elections and the election of nominees for appointment to the Senate.

Mr. Calvert responded on behalf of the Official Opposition by challenging the Premier to explain how the government's approach would make Saskatchewan "this year country". It was Mr. Calvert's assertion that the government's agenda did little to address or alleviate the pressures facing the populace but

instead forced them to wait until next year for relief.

Procedural Matters

In the opening days of the session, the government took advantage of a new rule that permitted a public bill considered in a previous session to be reinstated to the *Order Paper* in the following session if done within five sitting days of the commencement of the fall session. On October 23rd, Government House Leader **Rod Gantefer** gave notice that he would be moving the reinstatement of Bill No. 9 - *The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2008*. The motion to reinstate the bill was subsequently adopted and the bill was replaced on the *Order Paper* at the same stage it had reached during the previous session. Pursuant to the Rules of the Assembly, the bill is designated a specified bill and the amount of time previously spent considering it is carried forward to the current session.

Assembly Officer

In a letter dated October 22, 2008, Chief Electoral Officer **Jean Ouellet** submitted his resignation to the Speaker effective immediately. Mr. Ouellet had held the position since 2004 after serving in a variety of electoral positions with Elections Canada and Elections Saskatchewan. Speaker **Don Toth** announced that the position will be filled in an acting capacity until a new Chief Electoral Officer could be selected through a national competition.

Margaret (Meta) Woods
Clerk Assistant



Yukon

On October 8, the Premier of Yukon, **Dennis Fentie** (Watson Lake, Yukon Party), pursuant to Standing Order 73(2), informed the Speaker, **Ted Staffen**, that he wished to have the 2008 Fall Sitting of the First Session of the 32nd Legislative Assembly convene on October 23rd. The Speaker informed Members of the Premier's request and the House met on that date.

Legislation

Pursuant to Standing Order 74 the government introduced all legislation to be dealt with during the Fall Sitting by October 30th, the fifth sitting day. The eleven bills introduced were:

- ♦ Bill No. 12, *Second Appropriation Act, 2008-09*
- ♦ Bill No. 54, *Electoral District Boundaries Act*
- ♦ Bill No. 55, *Act to Amend the Social Assistance Act*
- ♦ Bill No. 56, *Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act*
- ♦ Bill No. 57, *Act to Amend the Miners Lien Act*
- ♦ Bill No. 58, *Act to Amend the Quartz Mining Act*
- ♦ Bill No. 59, *Forest Resources Act*
- ♦ Bill No. 60, *Act to Amend the Judicature Act*
- ♦ Bill No. 61, *Act to Amend the Municipal Act*
- ♦ Bill No. 62, *Act to Amend the Animal Protection Act*

- ♦ Bill No. 63, *Act to Amend the Seniors Income Supplement Act*

In addition, **Steve Cardiff** (Mount Lorne, NDP) introduced a private member's bill, *Young Worker Protection Act*, which has been designated Bill No. 109.

Private Member's Motion

The recent federal election was the subject of debate on October 29th, the first private member's day of the 2008 Fall Sitting. **Steve Nordick** (Klondike, Yukon Party) moved:

THAT this House urges the Parliament of Canada to review the effects of recent changes to the *Canada Elections Act* regarding information voters are required to present to prove identity, to determine if identification requirements need to be adjusted to prevent Northern residents from being deprived of the ability to exercise their democratic right to vote.

Fifteen of the House's 18 members spoke to the motion, many of them recounting incidents of constituents who were unable to vote due to new voter identification requirements. After two and a half hours of debate the motion was carried by a vote of 15-0.

Select Committee on Human Rights

The Select Committee on Human Rights held 15 public hearings in 15 Yukon communities during September and October. It also received 24 written submissions. Eight of those submissions came from individuals, while the others were submitted by a diverse group of entities including the Yukon Human Rights Commission, the Nacho Nyak Dun First Nation, and the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition. The committee members - **Marian Horne** (Pelly-Nisutlin, Yukon Party), **Don**

Inverarity (Porter Creek South, Liberal) and Mr. Cardiff - are currently finalizing their report, which is due to be tabled in the Assembly on Thursday, November 20th.

Special adjournment motion

Standing Order 75(1) stipulates that the House shall sit a maximum of 60 days per calendar year. As the House sat for 32 days in the 2008 Spring Sitting, 28 days remain available for the Fall Sitting. Given the October 23rd start date the House would have to adjourn by Thursday, December 11 at the latest.

However, on October 29th the government House leader, **Brad Cathers** (Lake Laberge, Yukon Party) gave notice of the following motion:

THAT this House shall stand adjourned from its rising on Thursday, November 6, 2008 until 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 12, 2008.

The intent of the motion was that the House not sit on Monday, November 10th so that MLAs could be in their electoral districts for Remembrance Day. On October 30th Mr. Cathers requested unanimous consent to debate the motion. Unanimous consent was granted and the motion was adopted after a brief debate.

The adoption of the motion does not alter the fact that the Assembly still has a maximum of 28 sitting days available for the 2008 Fall Sitting. However, now the House will have to adjourn by Monday, December 15th at the latest.

CCPAC/CCOLA Conference

From September 7 to 9 the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Office of the Auditor General of Canada co-hosted the 2008 conference of the Canadian Council of

Public Accounts Committees and the Canadian Council of Legislative Auditors. Yukon last hosted the Public Accounts Committees conference in 1985. The conference initially attracted 95 delegates, 12 observers and 39 guests. However, with the dissolution of the 39th Parliament and the subsequent issue of writs for the federal election, dozens of registrants had to cancel their plans to travel to Whitehorse. Conference highlights included a presentation by **J. Derek Green**, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland & Labrador, on his Report of the Review Commission on Constituency Allowances and Related Matters. Many conference participants also took the opportunity to travel on the scenic White Pass & Yukon Route railway from Fraser, BC to Skagway, Alaska.

