

## **Unions Respond to Federal Budget Freezes**

### **Public Service Hard-Hit**

**PAUL GABOURY**

[pgaboury@ledroit.com](mailto:pgaboury@ledroit.com)

The departmental budget freezes decreed by the Harper government will have dire consequences on hiring and on public services, according to federal public service employees unions.

Union leaders yesterday denounced the freeze on departmental budget envelopes, which will have dire consequences on public service, before the Standing *Committee on Government Operations and Estimates*.

John Gordon, President of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, representing some 177,000 members, maintains that the 2010 Federal budget will not help Canada pull out of the recession - rather it will worsen the situation.

"For the Canadian population, the compression of expenditures means a decrease in services and the quality of those services offered by the federal government, in a moment when they are needed most," said Mr. Gordon. "For federal public service employees, these limitations mean losses of jobs and income."

"Asking Canadians to 'do more with less' is perhaps a good advertising slogan, but it is not a viable solution. Inevitably, such measures will induce a reduction in services offered to the population and in the quality of these services, from coast to coast," declared Mr. Gordon

In 2010, the departmental budget freezes will amount to about five percent of the operating budget," noted Gary Corbett, President of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, which has 57, 000 members.

"We challenge the validity of this exercise, considering the limited resulting savings in comparison with the considerable damages to the quality of federal public service and to the capacity for professionals to fulfill their departmental mandates," stated Mr. Corbett.

"The number of vacant posts remains very high. Why? Simply because we cannot find a sufficient number of candidates to meet the needs of departments and organizations. Threatening the salaries, benefits, pensions or job security will not help attract competent professionals," added Claude Poirier, President of the Canadian Association of Professional Employees (CAPE), which represents 12,000 economists, sociologists and statisticians in the Canadian government, as well as some one thousand translators, interpreters and terminologists at the Translation Bureau and about 100 analysts and researchers at the Library of Parliament.

The freeze on departmental budget envelopes should also raise concern for the safety of the Canadian public. "If the sitting government imposes a freeze on the budgets and begins cutting programs, will we see a rise in dangerous projects in the market? Will we see issues affecting the safety of food or medicine? Can we expect problems should a new pandemic strike Canada?" asked the President of CAPE.