



Legislative Reports



Ontario

The Spring Session of the Ontario Legislature started on 6 April with the Speech from the Throne by the Lieutenant-Governor **Henry N.W. Jackman**. The speech dealt primarily with the state of the economy and pledged an economic recovery plan. "Our investment strategy starts with the conviction that a strong economy depends on a flourishing business sector." Some of the steps in the recovery plan include government working as a partner or coinvestor with the private sector; support for the expansion of small and midsize firms; an expansion of "Ontario's base of skills, knowledge and innovation, enhancing our ability to compete in world markets;" and funding to assist the development of "made-in-Ontario" products.

Amendments to the *Condominium Act*, announced in the Throne Speech, will be made to increase development and to provide better protection to consumers. Along this same line, changes to the *Planning Act* will increase the supply of basement apartments. It is hoped that this will increase the number of affordable apartments and will create jobs in the home renovation industry.

Other changes to legislation announced in the Speech from the Throne include changes to the

Ontario Labour Relations Act and changes to *Employment Equity* and *Pay Equity*. These Bills were introduced during the Session.

The Treasurer, **Floyd Laughren**, read the budget on 30 April 1992. In tabling the budget, he said "we are taking immediate steps to create jobs, ... control the deficit... [and are] taking concrete steps to train workers, increase business investment and sustain the public services that mark a decent and caring society."

A number of initiatives were announced to support new jobs. The Jobs Ontario training fund is a three year, \$1.1 billion program to provide jobs and training for long-term unemployed. The Jobs Ontario capital fund is to prepare the transportation, communications and environmental systems for the 21st century. \$2.3 billion over the next five years has been set aside for this program. The third initiative is the Jobs Ontario homes fund to expand non-profit housing by 20,000 units.

Plans to legalize casino gambling were also announced in the Budget. The government estimates that this move will bring in an additional \$150 million to the province. This, along with \$1 billion tax increase, will keep the deficit below \$10 billion. Tax increases included an environmental levi on beer can, increases to the personal income tax rate and a one-year surcharge on banks.

After many weeks of questions in the House and speculation in the media, the Premier announced on 3 June that legislation would be intro-

duced to permit retail stores to be open on Sundays. Retail stores argued that permission to be open on Sundays will decrease the flow of people to the U.S. to shop on Sundays and will allow stores to remain solvent. In making this announcement, the Premier stressed that the vote on the legislation would be a free vote. This legislation is expected to be called for second reading in the fall session. The government announced that the legislation will be retroactive to last spring and that there are no plans to prosecute retailers who open on Sundays in the meantime.

On July 3, 1992, changes to the Standing Orders came into effect. With these changes, the parliamentary calendar has been amended and will shorten the sitting time for the House by two weeks. There will continue to be a constituency week during each of the Sessions.

A new Standing Order sets time limits of 30 minutes on speeches when the Speaker is in the chair. However, in the following kinds of debate, the first member speaking for each recognized party may speak for up to 90 minutes:

- debate on second reading of a government bill;
- debate on third reading of a government bill;
- debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne;
- debate on the Budget motion;
- debate on an interim supply motion; and
- debate on any other substantive government motion.

A time limit of 30 minutes has been set for "Introduction of Bills".

Under the previous Standing Orders, there was no time limit on the period for introducing bills. Previous changes to the Standing Orders limited the time for "Petitions".

A new Standing Order specifically provides for time allocation motions. Under this Standing Order, the Government House Leader, or a Minister, may, after giving notice, move a time allocation motion to any proceeding on a government bill or to a substantive government motion. When this time allocation motion is the first Order of the Day, the question will be put, without further debate or amendment, at the end of that sessional day. Five members are required to request a recorded vote and the division bells for such a request are limited to five minutes. Before a time allocation motion may be moved on second reading of a government bill or on a substantive government motion, there must be three full days of debate on the motion for second reading or on the substantive government motion.

An amendment to the Standing Order dealing with notices ensures that, when a government notice is tabled with the Clerk of the House, copies will be distributed to all the House Leaders.

The existing prohibition against second reading of government bills (except supply bills) introduced during the last 8 sessional days of the regular spring or fall sessions is extended to include any extension of the session.

Other changes to the Standing Orders were discussed and have been referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The new Standing Order dealing with time allocation was soon tested in the Legislature. On 20 July, the Government gave notice of a

motion under new Standing Order 44a. The notice of motion set a time allocation on third reading on a bill. The third reading debate on this bill had started on the previous sessional day. One member had spoken and a second member was speaking when the debate was interrupted and the House was adjourned. The Government notice of motion stated that, when the order for third reading of this bill is next called, "the Speaker shall put the question forthwith on the motion which question shall be put without amendment or debate."

Gregory Sorbara raised a point of order contending that this motion was out of order and was not properly a time allocation motion. The member questioned how this could be a time allocation motion when the motion "is in substance a motion that prohibits any further debate whatever on Bill 150". The member also questioned how such a motion could be in order when it effectively prevented a member from finishing his speech.

The Speaker ruled that, while the government notice of motion does not call for time for debate for third reading of the bill, it does comply with the new Standing Order.

Committees

The Standing Committee on Estimates, chaired by **Cam Jackson** met during the Spring session to review the estimates of 3 ministries: Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. The Committee will continue to proceed with the consideration of the remaining 8 ministries which were determined by a resolution of the Committee. The Committee will review three Ministries when it meets this summer.

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs,

chaired by **Ron Hansen**, dealt with two pieces of legislation during the Spring session.

Bill 150 provides for the creation of labour-sponsored venture capital corporations to invest funds in Ontario businesses. The legislation will allow workers to pool their resources and provide venture capital to Ontario enterprises and to provide the opportunity for these funds to be used in a worker buyout of an existing enterprise.

Contributions to these funds are treated to beneficial tax treatment by both the provincial and federal governments, thus further encouraging participation by investors.

The Committee also considered a bill that will introduce a prohibition on the charging of any fee for the cashing of government cheques. Currently, anyone patronizing a cheque-cashing firm may be subject to a fee or commission for this service. Under this legislation, sponsored by a private member, **Gilles Morin** these cheque cashing firms, or any financial institution, would be prohibited from levying any charges or fees when cashing cheques issued by the government.

The Standing Committee on Government Agencies, under its Chair, **Robert Runciman** continued to consider proposed appointments to Ontario Government agencies, boards and commissions. The Committee also completed its report on the following agencies: Eastern Ontario Development Corporation, TV Ontario, and the Community Advisory Board of Brockville Psychiatric Hospital.

The Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, chaired by **Steven Offer**, presented two reports on 15 April as required by its mandate to conduct a major inquiry into the dissemination of confidential Ministry of Health information and the conduct of the Minister of

Northern Development and Mines. The report, *Inquiry re Ministry of Health Information*, as agreed by the majority of the Committee, reviewed and commented on evidence received during three weeks of public and closed session hearings. The report contained no recommendations and concluded with the words of the Minister in explanation of her conduct and her decision not to resign. Appended to the report was a joint dissenting opinion of the Liberal and Progressive Conservative members of the Committee, including their proposed recommendations calling for the resignations of both the Minister of Northern Development and the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Labour. The Opposition dissent recommended that OHIP, the Ministry of Health and the Office of the Minister of Health thoroughly review Ministry compliance with all statutory and procedural requirements regarding confidential information. Opposition members also recommended action by the Speaker and Board of Internal Economy to deal with conduct by constituency office staff deemed inappropriate and unacceptable.

In a second, related report, entitled *Report on Keith Harfield*, the Legislative Assembly Committee reviewed its efforts to seek testimony and co-operation by a particular witness summoned by two Speaker's Warrants. The Committee concluded that the pattern of conduct established in response to legitimate requests for attendance and the production of documents was "one of deliberate and repeated evasion and delay which demonstrates a lack of respect for the Committee and the Legislative Assembly." The Committee recommended that the House find Keith Harfield in contempt, and that the House direct the Speaker to issue a public

admonishment. The report has not yet been considered by the House.

The Standing Committee on the Ombudsman met to review the Ombudsman's Annual Reports and responses to the Standing Committee's Eighteenth Report. The Committee also considered communications from the public and set out its recommendations on these cases. On Thursday, 28 May 1992, the Chair, Mark Morrow, presented the Committee's Nineteenth Report 1991 to the Legislature.

The Committee's report highlighted three items for consideration. One of the recommendations is that the estimates of the Office of the Ombudsman be referred to this committee and not the Standing Committee on Estimates as presently set out. The Committee also recommended that the Provincial Auditor conduct a value for money audit of the operations of the Office of the Ombudsman and that the Standing Committee on the Ombudsman undertake a comprehensive review of the Office of the Ombudsman.

The Committee will meet during the summer recess to review the Office of the Ombudsman. This review will include an examination of all aspects of the *Ombudsman Act*; the scope of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction; the adequacy of the resources of the Office of the Ombudsman to perform its various functions; the relationship of the Office of the Ombudsman to other organizations involved in hearing complaints about government actions; and the mandate of and role to be played by the Standing Committee on the Ombudsman. The Committee is to complete and report the results of its review by the end of the year.

On 23 April 1992, Remo Mancini was elected Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts re-

placing Robert Callahan. In May 1992, the Committee was given the mandate to conduct the selection process for the Provincial Auditor. The Committee has agreed to follow the procedure set in 1986 by the Standing Committee on Legislative Assembly when it conducted the selection process for the Clerk of the House. The Committee will interview candidates during the summer and fall and will report on its recommended candidate to the House in September. The Committee tabled its 1990-1991 Annual Report in May 1992. The report covers the Committee's activities over the past 2 years and summarizes the Committee's reports during this time.

On 30 June 1992, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts tabled Report No. 1. This report covers the Committee's investigation of OHIP billing relating to substance abuse treatment in Ontario and the U.S. In the course of the investigation, the Committee visited 10 centres: 5 in the U.S. and 5 in the Toronto area. The Committee addressed 3 main areas: Why were Ontario patients seeking treatment for substance abuse outside the province? How was the Ministry of Health addressing the issue? and What is required to ensure that the present and future demand for treatment can be met within Ontario?

Throughout the Spring session, the Standing Committee on Resources Development, chaired by Peter Kormos, continued deliberations on Bill 124, *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act*. The Bill deals with an amendment which would require all bicycle riders over the age of five to wear helmets. Introduced as a Private Member's Bill by Dianne Cunningham in the first Session of the current Parliament, the Bill will receive the Committee's attention again in the fall session. At

a recent press conference, the Ministry of Transportation indicated that the Ministry is supporting the Bill and that the Ministry expected the Bill to be through the Legislature in the fall session.

The debate on second reading of Bill 40, *An Act to amend certain Acts concerning Collective Bargaining and Employment* was concluded and referral to the Committee was made pursuant to a time allocation motion. The Committee will be conducting public hearings for five weeks during the summer recess. Clause-by-clause consideration will follow when the Legislature resumes in the fall. This bill has been called the most important piece of legislation to be passed by the NDP government during its 5 year mandate. The bill will limit the use of strikebreakers, make it easier for unions to organize and will confer broad powers on the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

The Standing Committee on Social Development, chaired by Charles Beer, considered a designated matter under the provisions of Standing Order 123. The issue, designated by Joan Fawcett, related to proposed changes to the Ontario Student Assistance Program. In May, invited witnesses made presentations to the Committee and a report was then prepared and presented in the House on 16 July 1992. In this report, the Committee endorsed the review of the Ontario Student Assistance Program currently being conducted by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and set out areas that, in the Committee's opinion, should be included in the review.

Summer Adjournment

The Session ended on Thursday 23 July after being extended beyond the 25 June date set out in the parlia-

mentary calendar in order to complete several pieces of legislation. The adjournment ended a week and a half of opposition calls for the resignation of Allan Pilkey, Minister of Correctional Services. Allegations that female ministry workers had been harassed and sexually assaulted by male co-workers while attending training sessions at the Bell Cairn Training Centre were raised by members of the opposition during Question Period. A police investigation has been initiated by the Minister and Judge Inger Hansen has been appointed to make recommendations for improving working conditions in the Ministry of Correctional Services. The opposition continued to call for the Minister's resignation claiming that he displayed incompetence because he was unaware of the allegations prior to the issue being raised in the House. The government claimed that, as soon as the Minister became aware of the situation, he acted responsibly by closing the Training Centre and initiating the investigations.

Though introduced, legislation on auto insurance, expansion of pay equity laws, boundary changes in the London area and Sunday shopping did not reach the committee stage. Reports in the media indicate that these pieces of legislation will have top government priority in the fall session.

Jannis Manikel
Committee Clerk



Quebec

During the Spring Session, the National Assembly held 33 sittings between April 14 and June 23. With parliamentarians focusing their attention on the business of

supply, on the budget and on draft legislation.

Budgetary appropriations for 1992-1993 were tabled in the Assembly on March 26, 1992. These appropriations were examined from April 14 to May 13 in various parliamentary committees. However, when the time comes to consider the budget, the National Assembly sits as a committee of the whole.

The budget speech was delivered on May 14, 1992 by Gérard D. Lévesque, Minister of Finance. Spending estimates for 1992-1993 totalled \$40,703,000, whereas projected revenues for the same period totalled \$36,913,000. Taking into account cash holdings and the variation in the direct debt, the projected deficit was \$2,550,000. The Minister of Finance confirmed during his speech that the provincial sales tax on services and furniture (TVQ) would come into effect on July 1, 1992. It should be noted that the tax, initially set at 8 per cent, was to have come into effect last January. Its implementation was delayed by six months and the tax was reduced to 4 per cent.

On the day the budget was brought down, Jean-Pierre Saintonge, Speaker of the National Assembly, ruled on a question of breach of privilege raised by Guy Chevrette, Leader of the Official Opposition. The latter had criticized Marc-Yvan Côté, Minister of Health and Social Services, for having announced during a press conference measures affecting funding of health and social services. According to Mr. Chevrette, by so doing, the Minister held the Assembly up to ridicule since several days prior to the press conference, the Assembly's social affairs committee had approved appropriations which did not take into account the Minister's subsequent announcement. The

Speaker ruled that this did not constitute a breach of privilege because under our political system, a minister can announce a government decision. Furthermore, a minister has a duty to announce appropriations in accordance with the legal order prevailing at the time the budget appropriations are tabled. Lastly, the Speaker dismissed the Official Opposition Leader's argument that some of the measures announced were comparable to a taxation initiative and thus should have been mentioned in the budget speech. He stated that the government can select any member of Cabinet it wants to disclose budget options.

The debate on the budget speech took place from May 20 to June 2. The opposition took advantage of this debate to introduce six non-confidence motions.

During the month of June, the Assembly was mainly concerned with legislative matters. MNAs often burned the midnight oil and on three occasions sat until 8 a.m. the next morning. Of the many pieces of draft legislation considered during this period, several are worthy of note. These include Bill 9 which excludes certain optometry services from those services fully covered by the *Régie de l'assurance-maladie du Québec*. Furthermore, under the proposed legislation, some recipients will now be required to pay for pharmaceutical services and drugs which they had previously received free of charge.

Bill 36 proposed to amend the *Elections Act* and the *Referendum Act* to allow a citizen living outside the province for a period of up to two years to retain his right to vote. It reduced the period of time during which an election can be waged as well as the period of time between the tabling of a referendum question and the actual vote on the

question. It authorized the Chief Electoral Officer to provide assistance and support in electoral matters to other countries and international organizations.

Lastly, the bill provided for Quebec's new electoral boundaries to apply at the time of the next general elections, not at the time of the fall referendum.

With respect to labour legislation, the Assembly passed Bill 35 respecting industrial/work accidents and occupational diseases. The bill amends the medical assessment procedure. Also adopted was Bill 408 which provides for the establishment of the Quebec manpower development agency. The agency has a mandate to promote manpower development and to promote a balance between labour market supply and demand.