Floyd McCormick

Clerk



On November 5, 2008, Premier **Jean Charest** met with Lieutenant-Governor **Pierre Duchesne** to ask him to dissolve the current legislature.

The 38th Legislature had begun on April 5, 2007. At its dissolution, on November 5, 2008, the Assembly was composed as follows: Québec Liberal Party, 48 Members, Action démocratique du Québec, 39 Members; Parti Québécois, 36 Members; 2 vacant seats.

Although subject to change, the opening of the First Session of the

39th Legislature is scheduled to take place on 13 January 2009.

Resignation of the President of the Assembly

On July 14, 2008, **Michel Bissonnet** notified the Secretary General of the Assembly of his resignation as President of the National Assembly beginning on this date. Following his election as mayor of the Saint-Léonard borough, in Montréal, he also resigned from his office of Member on September 24, 2008. First elected in the electoral division of Jeanne-Mance, in the general election of 1981, Mr. Bissonnet was re-elected on six other occasions, in 1985, 1989, 1994, 1998, 2003 and 2007. In addition to defending the interests of his riding, as early as 1981, he was Official Opposition critic in several sectors (communications, consumer protection, access to information, the taxi issue) and was a member of various standing committees.

From 1985 to 1989, he was caucus chair of the Québec Liberal Party and member of the Office of the National Assembly. From 1989 to 1994, he was vice-president of the National Assembly. During this period, he was a member of the parliamentary committee to organize the celebrations surrounding the Bicentennial of Québec's Parliamentary Institutions from 1990 to 1992. Re-elected in 1994, he was deputy whip for the Official Opposition until 1997 and subsequently held the office of vice-chairman of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment until 1998.

Following the elections held in 1998, he was third vice-president of the National Assembly. Incidentally, he was the first vice-president from the Official Opposition, a tradition that the Parliament has upheld ever since. In this capacity, he

was a member of the Committee on the National Assembly until 2003.

Re-elected in 2003 and in 2007, he held the office of President of the National Assembly, while acting as chair of the Office of the National Assembly and chair of the Committee on the National Assembly.

The contribution of Mr. Bissonnet to the progress and outreach of the National Assembly is considerable. In 2005, he was awarded the rank of Grand-Croix, the highest distinction of the Ordre de la Pléiade. During the festivities of the 400th anniversary of Québec City, he received the rank of Officer of the Ordre national de la légion d'honneur de la République française for having distinguished himself as the Québec public figure having excelled by his contribution to France-Québec relations or to the Francophonie.

The Société du 400^e anniversaire de la Ville de Québec wished to underline the commitment of Mr. Bissonnet and the importance he granted to celebrating 400 years of traditions and political institutions in Québec City by awarding him the commemorative medal of the 400th anniversary.

Election of the new President of the Assembly

Upon the resumption of proceedings, last October 21, under the presidency of the longest-serving Member of the Assembly, **Henri-François Gauthier**, Member for Verdun, the parliamentarians elected their new President by secret ballot.

When the period for declaring candidacies had expired, the official list contained the names of **François Gendron**, Member for Abitibi-Ouest (PQ), and **Yvon Vallières**, Member for Richmond (QLP).

The day of the election, after the first ballot, the Member for Abitibi-Ouest, having obtained a number of votes equivalent to the majority of the valid votes cast, was declared elected President of the National Assembly of Québec.

Holder of a degree in education and in business administration, Mr. Gendron has been a Member for 32 years. He was elected as a Member of the Parti Québécois in the electoral division of Abitibi-Ouest for the first time in 1976, and he has been re-elected without interruption ever since. During his career, he has held several ministerial functions, particularly those of Minister of the Public Service, Minister of Education and Minister of Natural Resources. Furthermore, over the years, he has also assumed several parliamentary functions, among them: Deputy Government House Leader, Official Opposition House Leader, Third Vice-President of the Assembly, Interim Leader of the Second Opposition Group. At the time of his election, Mr. Gendron held the office of House Leader of the Second Opposition Group.

By-election

The new Minister of Health and Social Services appointed by Premier Charest, **Yves Bolduc**, general practitioner since 1981 and coroner since 1985, was elected on September 29, in the electoral division of Jean-Talon, following the resignation of **Philippe Couillard**, last June 25.

Resignation

On Wednesday, October 22, **Russell Copeman** announced his resignation as Member for the electoral division of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. Owing to this departure, there were two vacant seats in the Assembly.

Change of allegiance

On October 23, 2008, two Members of the Action démocratique du Québec, **Pierre-Michel Auger** (Champlain) and **André Riedl** (Iberville), decided to change allegiance by joining the Québec Liberal Party.

Interparliamentary relations

During a ceremony held at the National Assembly of Québec, on July 13, 2008, the French Government wished to mark its friendly relations with Québec by honouring 14 Quebecers who excelled in their respective activities, in addition to bringing an important contribution to promoting France-Québec relations or the Francophonie.

President Bissonnet was made an Officer of the Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur de la République française, the First Vice-President, **Fatima Houada-Pepin**, received the insigns of Knight for her action in promoting interculturalism, women's rights, the Francophonie and relations between the National Assembly of Québec and of France. They were awarded these honours by General **Jean-Pierre Kelche**, Great Chancellor of the Légion d'honneur, within the framework of the 400th anniversary of Québec City celebrations.

The Premier of Québec, Mr. Charest, will be awarded the medal of the Légion d'honneur française by President **Nicolas Sarkozy**, during a later ceremony. He will receive the highest distinction, that of Commander of the Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur.

