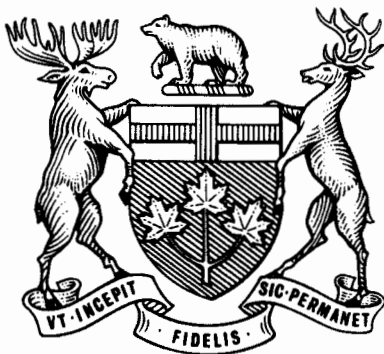


REPORTS ON LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES



ONTARIO

The overriding issue during the Ontario Legislature's Fall sitting was the Government's purchase of 25 per cent of Suncor Ltd., the Canadian subsidiary of Sun Oil Company of Pennsylvania, at a cost of roughly \$650 million.

The Liberal Official Opposition criticised the purchase repeatedly, arguing that, despite Government assurances to the contrary, it failed to secure the province's oil supply and did little to stimulate employment in Ontario since Suncor's principal holdings are in Western Canada. The New Democrats were supportive of the principle of Government ownership in the resource sector, but argued that it would have been far better to acquire ownership of large Ontario-based resource companies; they also questioned the strategic value of ownership of a minority of the company's stock.

As the debate unfolded, the question of the circumstances surround-

ing the acquisition came to almost the same prominence as the issue of the purchase itself. The Government refused, despite a continual barrage of opposition criticism, to make certain background studies and documents on which the decision to buy Suncor was partially based. In this demand for information, the two opposition parties were in total accord.

Almost every day, the Suncor deal and the background papers were the subject of heated exchanges in Question Period. In addition, an emergency debate took place on November 12 respecting the briefing given the government caucus by certain Minister of Energy staff and by outside consultants. During the debate, Energy Minister **Robert Welch** agreed to permit the same persons to appear at open caucus meetings of both opposition parties.

The most dramatic episode of the Suncor controversy occurred when the opposition staged a filibuster and delayed the passage of interim supply for several days. Basing his action on the tradition right of "the people to seek redress of their grievances at the time the government seeks supply," Opposition Leader **Stuart Smith** refused to let the motion for interim supply come to a vote until the background studies were tabled. Since the motion was necessary for the authorization of government expenditures after October 31, the delay in its passage meant that most government cheques, including civil servants' paycheques and certain public assistance cheques, could not be sent

out. The debate on interim supply continued for three sitting days until, late on November 2, Mr. Welch moved "the previous question," thus ending the debate. This was the first use of "closure" by an Ontario Government in a major debate for many, many years perhaps for as much as a century.

Legislation and Committee Work

Perhaps the most controversial piece of legislation before the Ontario Legislature in the Fall sitting was an amendment to the *Highway Traffic Act* put forward by Solicitor General **Roy McMurtry**.

This was something of an omnibus bill, touching on police chases, the powers of police officers to conduct spot checks and the problem of drunk drivers. The most contentious feature of the bill created what Liberal critic **Murray Elston** called "the offence of being almost drunk." The legislation authorizes police officers to instantly suspend for 12 hours the licence of drivers with a blood alcohol level between .05 and .08 (.08 is the legal definition of impairment under the federal *Criminal Code*).

Spokesmen for the Liberal party argued vociferously that if drivers with a level in excess of .05 are dangerous then the *Criminal Code* should be properly amended, and that the bill represented a serious infringement of civil liberties by vesting in the police the powers of prosecutor, judge and jury. The New Democrats admitted unease over

certain provisions in the bill, but supported it as an important step towards improved highway safety (NDP transport critic **George Samis**, however, opposed the bill on civil-libertarian grounds).

The Liberals forced the bill out to the Standing Committee on the Administration of Justice for clause-by-clause review. In the Committee, Mr. McMurtry accepted a number of opposition amendments, which went some way towards assuaging the opposition criticism, although the Liberals voted against the bill at Third Reading. The bill received Royal Assent on December 18, in time to be enforced during the Christmas season.

When the House prorogued on December 18, a number of government bills died on the Order Paper, while several others were the subject of committee consideration, including a major revision of the *Planning Act* and important amendments to the *Business Corporations Act*.

Until prorogation of the House, most Committee activity was in the realm of estimates review. During the winter recess, committees were extremely busy, as is typically the case in Ontario when the House is not in session. The Select Committee on Pensions met extensively, as did several others, including the Justice, Public Accounts and Ombudsman Committees; during the last week in January, the Procedural Affairs Committee visited the House of Commons at Westminster.

Among the more noteworthy committee reports was the Fifth Report of the Select Committee on Company Law on Accident and Sickness Insurance. This report is the last in a series of very bulky and highly influential reports on various aspects of the province's corporation law issued by this Committee, which was first established in 1965.