Bill 21, which was aimed at amending the rules governing Canada Day to designate July 1 as a holiday, was also debated at some length in the Assembly.

Aside from these five bills, the Assembly passed 45 other ones during the spring session. However, the process was not without incident. On June 22, referring to the urgency of the situation and the need to pass 28 bills before the following day's scheduled summer adjournment, Michel Pagé, Leader of the Government, introduced a motion to suspend the rules. The purpose of the motion was to limit debate on the bills to a maximum of 25 minutes. Feeling that this allowed too little time for full discussion, the Opposition expressed its dissatisfaction by remaining silent during the adoption of these bills and by demanding in return a record number of 25 recorded divisions in a single evening.

The main topics of discussion during this period were the constitutional crisis, a subject

debated at virtually every sitting; the relocation of Hôtel-Dieu, part of Montreal's heritage, from the downtown core to the suburbs; the government's use of the surplus funds held by the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec; the province's economy; the sale of Steinberg, a giant in Quebec's food industry; funding of private schools and the adoption of children from the People's Republic of China. A bill that specifically addresses the latter was passed before the summer adjournment.

On June 19, 1992, Liza Frulla-Hébert, Minister of Cultural Affairs, formally unveiled the government's cultural policy. The first-ever in Quebec's history, this policy takes its inspiration primarily from the testimony presented to the parliamentary committee on culture in the fall of 1991 and from the work of the advisory group on cultural policy.

The National Assembly did not extend the provisional amendments to its rules of procedures which had been in effect on a trial basis since October 25, 1990. These amendments had to do primarily with the Assembly's schedule of business as well as with the work of parliamentary committees, debate on Opposition members' business and the provisions respecting adjournment debates.

Jean Bédard
et
Constance Pinault
Office of the Secretariat
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Committees

During the last quarter, eight standing committees held 100 sittings for a total of 365 hours of work.

As is the case each year, the months of May and June were extremely hectic; from early June until the June 23 adjournment, committees sat from 10 a.m. until midnight, Monday to Friday. However, July proved to be a relatively quiet month for parliamentary committees.

During May and June, the committees focused their attention primarily on the clause-by-clause study of bills. This activity accounted for more than 80 per cent of all committee business.

Of the 40 legislative mandates given to committees, four could not be completed because of a motion of closure adopted by the Assembly with a view to ending the committee proceedings.

The Social Affairs Committee examined an important bill concerning the application of the legislation adopted last year pertaining to health and social services reform. The bill, which contained a total of 377 clauses, amended no less than 69 other pieces of legislation.

The same committee also examined Bill 408 which provided for the establishment of the Quebec Manpower Development Corporation. Basically, what the draft legislation does is to create a central body as well as regional bodies responsible for promoting manpower development and fostering a balance between labour supply and demand in the job market. Despite seven sittings devoted exclusively to examining this bill, the committee was unable to complete its business as a motion of closure put an end to the proceedings.

The sittings of the Public Works Committee focused primarily on

the municipal sector. Two bills affecting municipalities were examined. The first, which concerns the rules governing the administration of municipalities, contained provisions to allow municipalities to come together to set up a damage insurance corporation to meet their needs. Another bill under consideration proposed to abolish the leisure tax collected by the municipalities. However, contrary to what usually occurs, a private member's bill took up most of the time of the members of this committee. The committee met six times to discuss proposed legislative amendments to the charter of the Montreal Island inter-municipal Waste Management Commission and during nearly 50 hours of hearings, it heard from six agencies opposed to the bill.

The Economy and Labour Committee reviewed Bill 35 which proposed major amendments to the occupational health and safety commission. In view of the opposition to the bill, the Committee was the target of a motion of closure and was forced to refer the matter back to the Assembly without completing its report. Still in the field of labour relations, the Committee examined a bill aimed at countering under the table work in the construction industry. Prior to examining the bill, the Committee had held public hearings over the winter months.

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Committee examined a bill pertaining to the marketing of dairy products. The primary aim of the bill is to standardize dairy production quotas by 1996.

