



CPA Activities: The Canadian Scene

Presiding Officers Conference

Approximately fifty delegates and observers attended the 27th Conference of Presiding Officers which took place in Whitehorse, Yukon from January 21-24, 2010. Every jurisdiction except New Brunswick was represented.

The host of the Conference was Speaker **Ted Staffen** of Yukon. Among the other Speakers in attendance were: **George Hickers** (Manitoba), **Roger Fitzgerald**

(Newfoundland and Labrador), **Steve Peters** (Ontario) **Kathleen Casey** (Prince Edward Island), **Paul Delorey** (Northwest Territories), **Bill Barisoff** (British Columbia), **Don Toth** (Saskatchewan), **Charlie Parker** (Nova Scotia), **James Arreak** (Nunavut), **Peter Milliken** (House of Commons), and **Rose-Marie Losier-Cool** (Speaker pro tempore, Senate).

A number of special guests were also in attendance including **Gary Stevens**,

President of the Alaska State Senate, **Mike Chenault**, Speaker of the Alaska State House of Representatives, **Alfons Schöps**, Executive Director of the Partnership of Parliaments from Germany, and the former Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly **Patrick Michael** and **Missy Follwell**.

Following the Official Opening the first business dealt with First Nations Land Claims in Yukon. The presenters were



Sam Johnston, former Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly and **Marian Horne**, Minister of Justice and Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, Government of Yukon.

The second session featured a presentation by **Andrew Imlach**, Director of Communications and Research with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, on his 30 years with the CPA. The third session was on The National Assembly of Québec's Sustainable Development Plan of Action. The presenter was **Fatima Houda-Pepin**, First Vice-President of the Québec National Assembly.

The fourth business session was on What's New in House of Commons Procedure and Practice. The presenter was **Marc Bosc**, Deputy Clerk of the House of Commons. The fifth business session was on Parliamentary Privilege and the Media in the Case of *Sun Media Corporation versus the National Assembly of Québec*. The presenters were **François Gendron**, Third Vice-President of the Québec National Assembly and **Michel Bonsaint**, Associate Secretary General for Parliamentary Affairs and Procedure with the Québec National Assembly.

The final business session was entitled Welcome Back Kotter: New Initiatives in the Senate. The presenter was **Gary O'Brien**, Clerk of the Senate.

A farewell reception and dinner was hosted by Speaker Staffen. The delegates expressed their thanks to Speaker Staffen, Deputy Speaker **Steve Nordick**, and to the staff led by **Floyd McCormick**, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and **Linda Kolody**, Deputy Clerk for their efforts in making this such a successful conference.

Regional Council Meeting

On January 23, 2010 the members of the Canadian Regional Council of CPA who were attending the Presiding Officers Conference held a short meeting for the purpose of selecting a new Executive Secretary-Treasurer to replace **Paul Bélisle** who retired as Clerk of the Senate in September 2009.

The new Executive Secretary-Treasurer is **Blair Armitage**. He is presently Principal Clerk with the Communications Branch Directorate of the Senate of Canada.

He joined the Senate in 1988 as a Committee Clerk and later served as executive secretary in the Parliamentary Associations Secretariat. He was coordinator for a number conferences including the 1994 CPA Plenary Conference in Banff, Alberta.

In 1996, Blair became Deputy Principal Clerk of the Committees Directorate, and worked as Clerk to the Senate Rules Committee and the Conflict of Interest Committee. In July 2001, he was



Blair Armitage

designated acting Usher of the Black Rod, and acted in that capacity for a year and a half until the appointment of a new Usher of the Black Rod.

In 2003, he was appointed Principal Clerk of the Legislative Systems and Broadcasting Directorate which is responsible for the televising of Senate committees; the development of Information Technology solutions for information management issues involving the Legislative Sector; Debates Service and responsibility for the management of the Parliamentary Publications Centre.

He is a past President of the Association of Clerks at the Table in Canada.