
Legislative Reports



Quebec

On June 23 1995, the National Assembly adjourned for the summer having held 48 sittings since the resumption of the Session in March. During this period, 62 bills were passed of which 14 were private bills and 1 was a public bill introduced by a member. This private Member's public bill gave rise to a point of order.

The Chair was asked to rule on the introduction procedure with regard to this bill, because of its possible financial implications. It was decided that the bill could be introduced by a Member since it would not have a direct effect on the consolidated revenue fund if it were passed.

The Opposition having asked whether the Government would have to introduce another bill for the committal of public funds necessary to implement the measures contained in the budget speech with respect to the said bill. The Chair stated that it did not have the obligation to rule on the measures that the Government was to take with regard to this matter.

Amongst the numerous directives that were given by the Chair in

recent months, a certain number of them dealt with the tabling of videocassettes in the Assembly. Regarding this matter, the Speaker, **Roger Bertrand**, ruled that, in the short and medium term, only written documents would be allowed to be tabled in the Assembly, since the National Assembly does not currently dispose of the necessary facilities for the proper conservation of audiovisual documents on tape and that audiovisual documents containing information can always be transcribed. He also stated that this directive in no way undermined the rights stipulated in certain Standing Orders concerning the tabling of documents deemed to be of public interest.

In answer to a question concerning the application of this directive to the standing committees, the President declared that it was up to the chairman of each committee to decide on whether the tabling of an audiovisual document was desirable and necessary so as to help the committee members in carrying out their mandate.

On another subject, the President declared in order a motion by the Chief Government Whip for the adjournment of the debate on a motion without notice which was debated during Routine Proceedings. The grounds for this decision were that contrary to a motion to adjourn the Assembly, which can only be moved during Orders of the Day, a motion to adjourn the debate can be moved immediately a debate has begun, regardless of the part of the sitting.

Several bills were on the spring session's legislative menu. Among those that were passed, a bill establishing a permanent list of electors and amending the *Election Act* and other legislative provisions is worthy of mention.

The purpose of this bill is to establish a permanent list of electors by means of a register of electors and a register of territories. The register of territories will comprise electoral divisions, electoral precincts and polling subdivisions and municipal and school electoral divisions. A system of updating and revision of the list has been provided for. Furthermore, clarifications have been made with regard to what constitutes an elector's domicile.

The Assembly also passed bills respecting the development of manpower training, the reorganization of the health and social services network, and the environment, to mention but a few.

In addition to this legislative business, the Members were also asked to approve the Government's budgetary policy following the budget speech, which was delivered on May 9 by the Minister of Finance, **Jean Campeau**.

The Government's net financial requirements announced by the Minister indicate a budgetary deficit of \$3,975,000,000 this year, which is a decrease of some \$2,000,000,000 compared with last year, since the budgetary expenditure should total \$42,415,000,000 and revenue should reach \$38,440,000,000.

In view of attaining its objective to reduce the deficit, the Government intends to tighten up on tax

and income tax collection from taxpayers and businesses by increasing measures to control moonlighting in the construction industry and alcohol contraband, among other things. The budget does not add any new taxes nor does it increase the income tax burden on individuals. However, the tax on cigarettes will increase by \$0.72 a carton, and the tax on capital and the contribution of businesses to the health services fund will be raised.

After having indicated his disapproval of this first budget by Minister Campeau, the Member for Montmorency, **Jean Filion**, announced his intention, on June 13, to sit as an independent Member.

The party standings of the National Assembly are now as follows: 76 Members of the Parti Québécois; 47 Members of the Québec Liberal Party; and 2 Independent Members.

Interparliamentary Relations

Two major conferences were held in Québec this summer. The 21st session of the International Assembly of French-speaking Parliamentarians, whose chairman is the Speaker of the Québec National Assembly, **Roger Bertrand**, was held in July. Some 200 participants from the 48 member Parliaments met to discuss a wide range of subjects such as: the preparation of the Francophone Summit of Cotonou, which is scheduled for the fall; democratization and long-term development; the challenges that French-speaking communities face and the information superhighway.

In August, the National Assembly was the host of the Annual Assembly of the Eastern Regional Conference. It was the first time that this organization, represented by more than 800 delegates, met outside of the United States. The theme of this meeting was "Partners across

borders: pursuing regional prosperity".

Nancy Ford and Jean Bédard
National Assembly Secretariat
(Translated by Sylvia Ford)

Committee Activity

The committees were extremely busy in May and June. Their main focus was on some forty bills and the hearings these entailed. In addition, committees that had not completed consideration of their particular portion of the estimates had that on their agendas as well.

During this period a special committee was set up to hold hearings and consider in detail Bill 90, *An Act to Encourage the Development of Vocational Training*. The purpose of the Bill was to improve manpower qualifications and encourage employment, worker adjustment, re-employment and mobility. Struck under Standing Order 178, this committee ceased to exist as soon as it tabled its report.

The Committee on Institutions was very active. Among other things it carried out a detailed study of Bill 40, *An Act to Establish a Permanent Voters' List and to amend the Quebec Elections Act and other Acts in relation thereto*. The Committee's deliberations ended in a closure motion. The Committee also held hearings on administrative justice and considered Bill 79, *Human rights and Youth Rights Protection Act*, designed to give Quebec's *Commission des droits de la personne* the powers and functions of Quebec's *Commission de protection des droits de la jeunesse*.

The Committee on Planning and Infrastructures considered among other things Bill 94, *National Capital Commission Act*. As the title indicates, the Bill is designed to create a national capital commission for Quebec City. Seven private bills in-

volving municipalities were also considered by the Committee.

The Committee on Social Affairs considered Bill 83, *An Act amending the Health Services and Social Services Act*. This controversial Bill passed after the Assembly put an end to the Committee's deliberations via closure. The new legislation provides that the Minister may restrict to certain institutions the right to offer certain services. He may also modify the capacities, missions, categories or types of public institutions, or private institutions under agreement, or require an institution to shut down.

Among the activities of the Committee on the Budget and Administration was continued debate over the Throne Speech. Fifteen hours is allotted for debate on this topic in the National Assembly and a maximum of ten hours in committee. The Committee also considered Bill 71, which is designed to improve relations between the Ministry of Revenue and taxpayers.

The Committee on the Economy and Labour had some unusual terms of reference. On the one hand, three private bills and on the other, a public bill sponsored by a backbencher. This latter Bill followed up on a proposal by the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CNTU) that a capital investment fund should be created that in addition to accumulating retirement savings would provide financial assistance to businesses to maintain or create jobs, contribute to worker training and encourage worker participation in the development of businesses.

The Committee on Education questioned witnesses on two occasions and also undertook consideration of Bill 89, *An Act to amend the Professional Code*. This Bill contains provisions requiring the members of professional associations to pay expenditures incurred by the *Office des professions*.

The Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Food considered a bill on animal health protection. The Committee on Culture resumed consideration of what the arrival of the information superhighway means for Quebec culture. The Committee on the National Assembly met during this period to rule on various routine matters.

The committees will be taking a break in July following their vigorous activity in May and June and will resume sitting in August.

Marie Tanguay
Secretary, Planning and
Infrastructures Committee
Committee Secretariat



Manitoba

The First Session of the Thirty-Sixth Legislature commenced on May 23, 1995, with a number of changes from the Thirty-Fifth Legislature. These changes included a House composed of one Opposition Party (NDP), as opposed to two, and three Opposition Independents (Liberal). As well, Premier **Gary Filmon** added three new Members to his Cabinet to fill vacancies created by three Ministers of the previous Cabinet who did not seek re-election. The three new Cabinet Ministers are: **Jack Reimer** as Minister of Housing and Minister of Urban Affairs, **Brian Pallister** as Minister of Government Services

and **Vic Toews** as Minister of Labour (a newly elected Member).

Of particular significance to the Legislature was the appointment of **Louise Dacquay** (PC - Seine River) as the new Speaker, replacing **Denis Rocan** (PC - Gladstone) who had held the office since 1988.

The process for choosing a new Speaker in Manitoba continues as essentially that of appointment by the Premier. As other jurisdictions turn to the secret ballot election of a Speaker, there is some speculation that Manitoba may adopt this practice in the future.

Session

The new Legislature began with a fairly short Speech from the Throne (essentially a summary of the Government's speech at the beginning of the last Session of the Thirty-Fifth Legislature, in December 1994). The motion for an Address-in-Reply to the Speech from the Throne was moved later on the same day as the Throne Speech, as opposed to the following day as has been the tradition in Manitoba. The Throne Speech Debate was completed in five days instead of the usual eight. With an expected recess date of June 30th, the Government had a number of priority items to complete before this date, including the financial process and passage of certain Bills.