In addition to their legislative mandates, the committees completed during the early weeks of May their study of departmental and agency budgets undertaken the previous month.

In accordance with the standing orders, the Budget and Administration Committee debated for ten hours the budget speech delivered on May 14 by the Finance Minister.

Also in May, the committees held three question and answer sessions. Held on Friday morning, these sessions provide opposition members with an opportunity to put questions to a minister regarding any general matter under his jurisdiction. These three question and answer sessions focused on the following subjects: Montreal's situation, the use of automobile insurance premiums and the Canadian constitutional talks.

The Education Committee heard testimony from the Superior Council of Education in conjunction with its mandate to monitor public agencies. This committee also met with representatives of the task force on youth with a view to discussing the latter's report on the status of young people in Quebec.

Lastly, the Special Committee in Charge of Considering All Offers of a New Constitutional Partnership held three meetings during the session to hear testimony from five groups on the findings contained in the Report of the Special Joint Committee on a Renewed Canada.

*Doris Arsenault
Committees Secretariat
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The Second Session of the Twenty-Second Legislature opened on Monday, April 27, 1992 and adjourned on August 28, 1992. This session was highlighted by the presentation of the first budget of the 22nd Legislature, a series of obstructionary tactics, the Speaker's intervention on these tactics, a censure motion against the Speaker and adoption of provisional changes to the Rules of the Assembly, which were to eventually lapse.

Speech from the Throne

The Speech from the Throne, the NDP Government blueprint for the coming year, repeatedly emphasized the need to control spending and reduce the deficit. The government promised to negotiate a different cost-of-production formula that would increase Ottawa's share of the Gross Revenue Insurance Program (GRIP) costs and reduce producer premiums.

Other highlights in the Throne Speech included the promise of an environmental charter of rights and responsibilities and the creation of an environmental assessment commission; the elaboration of a wellness approach to health care rather than using health care only as a way to deal with sickness; the development of a social net to meet the challenges of poverty through employment and training programmes.

Legislation

In total, 94 public and 4 private bills were introduced of which 87 and 3 were respectively passed into law. Many of the bills were of a house-

keeping nature or flowed from budgetary measures announced in the spring budget.

However, Bill 87, *The Farm Income Insurance Legislation, 1992*, created much controversy and was the object of numerous procedural impasses. The intent of the Bill was to implement new provisions of the Gross Revenue Insurance Program (GRIP) for agriculture which had been implemented in June 1991 by the former administration under **Grant Devine**. The legislation also allowed for changes to certain notice provisions.

Committees

Committees of the Legislative Assembly were increasingly active since January, both inter-sessionally and during the session.

In addition to the meetings of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures (to be discussed later), other Committees of the Legislature which usually sit regularly were quite active this year, such as the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations and the Special Committee on Regulations (which is mandated to examine delegated legislation).

The Standing Committee on Municipal Law was re-activated after a number of years. Specifically, the Assembly referred to the Committee, after second reading, two bills relating to municipal wards.

In early summer, the Assembly created the Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs with the authority to "review and make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on proposed constitutional amendments ..." and to hold public hearings to that effect. The Committee expected to begin

its public hearings in late September.

The day before the House rose on August 28, 1992, the Assembly adopted a motion to strike a Standing Committee on Environment authorized to review and report on legislation relating to environmental issues as referred to it by the Assembly. The subject matter of Bill 48, *An Act to provide a Charter of Environmental Rights and Responsibilities* was referred to this Committee.

Special Committee on Rules and Procedures

Last winter, the Rules Committee held seven meetings and deliberated for a total of forty hours on a number of procedural issues with a view to revising the rules and practices in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. The Committee examined a wide range of procedural matters of concern to Members.

The Committee recommendations were adopted by the Assembly and implemented initially on a provisional basis. Such a trial period on the new rules would extend to the fiftieth sitting day of the current session (Second Session, Twenty-Second Legislature). As the session evolved and the political atmosphere became more and more difficult, the Opposition declined to even discuss permanent adoption of the provisional rules or consider an extension of the trial period.

The new rules provided for a change in sitting hours of the Assembly so as to enable Members to use their time more effectively. There was therefore a reduction in evening sittings from three to two nights per week, and additional time was added to the afternoon and remaining evening sittings.

The Legislative Assembly spends thirty-five to forty per cent of its time on the conduct of financial business i.e. the consideration of the

Estimates in the Committee of Finance which sits as a Committee of the Whole. In order to make more efficient use of this time and that of all Members, a new proposal provided for the Committee of Finance to be divided into two sections which would sit simultaneously to consider different estimates. Unfortunately, the trial period expired before the Assembly had an opportunity to experience this change.

A daily ten-minute Members' Statement Period was provided (90 seconds per Member on topics of their choice) immediately before Oral Questions.

Rules such as those for written questions and orders for returns were modified by changing the deadline for responses to written questions from 48 hours to five sitting days and by imposing a deadline of 180 calendar days on a response to an order for return.

Private Members' Day, every Tuesday, was extensively re-organized by rotating key private Members' business items on a weekly basis so that they would regularly receive periodic consideration without which rotation the House would not always reach these items on the Order Paper.

The new rules provided for the election of the Deputy Speaker. This rule change was permanently adopted and was not subject to the 50-day trial period, and hence survived the summer.

A number of other rule changes on trial included the abolishment of the requirement for seconders of a motion moved in the Assembly, the simplification of unduly complicated rules for the emergency debate process, the use of lap-top computers in the Assembly by Members, the use of new guidelines for the telecast of Legislative proceedings to give the

public a better perspective of what goes on in the Chamber, the prohibition of smoking in the Chamber during Committee of the Whole. Historically, smoking had only been forbidden in the Chamber when the Assembly was in formal session with the Speaker in the Chair.

Some important practices which the Rules Committee decided not to change were bell-ringing rules and a sessional calendar, two items which ironically would return to haunt the Assembly during the long summer months.

Procedural Issues

On June 11, the Conservative Opposition walked out of the Assembly on a recorded division for first reading on the *Farm Income Insurance Act* (GRIP Legislation) thereby triggering an 18-day bell-ringing period.

The Opposition was upset over the Government's attempts at what they described as retroactively changing the insurance program. Already, a group of farmers had sued the Government over not fulfilling an obligation to inform farmers by a specific date of imminent changes to GRIP. The Opposition claimed that the notice was sent out late and feared that the legislation would retroactively change the notice deadline. The Opposition felt that if the bill was introduced and the courts became aware of the intent of the government to "deem" that it had met its obligations, then that would affect the judge's decision on the law suit.

The Assembly was handcuffed by the lack of time limitation on bell-ringing and by a 17-day bell-ringing precedent in 1989.

After 18 days, Speaker Herman Rolfes intervened to end the bell-ringing, suspended the GRIP bill for an indefinite period to allow

for negotiation time and called for time limitations to bell-ringing.

The Rules Committee met and recommended a 30-minute limit on bell-ringing and, as a trade-off, the Opposition would be given the opportunity to suspend any bill for three days, at any time of their choosing. These recommendations were ultimately adopted by the Assembly under closure.

After a few days of systematic obstruction by the Opposition (through bell-ringing on adjournment motions) Mr. Speaker once again intervened, this time to stop the bell-ringing on adjournment motions in order that a decision could be made on the Rules Committee recommendations.

The Conservatives, annoyed at the Speaker's interventions, moved a motion to censure the Speaker accusing him of unwarranted intervention and of aiding and abetting the government in the Rules Committee and its recommendation on limiting bell-ringing. After a two and a half hour debate the motion was defeated and the Speaker given a vote of confidence by the House.

The GRIP bill which had triggered the procedural impasse this summer was finally adopted at third reading and given Royal Assent on August 24, 1992, but only after the Legislature adopted, under closure, a time allocation motion for all remaining stages of this legislation.

One of the major casualties of the procedural difficulties this summer was the lapse of all provisional rules changes after the 50-day trial period, which the Conservatives were not disposed to extend.

Robert Vaive
Deputy Clerk

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan