



## Annual Conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees

The Tenth Annual Conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees was held at Halifax, Nova Scotia from July 10 to July 13, 1988. Fifty-six delegates and observers attended the business sessions held in the Legislative Chamber of Province House. The host and chairman of this year's conference, Dr. J. William Gillis, and Council President for 1987-88 welcomed the participants and arranged for one of the most successful meetings to date.

The theme of this year's conference, "Guidelines for Public Accounts Committees in Canada" departed from the normal case study presented by each participating jurisdiction at previous Council meetings and evoked a wide ranging discussion on the roles, responsibilities, rights and resources of a well-run public accounts committee.

The business sessions revolved around a document prepared by the Council's subcommittee struck at last year's annual meeting in Quebec City. The subcommittee's terms of reference were "to develop guidelines of a model Public Accounts Committee in Canada and to report its finding to the Council in July 1988". The Members of the subcommittee (and chairmen of their respective public accounts committees) were Winston Baker, MLA (Newfoundland); Aileen Nicholson, MP (Canada); Ed Philip, MPP (Ontario) and Darlene Marzari, MLA (British Columbia) who fashioned a 100 page report which Mr. Baker presented to the Council.

The subcommittee met in Ottawa during the Canadian Comprehensive Auditing Foundation annual meeting last December to expedite the work handed to it by the Council. With the exception of the history and development of public accounts committees, eleven topics contained in the report were debated by the Council. They included:

- The Role of the Public Accounts Committee
- The Accountability Cycle
- Public Accounts Committee's Role in Relation to our System of Democracy
- Non-Partisan Nature of the Public Accounts Committee's Task,
- Expanding Role of the Public Accounts Committee,
- Crown Agencies, Transfer Payments, Tax Expenditures,
- Growing Depth of Public Accounts Committee Scrutiny,
- Ministerial Responsibility and Public Service Accountability,
- Principle of Public Service Accountability,
- Legislative Accountability, Relationship Between PACs and Auditors,
- Relationship Between PACs and Government,

### Relationship Between PACs and the Media;

The agenda for this year's conference has its roots in a report published by the Canadian Comprehensive Auditing Foundation in 1987, more commonly known as the Kelly-Hanson Report after its author, John J. Kelly and Hugh R. Hanson, entitled *Improving Accountability: Canadian Public Accounts Committees and Legislative Auditors*. Sixty-nine recommendations emanate from the Report and are a culmination of interviews with sixty-four legislators, Ministers of the Crown, Legislative Auditors, Committee Clerks and other professionals who have had some experience with public accounts committees.

The Council agreed to seek a further response on its guideline document from committees across Canada on the document with a view to publishing and distributing the guidelines early in 1989. The subcommittee remains in existence until the Council next meets in Alberta during July 1989. The new Board of Directors are: Barry Pashak, MLA (Alberta), President; Winston Baker, MLA (Newfoundland), First Vice-President; the Chairman of the Manitoba Public Accounts Committee, Second Vice-President; the Clerk to the Alberta Public Accounts Committee, Secretary, and Craig James, Clerk of Committees (British Columbia), Executive Secretary.

**Craig James**