On July 4, 2008, the presidents and vice-presidents of 45 Parliaments of the Francophonie unanimously adopted a final declaration on the measures to take to strengthen parliamentary democracy. At the initiative of President Bissonnet, these parliamentarians

hailing from Africa, America and Europe came together on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Québec City.

This event was one among other parliamentary Francophonie activities held in Québec City from July 1 to 7, namely the 24th session of the Assemblée régionale Amérique de l'APF and the Conférence des présidents d'assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, followed by the 34th session of the APF, the meeting of the Network of Women Parliamentarians and the Ordre de la Pléiade awards ceremony in which 17 public figures were honoured for their remarkable contribution to the outreach of the French language.

A few days before the resumption of the fall parliamentary proceedings, within the framework of the 12th Sommet de la Francophonie, the President of the French Republic, Mr. Sarkozy, delivered an address before all of the Members gathered together in the Chamber of the National Assembly before signing the distinguished visitors book and receiving the President's medal.

Parliamentary simulation

The Intergenerational Parliament was the final activity organized by the National Assembly to underline the 400th anniversary of Québec City. Its proceedings took place from September 15 to 17 under the honorary presidency of **Jean Leclerc**, of the Société du 400^e anniversaire de Québec, with the participation of former Olympic skier **Mélanie Turgeon**, who acted as lieutenant-governor.

Under the presidency of Mrs. Houada-Pepin, over 100 representatives from all generations (from 12 to 80 years) and hailing from several regions throughout Québec drafted an Intergenerational Charter stating

the ideals and aspirations of the participants and bridging the gap between all generations.

The following themes were discussed by the participants:

- ♦ the rights and duties of citizens;
- ♦ health, security, protection;
- ♦ the environment and the living environment;
- ♦ education, socialization and employment.

Internship programme

Each year, the scholarship programme of the Fondation Jean-Charles-Bonenfant awards five \$18,000 scholarships and welcomes young Québec university graduates for a ten-month internship at the National Assembly which comprises three components:

- ♦ the discovery of the National Assembly and a comparative study with other Canadian and foreign parliamentary institutions;
- ♦ the twinning, in alternation, with a Member from the parliamentary group forming the Government and an opposition Member;
- ♦ the drafting of an essay on the parliamentary institutions of Québec.

The 2008-2009 interns are:

Marie-Astrid Ospina D'Amours and **Pierre-Olivier Legault-Tremblay**, holder of a master's degree in international relations; **Olivier Bégin-Caouette**, bachelor of psychology, **Marc-André Turcotte**, bachelor of international relations and international law, and **Pierre-Luc Turgeon**, bachelor of political science.

Francine Boivin Lamarche

Secretariat of the National Assembly

Standing Committees

Various mandates were carried out by the standing committees of the National Assembly from August to October 2008. The following is an overview.

Orders of the Assembly

A motion was carried on May 14, 2008 in which the National Assembly ordered the Committee on Institutions to examine and make a report, by October 10, 2008, on the nature and context of the signing of the contract granted to Attractions Hippiques by the Government of Québec, and hear the persons it deemed necessary. The Committee on Institutions held public hearings for this purpose last August 27, 28 and 29. During the three days of hearings, the Committee heard more than a dozen persons, including Senator **Paul J. Massicotte**, owner of Attractions Hippiques, the Auditor General of Québec, the Minister of Finance and the chairman and chief executive officer of Loto-Québec.

The Committee on Public Finance also was given a mandate by a motion carried at the National Assembly last May 28. Pursuant to the provisions of this motion, the Committee was to hear, before October 21, 2008, the members of the working committee on the assessment of the cost of pension plan indexing. The mandate of this working committee, formed following a motion carried at the National Assembly on October 16, 2007, was to determine the main parameters and pertinent facts relating to public and parapublic sector pension plan indexing. The hearing with the six members of this working committee took place last September 30. Several persons attended this sitting, particularly the representatives of the main associations of Québec's

public service pensioners especially concerned by this matter.

Orders of Initiative

The Committee on Social Affairs held three days of public hearings in Montréal on September 29 and 30 and on October 1 within the framework of its order of initiative on homelessness in Québec. On this occasion, the Committee members heard thirty-five agencies and were also able to hear homeless persons or those who had already been in this situation. Approximately three hundred people attended these public hearings. The Members also took the opportunity while in Montréal to visit agencies that help the homeless.

The Committee is continuing its regional tour this autumn by visiting the cities of Trois-Rivières and Gatineau, before concluding its proceedings in Québec City. Incidentally, the Committee is holding an on-line consultation on homelessness to allow all citizens to give their opinion on this important issue.

The Committee on Culture held two days of public hearings within the framework of its order of initiative aiming to examine the situation as regards the dubbing of movies and television series in Québec. The Committee is especially interested in the issues surrounding the DVD and new technologies fields. These hearings allowed the Committee to hear eleven persons and agencies directly related to this sector of activities.

Statutory Orders

The Committee on Transportation and the Environment held special consultations on two bills in September and October 2008. Six days of public hearings were held on Bill 92, *An Act to affirm the collective nature of water resources and provide for*

increased water resource protection. Thirty persons and agencies came before the Committee members within the framework of these consultations. The Committee then set aside two sittings to hold special consultations and public hearings on Bill 96, *An Act to amend the Act respecting transportation services by taxi*. This bill aims, among other things, to improve the quality of handicapped accessible taxi services. Eight groups were heard on this occasion.

Accountability

In pursuance of the authority vested therein by the Standing Orders and the *Public Administration Act*, the Committee on Public Administration heard the head officers of three agencies. First, it heard the Deputy Minister of Revenue as well as the chairman of the *Société de développement des entreprises culturelles* concerning financial support given to cultural businesses. It then heard the authorities of the *Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux* concerning the procurement process regarding medical equipment and supplies. Both of these hearings followed up on the observations made by the Auditor General of Québec in his report published in March 2008.

