

British Columbia

Speech from the Throne

The Fifth Session of the 40th Parliament opened on February 9, 2016, with the presentation of the Speech from the Throne by Lieutenant Governor **Judith Guichon**. The Speech outlined government's plan to diversify the province's economy by the expansion of new Asia-Pacific markets for energy and technology, particularly the export of liquefied natural gas (LNG). During Address in Reply debate, Official Opposition Members expressed concern about the viability of the LNG industry, the adverse impact of government policies on worker safety and the environment, and the need for more actions to address poverty and the high cost of living.

Budget 2016

On February 16, 2016, Finance Minister **Michael de Jong**, presented the provincial budget for the 2016-17 fiscal year. The Minister stated that government's fiscal discipline and focus on economic development have resulted in a fourth consecutive balanced budget, while providing funds for targeted investments to help families, and to support vulnerable communities, First Nations and the private sector in creating jobs and opportunities for workers and businesses. In responding to the budget, Official Opposition Finance Critic **Carole James** called on government to do more to address urgent challenges in the areas of education, training, health care, housing, and the environment.

Legislation

At the time of writing, five of the 21 government bills introduced during the Fifth Session had received royal assent. These include the *Budget Measures*

Implementation Act, 2016 which gives effect to budget initiatives, and the *Food and Agricultural Products Classification Act* which requires all food and beverage products marketed as "organic" to be certified under a provincial or national certification program by 2018. In addition, the Legislature adopted the *Miscellaneous Statutes (Signed Statements) Amendment Act, 2016* which replaces the need for sworn statements with a simple, signed statement where appropriate. This legislation intends to reduce costs, delays and inconvenience for British Columbians by simplifying the law and making it easier to comply with legal requirements. Nineteen private members' bills were also introduced during this spring sitting.

Government Motion

Following two days of debate, on April 14, 2016, the Legislative Assembly adopted, on division, a government motion expressing support for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and urging the federal government to implement it. The TPP is a trade agreement signed by 12 Pacific Rim countries, including Canada, on February 4, 2016, after seven years of negotiations. The federal government has announced that it will consult with Canadians, and will support a House of Commons committee study of the TPP, prior to seeking a debate and vote in the House on ratification of the agreement. During debate on the TPP motion, Official Opposition Members moved an amendment to refer the agreement to a parliamentary committee for consultation on job creation and employment impacts for British Columbians. The amendment was defeated, on division, on April 13, 2016.

Parliamentary Committees

Eight committees of the Legislative Assembly were active during the reporting period. Highlights include:

On February 17, 2016, the Special Committee to Appoint a Merit Commissioner released its report which recommended that **Fiona Spencer** be reappointed as Merit Commissioner for a third term. An independent statutory officer of the Legislature, the Merit Commissioner monitors public service appointments to ensure the application of the merit principle in hiring and promotions in the provincial public service.

Two other appointment committees, the Special Committee to Appoint a Representative for Children and Youth and the Special Committee to Appoint an Information and Privacy Commissioner, were

established to make recommendations on the appointment of two statutory officers due to upcoming vacancies later this year.

The *Representative for Children and Youth Act* provides for the Representative to serve a maximum of two five-year terms. The current Representative, **Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond**, was appointed in 2006 and reappointed for a second five-year term in 2011, and is therefore not eligible for reappointment. The Representative has a three-part mandate: to advocate on behalf of children, youth and young adults to improve their understanding of and access to designated services; to monitor, review audit and publicly report on designated services for children and youth; and to conduct independent reviews and investigations into the critical injuries or deaths of children receiving reviewable services.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner provides independent oversight and enforcement of BC's access and privacy laws. BC's current Commissioner is **Elizabeth Denham** who was appointed in 2010. Ms. Denham has been nominated for the position of Information Commissioner in the UK and is expected to be appointed to this new position in the coming weeks in order to take on these responsibilities following the conclusion of her term in July.

On April 13, 2016, the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services began its annual spring meetings focused on receiving financial and operational updates from BC's eight statutory offices, in support of the Committee's annual mandate to consider the budget reports and estimates of the statutory offices, on an annual basis, which is a process that occurs each November. These spring meetings flow from the Committee's 2014 report, in which Members unanimously agreed to strengthen their oversight of statutory office budgets. The Committee implemented an expanded meeting schedule, including spring meetings, which has provided a broader discussion of annual reports and service plans, a better exchange of information, and increased opportunity for statutory officers to present updates and raise other matters of importance.

Women's Right to Vote

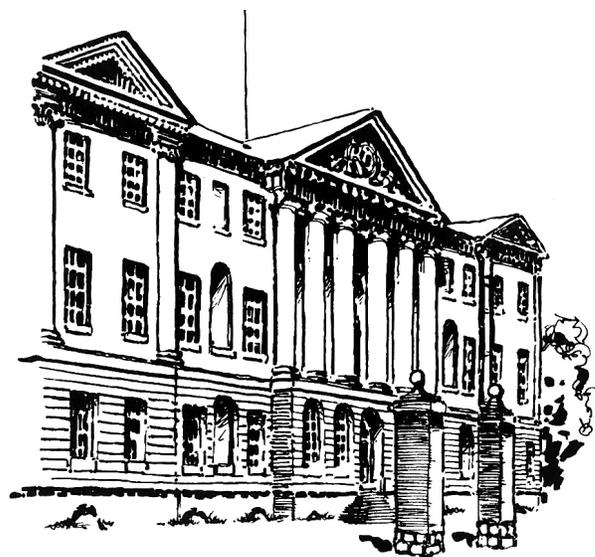
On April 5, 2016, in recognition of the 99th anniversary of adoption of legislation in BC which provided women with the right to vote in provincial elections and to seek provincial office, Speaker **Linda Reid** made a statement in the Chamber. She noted that

currently 38 per cent, or 32 of the 85 Members of the Legislative Assembly, are women. This is the highest proportion in any legislative assembly in Canada's history. Speaker Reid also acknowledged **Mary Ellen Smith**, who was the first female Member elected to the Legislative Assembly of BC in 1918, and **Nancy Hodges** who, in 1949, became the first female Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of BC, and the first woman to hold that position anywhere in the Commonwealth.

Legislative Assembly Staffing Changes

Susan Sourial was appointed Clerk Assistant, Committees and Interparliamentary Relations, effective April 1, 2016. Ms. Sourial joined the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia in March 2011, after 22 years with the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Jennifer Arril
Committee Researcher



Nova Scotia

Election of Deputy Speaker

The Spring 2016 sitting began on April 14, 2016. That day a new Deputy Speaker was elected as the former Deputy Speaker **Margaret Miller** had been appointed as Minister of the Environment in January. Both the Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition put forward candidates for the position. Following a secret ballot election, Liberal MLA **Gordon Wilson**, member for Clare-Digby, was elected as Deputy Speaker.

The Government House leader then presented Resolution 3128, a resolution that in part proposed that Mr. Wilson and **Keith Irving**, the member for Kings South, both be Deputy Speakers and that the annual salary be divided equally between these two Liberal MLAs. This resolution was called for debate on April 19, 2016. The House Leader for the Official Opposition proposed an amendment to the resolution that added a third Deputy Speaker, an MLA of the Official Opposition. Nine members spoke on the amendment and a recorded vote was taken on the amendment. The amendment was defeated. At the end of a short period of debate, the Speaker advised that in order to comply with Rule 85, two-thirds of the members present had to vote in favour of the resolution for it to pass. Rule 85 states that any vote to suspend or change a Rule requires two-thirds of Members present. A recorded vote was taken and 47 of the 51 members were present, thus 32 members voting in favour of the resolution was required to assure its passage – 33 members voted in favour and 13 voted against, therefore the resolution was carried.

Budget

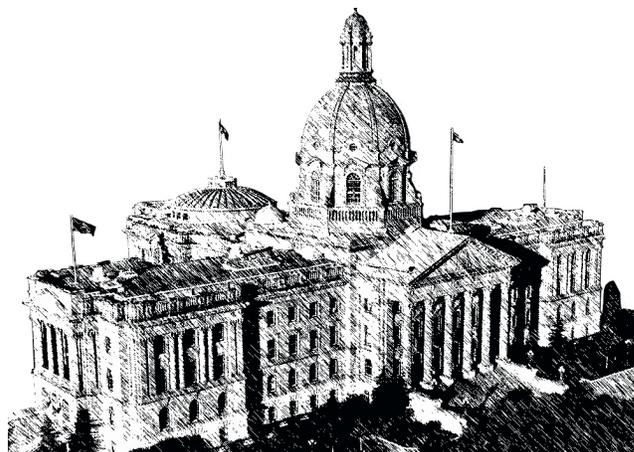
On April 19 Minister of Finance **Randy Delorey** delivered his first budget. Following the replies to the budget speech, on April 21 the Committee of the Whole on Supply commenced estimates discussion and questioning for the maximum daily allotted time of four hours per day. The 40 hours were completed on May 6 with five departmental estimates being discussed: Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, Business, Labour and Advanced Education, Health and Justice. The remaining departmental estimates were discussed in the subcommittee on supply that also met for 40 hours. The Appropriations Bill was introduced on May 6 and received all three readings that day with recorded votes on both second and third readings.

Bills

To date during this sitting 33 Bills have been introduced: 15 Government, 17 Private Member and one Private and Local Bill.

Annette M. Boucher

Assistant Clerk



Alberta

2nd Session of the 29th Legislature

The 2nd Session of the 29th Legislature began on March 8, 2016. The Speech from the Throne, delivered Lieutenant Governor **Lois E. Mitchell**, focused on economic diversification, the environment and democratic reform. Bill 1, *Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act*, which relates to establishing programs to create jobs, attract investment, and diversify the economy, received first reading that afternoon.

