



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION

THIRTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

Votes and Proceedings

of the Assembly

Wednesday, 14 January 2009 — No. 2

(Extraordinary Sitting)

**President of the National Assembly:
Mr. Yvon Vallières**

QUÉBEC

Extraordinary Sitting

The Assembly was called to order at 10.08 o'clock a.m.

Moment of reflection

Mr. President informed the Assembly that His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor would deliver the Opening Address of the Session.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor entered the National Assembly and, being seated in the Chair, was pleased to open the Session by the following Address:

Mr. President of the National Assembly,
Mr. Premier,
Madam Leader of the Official Opposition,
Mr. Member for Rivière-du-Loup,
Mr. Member for Mercier,
Ministers,
Members of the National Assembly,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, we are about to enter an important phase of our parliamentary democracy. This extraordinary sitting to which you have been summoned marks the opening of the 1st Session of the 39th Legislature of the National Assembly, a session that will take place against an unusual backdrop. The situation is urgent and it calls for appropriate, informed, responsible decisions.

Before I go any further, allow me to salute the Premier and Member for Sherbrooke, Jean Charest, whom Quebecers have, for the third time, entrusted with the job of leading our province.

I would also like to extend special greetings to the new Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Charlevoix, Pauline Marois, to the Member for Rivière-du-Loup, Mario Dumont, and to the Member for Mercier, Amir Khadir.

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The 38th Legislature was shaped by the election of a minority government—a very rare occurrence in our political annals. On December 8, 2008, the people of Québec elected a majority government, choosing to go back to a more traditional configuration. I am convinced that all the Members of the National Assembly will discharge their office with the civility and mutual respect necessary for the success of our democracy.

The 39th Legislature of the National Assembly includes 49 new Members, 12 of whom are coming back after a brief interlude. Also worth noting, 11 Members of this new parliament are under 35 years of age, the youngest being the MNA for Terrebonne, Mathieu Traversy. We must commend these young men and women for taking a keen interest in public affairs at such an early stage of their lives.

The people of Québec have also expressed their loyalty to some of our more experienced parliamentarians. I would like at this time to congratulate François Gendron and Yvon Vallières on their re-election. Already in 2003 and 2007, they were the most senior Members in the House. Mr. Vallières was first elected in 1973, and Mr. Gendron has been a Member of this House without interruption since November 1976, that is to say, for a little over 32 years. Interestingly, yesterday, the former followed in the latter's footsteps in acceding to the important and prestigious post of President of the National Assembly. They were both found worthy of responsibilities that impose a dual requirement of competence and impartiality, truly a mark of the high esteem in which they are held by their peers.

Four MNAs who were re-elected on December 8 boast over 20 years of experience in parliament. They are Pierre Paradis, Jacques Chagnon, Monique Gagnon-Tremblay and the new Leader of the Official Opposition, Pauline Marois. I am certain their experience will be of great benefit to all. On behalf of the people of Québec, I would like to thank them for their dedication to the public interest and for their lifelong commitment to it.

Like everyone here, I am very pleased to see Claude Bécharde back within these walls. Showing admirable courage and determination, the Member for Kamouraska-Témiscouata not only won his fight against the illness that had kept him away, but also retained the confidence of his constituents. And so he once again takes his place in this House to serve the collective interest and defend the ideas he holds dear.

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Of the Members who sat in the Assembly during the previous Legislature, I would like to single out two in particular who stepped down after playing a major role on our political stage over the last quarter of a century. I am speaking of Michel Bissonnet, who served as President of the National Assembly for five years, and Louise Harel, who served in various capacities, including that of President, and who was the first woman to fill that seat. They each had over 25 years of parliamentary experience. I salute them on behalf of our parliament.

There are now more women in the House than during the previous Legislature, a fact we should all be proud of. The new parliament includes 37 women—five more than after the 2007 election. There is obviously still room for improvement. Will we soon see the principle of parity the Premier applied to his Cabinet also embodied in the National Assembly? That is something only the voters can decide.

Another notable feature of this parliament is that it better reflects Québec's diversity. Eight of its Members were born outside Québec. Two of them are newcomers to this House. I wish to thank them, on behalf of all of us, for their involvement in Québec's democratic life. It is a testament to both their integration into our society and the openness of that society.

And now, getting back to the central purpose of this opening address, the National Assembly is meeting today on the Premier's initiative for a very specific reason. This extraordinary sitting was summoned to give the people's elected representatives the opportunity to discuss and implement new measures to address the international economic and financial crisis. Although Québec has been spared so far to some extent, we are beginning to feel the first effects of the upheaval. Quebecers expect their elected representatives to be extremely vigilant and efficient, and to take the most effective action to soften the impact of the troubled times ahead. I expect spirited discussions inspired solely by the desire to find the best possible solutions in the circumstances. I am convinced the Members of the National Assembly will be able to identify those solutions and thus guide us safely through the anticipated storm as quickly as possible.

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Ladies and gentlemen, Members of the National Assembly, this first sitting is indicative of the scope of the challenges you have chosen to tackle in the public interest and for the public good. The people of Québec, by electing you as their representatives, have put their faith in you. Your commitment is driven by conviction and for that, we honour you. I wish you all the success you deserve in achieving your goals and bringing your projects to fruition. But I hope, above all, that this 39th Legislature will fulfil the wishes and aspirations of all our fellow citizens.

Thank you for your attention and may your proceedings be productive.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor was pleased to retire.

Mr. President took the Chair.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Introduction of Bills

Mr. Hamad, Minister of Employment and Social Solidarity, moved that leave be granted to introduce the following Bill:

- 1 An Act to amend the Supplemental Pension Plans Act and other legislative provisions in order to reduce the effects of the financial crisis on plans covered by the Act

The motion was carried.

Accordingly, Bill 1 was introduced in the Assembly.

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Presenting Papers

Mrs. Courchesne, Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports, tabled the following:

The annual management report of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, for the fiscal year ended 31 March 2008.

(Sessional Paper No. 18-20090114)

Mr. Bachand, Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade, tabled the following:

The annual management report of the Conseil de la science et de la technologie, for the fiscal year ended 31 March 2008.

(Sessional Paper No. 19-20090114)

Mr. President tabled the following:

The special report of the Auditor General of Québec to the National Assembly on the occasion of the publishing of the Public Accounts of the Government of Québec for the fiscal year ended 31 March 2008, in pursuance of section 45 of the *Auditor General Act*;

(Sessional Paper No. 20-20090114)

The activities and management report of the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, for the fiscal year ended 31 March 2008;

(Sessional Paper No. 21-20090114)

The list of papers required by law to be tabled in the Assembly;

(Sessional Paper No. 22-20090114)

The new seating plan of the National Assembly, dated 14 January 2009.

(Sessional Paper No. 23-20090114)

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Oral Questions and Answers

Mr. President rendered the following directive concerning the management of Oral Questions and Answers during the 39th Legislature.

DIRECTIVE FROM THE CHAIR

The Chair must adapt the principles determined over time by the various Assembly presidents to the new composition of the Assembly, that is to say that any Member may address a question to the Government, including Government Members, that the questions are mainly set aside for the Opposition Members, that the notion of parliamentary group constitutes a principle that must be associated with the first two, that a preponderant role must be granted to the Official Opposition parliamentary group and that the Chair must take into consideration the presence of independent Members when distributing the questions.

For the duration of the 39th Legislature, the framework for Oral Question Period will be the following: The Government Members will be granted two questions per four sittings. This question will be addressed in 6th place. The independent Members will be granted one question per sitting, in 4th place. The latter may address a question each in turn. However, they will have to determine among themselves who will address the question during a sitting. The Chair does not intend to deny the political affiliation of the independent Members and it is for this reason that it will allow a Member affiliated with the Action démocratique du Québec to address one question in lieu of one of his colleagues. The Official Opposition may address all remaining questions.

No more than two supplementary questions may be addressed for each main question, with the exception of the first question by the Leader of the Official Opposition, which may include three. Also, a supplementary question may be addressed solely by a Member having the same political affiliation as the Member who addressed the main question. When addressing a supplementary question, a Member may not change it into a main question. However, a supplementary question may contain a preamble.

As regards the duration of questions and answers, 1 minute and 30 seconds will be granted for main questions addressed by the Leader of the Official Opposition. Main questions by other parliamentarians may not exceed one minute. Answers by the Premier to main questions may not exceed 1 minute and 45 seconds and those by the other ministers should not exceed 1 minute and 15 seconds. The time allocated for supplementary questions will be of 30 seconds and that allocated for answers by ministers to supplementary questions will be of 45 seconds.

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This framework may evolve during the current Legislature in accordance with the modifications that may be made to the composition of the Assembly.

The Assembly proceeded to Oral Question Period.

Motions Without Notice

By leave of the Assembly to set aside Standing Order 185, Mr. Charest, Premier, Mrs. Maltais (Taschereau), Mr. Deltell (Chauveau) and Mr. Khadir (Mercier) jointly moved:

THAT the National Assembly pay tribute to Mr. Jean Pelletier, and that it recognize his important contribution to the public service, particularly as mayor of Québec City for close to 12 years;

THAT it extend its deepest condolences to his family and friends.

By leave of the Assembly, a debate arose thereon.

The debate being concluded, the motion was carried.

At the invitation of Mr. President, the Assembly observed a minute of silence.

Notices of Proceedings in Committees

Mr. President gave the following notice:

- the Committee on the National Assembly shall meet to establish the membership of the standing committees and the list of temporary chairmen.

At 11.53 o'clock a.m., Mr. President suspended the proceedings for a few minutes.

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The proceedings resumed at 12.01 o'clock p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Economic statement

Pursuant to the order adopted at the sitting of 13 January 2009, Mrs. Jérôme-Forget, Minister of Finance, delivered an economic statement.

During her address, by leave of the Assembly to set aside Standing Order 53, Mrs. Jérôme-Forget, Minister of Finance, tabled the following:

An economic statement, accompanied by an explanatory document and additional information on the fiscal measures.

(Sessional Paper No. 24-20090114)

Mr. Legault (Rousseau) commented the economic statement on behalf of the Official Opposition.

At 12.35 o'clock p.m., Mr. President suspended the proceedings until 2.00 o'clock p.m.

The proceedings resumed at 1.59 o'clock p.m.

Pursuant to the order adopted at the sitting of 13 January 2009, the Assembly held the limited debate on the economic statement delivered by Mrs. Jérôme-Forget, Minister of Finance.

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Mr. Chagnon, Second Vice-President, informed the Assembly of the speaking time for the proceedings with respect to this limited debate. The debate shall last no more than 4 hours and 30 minutes, including 35 minutes granted to the independent Members and distributed as follows: 30 minutes to the independent Members affiliated with the Action démocratique du Québec and 5 minutes set aside for the Member for Mercier, 5 minutes being set aside for the reply by the Minister of Finance, the remaining time being distributed equally among the parliamentary groups without individual addresses being limited; any time not used by a parliamentary group will be transferred to the other group, any time not used by the independent Members affiliated with the Action démocratique du Québec will be transferred to the Member for Mercier; any time not used by the Member for Mercier will be transferred to the independent Members affiliated with the Action démocratique du Québec.

The debate arose thereon.

By leave of the Assembly to set aside the order adopted at the sitting of 13 January 2009, the proceedings continued beyond 6.30 o'clock p.m.

The debate being concluded, at 6.37 o'clock p.m., Mr. Gendron, Third Vice-President, suspended the proceedings until 8.00 o'clock p.m.

The proceedings resumed at 7.59 o'clock p.m.

Government Bills

Passage in Principle

Pursuant to the order adopted at the sitting of 13 January 2009, Mr. Hamad, Minister of Employment and Social Solidarity, moved, —That Bill 1, An Act to amend the Supplemental Pension Plans Act and other legislative provisions in order to reduce the effects of the financial crisis on plans covered by the Act, do now pass in principle.

After debate thereon, the motion was carried and Bill 1 was accordingly passed in principle.

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Committee of the Whole

Pursuant to the order adopted at the sitting of 13 January 2009, the Assembly resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole for the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 1, An Act to amend the Supplemental Pension Plans Act and other legislative provisions in order to reduce the effects of the financial crisis on plans covered by the Act.

By leave of the Assembly to set aside Standing Order 53, Mr. Hamad, Minister of Employment and Social Solidarity, tabled the following:

A document presenting the content elements of the regulations that will follow the passage of Bill 1, An Act to amend the Supplemental Pension Plans Act and other legislative provisions in order to reduce the effects of the financial crisis on plans covered by the Act.

(Sessional Paper No. 25-20090114)

Bill 1 was considered in Committee of the Whole, amended, and thereupon reported.

The report was concurred in.

At 11.24 o'clock p.m., Mr. Chagnon, Second Vice-President, adjourned the Assembly until Thursday, 15 January 2009, at 10.00 o'clock a.m.

YVON VALLIÈRES

President