In order to complete the financial process in the time frame proposed, the House adopted several procedural motions to facilitate the process. Among these, the most significant one deemed that those stages of the financial process which had been completed prior to the close of the previous Legislature in March 1995, were introduced, considered and concluded and were forthwith reinstated during the first session of the new Legislature. Consequently, the budget speech and debate, the establishment of the

Committee of Supply and the Committee of Ways and Means, the tabling and referral of the messages from the Lieutenant-Governor and the estimates attached to them, were treated as if they had occurred during the new Legislature. Thus, the next stage of the financial process, the 240-hour consideration of the detailed estimates by the Committee of Supply, could begin once the Throne Speech debate was completed. As well, the House adopted a motion to amend certain rules, just for the current session, adjusting procedures in Committee of Supply - namely that the Committee would sit in three sections to consider different departmental estimates, simultaneously, as opposed to two sections. Further, additional motions were moved to waive Private Members' Hour and to extend sitting hours of the House.

Thus, with these temporary changes to certain rules of the House and with an overall attitude of goodwill, the June 30th deadline was met.

The harmony was not, however, complete. As one of the major issues that coloured the first part of the First Session, the Government's proposed contribution to build a new arena in Winnipeg as well as the proposed private sector deal(s) regarding the purchase of the Winnipeg Jets hockey team, the Government was regularly responding to questions from the Opposition about these matters, either during Question Period or in Committee of Supply. Towards the end of the Supply process, the Opposition House Leader, **Steven Ashton**, moved motions to reduce two separate Supply resolutions by amounts that were, a) the amount that was allocated to cover losses of the Winnipeg Jets and b) the amount that was allocated for the current year's contribution to building a new arena. Both

motions were defeated on recorded votes.

In addition to the Supply process, the House did spend some time considering the legislative side of House business. Just over thirty government bills reached debate on Second Reading, with four (other than the Loan and Appropriation bills) proceeding through to Royal Assent. These four bills were: Bill No. 3 - *The Maintenance Enforcement (Various Acts Amendment) Act*, Bill No. 7 - *The City of Winnipeg Amendment Act*; Bill No. 24 - *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act*; and Bill No. 35 - *The Elections Amendment, Local Authorities Election Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act*.

Of these, Bill No. 3 generated the most emotion and debate among Members, as well as eighteen public presentations at committee. The thrust of the bill was to enhance the province's ability to enforce family maintenance payments. The amendments to the *Maintenance Enforcement Act* and other Acts contained in this Bill, provide for the following measures which can be applied against persons delinquent on their payments; such persons can now be reported to the Credit Bureau; suspension and removal or refusal of renewal of a driver's license and registration; garnishment of pension benefit credits and an increase in fines and jail terms. The Opposition supported the Government in bringing this legislation forward, however, they were critical in stating that it had been too long in coming, the consultation process was limited and the bill did not go far enough in its efforts to ensure that payments would be made and defaulters adequately penalised.

Bill No. 7 was supported by all Members of the House as it would amend the *City of Winnipeg Act* to provide for issuing tax credits and rebates to persons making contribu-

tions to a candidate running for City Council.

Bill No. 24 was also moved through quickly as it will establish a system that will require the reporting, payment and remittance of tax on tobacco products, originally marked for sale in another province, that are being marketed in Manitoba. And finally, Bill No. 35 was moved through all of its legislative stages within 3 days. This bill, with all-party agreement, arose out of concerns raised in the recent provincial election, as well as in previous reports of the provincial Chief Electoral Officer, regarding the public posting of voters' lists. Such public notification of people's names and addresses would put some people at further risk who may have left a violent relationship and/or are being stalked. The legislation removes the obligation for such open publication and moves the list to offices of Returning Officers. It also allows persons to request the removal of their names from the lists.

Procedural Matters

Early in the Session, Speaker Daquay was presented with a difficult matter concerning the use of the language "racist" and "racism". Oscar Lathlin (NDP - The Pas) raised a matter of privilege relating to comments made to him by Premier Filmon who stated that he knew of persons who might regard Mr. Lathlin as a racist. In the exchange during which these comments were made, Mr. Lathlin had earlier stated that he had heard people within his community refer to the government's policies as racist. The Speaker first ruled that the matter was not one of privilege but rather one of order as the matter was dealing with language. In considering the language that was in question, the Speaker ruled, based on previous Manitoba rulings, that the lan-

guage used by both the Premier and Mr. Lathlin was unparliamentary and directed that it be withdrawn. Both Members complied.

Judy White
Clerk Assistant
Manitoba Legislative Assembly



Parliament adjourned on June 22, 1995. The days preceding the summer adjournment were marked by the passage of highly controversial bills: legislation on the registration of lobbyists (Bill C-43), firearms control (Bill C-68), retiring allowances for MPs (Bill C-85), and sentencing (Bill C-41) were given final approval by the House.

Procedure

The period preceding adjournment is also a time when tension rises and Speakers must exercise great vigilance. In this regard, the Speaker made several important rulings.

Naming of an MP

On May 29, 1995, the Speaker named an MP and ordered that person to withdraw from the House for the remainder of the day's sitting. The MP, Jake Hoeppner (Lisgar-Marquette, Reform) had refused to

withdraw remarks judged unparliamentary.

Unauthorized use of a photograph

On May 30, 1995, Elsie Wayne (Saint John, Progressive Conservative) rose on a question of privilege after learning about the unauthorized use of her photograph as part of a study prepared by Health Canada on plain, generic packaging of tobacco products. This MP was of the opinion that the use made of the photograph violated her privacy and dignity as an individual and as an MP, exposed her to ridicule, and gave a false impression of her that could be harmful to her in carrying out her duties. In a ruling handed down on June 13, 1995, the Speaker stressed the seriousness of the incident and stated that the use of photographs of MPs in situations that have nothing to do with their duties can very well cause unforeseen difficulties and lead to embarrassing situations. After noting that apologies and explanations had been extended, the Speaker did not conclude that this MP's privilege had been breached.

Deferred recorded vote

The Standing Orders of the House of Commons allow the Chief Government Whip or the Chief Opposition Whip to ask the Speaker to defer a recorded vote to another determined time. Usually the government and the Opposition agree on the time at which the deferred vote is to be held. On June 15, 1995, during the debate on a government bill, the Opposition asked that the recorded vote be deferred, but there was no agreement on when the vote would be held. After asking the parties in the House to come to an agreement on this subject, to no avail, the Speaker himself decided when the vote would be held. Although the Speaker's decision was

more favourable to the Opposition's request, the Speaker took care to note that the decision was not based on the fact that the Opposition had made its request first.

Intimidation of an MP

On June 8, 1995, Pierrette Ringuette-Maltais (Madawaska-Victoria, Liberal) said she had been the subject of intimidation by Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Reform) who had grasped her by the arm. Ms Ringuette-Maltais rose on a question of privilege; Ms Grey then apologized to her. On June 19, 1995, the Speaker ruled that the apologies extended by Ms Grey had ended the incident. However, the Speaker emphasized the seriousness of the situation and asked MPs to respect the conventions and traditions of the House and to conduct themselves with all the civility becoming to representatives of the Canadian public.

Committees

After evaluating the pilot project that had been launched in April, the Board of Internal Economy confirmed that it intended to continue distributing Committees publications mainly in electronic form, but agreed to re-establish official translation of Committees deliberations. During the pilot project, transcription of the sound recording of simultaneous interpretation of the deliberations had been provided.

Special Joint Committee on a Code of Ethics

The House agreed to the striking of a Special Joint Committee responsible for developing a code of ethics to help Senators and MPs reconcile their official responsibilities and their personal interests. The Committee will also consider relations between parliamentarians and lobbyists.

Standing Committee on Finance

After considering in detail the bill concerning the budget and reporting it to the House with amendments, the Standing Committee on Finance tabled another report containing recommendations for implementing the measures passed in the budget.

Supply

On June 7, 1995, the House instructed the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to undertake a comprehensive review of the business of supply, with particular attention to the reform of the *Estimates* and the processes and mechanisms used by the House and its Committees to consider and dispose of them. Its report is to be tabled by December 1, 1995.

Private Members' Business

A motion tabled by Rey Paghtahan (Winnipeg-North, Liberal) was adopted by the House. The motion asks the government to take legislative measures to stop hate propaganda on the information highway.

Centre Block Renovations

Lastly, we note that extensive renovations to the Centre Block will be carried out between the years 2002 and 2006. During that time, MPs will sit in a chamber to be arranged on the first floor of the West Block, in a space now occupied by the cafeteria.

MPs returned to the House for the fall session on September 18, 1995.

André Gagnon
Procedural Clerk
Table Research Branch



Saskatchewan

The Fifth Session of the 22nd Legislature concluded late on May 18, 1995, and was dissolved five days later on May 23rd. The General Election followed on June 21st. The party standings in the House going into the election were: New Democratic Party - 51, Progressive Conservatives - 9, Liberals - 3, Independent - 1 and two vacancies.

The revised constituency boundaries previously agreed to by the House came into effect with a reduction in the number of seats from 66 to 58. A 42-seat New Democratic majority government was returned by the electorate with the 11 Liberal Members overtaking the 5 Progressive Conservatives as the Official Opposition. The Progressive Conservatives retained official party status. Premier **Roy Romanow** chose not to immediately replace the three defeated cabinet ministers, **Carol Carson**, **Darrel Cunningham** and **Fred Thompson**, but instead distributed their portfolios to current Ministers.

Appointment

Following the retirement of **William Goodhand**, a new Sergeant-at-Arms has been appointed for the Saskatchewan Legislature. Saskatchewan born **Patrick Shaw** began his appointment on August 1. Mr. Shaw served with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for twenty

years, working variously as an investigator, unit commander and criminal law instructor at the Training Academy. More recently, he has been employed as the Manager of the Protective Services and Crime Prevention Unit at the Saskatchewan Property and Management Corporation.

Margaret Woods
Clerk Assistant



British Columbia

The fourth Session of the 35th Parliament concluded on July 13, 1995, after seventy-six sitting days. Despite earlier predictions of a light legislative agenda, the House in fact considered fifty-eight bills. All fifty-six bills introduced by the government were passed, several of which were significant pieces of legislation.

Legislation

Introduced by Attorney General **Colin Gabelmann**, the *Election Act* proved to be one of the more controversial bills in the government program. At 302 pages, it was also indisputably the longest. The Act, given Royal Assent on July 13, represents a major overhaul of the rules and regulations for conducting provincial general elections. The last substantial changes to the Act were made in 1920. The bill's central features include enlarging the scope of

responsibilities of the Chief Electoral Officer; requiring public opinion polls to be accompanied by background information such as the size of the sample and its sponsors; limiting the amount of money that political parties and other groups may spend during an election campaign; and requiring disclosure of campaign funds received by political parties.

The bill received a great deal of attention from opposition parties and the news media. The latter interpreted the bill's requirements on reporting poll information as an attack on press freedom, while the Liberal and Reform caucuses criticized the bill's restraint on third party advertising and its exemption from the disclosure rules of volunteer workers during election campaigns.

The *Adoption Act* represented a comprehensive set of changes to the regulation of adoptions in the province. Among other things, the new Act regulates private adoption agencies and requires consultation with aboriginal communities in cases involving aboriginal children. Two other innovations proved to be controversial: permitting same-sex couples to adopt and removing restrictions regarding contact between biological parents and children. Under the new Act, adopted children, when nineteen years or older, may apply to see their original birth certificate and adoption order, though birth parents may file a "no contact declaration" which would prohibit contact in such cases. Information and Privacy Commissioner **David Flaherty** expressed concern over the privacy implications of the disclosure provisions of the Act, which put the onus on birth parents to prevent information about them being forwarded to their birth children. Social Services Minister **Joy MacPhail** countered that the government had worked

hard to strike a balance between disclosure and confidentiality, and offered a range of options for the dissemination of information between birth parents and children.

Commissioner Flaherty also expressed privacy concerns over another piece of legislation, the *Criminal Records Review Act*. This Act, in an attempt to help prevent physical and sexual abuse of children, requires that criminal record checks be conducted on all current and potential employees who work with children. The Commissioner questioned the scope of the Act, which targets categories of occupations and applies to approximately 280,000 individuals or one-sixth of the adult population of the province, some of whom (such as dentists and nurses) may not have regular contact with children. Despite these comments, the bill was supported unanimously by the Members of the House.

The *Access to Abortion Services Act* was introduced by Health Minister **Paul Ramsey**. This Act creates "access zones" around the homes and offices of doctors who perform abortions, as well as abortion clinics. A number of activities would be prohibited within these zones, including persuading a person to refrain from obtaining an abortion and photographing or videotaping them; intimidating or physically interfering with a doctor, patient or other employees; and holding demonstrations. The Act provides for a maximum fine of \$5000 or imprisonment of up to six months.

Municipal Affairs Minister **Darlene Marzari** introduced the *Growth Strategies Amendment Act*, which provides regional districts in the province with the authority to undertake region-wide planning. Districts may initiate and implement

"regional growth strategies", subject to approval by the municipalities affected. Where no agreement can be reached, the Act provides for a dispute resolution mechanism. In addition, the provincial cabinet is empowered to require the development of a regional strategy in certain circumstances.

Columbia River Treaty

An intense debate followed an announcement by the Bonneville Power Authority in Washington State that it was withdrawing from negotiations on dispersal of benefits from the Columbia River Treaty. At issue was \$250 million in payment from Bonneville to British Columbia in exchange for a reduction in the amount of power to be returned to the province. Though a memorandum of agreement had been signed between the two entities, Bonneville abruptly announced that it did not wish to proceed, and instead would build the power transmission lines necessary for a return power flow, as mandated by the original treaty.

This move had implications for the province's budget as well as the government's recently signed Columbia Basin Accord and accompanying legislation. These set up a regional authority to oversee dispersal of benefits to the Kootenays, a region of the province that experienced large-scale flooding to construct the dams necessary for the initial power generation. During debate on a motion to condemn the actions of the Bonneville Power Authority, opposition members attacked the government for including the \$250 million in the current budget though the agreement was not yet finalized. Finance Minister **Elizabeth Cull** responded that the government proceeded on the basis of an opinion from the Comptroller General to account for the funds as revenue for the current fiscal year.

Government Communications Contracts

On May 18, 1995, the Speaker tabled a report by Auditor General **George Morfitt** regarding an investigation into the tendering of government advertising contracts. Allegations had been made by members of the Opposition that a particular advertising company, NOW Communications, had been accorded preferential treatment because of ties between its principals and the governing New Democratic Party. Additionally, questions were raised about sub-contracting involving an advertising firm in Washington, DC.

The Auditor General found that the contractual relationship between NOW Communications and the government was similar to that of other suppliers, and that contracts were, in general, appropriately managed and controlled. However, in certain instances reporting and accountability were found to be inappropriate, in that the true provider of the services (ie. the American firm) was not disclosed.

Committee Activity

Three all-party committees will be active through the fall. For the first time, the Public Accounts Committee's term of reference permit it to meet while the House is adjourned. The Committee has been referred a report, issued jointly by the Auditor General and the Deputy Ministers' Council, entitled *Enhancing Accountability for Performance in the British Columbia Public Sector*. The Committee will be hearing from representatives of both issuing entities in its study of the report.

The Select Standing Committee on Forests, Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources will be breaking new ground when it meets to consider the business plan for Forest

Renewal BC, a Crown agency established by statute last year. The Act that establishes the agency also mandates that its business plan be approved each year by a select standing committee. The Committee is chaired by MLA Frank Garden.

One set of changes in the new *Election Act* relates to the position of Chief Electoral Officer in the province. The position receives significant new authority under the Act and is now styled an Officer of the Legislature. New responsibilities include issuing directives to political parties regarding financing and other activities; appointing and supervising election officials; recommending changes to the Act; and chairing an Election Advisory Committee, to receive input from representatives of political parties. As with other officers, the governing statute provides for selection by an all-party committee of the House, in this case the Special Committee to Appoint a Chief Electoral Officer. The Committee, chaired by MLA Mike Farnworth, will begin meeting in September.

Parliamentary Attachment

The British Columbia Legislative Assembly was pleased to welcome Philip Mithen, Deputy Clerk in the Parliament of Victoria, Australia for a three-day attachment in July. During his visit, Mr. Mithen met with Assembly officers and staff to study a variety of issues, including electronic publication of Assembly documents, modernisation of procedure, and staff contracts and employment agreements.

Neil Reimer
Assistant Committee Clerk



Alberta

In the last few months, the Governor General of Canada, the Prime Minister, and the Speaker of the House of Commons have visited Alberta.

His Excellency, the Governor General, Romeo LeBlanc, made his first official visit to Alberta in early March 1995. His visit included meetings with the Lieutenant Governor, the Premier, and the Speaker. His Excellency officially opened the 1995 Canada Winter Games in Grande Prairie, Alberta.

The Alberta Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association celebrated its 50th anniversary on March 26th and Gilbert Parent, Speaker of the House of Commons, made his second official visit to Alberta in early May to address the Alberta Branch of the CPA. Mr. Parent was the keynote speaker at the annual Premier's Prayer Breakfast and also addressed members of the Canadian Club in Edmonton.

The Prime Minister attended opening day celebrations at this year's Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth - The Calgary Stampede and Exhibition (July 7-16) for a taste of western hospitality and Alberta beef.

Some significant changes to the Legislative Assembly seating plan have occurred since December 1994. At a press conference held on December 9th, Julius Yankowsky, the Liberal Member for Edmonton Beverly-Belmont, officially announced

his decision to cross the floor and join the Government Caucus.

In a by-election precipitated by the unexpected death of Dr. Harry Sohal, Member for Calgary-McCall, Shiraz Shariff, Progressive Conservative candidate, was elected as the new Member on April 20th and officially sworn-in on May 10th.

In addition, Paul Langevin, the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, joined the Government Caucus on April 25th after sitting as an Independent Member for over a year.

Another seating change was required when Andrew G. Beniuk, Member for Edmonton-Norwood, became an Independent Member after he was removed from the Liberal Caucus on June 23rd.

Not including the Speaker, the changes to the Assembly seating plan translate into fifty-two Progressive Conservative Members, twenty-nine Liberal Members and one Independent Member.

The 1995 Spring Session adjourned for the summer on May 19th with the passage of forty-two Government Bills and one Private Member's Bill (Bill 208). Since the changes to the Standing Orders in 1993, Bill 208, *Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 1995*, is the fourth Private Member's Bill to pass into law.

With the passage of Bill 19, *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Amendment Act, 1995*, Robert C. Clark was officially sworn-in as Alberta's first Information and Privacy Commissioner on June 18th.

On a closing note, members of the Electoral Boundaries Commission were officially announced on June 20th. The Commission held its first meeting on June 14th.

Moses K. Jung
Executive Assistant
to the Speaker

SENATE



The Senate sat into July in order to adopt a number of important bills including Bill C-104, amending the *Criminal Code* and the *Young Offenders Act* to permit DNA analysis, and Bill C-85, modifying the pension regime for retired MPs.

Other legislation remained on the order paper including third reading of the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act* (Bill C-69), the Bill on Pearson Airport (Bill C-22) and Bill C-68 respecting gun control.

Speaker's Ruling

On July 11, the Speaker **Gil Molgat** made his ruling on the motion of Senator **Anne Cools** proposing to establish a select committee to examine the conduct and behaviour of a judge of the Ontario Court and some barristers. In the end, the Speaker determined that the motion was in order. While he acknowledged the possible implications of the Senator's motion, the Speaker limited his role to assessing whether the motion was in order according

to the rules and practices of the Senate. He avoided any comment on the merits of the motion which involved the possible removal of a judge from the bench.

Committees

The Special Senate Committee on the Pearson Airport met throughout the summer to examine all matters concerning the policies and negotiations leading up to and including the agreements respecting the redevelopment and operation of Terminals 1 and 2 at Pearson International Airport in Toronto. It is also looking at the circumstances relating to the cancellation of the agreements.

By the end of its hearings in September the committee will have heard from some sixty witnesses and will have combed through more than 100,000 pages of documents that were made available by the Government. The committee's deliberations centre on two opposing assessments of the public interests and whether those interests were better served by the agreements to lease two terminals at Pearson Airport to a private company or by the decision to cancel the lease following the 1993 federal election.

Other matters

When the Senate adjourned for the summer, members offered tributes to Senator **Joan Neiman** who retired

from the Senate in early September, before the Senate resumed its sittings. Colleagues praised Senator Neiman, who became a member in 1972, for her dedication and hard work especially in promoting the activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and numerous standing committees including Aboriginal Peoples, National Finance and the Special Joint Committee on a Renewed Canada. More recently, Senator Neiman chaired the Special Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide.

Senator **Jean-Noël Desmarais**, who had been been a frequent participant in the work of the Special Committee died from cancer on July 26, 1995.

In September the Prime Minister filled 4 vacancies in the Upper House. The new Senators are **Doris Anderson** of PEI, who is a former professor of Home Economics; **Lorna Milne** of Ontario a former trustee and vice-chair of the Peel County Board of Education; **Marie-P. Poulin** of Sudbury who was the founding president and director of the Tribunal Canadien des relations professionnelles artistes-producteurs; and **Bill Rompkey**, who had been the MP for Labrador since 1972.