For further information regarding the standing committee proceedings, please visit the Internet site of the Québec National Assembly at the following address: www.assnat.qc.ca.

Christina Turcot

Secretariat of Committees

Translation: **Sylvia Ford**
Secretariat of the Assembly



Prince Edward Island

The standing committees maintained a busy and productive schedule during the last quarter.

The Standing Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Environment held six meetings and received briefings on a variety of topics related to its mandate. The committee members also participated in a fact-finding tour of a cranberry harvest in conjunction with their investigations into the state of the industry in Prince Edward Island.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts met several times this fall with the Auditor General to review his latest annual report to the Legislative Assembly. In addition, the committee is continuing to follow up on a previous audit conducted of workforce incentive programs, the intention of which was to facilitate a restructuring of the provincial public service. At the beginning of October, the Auditor General informed the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that he had commenced an audit of the Provincial Nominee Program. The program, administered by the provincial government, has recently been the subject of media and community comment on the appropriateness of its management. The committee will decide in the coming weeks whether to embark on their own review of the program or wait until the Auditor General's audit is completed.

At the end of the Spring session, members of the Standing Committee on Community Affairs and Economic Development agreed to undertake a review of rural development in Prince Edward Island. Over the summer, the committee met with representatives from the newly-created Department of Rural Development to receive a briefing on the Department's mandate. The Department stated they would put forth a rural development strategy within the coming twelve months and noted that the committee's review of rural development would certainly benefit the Department in their process. The committee decided to solicit submissions from individuals and groups from across the province and held six meetings in September and October in a number of rural communities. The committee will report its findings in November.

The Standing Committee on Social Development has maintained an active agenda in recent months, as the committee was mandated by the Legislative Assembly to review the safe use of cell phones in vehicles. The committee was also asked by the Department of Health to review proposed amendments to the *Smoke-free Places Act*. For both issues, the committee sought public input by advertising for submissions and held several meetings to meet with vested individuals and groups. Findings will be reported in mid-November.

The Standing Committee on Fisheries, Intergovernmental Affairs and Transportation concluded its review of the collapse of Polar Foods International Inc., a business failure which cost Island taxpayers approximately \$31 million. The committee's final report will be presented to the House in the fall sitting.

Second Session to Reconvene

The Second Session of the Sixty-third General Assembly, which had adjourned on May 22, 2008, after 28 sitting days, will reconvene on November 12, 2008.

The resumption of the sitting will mark the first time in the history of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island that the members have been recalled to a date specified by a parliamentary calendar. In the spring of 2008, the Legislative Assembly unanimously adopted a recommendation from the Standing Committee on Privileges, Rules and Private Bills that there be a parliamentary calendar, with the fall sitting starting on the first sitting day following Remembrance Day, and the spring sitting starting during the first week of April each year. The House also decided that 60 days' notice of the resumption of Assembly business would be provided to all members (previously, a minimum of 10 days' notice was required). The parliamentary calendar is intended to better organize the time of the House and of members and add a degree of predictability to the legislative schedule.

Hansard

Once the House closed for the summer, Hansard worked on creating indices to the daily debates and the committee transcripts, as well as continuing to edit committee meetings and conference proceedings. The Manager of Hansard participated in the annual Hansard Association of Canada conference, held in Fredericton, New Brunswick, from 25-29 August. In late October the Manager accepted an invitation to speak to journalism and medical students at a publicly-funded college on the subject of transcribing. This followed a July address to students in a legal assistants' program

at a private college. This "outreach ministry," as the Manager termed it, has three purposes: to introduce a potential new workforce to Hansard, to advocate the importance of transcribing generally, and to alert students about a potential career path. In October there were personnel changes within Hansard, requiring advertisements for positions, interviews, and hiring.

Legislative Library & Research Services

Since the official opening of the Legislative Library on May 22, 2008, its staff have been busy establishing services, working with the standing committees, and dealing with research requests. It was also a very busy conference season. **Laura Morrell**, Research Librarian, attended the directors' meeting of the Association of Parliamentary Librarians in Canada, the 24th Annual International Federation of Library Associations Pre Conference for Library and Research Services for Parliamentarians, and the World Library and Information Congress.

Research Officer **Ryan Conway** has been busy with various research requests from MLAs, caucus staff and standing committees. The Research Officer provides support to standing committees through reports and presentations, summaries of witness presentations and draft recommendations for committee reports. Recent committee concerns have included rural development, the use of cell phones while driving and proposed amendments to Prince Edward Island's *Smoke free Places Act*.

In September 2008, the Research Officer attended the Parliamentary Visitor Services Association Annual Conference in Edmonton/Jasper, Alberta. The week long conference provided a chance to meet visitor services staff from across Canada,

learn how each jurisdiction interprets their Legislative Assembly, and gather ideas that could be used in interpretive and educational efforts at the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island.

Other Matters

As issues such as transportation, NAFTA and border security between Eastern Canadian provinces and Northeastern states become increasingly challenging, more Canadian leaders must develop solid leadership skills. The Council of State Governments' Eastern Regional Conference's Robert J. Thompson Eastern Leadership Academy (ELA) helps them do just that.

Paula Biggar, Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island, was among a select group of 31 Northeastern regional and Eastern Canadian leaders chosen this year for the ELA. The program which ran from September 14-18, 2008, at the University of Pennsylvania, aims to help the region's leaders develop skills and examine major policy issues facing the Northeastern United States and Eastern Canada.

On September 30, 2008, the Prince Edward Island Human Rights Commission announced its first Award for the Advancement of Human Rights in the province. The Commission created the award to recognize individuals, groups or organizations that have made significant contributions toward the advancement of human rights on Prince Edward Island. The selection of the recipient of the Award will be based on exceptional achievement on a volunteer basis to promote human rights and equality in Prince Edward Island as defined in the Prince Edward Island *Human Rights Act*. The Award will be presented

on December 10, International Human Rights Day.

Former Premier **William Bennett Campbell** passed away on September 11, 2008. He was a member of the Legislative Assembly from 1970-1979, and held various portfolios, including education and finance. Following the retirement of Premier **Alex Campbell** from political life, **Bennett Campbell** won the leadership of the Liberal Party and was sworn in as Premier on September 18, 1978. His government was defeated in the general election held the next year. He remained party leader and leader of the opposition until entering federal politics. Bennett Campbell won the seat for Cardigan in the House of Commons through a 1981 by election following the death of **Daniel J. Macdonald**. He took over Macdonald's cabinet portfolio and became Minister of Veterans Affairs but lost his seat in the 1984 general election. Throughout his life, Mr. Campbell was very active in community life, serving as superintendent of insurance and official trustee for the province. He is survived by his wife, Shirley, and their eight children.

Marian Johnston
Clerk Assistant and
Clerk of Committees



House of Commons

For several months, rumours of a fall 2008 election swirled. The parties had tried to find some common ground before Parliament was to resume on September 15, but to

no avail. So on September 7, 2008, **Stephen Harper** went to Governor General **Michaëlle Jean's** residence to ask her to dissolve Parliament. Calling the general election cancelled 3 by elections scheduled for September 8 and 1 for September 22, and caused 35 bills to die on the Order Paper. In total, 33 MPs chose not to run for re election.

On election day, October 14, 2008, according to preliminary results supplied by Elections Canada, Canadians elected a minority Conservative government with 143 MPs-16 more than it had when Parliament was dissolved. The Liberals won 77 seats. The NDP won 7 more seats for a total of 37, and the Bloc Québécois gained 1 for a total of 49. Two Independent candidates were elected as well.

Committees

A few committees held meetings in August, many of which were controversial. Because of the minority government, the opposition party MPs were able to control the proceedings of each committee.

The Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics held meetings during the second week of August (August 11 to 14) on the Conservative Party of Canada's 2006 election campaign expenses. The meetings were marked by many interruptions and points of order to try to shut down the study.

On August 18 and 19, the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri Food met to follow up on the accidental release of a report concerning the government's intention to cut the number of food inspectors. Against the backdrop of the listeriosis outbreak, the opposition parties forced the two meetings to be held, at which Agriculture Canada officials appeared.

The Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security met on August 25. The opposition parties used their majority to pass a motion asking the House of Commons to require that **Maxime Bernier** testify about the Couillard affair, which led to his resignation as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage held an emergency meeting on August 26 to discuss the budget cuts to a number of cultural programs announced by the Conservative government.

On August 27, the Subcommittee on Oil and Gas and Other Energy Prices held its first two meetings. The Subcommittee was created to discuss rising gas prices.

David Gagnon
Procedural Clerk



Ontario

The Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly conducted its annual review of the Ontario Legislature's television broadcast system as part of the Committee's permanent mandate. An issue raised during the review was the fact that a major satellite broadcast distributor was apparently not interested in renewing the contract for distribution of the signal which carries the Assembly's parliamentary channel (OntParl). Committee Members were concerned that, with revised channel programming affecting the OntParl signal carried by cable providers

and with a decision not to renew the contract for satellite distribution of the signal, fewer members of the public would have access to the televised proceedings of the Ontario Legislative Assembly. After further discussion the Committee agreed that a letter signed by the Speaker and endorsed by the Committee should be sent to the CRTC urging that coverage of legislative proceedings in Ontario be made mandatory.

As a result of this discussion and review of the television broadcast system, **Bob Delaney**, who is a Member of the Legislative Assembly Committee, introduced a Private Members Notice of Motion on Thursday, October 9, 2008 which read as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should request of the Government of Canada that an amendment be made to the terms of reference governing the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to ensure that a condition to the CRTC's granting, or renewal, of a license to carry cable, wireless, wireless cable or any other type of television content by every distributor in any market is the requirement to broadcast, as part of every basic package of television services or channels, and using a minimum of one dedicated channel, the legislative proceedings of the province or territory in which the distributor of the television content proposes to offer service, as supplied to the distributor by the legislative broadcast service in that province or territory.

After 50 minutes of debate during Private Members' Public Business, the resolution was carried unanimously on a voice vote.

Speaker's *Sub judice* Ruling

A significant procedural ruling was made on Monday, October 27, 2008,

when Speaker **Steve Peters** ruled that a notice of motion for an Opposition Day be removed from the *Orders and Notices Paper* as it offended the *sub judice* convention. The notice, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition **Robert Runciman**, requested that the Government call a public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding an accused individual's bail release. The Speaker ruled on the applicability of the *sub judice* convention to a motion, and whether this specific motion offended that convention.

The Speaker ruled that although a strict interpretation of Standing Order 23(g) would limit the *sub judice* rule to "debate", a motion provides the context of the debate and therefore must be subject to the rules of debate. The Speaker also cited support for this interpretation in the precedents and practices of other jurisdictions.

Beyond the strict application of Ontario's *sub judice* Standing Order, the Speaker also examined the motion with respect to the broad parliamentary convention of *sub judice*.

The Speaker found that the motion:

identifies – in every one of its clauses – the names of individuals associated with a very serious incident that is still before the criminal courts. It also draws conclusions on certain evidence and on the actions of officials involved in the administration of criminal justice in Ontario.

Consequently, he ruled that the motion offended the *sub judice* convention in that it offered much potential for prejudice to an ongoing criminal proceeding.

Following this ruling it was agreed with unanimous consent that a new notice of motion be placed on the *Orders and Notices Pa-*

per in substitution of the one ruled out of order.

