



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION

FORTIETH LEGISLATURE

Votes and Proceedings

of the Assembly

Wednesday, 31 October 2012 — No. 2

President of the National Assembly:
Mr. Jacques Chagnon

QUÉBEC

The Assembly was called to order at 4.06 o'clock p.m.

Moment of reflection

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

The Honourable 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,
Madam Premier,
Mr. Leader of the Official Opposition,
Mr. Leader of the Second Opposition Group,
Madam Member for Gouin,
Mr. Member for Mercier,
Members of the Executive Council,
Members of the National Assembly,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered here to witness another important moment in our democratic and parliamentary life.

First of all, I wish to congratulate all of the Members of the National Assembly who received the support of their respective constituents in the general election last 4 September. The population has placed its trust in you and I am convinced that you will discharge your responsibilities with honour and dedication.

Today's sitting officially marks the opening of the 40th Legislature of the National Assembly. The proceedings of this sitting, as stipulated in the Standing Orders, will be devoted exclusively to the Premier's presentation of her government programme. Incidentally, I hasten to extend my greetings to Mrs. Pauline Marois, whom the citizens have instructed to govern the province of Québec. For the first time in its history, Québec is under the leadership of a woman, and I am very pleased to underline this milestone.

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I would also like to extend greetings particularly to the new Leader of the Official Opposition, Mr. Jean-Marc Fournier, to the Leader of the Second Opposition Group, Mr. François Legault, as well as to the Member for Gouin, Mrs. Françoise David, and the Member for Mercier, Mr. Amir Khadir.

Last 4 September, the citizens expressed their wish to entrust the government accountability to the party that had until then fulfilled the role of Official Opposition. With their vote, they also chose to make more room for women in the new National Assembly. Indeed, I acknowledge with great satisfaction that women now represent more than one-third of the elected officials. Our fellow citizens also opened the doors of the National Assembly to a great number of newly elected Members. Thus, taking their place in this Chamber are 40 new Members, whom I welcome.

Among these is the youngest Member ever to be elected in Québec. I am, of course, referring to the Member for Laval-des-Rapides, Mr. Léo Bureau-Blouin. The 85 Members who have returned to the Assembly owing to the confidence of the citizenry also deserve our consideration.

Two among them have earned everyone's respect and admiration, since they are our most senior Members. We have Mr. François Gendron, Member for Abitibi-Ouest, who has served without interruption since 15 November 1976 and who is on the way to beating the record set by the late Gérard D. Levesque. Furthermore, Mr. Henri-François Gautrin, Member for Verdun, remains the oldest Member of this Assembly. Both distinguished figures will surely allow all of their colleagues to benefit from the wisdom they have acquired over the years.

For the second time in just a few years, Quebecers have chosen to elect a minority government. In 2007, the election of a minority government was an unprecedented event in our recent parliamentary history, as this situation had not occurred since 1878. The advice that I can give under these circumstances is characterized by common sense. The principle consequence of the election of a minority government is to allow Members to conduct their proceedings in a spirit of dialogue and openness. This advice is, of course, directed first and foremost to the elected government, since it is responsible for the legislative agenda and the principle work undertaken by the National Assembly. This advice also goes out to the Official Opposition, the Second Opposition Group and to the Members for Gouin and Mercier. I am confident that everyone will agree on methods of operation, and the citizens will greatly benefit from this. I would add that the very debates will benefit from this minority government context. The dialogue and openness that should prevail during this new legislature will influence the tone and nature of the discussions within this House.

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One fact remains: the presence of a minority government reveals the true meaning of "ministerial accountability". Indeed, the government will at all times be required to earn the support of the Assembly. In view of the numerous challenges that Québec faces, and as a new legislature gets underway, I would first and foremost like to leave you with a message of confidence. Québec is a great democracy. Our parliament is one of the oldest in the world, and we are very proud of it. At the same time, Québec society fully participates in modernity and building the future. In several fields, we are at the forefront when it comes to competing with the world's best. Québec has what it takes to continue flourishing, and you are its primary architects. In practice, you are responsible for legislative work whose purpose is to improve the lives of all Quebecers, and I know that this mission is of utmost importance to you.

In conclusion, I wish you all the best during this mandate that the population has given to you. You have been elected to implement objectives and convictions that honour you, though these objectives and convictions may at times be divergent. I simply wish that the citizens of Québec may be the first to benefit from the parliamentary work that you are commencing today.

I thank you for your attention and wish you every success in your work.

The Honourable the Lieutenant-Governor was pleased to retire.

Mr. President took the Chair.

Mrs. Marois, Premier, then delivered the Opening Speech of the Session on behalf of the Government.

At the end of her address, Mrs. Marois, Premier, moved, –That this Assembly approves the general policy of the Government.

At 5.23 o'clock p.m., Mr. President adjourned the Assembly until Thursday, 1 November 2012, at 9.45 o'clock a.m.

JACQUES CHAGNON

President