The following day the election for the Deputy Chair of Committees was held. The previous Deputy Chair of Committees, **Richard Feehan** (Edmonton-Rutherford), resigned from the position earlier in the year after being appointed to cabinet as Minister of Indigenous Relations. Two Members were nominated and allowed their names to stand for the position: **Heather Sweet** (Edmonton-Manning), and **Prasad Panda** (Calgary-Foothills). Ms. Sweet was the successful candidate having secured the minimum 50 per cent plus one majority.

Cabinet Changes

On February 2, 2016, Premier **Rachel Notley** announced a Cabinet shuffle adding six new ministers and increasing the total size of Cabinet to 19 Members. The new ministers include Mr. Feehan (Indigenous Relations), **Christina Gray** (Labour, Democratic Renewal), **Stephanie McLean** (Service Alberta, Status of Women), **Ricardo Miranda** (Culture and Tourism), **Marlin Schmidt** (Advanced Education), and **Brandy Payne** (Associate Minister of Health).

Budget 2016

Budget 2016, presented by the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance **Joe Ceci** on April 14, 2016, anticipates a deficit of approximately \$10.4 billion for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. It also announced the planned implementation of a carbon levy, beginning in 2017, on the price of fuels that produce greenhouse gas emissions when combusted, including transportation and heating fuels such as diesel, gasoline, natural gas and propane. Low- and middle-income households will be eligible for a rebate to offset the costs of the carbon levy. The rebate will be calculated based on household income. Small business taxes will be reduced from 3 per cent to 2 per cent and a variety of tax incentives have been introduced to encourage investment, innovation, and economic diversification. Increased support for eligible households will also be available through income support, tax credits and child benefits. Infrastructure is also a budget priority with almost \$35 billion designated for projects over the next five years.

As in previous years, the consideration of the main estimates has been referred to the three Legislative Policy Committees. The Standing Orders allow for variation in the amount of time scheduled for a ministry, running from two to six hours. For Budget 2016, each ministry will receive three hours of consideration with the exception of Executive Council which, under the Standing Orders, always receives two hours of consideration. Estimates consideration began on April 21, 2016, and were scheduled to carry through to May 17, 2016, when Committee of Supply will convene to vote on the budget.

By-Election for Calgary-Greenway

On March 22, 2016, a by-election in Calgary-Greenway was held to fill the vacancy created in November 2015 by the unexpected passing of Progressive Conservative (PC) MLA **Manmeet Bhullar**. Following a close race, **Prab Gill**, a businessperson with experience in the oil and real estate industries, held the seat for the PC party by a narrow margin.

Following the by-election, 54 of the 87 seats in the Assembly were held by the New Democrats, 22 by the Wildrose Party, nine seats by the PCs, and the Alberta Liberals and the Alberta Party hold one seat each.

Committee Business

On February 12, 2016, the **Stephanie McLean** (Calgary-Varsity) became the first Alberta MLA to give birth while holding office. Her son, Patrick, has since made regular appearances in the Chamber, including Oral Question Period, while his mother fulfills her responsibilities as a Member and Minister. Following a motion made by **Nathan Cooper** (Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills), House Leader for the Official Opposition, the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services, which is responsible for determining Member remuneration, has established a sub-committee to consider the feasibility of various family-friendly initiatives for the Members within the precincts of the Legislative Assembly.

On March 14, 2016, the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship tabled its report on the review of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate Office 2014 Annual Report. Shortly after, the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices tabled reports recommending the reappointments of **Merwan Saher** as Auditor General and **Glen Resler** as Chief Electoral Officer.

The Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future is continuing its review of the *Personal Information Protection Act*. The Committee has until January 2017 to complete this review.

The Standing Committee on Families and Communities is working on its review of the amendments to the *Mental Health Act* made by the *Mental Health Amendment Act, 2007*. This Committee must report its findings to the Assembly before July 16, 2016. In addition, on April 11, 2016, the Assembly referred Bill 203, *Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016*, to the Committee following First Reading. The Committee will commence its work on Bill 203 after completion of its current review.

Under Standing Order 59.01(11), unless otherwise ordered by the Assembly, committees are prohibited from meeting for any other purpose during the period in which the main estimates are under consideration. On April 21, 2016, the Assembly passed a motion exempting the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee from Standing Order 59.01(11) to permit the Committee to continue its work on reviewing the four pieces of legislation within its mandate. The Committee must report its findings and recommendations to the Assembly before September 29, 2016, on: the *Public Information Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act*,

the *Conflicts of Interest Act*, the *Election Act*, and the *Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act*. This is only the second time the Assembly has approved an exemption to Standing Order 59.01(11).

New Clerk

On April 4, 2016, it was announced in the Assembly that **Robert H. Reynolds**, had been appointed as the seventh Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Mr. Reynolds first joined the Legislative Assembly Office as Parliamentary Counsel in 1993. In 1997 he was appointed Senior Parliamentary Counsel and in 2010 he was named Law Clerk and Director of Interparliamentary Relations.

Jody Rempel
Committee Clerk



Manitoba

The Fifth Session of the 40th Legislature resumed on February 24, 2016 and continued consideration of outstanding business until March 15. The Legislature was then dissolved on March 16 and the provincial General Election was held on April 19, 2016.

At the end of this three-week sitting of the House, six Government Bills received Royal Assent:

- *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 enables 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 makes a number of changes to the process for obtaining protection orders against someone who has engaged in domestic violence or stalking;
- *Bill 17 – The Manitoba Teachers’ Society Act*, which gives the organization representing teachers in the province a comprehensive set of by-law powers to deal with its own governance and operations;
- *Bill 18 – The Path to Reconciliation Act*, a bill that sets out the government’s commitment to advancing reconciliation;
- *Bill 22 – The Elections Amendment Act (Signatures Required for Nomination Document)*, which follows a recommendation of Manitoba’s Chief Electoral Officer to reduce from 100 to 50 the number of voters required to sign a candidate’s nomination document;
- *Bill 23 – The Interim Appropriation Act, 2016.*

In addition, a Private Bill, *Bill 300 – The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act*, also received Royal Assent on the same day.

Standing Committees

Since our last submission, the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development met twice and the Standing Committee on Justice met once to hear public presentations and conduct clause-by-clause consideration of several bills.

Moreover, the Standing Committee on Rules of the House met on March 9 to consider proposed amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, described in the next section of this article.

Rule changes

As noted above, prior to the dissolution of the 40th Legislature, the Legislative Assembly adopted a series of changes to its Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceeding, continuing a rules review process initiated in June 2015.

Following several weeks of discussions between representatives of all parties and based on their agreements, Manitoba Clerk of the Assembly **Patricia Chaychuk** and Deputy Clerk **Rick Yarish** prepared a document titled “*Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Rule Change Proposals – March 2016*”. The document was presented to the Standing Committee on the Rules of the House on March 9, and during the meeting

chaired by Speaker **Daryl Reid**, members considered and passed all proposed changes with a couple of amendments.

The Committee Report was presented to the House the following day and it was concurred in by leave on the morning of March 15. The newly adopted rules came into effect April 20, the day following the General Election.

Key changes include:

- Clarifications to the rules regarding quorum, with new rules added to clarify quorum counts in the Committee of Supply;
- Modernization of the wording regarding divisions, clarification of the process requesting a recorded vote, and introduction of the requirement of formal notice for pairing;
- The number of required copies for tabled items will now be determined at the start of each Legislature;
- There is no longer a requirement for Ministers to provide written copies of Ministerial Statements, with written notice to be given to the Speaker, recognized parties and Independent Members 90 minutes prior to the start of Routine Proceedings;
- If there is no second largest Recognized Opposition Party, the Official Opposition could be entitled to all three Opposition Days;
- Private Members' Resolutions are now limited to a single "Therefore Be It Resolved" clause and a 10 minute question period on the Resolution will now be held immediately after the mover has spoken in debate;
- Private Members' Resolutions can now be filed intersessionally for consideration during resumption of a sitting period;
- Tabling provisions were changed to remove from the rules a specific number of copies to be tabled, with the required number to be determined by the Speaker and House Leaders at the start of each Legislature;
- A provision was added for answers to Written Questions tabled intersessionally;
- Bill sponsors will now be able to move Concurrence and Third Reading motions to their Bills, and have the option of speaking to the motion at the time of moving or at the end of the debate.

To see the complete description of these rule changes, and the verbatim transcript of the meeting of the Standing Committee on the Rules of the House, please visit:

http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/40th_5th/hansardpdf/rh1.pdf

Also, a summary of the changes can be found here:

http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/business/house_rules_2016_changes.pdf

Additional discussions on further rule changes are scheduled for the next fall.

General Election

On March 16, 2016, the Legislature was dissolved and the writs were dropped marking the official start of the electoral campaign. The 41st General Election of Manitoba took place on April 19, 2016. Once the polls closed and the ballots were counted, the Progressive Conservatives won 40 seats in the 57-seat Legislature and they will form government for the first time since 1999. The New Democratic Party won 14 seats to become the Official Opposition, and the Liberals won three seats (four seats are required under Manitoba rules for status as recognized party). Of the 16 ministers seeking re-election, 12 did not win their seats. In total, 29 new members will take their seats in the Manitoba Legislature when the House meets for the first time on May 16 to elect a new Speaker.