New Standing Orders

On Thursday, October 2, 2008, the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly presented its report to the House on its review during the past summer of the provisional Standing Orders. The key features of the new rules provide that on Mondays the House will start its meeting week at 10:30 a.m. (as opposed to the previous 9:00 a.m. start) and will begin directly with Question Period. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, daily sittings will continue to begin at 9:00 a.m. Similar to Mondays, however, Question Period will move to 10:30 a.m. each day.

Independent Member

Of late, the Member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, **Bill Murdoch**, has been seated in the Legislative Assembly as an independent member. Mr. Murdoch's departure from the Progressive Conservative caucus leaves the seat standings in the House at 71 Liberals, 25 Progressive Conservatives, 10 New Democrats and 1 independent, for a total of 107.

Committees

The Standing Committee on Estimates continued its consideration of the 2008-2009 expenditure estimates of selected ministries. An Order of the House dated June 17 authorized the Committee to meet twice during the summer adjournment. During the period August-October, the Committee completed reviewing the Estimates of the following ministries: Northern Development and Mines; Research and Innovation; Labour; and Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

By an Order of the House dated October 9, the Committee was au-

thorized to change the order in which it will consider the Estimates of the remaining selected ministries, and to extend by one week its period of consideration. The Committee must now present its report on all Estimates considered by the fourth Thursday in November, as opposed to the third Thursday as set out in the Standing Orders.

On September 22, **Tim Hudak** presented to the House the Committee's report with respect to the Volume 2 Estimates (those of the Legislative Assembly Offices).

The Standing Committee on General Government met to consider Bill 90, *An Act to enact the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, to repeal the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act and to make related amendments to other Acts*. Under the Bill, collective bargaining is extended to part time and sessional employees of colleges of applied arts and technology. The Committee also considered Bill 85, *An Act to permit the issuance of photo cards to residents of Ontario and to make complementary amendments to the Highway Traffic Act*. The bill authorizes the Ministry of Transportation to issue basic, enhanced and combined photo cards to the residents of Ontario. Basic photo cards may be issued to anyone who is a resident of Ontario and does not hold a valid driver's licence. Enhanced photo cards may be issued to anyone who is a resident of Ontario and a Canadian citizen and does not hold a valid driver's licence. Combined photo cards may be issued to anyone who is a resident of Ontario and a Canadian citizen and who does hold valid driver's licence.

On September 24, 2008, the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly met for the purpose of writing its Report on the review of the Standing Orders.

Upon request from the Committee to extend the date by which the report was to be tabled, unanimous consent from the House was given on a motion presented by **Michael Bryant** dated September 24, 2008, that stated, "notwithstanding the order of the House dated May 1, 2008, the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly shall submit its Report on the Standing Orders to the Assembly by October 2, 2008."

On October 2, 2008, **Bas Balkissoon**, Member from Scarborough-Rouge River and Chair of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, presented to the House the Committee's report entitled *Report on the Review of the Standing Orders* and moved the adoption of the recommendation outlined in the report.

On October 8 and 22, the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills met, pursuant to its permanent mandate, to consider its first draft Report on Regulations of the 39th Parliament. On this occasion, the Committee heard a presentation by the Registrar of Regulations, and heard statements from ministries whose regulations are included in the report. The report was adopted and tabled in the House on Thursday, October 30, 2008.

The Standing Committee on Social Policy completed its consideration of Bill 77, *An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes*. On September 22, 2008, the bill was reported back with certain amendments to the House for Third Reading, and it received Royal Assent on October 8, 2008. The Committee also completed its draft report on the review of the *Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004*, and tabled its report on No-

vember 4, 2008. In October, the Committee began holding public hearings on Bill 97, *An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*.

William Short
Committee Clerk



Nunavut

The 4th Session of the 2nd Legislative Assembly of Nunavut reconvened on September 9, 2008. Its final sitting was held on September 18, 2008.

There were a total of 178 sitting days during the 2nd Legislative Assembly. A total of 96 bills were introduced, of which 93 received Assent. Five of these bills were introduced under the authority of the Management and Services Board of the Legislative Assembly. These bills amended statutes under the jurisdiction of the Legislative Assembly itself. Two government bills were ordered withdrawn by order of the House and one bill fell off the order paper upon prorogation.

Other statistics of note for the 2nd Legislative Assembly include:

- ♦ 560 Ministers' statements were delivered;
- ♦ 1,437 Members' statements were delivered;
- ♦ 1,762 oral questions were posed;
- ♦ 79 written questions were posed;
- ♦ 14 committee reports were presented;
- ♦ 732 documents were tabled; and
- ♦ 101 formal motions were considered.

Three major pieces of legislation were passed by the 2nd Legislative Assembly during its 4th Session, including a new *Education Act*, a new *Official Languages Act* and a new *Inuit Language Protection Act*. Under section 38 of the federal *Nunavut Act*, the *Official Languages Act* requires the concurrence of Parliament by way of a resolution.

Other business transacted by the House during its final sitting included the appointment of **Norman Pickell** as Integrity Commissioner of Nunavut, the acceptance of Mr. Pickell's report concerning the conduct of Baker Lake MLA **David Simailak** and the passage of a motion calling on the Executive Council to request the Auditor General of Canada to undertake a comprehensive audit of the Government of Nunavut's evaluation and award process in relation to its contracts for medical travel on scheduled air-lines.

October 27 Election

Nunavut's third territorial general election was held on October 27, 2008. Voters in 15 of Nunavut's 19 constituencies went to the polls on that day. Messrs. **Tagak Curley** (Rankin Inlet North) and **Keith Peterson** (Cambridge Bay) had earlier been declared acclaimed at the close of nominations.

Because no nominations were received in the constituency of South Baffin, which includes the communities of Cape Dorset and Kimmirut, a new writ of election was issued. The vote took place on November 3, 2008. Four candidates were on the ballot.

A by-election in the constituency of Akulliq, which includes the communities of Repulse Bay and Kugaaruk, will be held on December 15, 2008. Four candidates will be on the ballot.

The by-election was necessitated due to the cancellation of the October 27 election in the constituency. Under the *Nunavut Elections Act*, which was passed by the Legislative Assembly in 2002, candidates are required to have been resident in Nunavut for a consecutive period of at least twelve months prior to election day.

On September 26, 2008, Chief Electoral Officer **Sandy Kusugak** exercised her authority under the legislation to reject the candidacy of **Jack Anawak**, on the grounds that he did not meet the residency requirements under the Act. Mr. Anawak subsequently exercised his right under the Act to appeal the Chief Electoral Officer's decision to the Nunavut Court of Justice. Under the Act, the Chief Electoral Officer is required to cancel the election if such an appeal is made.

In a written judgement issued on October 7, 2008, Justice **Earl Johnson** indicated that he was "satisfied that the respondent did not err in disqualifying the appellant as a candidate." He denied the appeal.

Mr. Anawak subsequently challenged the *Nunavut Elections Act* on constitutional grounds, arguing that the residency requirements violated his democratic, equality and aboriginal rights under the *Charter*. The Chief Electoral Officer and the Attorney General were the respondents in this matter. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly was granted intervener status. In a written judgement issued on November 5, 2008, Justice Earl Johnson concluded that there was no breach and dismissed the application.

As of November 19, 2008, the Members of the 3rd Legislative Assembly are:

- ♦ **Eva Aariak** (Iqaluit East)
- ♦ **James Arreak** (Uqqummiut)
- ♦ **James Arvaluk** (Tununiq)

- ♦ **Moses Aupaluktuq** (Baker Lake)
 - ♦ **Tagak Curley** (Rankin Inlet North)
 - ♦ **Ron Elliott** (Quttiktuq)
 - ♦ **Adamee Komoartok** (Pangnirtung)
 - ♦ **Lorne Kusugak** (Rankin Inlet South-Whale Cove)
 - ♦ **Johnny Ningeongan** (Nanulik)
 - ♦ **Paul Okalik** (Iqaluit West)
 - ♦ **Eruk Pauloosie** (Nattilik)
 - ♦ **Keith Peterson** (Cambridge Bay)
 - ♦ **Allan Rumbolt** (Hudson Bay)
 - ♦ **Fred Schell** (South Baffin)
 - ♦ **Daniel Shewchuk** (Arviat)
 - ♦ **Louis Tapardjuk** (Amittuq)
 - ♦ **Peter Taptuna** (Kugluktuk)
 - ♦ **Hunter Tootoo** (Iqaluit Centre)
- Messrs. Arreak, Arvaluk, Curley, Okalik, Peterson, Tapardjuk and Tootoo had served as Members of the 2nd Legislative Assembly.
- Former Nunavut MLA **Leona Aglukkaq** was elected as Nunavut's new Member of Parliament in the federal general election of October 14, 2008. Ms. Aglukkaq was subsequently appointed federal Minister of Health.

Nunavut Leadership Forum

The Nunavut Leadership Forum convened on November 14, 2008. The Forum consists of all MLAs. The Forum's proceedings were open to the public to observe from the Visitors' Gallery and were televised live on local community cable channels across Nunavut.

The first item of business was the selection of the Speaker. **James Arreak** was acclaimed to the position. Mr. Arreak had previously served as the Deputy Speaker during the 2nd Legislative Assembly.

Three Members accepted nominations to serve as Premier: Ms. Aariak, Mr. Curley and incumbent

Premier Okalik. Each candidate was permitted to deliver a 20-minute speech. Members not standing for Premier were allowed to ask up to three questions to the candidates. In a secret ballot vote, Ms. Aariak was elected as Premier on the first round of balloting. Ms. Aariak is the second Premier of Nunavut and the first woman to hold the office.

A total of nine Members accepted nominations to serve on Cabinet. Caucus had earlier announced that the Cabinet will consist of eight members (Premier and seven Ministers). In light of the December 15, 2008, by-election in the constituency of Akulliq, Caucus agreed that seven members of Cabinet would be selected during the Forum's proceedings of November 14, 2008 (Premier and six Ministers).

The following Members were elected to Cabinet: Messrs. Kusugak, Peterson, Shewchuk, Tapardjuk, Taptuna and Tootoo.

The Nunavut Leadership Forum will reconvene in early 2009 to select the remaining Minister. The *Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act* provides that the Premier has the prerogative to assign Ministerial portfolios.

Commissioner of Nunavut **Ann Meekitjuk Hanson** presided over the swearing-in ceremony for the Members of the Third Legislative Assembly, which took place on the morning of Wednesday, November 19, 2008, in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly.

The 3rd Legislative Assembly convened for its first sitting on the afternoon of November 19, 2008. Following the formal election of the Speaker, motions were adopted to recommend the appointments of the Premier and Cabinet. The Assembly also passed a motion to appoint Mr. Pauloosie, MLA for Nattilik, as Deputy Speaker and

Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole.

Other business transacted by the House included appointments to the Striking Committee and the Legislative Assembly's Management and Services Board. The swearing-in ceremony for the Premier and Cabinet took place later in the afternoon, which was followed by a well-attended reception in the main foyer of the Legislative Assembly Precinct.

Alex Baldwin

Office of the Legislative Assembly



New Brunswick

In the interim between the June adjournment of the House and the opening of the fall session (Third Session), select and standing committees received public input, filed a report, and reviewed annual reports of government departments and Crown Corporations; an opposition member resigned; a new member was elected and sworn in; the opposition selected a new Leader and a shadow cabinet; and Premier **Shawn Graham** shuffled his Cabinet. Meanwhile, extensive refurbishment continued on the exterior cladding and the roof of the Main Legislative Building.

The Select Committee on Tax Review continued to review input on *A Discussion Paper on New Brunswick's Tax System*. The Standing Committee on Law Amendments received input on Bill 82, *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and the discussion paper *Personal Health Information Access and*

Privacy Legislation. Both Committees are expected to report during the session. The Select Committee on Wellness released a final report, *Wellness...we each have a role to play – Individuals, communities, stakeholders and government*, July 11, 2008. Standing Committees on Public Accounts and on Corporations reviewed the annual reports of departments and Crown Corporations.

Jack Carr, a former communications consultant and government worker, and the twin brother of PC MLA for Oromocto, **Jody Carr**, was elected in a November 3 by-election to fill the vacancy in New Maryland-Sunbury West. The new Member was sworn in on November 19 in a ceremony held in the Chamber. The vacancy was created when **Keith Ashfield** resigned to run successfully in the federal election. He was subsequently appointed the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency Minister in Prime Minister **Stephen Harper's** Cabinet.

On October 18, 2008, **David Alward**, MLA for Woodstock, was chosen Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and became Opposition Leader, a post previously held by Madawaskes-les-Lac MLA **Jeannot Volpé**, following the resignation of Bernard Lord early in 2007. Mr. Alward, a former Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture, was first elected in 1999. The Opposition shadow cabinet includes former minister and MLA for Lamèque-Shippagan-Miscou, **Paul Robichaud**, as Opposition House Leader.

In a November 12 Cabinet shuffle, three new Ministers were sworn in: **Rick Brewer**, Southwest Miramichi, as Minister of Human Resources and Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs; former Deputy Speaker **Brian Kenny**, Bathurst, as Minister of State for Seniors, and Minister Responsible for

the Non-profit Organizations Secretariat; and **Bernard LeBlanc**, Memramcook-Lakeville-Dieppe, as Minister of Local government. Three ministers assumed new portfolios: **Wally Stiles**, formerly Minister of Human Resources, as Minister of Natural Resources; **Donald Arseneault**, formerly Minister of Natural Resources, as Minister of Post-secondary Education, Training and Labour; and **Ed Doherty**, formerly Minister of Post-secondary Education, Training and Labour, as Minister of Supply and Services. **Mary Schryer**, currently Minister of Social Development, is also the Minister Responsible for Housing.

The Second Session of the 56th Legislative Assembly which had adjourned on June 18, met in the forenoon of November 25 to prorogue the session before the formal Opening of the Third Session later that afternoon.

The Throne Speech, delivered by His Honour **Herménégilde Chiasson**, noted that while the New Brunswick economy performed much as expected in the first half of 2008, with many indicators showing solid growth, unprecedented global developments affecting financial markets and the economy will result in lower overall growth this year and that the fallout from turmoil in financial markets and weakness in the US economy and other changes represent a serious challenge for government. "While global economic conditions mean the path has grown more rugged, the journey towards self-sufficiency continues."

Among the numerous initiatives announced were:

- a 10-year strategic plan for intelligent transportation systems;
- the establishment of a New Brunswick Health Research and Innovation Council;

- a response to the Report of the New Brunswick Task Force on Forest Diversity and Wood Supply;
- a tourism strategy for completion in 2009;
- tax reform to be implemented in a manner that helps achieve the goal of self-sufficiency by 2026;
- a new energy policy for release in mid-2009;
- new investments detailed in the *Early Childhood Strategy Action Plan 2008-2009*;
- implementation of a student code of conduct;
- initiation of a modern autonomous college system to allow the New Brunswick Community College to become a full partner with universities in post-secondary education;
- personal health information access and privacy legislation;
- a *Building Code Act* to establish a chief building inspector position;
- improvements to the assessment appeal process to make the process more balanced, fair and transparent;
- a report from and response to the commissioner on the future of local governance; and
- *Pay Equity Act* to apply to all parts of the public service.

In responding to the Speech from the Throne, Opposition Leader **David Alward** stated that the government must reassure New Brunswickers that it has a plan to weather the current economic storm, and that if the Throne speech was any indication, the government does not. The Opposition Leader stated that the economy needs an immediate stimulus to help lessen the impact of the economic downturn, including an immediate reduction in personal, small business and corporate taxes. The Opposition Leader also stated that government should not raise the HST.

The Opposition Leader noted that the government had turned their back on the province's most vulnerable by eliminating \$5 million from the home heating assistance program and that it had abdicated responsibility for administering the

program by outsourcing it to a third party

The Opposition commended the government on its plans to build on last year's Agricultural Summit, an idea that was championed by industry. The Opposition Leader stated that he was encouraged to see that the government is moving forward on implementing the four early childhood development centres, a project that has long been championed by former Lieutenant Governor **Margaret Norrie McCain**.

The Leader of the Opposition called upon the government to:

- take immediate action on the economy;
- address the issue of rising property tax assessments to lessen the burden on families, homeowners and businesses;
- provide the province's most vulnerable with real options to reduce heating costs;
- make affordable housing a priority in the province;
- address student debt to help more students complete their studies with a reduced debt burden.

The start of the session was marked by a new spirit of cooperation indicated in statements on both sides of the House that the Members would strive to work together to solve the problems for the benefit of all New Brunswickers.

The agenda for the House and for the fall sitting will be devoted to debating the Throne Speech, the 2009-2010 Capital Budget, various pieces of legislation, and private Members' resolutions.

Standings in the House on November 28, 2008 as this goes to press are: Liberals, 32; PCs, 23.

Loredana Catalli Sonier
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly