



# Public Accounts Committee Activity

## The Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees

by Craig James



E.B. Shillington, President, Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees 1985-86.

*This is the first in a series of articles intended to raise public awareness about the work of Public Accounts Committees and other post expenditure review committees. Future items will consist of summaries of important reports by public accounts committees across Canada; the follow-up to their reports, contentious procedural points and profiles of committee chairman. This series is in keeping with a recommendation of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees at its 1985 meeting in Whitehorse. The first article is a brief history of the Council. Anyone associated with public accounts committees is invited to contact the author with suggestions for future issues.*

The Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees (CCPAC) was organized in 1979 on the initiative of Patrick Reid, chairman of the Ontario Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Public Accounts at that time. He seized the opportunity at a time when Public Accounts Committees were becoming more curious about the role played by their legislative auditors and as a result felt the need to form a closer relationship with the Conference of Legislative Auditors. In 1978, Mr. Reid attended their annual meeting in Edmonton and the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees was born. Mr. Reid was president until 1983 when he resigned from the Assembly and accepted a position with the Ontario Mining Association. He was succeeded by Mr. Tony Penikett (MLA, Whitehorse West, Yukon), 1984-85, and Mr. E.B. Shillington (MLA, Regina Centre, Saskatchewan), 1985-86.

The seven annual meetings of the Council have continued to be held at the same time and in the same city as the Conference of Canadian Legislative Auditors. In 1979 the Council met in St. John's, in 1980 Winnipeg, in 1981 St. Andrews, in 1982 Victoria, in 1983 Toronto, in 1984 Charlottetown and in 1985 Whitehorse. The locations of future meetings are Regina (1986), Quebec City (1987) and Halifax (1988).

At the meeting in Whitehorse a first and second vice president were elected: Mr. Claude Lachance (MLA, Bellechasse, Quebec) and Dr. Colin Stewart (MLA, Colchester South, Nova Scotia). This formalized board of directors appealed to the Council in terms of future conference planning and organizational objectives.

In view of the demands of time upon the executive in their various parliamentary capacities it was agreed, in 1984, to have the Public Accounts Committee clerk in the jurisdiction hosting the Council's annual meeting as secretary. Missy Follwell, Clerk Assistant, Yukon, became the first

such appointee whose term was for 1984-85. I was appointed at the Whitehorse meeting in 1984 to serve for 1985-86. As one would expect, the position of secretary is that of coordinator and facilitator throughout their term of office. Conference planning is a major responsibility of the Secretary's function.

In March 1986 the current executive will be meeting in Quebec City to review, among other things, the CCPAC constitution with any alterations to be submitted to the Council at its annual meeting in Regina (July 6-9, 1986) for a final decision. A review of the Council's 1986 meeting agenda will also be considered.

Typically, the annual meeting brings together public accounts committee delegations who present case studies of investigations they have undertaken in the previous year, the debate of which is published and made public for future reference. Indeed, Blackwell's, a large bookstore and publisher in Oxford, England, and elsewhere, have placed their own standing order with the CCPAC to fill requests that Blackwell's have received from around the world for CCPAC proceedings. Comprehensive auditing, accountability in government, Estimates and long-term budgeting the value of public accounts committees are but a few non-case studies which have been debated at meetings since 1979.

Unique to the CCPAC annual meeting is the joint session with legislative auditors held originally at the suggestion of Mr. Willard Lutz, Provincial Auditor for the province of Saskatchewan. The joint sessions have come to signify mutual respect and common interest between politicians and auditors.

The CCPAC approved and adopted its Constitution on July 6, 1982. Mr. Patrick Reid figured prominently as an author of this Constitution.

Craig James is Clerk Assistant of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly