



# CPA Activities: The Canadian Scene

Photo by Denis Drever/Senate of Canada.



## 31<sup>st</sup> Canadian Presiding Officers' Conference

From January 30 to February 2, over 60 delegates and guests from every province and territory, gathered in Ottawa for the 31<sup>st</sup> Canadian Presiding Officer's Conference.

On January 30, guests to the conference, which was co-hosted by Speakers **Noël A. Kinsella** and **Andrew Scheer**, were welcomed and recognized by the Senate and the House of Commons following Senators' Statements and Question Period, respectively.

The first full day of the conference began with a courtesy call with the Governor General, His Excellency **the Right Honourable David Johnston** at Rideau Hall. Once delegates reconvened on Parliament Hill,

Speaker Kinsella presented a thoughtful statement on the critical role of the Senate in Canada's bicameral Parliament (see a revised version of this presentation in this issue). In a subsequent discussion chaired by **the Hon. Dale Graham**, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick, delegates of some provinces which favour reform or outright abolition of this chamber offered some counterarguments. Attendees noted they were waiting with interest for the Supreme Court's reference on Senate reform.

In a session chaired by **the Hon. Carolyn Bertram**, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island on the pros and cons of the Legislative Precinct being under the authority and responsibility

of the Speaker and the administration of Parliament, **the Hon. Dan D'Autremont**, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan's presentation prompted much discussion about the diverse methods Canadian parliaments use to oversee their grounds and operations. Numerous delegates mentioned the difficulty administrators of legislatures have had when requesting funds for general operations or renovations from members who may face political consequences when approving spending.

A third session chaired by Ontario Deputy Speaker **Bas Balkissoon**, featured a presentation by **the Hon. Daryl Reid**, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and **Jacques Chagnon**, Speaker of the

National Assembly of Quebec, focussed on security issues facing legislatures. Discussion included numerous anecdotes about security threats, breaches, and protective services in place. Some commentators remarked that geography and population often lead to particular challenges for certain jurisdictions.

On February 1, under the guidance of chair **the Hon. Linda Reid**, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia and presenter **the Hon. Ross Wiseman**, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador, delegates briefly brainstormed potential topics for future CPA regional conference and seminars. Participants noted the need to provide discussions which were interesting, relevant, informative, non-partisan and either specialized or more general

depending on the expected audience.

Speaker Scheer outlined some recent rulings he had made regarding the speaking privileges of MPs in a session chaired by **the Hon. David Laxton**, Speaker of the Assembly of the Yukon, on the role of the Speaker versus the role of the parties in managing the House. Much discussion ensued on different procedures for managing Question Periods in legislatures across the country.

Finally, in a session which seemed to be of particular interest to many parliamentarians in attendance, **the Hon. Jackie Jacobson**, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, outlined some of the Members' Assistance Programs in his jurisdiction. In the wide-ranging discussion which followed, chaired by

**the Hon. Gene Zwozdesky**, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, delegates noted the special stresses of their unique occupations and the need to ensure that their mental and physical health is well managed. Dramatic differences in terms of what services were available at different legislatures were observed.

In addition to formal business, attendees had the pleasure of taking in an Ottawa Senators hockey game, the official opening of Winterlude, and receptions hosted by Speakers Kinsella and Scheer, **Gary W. O'Brien**, Clerk of the Senate and Clerk of the Parliaments, **Audrey O'Brien**, Clerk of the House of Commons. A parallel programme for delegates' guests received much praise as well.

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Speakers Noël Kinsella and Andrew Scheer (left) address delegates during the opening session of the 31st Presiding Officers' conference in Ottawa.



Speaker Kinsella (centre) points out some interesting features in the Centre Block to Speaker David Laxton of Yukon (left) and Speaker Ross Wiseman of Newfoundland and Labrador (right).



In between sessions some attendees took the opportunity to get a guided tour of the Senate Chamber with Speaker Kinsella.



PEI Speaker Carolyn Bertram (centre) shares a laugh during a break with Northwest Territories delegates Colette Langlois, Acting Clerk, and Speaker Jackie Jacobson.



Alberta's Deputy Chair of Committees Mary Anne Jablonski and Alberta Speaker Gene Zwozdesky during a panel discussion.



Attendees listened to talks on security issues facing legislatures, Members' Assistance Programs, and different methods used to manage parliamentary precincts.



Quebec President Jacques Chagnon (centre) presents gifts to Speakers Kinsella and Scheer, co-hosts of the conference.

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