After winning his seat in St. Boniface on election night, outgoing NDP Premier **Greg Selinger** announced that he would be stepping down as the party leader. Manitoba Liberal Party leader **Rana Bokhari** lost her bid to obtain a seat in the Legislature in the central constituency of Fort Rouge, and she indicated subsequently that she will step down as leader of her party.

New Cabinet

On May 3, 2016 new Manitoba Premier **Brian Pallister** unveiled his first Cabinet. The new Cabinet appointments are as follows:

- **Heather Stefanson** – Minister of Justice and Attorney General
- **Cameron Friesen** – Minister of Finance
- **Kelvin Goertzen** – Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living;
- **Ian Wishart** – Minister of Education and Training
- **Scott Fielding** – Minister of Families
- **Blaine Pedersen** – Minister of Infrastructure
- **Eileen Clarke** – Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations;
- **Cathy Cox** – Minister of Sustainable Development
- **Cliff Cullen** – Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade;

- **Ralph Eichler** – Minister of Agriculture
- **Rochelle Squires** – Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage and Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs and Status of Women
- **Ron Schuler** – Minister of Crown Services

Mr. Goertzen has also been appointed as the new Government House Leader.

Orientation Sessions for new MLAs

On May 4 and May 5, 2016, several orientation sessions for all new members were offered. On the first day, the newly elected MLAs met with Legislative Assembly Human Resources staff and Members' Allowances staff. The following day, they were offered a session on the House and Committee Procedure and Practices held by the Table Officers. After this session, staff from Hansard Branch and Visitor Tour Program were introduced, followed by another orientation session with members from the media who follow the Legislature. In the afternoon, first the new MLAs met with a panel of former members, **Bonnie Mitchelson, Stu Briese, Gord Mackintosh and Theresa Oswald**. The last session featured several independent officers: the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, the Children's Advocate, the Auditor General, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Ombudsman, and the Legislative Counsel.

1st Session of the 41st Legislature

At the time of submission, it was announced that the House will resume on May 16, 2016, with the 1st Session of the 41st Legislature. The first item of business will be the election of a new Speaker by secret ballot. The first Speech from the Throne from the new government will be delivered by Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba **Janice C. Filmon**.

Retiring Speaker Daryl Reid

On February 22, **Daryl Reid**, MLA for Transcona and Speaker of the House, announced his intention to not seek re-election. First elected to the Manitoba Legislature in the 1990 General Election, Mr. Reid served as his party's critic for transportation and the Workers' Compensation Board. Following the NDP election victory in 1999, he served as the chairperson for the government's Graduated Driver Licencing Task Force and of the Manitoba Government's 2020 Manitoba Transportation Task Force. In October 2011, Mr. Reid was elected 29th Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, a position in which he served for the last four and a half years.

Prior to serving the constituency of Transcona for nearly 26 years, Mr. Reid was actively involved in the trade union movement and from 1986 to 1990 was the National President of his railway employee association.

Chamber accessibility

During the month of April, renovations to enhance accessibility commenced in the Chamber. The challenge with the original design of the Assembly Chamber, which dates back to 1920, is that all MLA desks and chairs are situated on a flooring level that is lower than the row that makes up the row of desks, meaning that MLAs are required to step down in order to access their desks. The design does not work for anyone using any type of accessibility device such as wheelchair or a scooter. As the first step in a multi-phase plan to enhance accessibility, six desks in the third row were removed so that the lower level of the flooring under these desks could be raised flush to the outer rim of the Chamber. Three desks near the loges on both the government and opposition sides have been removed and the floor has been raised. Once the desks are returned in place, any MLA entering the Chamber who uses an accessibility device will now be able to maneuver directly to a desk without having the impediment of uneven floor level. This is the first step in a project to make the entire Chamber more accessible.

Andrea Signorelli

Clerk Assistant/Clerk of Committees



House of Commons

The First Session of the Forty-Second Parliament continued through the early months of 2016. The information below covers the period from February 3, 2016, to May 6, 2016.

Financial Procedures

On February 25, 2016 at the request of **Bill Morneau** (Minister of Finance), an Order of the Day was designated for the consideration of a Ways and Means motion for a budget presentation. On March 22, 2016, Mr. Morneau moved “[t]hat this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government” and presented the budget speech. A special order was adopted on April 12, 2016 governing the disposition of the motion, and following the usual four days of debate, the motion was agreed to on April 19, 2016.

The following day, on April 20, 2016, **Dominic Leblanc** (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons), in the name of the Minister of Finance, introduced the first budget implementation bill, Bill C-15, *An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures*.

Points of Order, Questions of Privilege and Procedure

Procedure

On March 10, 2016, the House adopted a motion by unanimous consent to permit a Minister of the Crown to make a statement pursuant to Standing Order 31 at the next sitting of the House. On March 11, 2016, in accordance with the motion, **Lawrence MacAulay** (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food) rose to pay tribute to a constituent who had recently passed away during *Statements by Members*.

On April 12, 2016, extending a practice in effect since 2010, the House adopted a motion to provide that the bells to call in Members shall sound for not more than 30 minutes for recorded divisions on Tuesdays, Wednesday and Thursdays, with the exception of divisions held after Oral Questions. Due to ongoing construction on and around Parliament Hill and an expansion of the Parliamentary Precinct beyond the Parliament Hill boundaries, this practice was put into place to ensure Members have adequate time to return from offices and committee rooms to the House of Commons for a vote.

Points of Order

On April 18, 2016, **Peter Julian** (New Westminster—Burnaby) rose on a point of order concerning the admissibility of private Members’ motion M-43 concerning the Taxpayer’s Bill of Rights, standing in the name of **Pat Kelly** (Calgary Rocky Ridge), scheduled to

be debated that day. Mr. Julien alleged that the motion, which instructs a committee to draft and bring in a bill following which it would be added to the order of precedence in the name of Mr. Kelly, contravened Standing Order 68(4), which grants Ministers of the Crown the exclusive power to introduce such motions. He further argued that as there is no provision for private Members to do the same, the motion must be inadmissible. **Andrew Scheer** (House Leader of the Official Opposition) argued that the motion was in order given that it was the practice of the House to adopt motions to regulate its own proceedings, or to provide for mechanisms not specifically prescribed in the Standing Orders. The Speaker took the matter under advisement; however, given that the House was prepared for the debate, and in order not to penalize Mr. Kelly, he allowed the debate to begin on the motion. At the time of writing, the Speaker has not ruled on the matter.

Privilege

On April 19, 2016, the Speaker ruled on a question of privilege raised on April 14, 2016 by Mr. Scheer concerning the premature disclosure of Bill C-14, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other Acts (medical assistance in dying)*. Mr. Scheer alleged that the reporting of specific and detailed information contained in Bill C-14 in a newspaper article and elsewhere in the media before the bill had been introduced in the House was a serious breach of Members’ privileges. In his ruling, the Speaker reiterated that due to its pre-eminent role in the legislative process, the House cannot allow precise legislative information to be distributed to others before it has been made accessible to all Members. He agreed that in this instance there appeared to be a direct contravention of the House’s right to first access to legislative information, which had impeded the ability of Members to perform their parliamentary functions. Concluding that the matter constituted a *prima facie* question of privilege, he invited Mr. Scheer to move a motion. Mr. Scheer moved that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, and after a short intervention, the motion was agreed to by unanimous consent. The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs began its study of the question on May 2, 2015.

On May 5, 2016, the Speaker ruled on a question of privilege raised on April 22, 2016, by **Luc Thériault** (Montcalm) alleging that **Marc Garneau** (Minister of Transport) and **Kate Young** (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport) had deliberately misled the

House by making false statements concerning litigation involving Quebec and Air Canada, arising from the *Air Canada Public Participation Act*. He argued that the false information had led the House to misinformed votes at second reading of Bill C-10, *An Act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures* on April 20, 2016, which he believed cast doubt on the legitimacy of the votes. Mr. Garneau rose to confirm that his statements regarding the situation were accurate and that he believed this matter was not a question of privilege, but a matter of debate. In his ruling, the Speaker reminded Members that his role in the matter was not to judge the content or accuracy of the statements made, but to determine whether a Member had deliberately misled the House. The Speaker outlined that to do so it must be proven that the statement was misleading, the Member making the statement knew that the statement was incorrect when it was made, and that the Member intended to mislead the House by making the statement. After examination of the matter, he concluded that these conditions had not been met and that it was not a *prima facie* question of privilege.

Committees

On February 3, 2016, the House adopted a supply day motion moved by **Sheila Malcolmson** (Nanaimo—Ladysmith) concerning pay equity. Among other things, the motion called on the government to take action to close the wage gap between men and women and recognize pay equity as a right. The motion also instructed the House to appoint a special committee with the mandate to conduct hearings on the matter and to propose a plan to adopt a proactive federal pay equity regime. As a consequence, the Special Committee on Pay Equity was struck and the Committee has heard from more than 30 witnesses over the course of the study thus far. The Committee must report to the House by June 10, 2016.

On February 25, 2016, the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying presented its report, entitled *Medical Assisted Dying: A Patient-Centered Approach*, to the House. During the study, the Committee held 18 meetings and heard from over 60 witnesses. The Committee was appointed on December 11, 2015 to review the report of the External Panel on Options for a Legislative Response to *Carter v. Canada* and make recommendations on the framework of a federal response on physician-assisted dying. Though the Report has not been concurred in, the Government recently introduced the related Bill C-14, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments*

to other Acts (medical assistance in dying). At the time of writing, the bill had been adopted at second reading and sent to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

On April 14, 2016, **Marc Bosc**, the Acting Clerk of the House of Commons, appeared before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to answer questions regarding initiatives towards a family-friendly House of Commons. The Acting Clerk informed the Committee of recent improvements to facilities and services available to Members with young children, including the creation of a family room and designated parking spaces, and answered questions on various topics from daycare to potential changes to the sitting week. The Acting Clerk indicated to the Committee that the House administration would adapt to whatever changes the House might recommend. The Acting Clerk had previously appeared in relation to the Committee's study on February 2, 2016. Over the course of the study, the Committee has heard from Members of Parliament, spouses of Parliamentarians, union representatives, and other groups and individuals.

On April 21, 2016, the Eighth Report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs was presented to the House and concurred in by unanimous consent. This resulted in an amendment to the Standing Orders which changed the name of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

Other Matters

Members

Prior to the start of the 42nd Parliament, **Mauril Bélanger** (Ottawa—Vanier) withdrew his candidacy for Speaker of the House of Commons after being diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease). Following this, on December 9, 2015, the House adopted a special order to have Mr. Bélanger act as honorary Chair Occupant on a day to be selected by the Speaker. On March 9, 2016, the designated day, Mr. Bélanger participated in the Speaker's Parade and was in the Chair during Statements by Members and for the beginning of Oral Questions. Mr. Bélanger used a text-to-speech device while in the Chair.

On May 6, 2016, Mr. Bélanger again used a text-to-speech device while giving a speech at second

reading of his private Members' bill C-210, *An Act to amend the National Anthem Act (gender)*.

On March 24, 2016, **Denis Paradis** (Brome—Missisquoi), Chair of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, presented the first report from the Committee, entitled "Tribute to the Honourable Mauril Bélanger," to acknowledge the significant contribution that Mr. Bélanger has made to official languages in Canada. Unusually, Mr. Paradis read the report in its entirety and referred to Mr. Bélanger by name. The Speaker noted this derivation from the normal practices of the House but added he would allow it once given the circumstances.

On March 23, 2016, news was received of the death earlier that day of **Jim Hillyer** (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner). It being Wednesday, the House met as usual at 2 p.m., but rather than conduct its normal business, Members proceeded directly with tributes to Mr. Hillyer and observed a moment of silence in his memory. Following the tributes, at 2:26 p.m., the House adjourned for the remainder of the day.

Statements, Resolutions, Special Debates

On February 3, 2016, the Speaker made a statement commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Centre Block fire. He paid tribute to the seven people who died in the fire and recognized the presence of some of their descendants in the galleries. He invited Members to take note of the use of the wooden mace, which is customarily used when the House sits on February 3 to mark the anniversary of the fire of 1916. The House then adopted a motion instructing the Office of the Curator to submit ideas to the Board of Internal Economy for a physical reminder, such as a stained glass window, to be installed as a permanent reminder of the tragic event.

On April 12, 2016, the House held an emergency debate regarding the suicide crisis in numerous indigenous communities. This was the first emergency debate of the 42nd Parliament.

On May 5, 2016, during Statements by Ministers, **Justin Trudeau** (Prime Minister) followed by **Rona Ambrose** (Leader of the Opposition) and **Thomas Mulcair** (Leader of the NDP) made statements regarding the fire in Fort McMurray, Alberta. By unanimous consent, **Rhéal Fortin** (Rivière-du-Nord) and **Elizabeth May** (Saanich—Gulf Islands) also made statements.

Moments of silence

On February 16, 2016, Members observed a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the shooting in Lac-Simon, Quebec, on February 13, 2016.

On April 21, 2016, Members observed a moment of silence to commemorate the National Day of Mourning and to honour the memory of workers killed or injured at work.

E-petitions

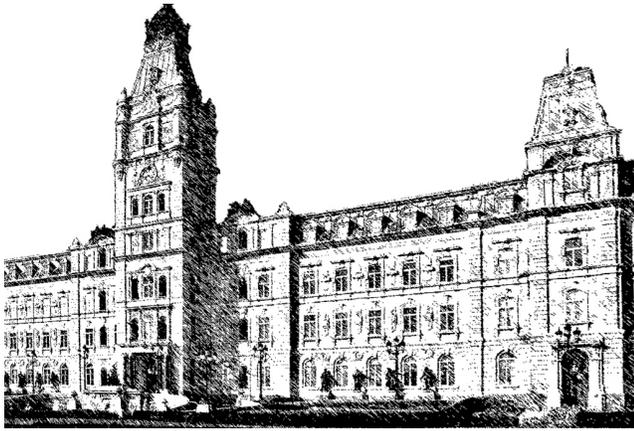
On April 11, 2016, **Kennedy Stewart** (Burnaby South) tabled the first electronic petition (concerning cruelty to animals) in the House of Commons. The House began accepting electronic petitions on December 4, 2015, following the adoption of the Thirty-Third Report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in the previous Parliament. The Report stemmed from a private Member's motion moved by Mr. Stewart and adopted in the House on January 29, 2014, which had instructed the Committee to provide recommendations with respect to establishing an electronic petitioning system.

Tributes

On April 13, 2016, pursuant to the order made on December 4, 2015, the Speaker welcomed **Audrey O'Brien**, Clerk Emerita, to the House of Commons to recognize her retirement. Ms. O'Brien took part in the Speaker's Parade and sat at the Table during Oral Questions. Statements of tribute were made to her by Members of each party.

On April 21, 2016, Members of Parliament marked the 90th birthday of Her Majesty Queen **Elizabeth II** on a number of occasions during the sitting. During *Statements by Members*, several Members paid tribute to Her Majesty, after which Members in the House spontaneously sang Happy Birthday and God Save the Queen. Mr. Leblanc wished Her Majesty a happy birthday during the weekly statement, as did Mr. Scheer on a point of order raised thereafter.

Julie-Anne Macdonald
Table Research Branch



Québec

National Assembly proceedings

Composition of the Assembly

On January 28, 2016, the Premier shuffled his cabinet. There are 28 ministers that make up this new cabinet, two more than before. On this occasion, **François Blais** (Charlesbourg), **Martin Coiteux** (Nelligan), **Jacques Daoust** (Verdun), **Sam Hamad** (Louis-Hébert), **Pierre Moreau** (Châteauguay), **Lise Thériault** (Anjou-Louis-Riel) and **Dominique Vien** (Bellechasse) were given new portfolios. **Julie Boulet** (Lavolette) was also named a minister, along with four cabinet newcomers **Dominique Anglade** (Saint-Henri-Saint-Anne), **Rita Le Santis** (Bourassa-Sauvé), **Luc Fortin** (Sherbrooke) and **Sébastien Proulx** (Jean-Talon). A detailed description of these ministerial offices is available at the following address: <http://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/deputes/fonctions-parlementaires-ministerielles/conseil-ministres.html>

Owing to the health issues of **Pierre Moreau** (Châteauguay), who was appointed Minister of Education and Higher Education in the cabinet shuffle of January 28, 2016, the Premier reassigned key cabinet positions on February 22, 2016. The Minister of Families, **Sébastien Proulx** (Jean-Talon), was also given the Education, Recreation and Sports portfolio, while **Hélène David** (Outremont) became Minister of Higher Education. Mr. Fortin (Sherbrooke), then Minister for Recreation and Sports, was named Minister of Culture and Communications, a position previously held by the Member for Outremont. For her part, **Lucie Charlebois** (Soulanges), Minister for Rehabilitation, Youth Protection, Public Health and Healthy Living, was asked to replace Mr. Moreau (Châteauguay)

as Minister responsible for the Montérégie region. Mr. Moreau will assist with the finance portfolio.

Pursuant to an order-in-council adopted by the Government of Québec on March 9, 2016, a by-election will be held on April 11, 2016, in the electoral division of Chicoutimi. This riding has been vacant since last October, following the resignation of **Stéphane Bédard**.

Bills passed

During the months of January to March 2016, the Assembly passed two bills:

Bill 66, *Funeral Operations Act*;

Bill 90, *Appropriation Act No. 1, 2016-2017*.

Budget Speech

On March 17, 2016, **Carlos Leitão**, Minister of Finance, delivered the budget speech, and the estimates of expenditure for 2016-2017 were tabled on the same day. Interim Supply was adopted on March 22, 2016 and, on March 23, 2016, the Assembly began the 25-hour debate on the budget speech.

Statements from the Chair

On March 8, 2016, **Jacques Chagnon**, the President of the National Assembly, made a statement concerning applause and unparliamentary language during Oral Questions and Answers. This statement was in response to a situation that occurred during oral question period on February 25, 2016. The Official Opposition House Leader asked a question about a Member belonging to the parliamentary group forming the Government. Following an answer from the Government House Leader, several Members belonging to the parliamentary group forming the Government stood up and applauded. After the proceedings were suspended, the House Leaders reiterated the importance of respecting the no-applause rule. The Government House Leader had also insisted that Members respect Standing Order 35, which concerns words deemed unparliamentary.

In his statement, the President recalled that both rules of procedure must be respected. However, there is no cause-and-effect link between them. Furthermore, a somewhat nuanced approach is needed as to their application.

Application of the rule prohibiting applause entails the Chair simply noting, rather than interpreting, actual fact. The Chair's role is to determine whether or not there has been applause. On February 25, this observation was unequivocal. The rule governing unparliamentary language and words inadmissible in debate, set out in Standing Order 35, requires nuancing as to its application. Unlike application of the no-applause rule, the Chair must note the facts and analyze the situation. The Chair's ruling depends on the nature of the words and, especially, the context in which they are spoken. A sensitive, well-balanced approach to applying this Standing Order is crucial in the context of parliamentary proceedings, as it provides the framework for Members to exercise their constitutional parliamentary privilege of freedom of speech. It is the Chair's role to find a way to allow vigorous and healthy democratic debate to take place. In the February 24, sitting, this issue was addressed during Oral Questions and Answers. The Chair had made a cautionary remark to avoid a Member's conduct being called into question, which did not, in fact, occur. The Chair indicated that questioning the Government about a Member is not prohibited. However, casting reflections upon the conduct of another Member is.

The President recalled that in the discussions preceding the amendments to the Standing Orders, the clear goal was to improve decorum through two specific measures: starting proceedings on time and eliminating applause during Oral Questions and Answers. The President stated that it is also important that failure to respect the no-applause rule not become a political tool used to emphasize the importance a certain group of Members accords to a subject discussed in Oral Questions and Answers. This would run contrary to the goals targeted when this rule was adopted. So that proceedings are courteous, the Chair counts on the cooperation of all Members and on their sense of commitment to ensure that this rule is respected and that the words spoken in the House comply with Standing Order 35. This way, we will achieve the goal of improving decorum in the Assembly and of projecting a better image of it.

On March 24, 2016, following a request from the Leader of the Second Opposition Group and an independent Member, the President and other presiding officers issued a joint statement on the application of Standing Order 35(3), which governs referring to matters that are under adjudication before a court of law. During the last two oral question periods, the Chair intervened several times to urge Members to exercise caution and to prohibit Members

from speaking about the criminal charges laid against a former Member and minister.

The Chair recalled that in criminal and penal matters, all Chairs from 1984 on have applied Standing Order 35(3) clearly, consistently and unambiguously. It has been strictly applied because prejudice is deemed likely to occur. Strict application of the sub judice rule in criminal and penal matters ensures that the integrity of the judicial process is respected and cannot be violated under any circumstances without potentially resulting in a stay of proceedings.

Because this rule is not applied as strictly in civil matters or inquiries, under certain circumstances, Members were permitted to discuss the Charbonneau Commission in the context of debates, given that the outcome of a commission of inquiry is not the same as that of a criminal trial. Referring to an indictment opens the door to discussing the acts for which charges were laid. In a criminal case, this is the heart of the matter. When a question is asked in the House, it starts a parliamentary, and necessarily political, discussion on the subject, and a hearing that should be held before the courts takes place on the National Assembly floor. The sub judice rule codified in Standing Order 35(3) seeks to prevent this. There is no doubt that the Chair's role is to protect Members' rights to exercise oversight powers with respect to the Government's actions. However, this role must be exercised in accordance with the rules of parliamentary law unanimously adopted by the Members. In the case at hand, these rules require that the Assembly respect our system of governance and our rule of law. Just as the courts fully respect our Assembly's autonomy by refraining to intervene in its internal affairs and debates, the Assembly must refrain from broaching criminal or penal matters. This does not in any way prevent Members from questioning the Government on its actions. In this regard, the Chair specified that it is possible to question the Government on its actions and decisions other than those related to individuals subject to criminal or penal charges.

National Assembly infrastructure improvement project

On March 24, 2016, the President inaugurated the construction site of the National Assembly's hospitality pavilion. The ceremony was attended by the mayor of Québec City, **Régis Labeaume**, and the three parliamentary group whips, **Stéphane Billette**, Chief Government Whip, **Harold Lebel**, Chief Official Opposition Whip, and **Donald Martel**, Whip of the Second Opposition Group.

Let us recall that the National Assembly infrastructure improvement project, which will be completed in spring 2019, provides for the construction of an underground hospitality pavilion, substantial infrastructure upgrading work and the addition of two parliamentary committee rooms adapted to the needs of parliamentarians, the media and the public.

Committee proceedings

The standing committees began their work in mid-January. The months leading to March were very busy, with four committees often sitting simultaneously, which is the maximum that may meet when the Assembly sits under the Standing Orders. Over 300 hours of public meetings were held to carry out the various committee mandates.

Public consultations

The sectorial committees held a total of 50 public consultation hearings within the framework of their mandates. During these consultations, the committees heard approximately 260 witnesses and received 380 briefs.

Most of these consultations concerned public bills. Nine bills were referred to committees for consultations. Among these, Bill 86 involved broad consultations. The members of the Committee on Culture and Education (CCE) held eleven sittings during which persons and organizations came to express their opinion on this bill aiming to modify the organization and governance of school boards. At the conclusion of the hearings in April, the Committee will have heard over 50 organizations. The Committee on Citizen Relations (CCR), for its part, held six public meetings on Bill 77, *Québec Immigration Act*.

The National Assembly also instructed two committees to hold special consultations on matters other than the consideration of bills. The Committee on Transportation and the Environment (CTE) heard the interested parties in reference to passenger transportation by automobile for remuneration, while the Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries, Energy and Natural Resources (CAFENR) gathered the opinions of citizens and groups within the framework of the consideration of the Green Paper on social acceptability entitled "Orientations du ministère de l'Énergie et des Ressources naturelles en matière d'acceptabilité sociale."

Clause-by-clause consideration of bills

During the first three months of the year, some 40 sittings were held to give clause-by-clause consideration to six bills. The Committee on Institutions (CI) was among the busier committees, as it continued its consideration 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*. Since January, nine sittings have been held thereon and consideration continued beyond March. For their part, the CCR and the CTE each held seven sittings to examine legislation in reference respectively to immigration and the organization and governance of shared transportation in the Montréal metropolitan area. The CCR's proceedings ended in March, but the CTE's work extended beyond March.

Other mandates

The CCR continued its order of initiative on aboriginal women's living conditions. In addition to hearing new persons and groups in the course of public hearings, certain Committee members travelled to aboriginal communities to meet stakeholders on site, in the Québec City region and in Kuujuaq. Furthermore, at the end of March, this committee adopted an order of initiative on women's place in politics.

In March, the CAFENR tabled a report on its order of initiative on the farmland grabbing phenomenon. The Committee members included five recommendations in their report.

Composition of committees

Elections were held to fill three Committee vice-chair positions following the Cabinet shuffle carried out in January. Members **Alexandre Iracà** (Papineau), **Robert Poëti** (Marguerite-Bourgeoys) and **Jean-Denis Girard** (Trois-Rivières) were elected as vice-chair of the CAFENR, the Committee on Labour and the Economy (CLE) and the Committee on Public Administration (CPA) respectively.

Stéphanie Labbé

Parliamentary Proceedings Directorate
Sittings Service

Pierre-Luc Turgeon

Parliamentary Proceedings Directorate
Committees Service



New Brunswick

The Second Session of the 58th Legislature resumed on February 2, when Finance Minister **Roger Melanson** delivered the second budget for the Gallant government.

“This budget marks the close of the Strategic Program Review process and will set a foundation that our province can build upon so we can invest in New Brunswick’s priorities and create jobs” said Mr. Melanson.

The provincial government estimated a deficit of \$347 million for 2016-17. Revenues of \$8.719 billion are projected, a 5.1 per cent increase over 2015-16 revised estimates. Excluding the revenue measures in the budget and prior-year adjustments, revenue growth is estimated to be 2.3 per cent. Expenses are expected to grow 3.5 per cent, an increase of \$303.8 million. The budget included a multi-year plan to improve the province’s bottom line and return to balanced budgets by 2020-21.

Revenue measures from the Strategic Program Review will yield \$293 million once fully realized. Specific items included increasing the general corporate income tax rate from 12 to 14 per cent; increasing the provincial portion of the HST by two percentage points

with a refundable provincial HST credit designed to protect low-to-middle income households to return approximately \$100 million to New Brunswickers; increasing the tobacco tax and establishing a dedicated enforcement unit to disrupt the trade of contraband tobacco; and allowing the purchase of rights to name government-owned assets such as buildings, parks, and bridges.

The Strategic Program Review will yield \$296 million in expenditure reductions including \$115 million in 2015-16 and \$181 million announced in 2016-17. Expenditure reduction initiatives included rightsizing management and an organizational realignment of the civil service to save \$46.4 million; reducing senior and middle managers by 30 per cent; and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure shifting non-core functions to the private sector.

On February 4, Finance Critic **Blaine Higgs** delivered the Official Opposition’s reply to the Budget. Mr. Higgs spoke in support of the move to an integrated pension services corporation to ensure independent and cost-effective pension administration and investment management. He raised concerns regarding the concept of privatization of services as the answer to improved efficiencies; the unfair taxation program for First Nations; spending initiatives contained in the Main Estimates without real definition or clarity; and he questioned the two per cent increase in HST coinciding with the government’s new spending commitments.

Legislation

The Legislature adjourned on February 12 and resumed sitting for two weeks on March 29. Legislation considered during this period included:

Bill 21, *An Act to Amend the Judicature Act*, introduced by Justice Minister **Stephen Horsman**, requires the Chief Justice of the Court of Queen’s Bench to obtain the consent of the Minister of Justice before designating the place at which a judge is to establish residence.

Bill 24, *An Act to Implement Strategic Program Review Initiatives*, introduced by the Minister of Health and the Minister responsible for the Strategic Program Review, **Victor Boudreau**, proposes changes to a variety of bills to allow the decisions made following the Strategic Program Review to move forward. Legislative changes include the establishment of an agriculture appeal board; the elimination of the Post-Secondary Student Financial Assistance Review

Board; the elimination of the Private Investigators and Security Services Commission; the dissolution of the Private Occupational Training Corporation; and the elimination of the Trail Management Trust Fund Advisory Board.

Bill 25, *Volunteer Emergency Aid Act*, introduced by Minister Boudreau, provides protection to a person who, in good faith, renders emergency medical aid to the victim of an accident or a medical emergency.

Bill 39, *An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act*, introduced by Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour Minister **Francine Landry**, creates the presumption that if an emergency response worker is diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, the disorder arose in the course of the worker's employment.

Bill 38, *Vestcor Act*, a private Bill introduced by **Benoît Bourque**, provides for the incorporation of two new corporations and the continuation of the New Brunswick Investment Management Corporation as a private corporation, not a Crown corporation. The corporations would provide pension and benefits administration, investment management, and other related activities for the Public Service Shared Risk Plan and the New Brunswick Teachers' Pension Plan.

Motions

On April 7, the House adopted a motion, proposed by **Carl Urquhart**, asking the government to work on a long term strategy to better understand Lyme disease and to provide public awareness on the risks, protection, symptoms and advice on when to seek medical attention.

Committees

On April 8, the House appointed a Select Committee on Climate Change, charged with the responsibility of conducting public consultations on the issue of climate change and reporting to the House with recommendations. The committee is expected to begin the public consultation process in the summer.

Student Parliament

The 27th Annual Student Legislative Seminar was held from April 29 to May 1. The seminar is a non-partisan program open to Grade 11 and 12 students. Forty students from various high schools participated, representing all areas of the province. The students

were welcomed to the Legislative Assembly by Speaker **Chris Collins**. Throughout the weekend, the students attended lectures focused on the three branches of government: legislative, executive and judicial. Minister **Denis Landry** spoke on the role of the Premier and Cabinet; Deputy Speaker **Lisa Harris** spoke on the challenges and rewards of being a woman in politics; Oromocto-Lincoln Member **Jody Carr** spoke on the role of the Opposition; Green Party Leader **David Coon** spoke on the role of the third party in the House; and **Julian A.G. Dickson**, Judge of the Provincial Court of New Brunswick, spoke on the role of the judicial branch.

Standings

The Legislature adjourned on April 8 to resume on May 17. The current House standings are 26 Liberal Members, 22 Progressive Conservative Members, and one Green Party Member.

John-Patrick McCleave
Committee Clerk



Northwest Territories

House Proceedings

Following prorogation in December, 2015, the 18th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories commenced its Second Session on February 18, 2016, with Commissioner **George L. Tuccaro** presenting the Commissioner's Opening Address on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The opening day of the Second Session saw Finance Minister **Robert C. McLeod** table Interim Estimates for 2016-2017 as well as two supplementary appropriation estimates. In keeping with the Rules of the Legislative Assembly, the tabled documents were moved immediately into Committee of the Whole for Assembly consideration. Supplementary and Interim Appropriation bills received Third Reading in the House on February 29, 2016 and March 2, 2016, respectively.

On February 18, 2016, **R.J. Simpson**, MLA for Hay River North was appointed as Deputy Speaker and **Frederick Blake, Jr.**, MLA for Mackenzie Delta, and **Danny McNeely**, MLA for Sahtu, were appointed as Deputy Chairpersons of Committee of the Whole.

February 18, 2016 also saw amendments to the Rules of the Legislative Assembly to establish the standing committees of the 18th Legislative Assembly as well as the striking of the following Committees: the Striking Committee; the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment; the Standing Committee on Government Operations; the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures; and the Standing Committee on Social Development.

According to new protocol agreed upon by Members of the 18th Legislative Assembly, Premier **Robert R. McLeod** tabled the *Proposed Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories, 2016-2019* on the first day of the Session. By motion in the House on February 22, 2016, this document was moved into Committee of the Whole for Assembly consideration. Consideration of this document took place over three days, with 26 amendments being adopted. The revised *Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories, 2016-2019* was tabled by Premier McLeod on March 3, 2016, the final day of the February-March sitting.

Later that day Commissioner Tuccaro granted assent to four bills and adjourned the House to May 31, 2016.

Legislation

In addition to the supplementary and interim appropriation bills, Bill 1 *An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act* was considered during this sitting. This bill amends the *Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act* to establish a two-year freeze on any upward adjustment of the indemnities payable to Members.

Committees

The Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning continued its orientation and technical briefings during early February. Following the establishment of Committees, on February 18, 2016, the following Members were named Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Standing Committees:

- Striking Committee **Tom Beaulieu** (Chair).
- Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure **Herbert Nakimayak** (Chair)

- and **Cory Vanthuyne** (Deputy Chair);
- Standing Committee on Government Operations **Kieron Testart** (Chair) and **R.J. Simpson** (Deputy Chair);
- Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures **Kevin O'Reilly** (Chair) and **Julie Green** (Deputy Chair); and
- Standing Committee on Social Development **Shane Thompson** (Chair) and Ms. Green (Deputy Chair).

From April 12 to 14, 2016, the Standing Committee on Government Operations, Chaired by Mr. Testart, MLA for Kam Lake, conducted its review of the Public Accounts of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the year ended March 31, 2014. This review marked the Committee's first opportunity during the term of the 18th Legislative Assembly to work directly with representatives from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. A public hearing was held in the Legislative Assembly Building on April 14, 2016. The Committee will table its Report on the Review of the 2013-2014 Public Accounts during the upcoming sitting.

Throughout April, the Standing Committees on Economic Development and Environment, Government Operations and Social Development met to engage in strategic planning exercises, identifying priorities that will guide their work throughout the 18th Assembly.

In late April, standing committees commenced their review of the 2016-2017 Business Plans for the Government of the Northwest Territories. These meetings were *in camera* sessions, to allow Committees to provide input prior to the expected introduction of the 2016-2017 budget during the upcoming May/June sitting.

Michael Ball

Principal Clerk, Committees and Public Affairs



Ontario

The House returned from its winter adjournment on February 16, 2016. The vacancy in the membership of the House—stemming from the resignation of Progressive Conservative MPP **Christine Elliott** to assume the post of Ontario’s first patient ombudsman—had been filled on February 11, when the by-election in the riding of Whitby-Oshawa returned **Lorne Coe**, a Durham Regional Councillor, to the House. Having still to be gazetted and sworn in the day of the House’s return, Mr. Coe, a Progressive Conservative, took his seat in the Legislature on February 22.

Parliamentary Officers

On February 16, on the address of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, **David Williams** was appointed Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province. Dr. Williams, formerly the Medical Officer of Health for the Thunder Bay district Board of Health, had been Ontario’s Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health since July 1, 2015; and previously from November 2007 to June 2009.

Also on February 16, the Assembly presented two addresses respecting the Office of the Ombudsman for the Province of Ontario; one address requesting the re-appointment of Deputy Ombudsman **Barbara Findlay** as the temporary Ombudsman for the period March 16 to March 31; the second address requesting the appointment of **Paul Dubé** as Ombudsman for the Province of Ontario. Mr. Dubé, member of the Law Societies of Upper Canada and New Brunswick, and former federal Taxpayers’ Ombudsman, was sworn in as Ontario’s seventh Ombudsman on April 1, 2016.

Black History Month

On February 16, 2016, **Michael Coteau**, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, introduced Bill 159, *An Act to proclaim the month of February as Black History Month*. The bill received all three Readings and Royal Assent that same day.

Ontario Budget

On February 25, Minister of Finance **Charles Sousa** presented the 2016 Budget. Highlights of his Budget speech included plans for infrastructure investment, for expanding access to post-secondary education—by providing non-repayable grants and assuring students from families with incomes of less than \$50,000 of free average tuition—and for developing a low-carbon economy. To this end, the minister announced plans to move forward with a proposed cap-and-trade program.

Condolences

In the current sitting period, the House has been taking time on certain Tuesdays and Wednesdays, before the start of Question Period, to honour former MPPs who have passed away with all-party tributes. The tributes take place in the presence of the Member’s family, friends and former parliamentary colleagues. Since February 16, the House expressed condolences in this manner on the death of:

- **John Twining Clement**, Member for the electoral district of Niagara Falls (1971 to 1975)
- **Hugh Patrick O’Neil**, Member for the electoral district of Quinte (1975 to 1995)
- **Wayne Wettlaufer**, Member for the electoral districts of Kitchener and Kitchener Centre (1995 to 2003)
- **Derwyn Shea**, Member for the electoral district of High Park-Swansea (1995 to 1999)
- **George Lyle Ashe**, Member for the electoral district of Durham West (1977 to 1987)
- **Lorne Howard Maeck**, Member for the electoral district of Parry Sound (1971 to 1981)
- **Robert T.S. Frankford**, Member for the electoral district of Scarborough East (1990 to 1995)
- **Frank Sheehan**, Member for the electoral district of Lincoln (1995 to 1999)
- **Gary L. Leadston**, Member for the electoral district of Kitchener-Wilmot (1995 to 1999)
- **Peter Kormos**, Member for the electoral district of Welland-Thorold (1988 to 1999), Niagara Centre (1999 to 2007) and Welland (2007 to 2011)

Speaker's Book Award

The winning entry of the 2015 Speaker's Book Award, announced at a ceremony on March 7, 2016, was *Up Ghost River: A Chief's Journey through the Turbulent Waters of Native History*, written by **Edmund Metatawabin** with **Alexandra Shimo Gilles Bisson**, MPP for Timmins-James Bay, used his Member's Statement on March 9 to thank the Speaker for having inaugurated the awards, and to congratulate Mr. Matatawabin on his powerful account of the experiences and stories of the James Bay.

The Speaker's Book Award, which recognizes works by Ontario authors reflecting the diverse culture and rich history of the province and of its residents, was launched in 2012 by Speaker **Dave Levac**.

New Deputy Speaker

On March 22, 2016, **Bas Balkissoon**, Deputy Speaker and MPP for Scarborough-Rouge River, resigned his seat, creating a vacancy in the membership of the House. On April 5, 2016, **Soo Wong**, MPP for the electoral district of Scarborough-Agincourt, was appointed Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House in Mr. Balkissoon's place. She is the second woman to hold the position in Ontario since **Marilyn Churley** held it in the 36th Parliament (1995-1999).

Ms. Wong had been the Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and her appointment as Deputy Speaker precipitated membership changes on eight of the nine Standing Committees.

Gathering Place

Two of the Legislative Building's committee rooms – ones often also used for a variety of events or gatherings—have been transformed into a living legacy of Ontario's rich Aboriginal presence. The new permanent exhibit, titled *Gathering Place*, presents Aboriginal artwork and cultural artifacts with a view to honouring the experiences of the province's Aboriginal peoples and building understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

The two rooms housing *Gathering Place* have been renamed to reflect the two language groups of the majority of First Nations living in Ontario, the Algonquians and the Haudenosaunee (or Iroquois). One has been named *Ninoododadiwin*, meaning

“harmony” in the Ojibway language (Algonquin group), the other *Ē dwaę na ga da:t*, meaning “we will raise our voices together in unison” in the Cayuga language (Haudenosaunee group).

The art and artefacts, which include paintings, prints, canoe paddles and traditional garments, are on loan from Aboriginal communities across Ontario. The objects on display will change over time, but the *Gathering Place* will remain, a vibrant space within the Legislative Building where all those who meet will mingle with the narrative of Ontario's Aboriginal peoples.

Committees

Standing Committee on Estimates

The Standing Committee on Estimates began its consideration of the 2016-2017 Estimates of selected ministries and offices.

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs conducted its 2016 pre-budget hearings in January and February 2016 in Hamilton, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Ottawa and Toronto. In total, 146 witnesses appeared before the Committee, and an additional 114 written submissions came from interested individuals and groups who did not appear before the Committee. On the last day of the public hearings in Toronto, the Minister of Finance appeared before the Committee to update Members on the Government's parallel set of pre-budget consultations. The Minister's presence afforded the Members of the Committee an opportunity to share with him what Ontarians have said to the Committee during its public hearings.

The Committee also held public hearings and clause-by-clause consideration on Bill 173, the provincial Budget bill. The bill was reported back to the House, without amendment, on April 7. The Committee recently elected MPP **Peter Milczyn** as Chair, and MPP **Yvan Baker** as Vice-Chair.

Standing Committee on General Government

The Standing Committee on General Government considered Bill 135, *An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning*. The bill, among other purposes, seeks to replace the existing structure for the

assessment of electricity resources, the development of an integrated power system plan and the development of procurement processes for matters relating to electricity with a new long-term energy planning regime. The bill received two days of public hearings and one day of clause-by-clause consideration, and was reported to the House without amendment.

The Committee is currently considering Bill 172, *An Act respecting greenhouse gas*, which establishes a framework for Ontario's cap and trade program.

Standing Committee on Justice Policy

The Standing Committee on Justice Policy held public hearings on Bill 119, *Health Information Protection Act, 2016*. The bill sets out to amend the *Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004*, to make certain related amendments and to repeal and replace the *Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004*.

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills

The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills considered 10 private bills during this period. The Committee also tabled its First and Second Reports of 2016, containing recommendations on regulations reviewed by the Committee in 2014 and the first six months of 2015, respectively.

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly

The Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly completed a 10-month study on e-petitions, and tabled its report on February 16, 2016. The Committee studied the experiences of other legislatures and received testimony from parliamentary officers, civic engagement advocates, and academics. The report contains the recommendation that an e-petition system be adopted by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and provides a framework for its creation.

On March 3, the House adopted the recommendations contained in the Committee's report, per which the Clerk of the House will initiate a study to determine the best method of proceeding in order to bring about the proposed e-petition model.

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

During this period, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts held hearings on the following sections and chapters of the *2015 Annual Report* of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario: ServiceOntario

(Section 4.09); Hydro One—Management of Electricity Transmission and Distribution Assets (Section 3.06); and Toward Better Accountability (Chapter 5). In addition to value-for-money audits, the *2015 Annual Report* includes a new section – Chapter 5 – that looks at accountability, governance and/or transparency, which the Committee has chosen for review.

The Committee also tabled the following two reports on the *2014 Annual Report* of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario: Education of Aboriginal Students (Section 4.05); and Public Accounts of the Province (Chapter 2).

Standing Committee on Social Policy

In January, the Standing Committee on Social Policy 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 relates to the Ontario Government's *It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment* campaign. The Committee held clause-by-clause consideration of the bill in February and reported the bill, as amended to the House. On March 8—International Women's Day—the House passed the bill, which received Royal Assent the same day.

The Committee went on to consider Bill 163, *An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 and the Ministry of Labour Act with respect to posttraumatic stress disorder*. The bill creates a presumption, under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*, that posttraumatic stress disorder in certain workers arises out of and in the course of the workers' employment. The bill was reported from Committee as amended. Pursuant to an Order of the House, the Third Reading stage of the bill—which had wide support of the House—was limited to 15 minutes apportioned equally among the three recognized parties. The bill was then passed and received Royal Assent on April 6.

Sylwia Przedziecki

Committee Clerk



Prince Edward Island

Second Session, Sixty-fifth General Assembly

The Second Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly opened with a Speech from the Throne on April 5, 2016 at 2:00 p.m. in the Legislative Assembly Chamber, Hon. George Coles Building. The Speech was delivered by **Frank Lewis**, Lieutenant Governor of Prince Edward Island, and emphasized population growth in the working-age demographic, health and wellness, and modernizing government.

Budget

Minister of Finance **Allen Roach** delivered the Budget Address on April 19. Total revenue for 2016-17 is listed at \$1.710 billion, and total expenditures \$1.719 billion, resulting in a deficit of \$9.6 million. Tax changes are prominent in the Budget: the Harmonized Sales Tax will increase by 1 per cent to become 15 per cent effective October 1, 2016, while the Real Property Transfer Tax will be eliminated for first-time homebuyers and the Basic Personal Tax Exemption will increase to \$8,000.

House Business

In the month of April, Government tabled 28 bills. Notable among them are Bill No. 22, *Regulatory Accountability and Reporting Act*, which addresses cooperation among New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island on regulatory reform, and Bill No. 26, *Education Act*, which repeals the *School Act* and updates many aspects of the administration of education in the province.

The Opposition did not introduce any bills during the month of April, but tabled several motions. Opposition motions on the Cape Bear lighthouse, child advocacy services, Boys and Girls Clubs of PEI, the basic personal income tax exemption, honest and transparent debate, a population growth strategy, and broadening the home heating tax exemption were debated.

Report of the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal

The Special Committee on Democratic Renewal tabled its report on an electoral system plebiscite question on April 15. The committee recommended the following question be put to Islanders in a plebiscite in November, 2016:

“Rank the following electoral system options in your order of preference, 1 through 5 (with “1” being your most preferred):

- Dual Member Proportional Representation
- First-past-the-post (the current system)
- First-past-the-post Plus Leaders
- Mixed Member Proportional Representation
- Preferential Voting”

The committee further recommended that plebiscite voters be free to rank as many or as few options as they wish, and put forward specifications on how the First-past-the-post Plus Leaders and Mixed Member Proportional Representation would work. The committee tasked Elections PEI with communicating impartial information to Islanders on the plebiscite, and called for electronic voting to be used in the plebiscite.

As of this writing debate has commenced on the committee’s report, but it has not been adopted by the House. The report can be read at http://www.assembly.pe.ca/sittings/2016spring/reports/23_1_2016-15-04-report.pdf.

Speaker’s Rulings

During the first month of the session Speaker **Francis ‘Buck’ Watts** made four rulings on matters raised in the House. On April 5, he denied a request from **Jamie Fox**, Leader of the Opposition, to rule on whether

a *prima facie* breach of privilege had occurred when Minister **Allen Roach** had allegedly misled the House; the events to which Mr. Fox referred occurred in a standing committee and committee of whole house, in which the Speaker will not become involved without a committee report on the matter. No such report had been provided.

On April 14, the Speaker declined to retake a vote on Motion No. 27, which had been defeated in a recorded division on April 12. Opposition House Leader **Matthew MacKay** requested that the vote be retaken based on his assertion that the announced results were incorrect. After reviewing Hansard and the Journal, the Speaker confirmed that the Journal reflected the results of the vote accurately, but that he had made an error in his indication of how many members voted in favour of the motion. However, as the error did not change the outcome of the vote, the Speaker concluded that it need not be retaken.

On April 20, in response to a point of order the Leader of the Opposition had raised objecting to a recent announcement Government had made outside of the House, the Speaker reminded Government that it is well-established custom that major government announcements are to be made within the House when it is in session.

On April 26, the Speaker ruled that, contrary to the assertion of Opposition member **Steven Myers**, the Premier's recent response to a question in the House was not a deliberate attempt to mislead the House based on its perceived contradiction of a response the Premier had given in an outside organization's questionnaire during the 2015 election campaign. Therefore the Speaker did not find that a *prima facie* breach of privilege had occurred. Further, the Speaker objected to a letter the Leader of the Opposition had sent to the Chair of a standing committee and discussed in the media, in which he suggested that the Speaker's attendance at Liberal party events could lead to questions regarding his impartiality. The Speaker also raised concerns about statements by members of the media suggesting that the Opposition believes an element of partisanship may be present in the Speaker's recent rulings, suggesting that Opposition members may move a motion of non-confidence in the Speaker, and speculating that the Speaker's recent caution to the government was a reaction to the Opposition's concerns regarding his neutrality. The Speaker indicated in his ruling that

"I take these statements very seriously and see

the letter sent to the Rules Committee by the Leader of the Opposition and subsequent public reflections on the impartiality of the Speaker, and suggestions of non-confidence as a clear form of intimidation and thus a *prima facie* breach of Privilege, that cannot be allowed to be advanced unquestioned. To do so undermines the very authority of House itself, diminishes its proceedings and brings disrepute to this honourable institution."

The Speaker then requested that a member move a motion that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges for full review, including any suggested impropriety on the Speaker's part. A member did move such a motion, and it was carried unanimously. The full text of this ruling can be read in the Journal for April 26 at <http://www.assembly.pe.ca/sittings/2016spring/journal/2016-04-26-journal.pdf>.

Ryan Reddin

Clerk Assistant – Research, Committees and Visitor Services



Saskatchewan

Twenty-Eighth General Election

On March 8, 2016, **Vaughn Solomon Schofield**, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, dissolved the twenty-seventh legislature at the request of Premier **Brad Wall**, starting a 27-day election period. A record

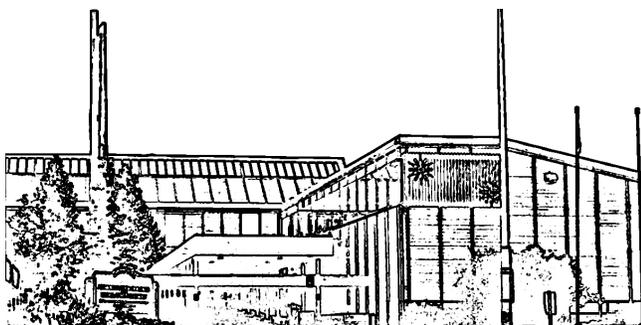
268 candidates were nominated for election in 61 constituencies. Constituency boundaries have been redrawn since the previous general election in 2011, and the number of constituencies has increased by three. At dissolution the Assembly comprised 47 Saskatchewan Party MLAs, nine New Democratic MLAs, and two vacancies.

On April 4, 2016, Saskatchewan held its twenty-eighth general election. The Saskatchewan Party was elected for a third consecutive majority government, taking 51 of the 61 seats. The New Democratic Party elected 10 MLAs and will form the opposition. Seventeen new MLAs were voted into office: three for the NDP and fourteen for the Saskatchewan Party. Premier Wall announced there would not be any immediate cabinet changes given that the members of cabinet were re-elected. **Trent Wotherspoon** was designated as the Leader of the Opposition by his caucus on April 12. He succeeds **Cam Broten** who was not re-elected and stepped down as party leader on April 11.

The first session of the twenty-eighth legislature will begin on May 17 with the election of Speaker and the Speech from the Throne. Premier Wall announced that the government would present its fiscal 2016-17 budget on June 1.

Anne Drake

Committee Clerk/Coordinator



Yukon

Spring Sitting

On March 24, 2016, Premier **Darrell Pasloski** advised Speaker **David Laxton** that the Legislative Assembly would reconvene on April 7, for the 2016 Spring Sitting of the First Session of the 33rd Legislative Assembly. This is the second time since 2007 (the first

time being 2015) that the Spring Sitting has started after the start of a new fiscal year.

On April 14, Government House Leader **Darius Elias** informed the House, pursuant to Standing Order 75(4), that after conferring with opposition House Leaders it was agreed that the Spring Sitting would be a maximum of 28 sitting days, with the final sitting day being May 26.

It is anticipated that the 2016 Spring Sitting will be the last Sitting before the next general election.

Government bills

During the Sitting, the following government bills were introduced:

Bill No. 21, *Third Appropriation Act, 2015-16*

Bill No. 22, *Interim Supply Appropriation Act, 2016-17*

Bill No. 23, *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* (requesting a record appropriation of \$1.39 billion)

Bill No. 95, *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*

Bill No. 96, *Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2016*

Bill No. 97, *Chartered Professional Accountants Act*

Bill No. 98, *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*

Bill No. 99, *Second Income Tax Amendments Act, 2016*

Bill No. 200, *Technical Amendments Act, 2016*

Bill No. 201, *Act to Amend the Placer Mining Act and the Quartz Mining Act*

Bill No. 202, *Act to Amend the Education Act*

Private member's bill – political contributions

On April 19, Official Opposition Leader **Liz Hanson** introduced Bill No. 107, *Act to Amend the Elections Act, with Respect to Political Contributions*. The bill seeks to ban corporate and union donations, to end political donations from non-Yukoners, and to cap at \$1,500 annual contributions by individual donors.

On May 4 – a day on which Opposition Private Members' business had precedence – the bill

was brought forward for second reading debate. Unusually, an amendment was moved to the motion for second reading, proposing that the bill be referred to the Members' Services Board after second reading (rather than to Committee of the Whole, which is the standard practice). The amendment, moved by Minister of Justice **Brad Cathers**, was adopted on a voice-vote, and the motion for second reading of the bill, as amended, carried unanimously (18 yea, nil nay).

Motions by Third Party Leader

On April 20, a day on which private members' business had precedence, Leader of the Third Party **Sandy Silver** brought forward for debate Motion for the Production of Papers No. 13, seeking the return of all current applications for infrastructure funding that the territorial government submitted to the federal government. Mr. Silver's motion received the support of the Official Opposition, but was defeated on division. On May 4, Mr. Silver's Motion No. 1033, urging the government to explain details of the planned Dempster Highway fibre optic line, was debated and carried unanimously (18 yea, nil nay).

Intergovernmental Forum - Yukon's environmental assessment regime

The first intergovernmental forum since 2010 was held in Whitehorse on April 8. Federal Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs **Carolyn Bennett**, Premier Pasloski, Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations **Ruth Massie**, and chiefs of Yukon's 11 self-governing First Nations met and agreed on an approach to federal legislation concerning Yukon's environmental assessment regime. A joint news release issued that day noted that it was agreed the federal government will "work to repeal the four contentious amendments to YESAA [i.e., the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*]. Revised legislation will be drafted in collaboration with Yukon First Nations, the Government of Yukon and other key stakeholders." Critics had characterized the contentious amendments as "moving backwards," arguing that Yukon was ceding to a federal minister some decision-making power that the Government of Canada had been previously transferred to Yukon. Critics also said that the amendments contravened the 1993 Umbrella Final Agreement, which provides the basis for First Nations land claims in Yukon. The amendments had been among those contained in Bill S-6, *An Act to amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act and the Nunavut Waters*

and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act, which had been assented to on June 14, 2015 in the preceding Parliament.

Northern Premiers' Forum held in Yukon

On April 28-29, Premier Pasloski, Northwest Territories Premier **Robert R. McLeod**, and Nunavut Premier **Peter Taptuna** met in Yukon to discuss matters of pan-northern interest. On April 29, the premiers met in Whitehorse, then flew north to Dawson City. The following day, they continued on a northern trajectory to Old Crow, Yukon's northernmost community. Northwest Territories Deputy Premier **Robert C. McLeod** also travelled to Yukon for the forum.

Linda Kolody
Deputy Clerk



The Senate

On April 12, 2016, the Senate welcomed the seven new senators selected by the Prime Minister. They are: **V. Peter Harder**, **Raymonde Gagné**, **Frances Lankin**, **Ratna Omidvar**, **Chantal Petitclerc**, **André Pratte** and **Murray Sinclair**. Senator Harder was appointed Leader of the Government in the Senate, to be styled as Government Representative.

Senator Harder indicated that he supports the continuation of the recent Senate practice of inviting one minister per week to participate in Senate Question Period to answer questions relating to his or her ministerial responsibility. To date, four ministers have appeared.

The Senate's political landscape continues to evolve. Since our last update there have been two retirements (Senators **Irving Gerstein** and **Céline Hervieux-Payette**), one resignation (Senator **Maria Chaput**) and several changes in affiliation to independent. Also, a working group of independents has formed and its members have named a facilitator.

On February 24, 2016, the Speaker of the Senate ruled on a question of privileged raised by Senator **John Wallace** regarding the Selection Committee and its treatment of independent senators. Speaker **George Furey** determined that there had been no *prima facie* breach of privilege and that there were other means by which to resolve the situation. The leaders of the Opposition and of the Senate Liberals later proposed to change the membership of committees to allow for more participation by independent senators. This proposal is still being discussed.

Committees and Legislation

A special joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons made recommendations to the government in February regarding the issues relating

to physician-assisted dying raised in the Supreme Court's decision in *Carter*. Bill C-14 was subsequently introduced in the House of Commons. The Senate has authorized its Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee to conduct a pre-study while this bill makes its way through the Commons.

The Senate may soon also conduct a pre-study of the government's budget implementation legislation (C-15). A notice of motion to this effect is currently on the Order Paper for consideration.

The Senate continues its study of Senate Public Bills while it awaits the arrival of government legislation. These bills cover a wide variety of topics ranging from the creation of a National Seal Products Day, to amending the *Divorce Act* to provide for shared parenting plans and to amending the *Constitution Act, 1867*. Bill S-201, An Act to prohibit and prevent genetic discrimination, was amended in committee and then read a third time before being sent to the House of Commons.

Céline Ethier
Procedural Clerk