Motion of Censure

On November 16, a debate was held which was entirely without precedent in the Ontario Legislature — a motion of

censure of the Speaker. The motion, brought forward by veteran NDP Member **Donald MacDonald**, was:

That this House has lost confidence in the Speaker's capacity to exercise the responsibilities of the chair with adequate competence and impartiality, thereby resulting in frequent infringement of the privileges of individual members and jeopardizing the orderly conduct of legislative business. Therefore this House (1) urges the Speaker to resign and (2) establishes a committee made up of the House leaders of each party which would report back with an acceptable list of nominees for election by members of the Legislature of a new presiding officer.

In speaking to his motion, Mr. MacDonald stated that although "no motion of censure on a person whom one respects personally is a tasteful thing," motions of censure in the Speaker are rare but acknowledged element of parliamentary procedure. Mr. MacDonald's comments were not so much directed to criticisms of the Speaker as to attacks on what he termed the Government's "rubberstamp" approach to the Legislature.

Liberal Leader **Stuart Smith** told the House that his party would not be supporting the motion. "We take that matter extremely seriously. We believe the present Speaker has weaknesses, but we believe there is only one kind of deficiency, one defect that would justify this resolution being passed by the House. That would be deliberate partisanship. If there were deliberate partisanship we believe the resolution would then be justified. It is our view that such deliberate partisanship is not to be found in the present Speaker, and that is basically the reason we will not vote for the resolution... On a personal level, we think he is a very fine human being and we like him as a person, whatever we may think of certain decisions he has made as Speaker."

Dr. Smith also said that he thought censuring the Speaker would only deflect attention from the real

problem in the conduct of House affairs, which, he maintained "stems entirely from the unparalleled arrogance of the government of Ontario since it gained a majority."

The Dean of the House, Mr. **Osie Villeneuve** (PC, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry) who was first elected in 1948 spoke against the motion. Mr. Villeneuve said that the Speaker, like an umpire, cannot be held responsible for the quality of play, that "the players themselves control the calibre of their performances." Mr. Villeneuve also defended the Speaker on a personal level: "the record attests to the fairness, even-handedness and tolerance of the (Speaker). He has been unfairly harassed by Members of the Opposition from the time he assumed the position. Yet he has never responded in anything other than a gentlemanly way."

Former Speaker **Jack Stokes** (NDP, Lake Nipigon) remarks concentrated on the unique problems faced by the person occupying the Speaker's chair, and the difficulties encountered by Speakers in being fair, firm, impartial, non-partisan and consistent. Mr. Stokes, who did not support the motion, concluded by urging "all honourable Members not to take their frustrations out on the chair."

Premier **William Davis** also spoke in the debate. The principal thrust of his comments was that legitimate opposition disagreement with the policies of the government and with the process by which the Speaker was selected should not be transformed into an unwarranted attack on the Speaker. The Premier also said that "in terms of your sensitivity, decency, integrity and judgement, I have every confidence in you as Speaker of this Assembly."

The motion of censure was defeated by a vote of 86 to 17.

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SENATE AND HOUSE OF COMMONS

Two issues received the lion's share of attention during the period under review (November 1981 — January 1982). These were the budget of November 12 and final passage of the federal government's constitutional charter in December. Since both have already been well publicized in the press, each will be described only briefly since there were a number of other interesting developments during this period.

The Budget

Finance Minister **Allan MacEachen's** second budget was intended to overhaul the personal tax system, primarily by closing loopholes of greatest benefit to those in the upper tax brackets. For example company cars, interest free loans and other job benefits would henceforth be taxable. Mr. MacEachen predicted a decline in the overall deficit from thirteen to ten billion dollars through a program of "intensive restraint" by the federal government. Federal payments to the provinces were cut by nearly six billion dollars although some of that will be made up through increased income tax receipts from under new agreements with Ottawa.

The Progressive Conservative financial critic, **Michael Wilson**, said the measures were far short of what was necessary to stave off a recession. **Bob Rae**, of the New Democratic Party agreed, pointing out that the government was adding more tax dollars to its

coffers but did not plan to use them to stimulate the economy or to produce jobs.

Shortly before the Christmas adjournment Mr. MacEachen unveiled a number of changes which, while leaving the general fiscal pattern of the budget intact, constituted a substantial retreat from the massive loophole closing originally outlined in his budget.

The Constitutional Resolution

Following the Constitutional Conference of November 2 to 4 at which the federal government and all provinces (except Quebec) agreed on changes to the constitutional resolution, the amendments were put before Parliament. The key change was the so-called "notwithstanding" clause which allows federal or provincial governments to expressly state that an act affecting fundamental freedoms, legal rights, or equality rights may remain valid even if it conflicts with the charter. However such acts will have to be reviewed and renewed every 5 years. The charter passed the House on December 2 by a vote of 246 to 24 and the Senate on December 8, by a vote of 59 to 23.

Committee Activity

Outside the glare of publicity surrounding the budget and the constitution many members went about the day to day work of attending committee meetings, and drafting reports, several of which were tabled before Parliament adjourned for Christmas. The Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence presented an interim report of its sub-committee on Canada's Relations with Latin America and the Caribbean, chaired by **Maurice Dupras**. The report had four objectives; to establish the importance of this region in overall Canadian foreign policy, to identify significant policy issues, to outline an agenda for further work and to address the El Salvador crisis in particular. Another sub-committee, chaired by **Maurice Harquail**, examined the status, capability and role of the armed forces reserves. After outlining the historical background, Canada's

military obligation, the current role of the reserves and the capability and state of readiness in case of an emergency, the sub-committee made a number of recommendations. It called on the government to upgrade the military effectiveness of the reserves to make them a viable component of the total defence force. The committee said primary reservists should be offered financial incentives, preferably a tax exemption, while supplementary reservists should be paid a modest annual retainer. Another recommendation was that any reductions in reserve programs by the Department of National Defence should be clearly identified and brought to the attention of Parliament by the Department.

The Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence was given a new reference on December 18. It is now empowered to examine security and disarmament issues with specific attention to the United Nations Special Session devoted to disarmament scheduled for June/July 1982.

On November 23 the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee **Bill Clarke** presented a report on the "tax gap" and the need for improved Electronic Data Processing (EDP) security measures. The report noted a disagreement between the Auditor General and the Department of National Revenue on the best way to reduce non-compliance by individuals and corporations. The Auditor General wanted improvements to the present system of scrutiny based on a random sample of all categories of tax payers but the Department felt a different system, based on new use to its computer system, would be more effective. The Committee disagreed with the Auditor General and recommended the Department abandon its present random sampling techniques of collecting tax gap information, and proceed with adoption of new methods making better use of computers.

A second report presented on December 13 dealt with the reform of the estimates. The committee commended the Comptroller on the new

format made in response to criticism by many members of the House, the Auditor General and the Royal Commission on Financial Management and Accountability. The estimates are now presented in three separate books: *The Government Expenditure Plan* which provides an overview of total government spending; the *Estimates*, which form the basis upon which Parliament grants spending authority to the government and the *Program Expenditure Plans* which provide further details of the departmental programs and activities. The committee noted, however, that parliamentarians had not been sufficiently informed about the new documents. It called for the preparation of a guide to assist users.

The Standing Joint Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments brought the attention of Parliament to two regulations which it said violated criteria established by Parliament for the scrutiny of regulations. The first, an order under the *National Transportation Act*, relating to the reduction of the railway passenger network in Canada is a particularly complicated matter which raises the question of definition as to what is a "regulation" and a "statutory instrument". The matter has been raised several times previously by the committee but until the *Statutory Instruments Act* is amended the scrutiny of delegated legislation is unlikely to advance beyond the present point. The other report, on December 16, centred on Treasury Board Claim Regulations and the Committee's contention that certain provision of the regulation were objectionable from a procedural point of view. The President of the Treasury Board said the regulation would be reviewed but gave no undertaking to remove the objectionable aspects of the regulation.

A more positive example of a minister responding to initiatives of a parliamentary committee is to be found in the case of the Special House of Commons Committee on the Disabled and the Handicapped. Following publication of its major report *Obstacles* last February an inter-

departmental committee was established to produce a coordinated government response to its recommendations. The Minister of Health and Welfare tabled a list of recommendations with which the government was willing to proceed immediately. Then, on December 7, the Prime Minister gave responsibility to a Minister of State, **Gerald Regan**, to oversee the implementation by federal departments, agencies and crown corporations of the recommendations contained in the committee report. Mr. Regan tabled a further response to the committee's recommendations on December 17, 1981. The same day the Chairman of the Special Committee, **David Smith**, presented another report dealing with the problems of the handicapped among the native population. A final report reviewing and assessing what the committee has accomplished during the year of the disabled will be presented before its mandate expires at the end of the present session.

Ruling by the Speaker

On November 4, Speaker **Jeanne Sauvé** gave a ruling on a question of privilege relating to the right of committee chairmen to answer questions in the House. The issue originated in a question addressed to the Chairman of the Standing Committee of Transport, **Maurice Dionne**, concerning the status of discussions to convene the committee and to widen its mandate. The reply was given by the President of the Privy Council, **Yvon Pinard**. A subsequent question was put to the chairman as to whether he had asked for a reference on the via rail question. Both the chairman and the minister rose but the President of the Privy Council answered. This gave rise to the question of privilege. The Speaker ruled that the right of committee chairmen to answer questions regarding procedural matters is well established. However, she said if the President of the Privy Council wants to interpret the question as being related to the business of the House, it is not for the Chair to say otherwise. She noted that she had not recognized one over the other but that Mr. Dionne had deferred to the minister. In any event as Mr.

Dionne did subsequently respond to the question in the House, she found no breach of parliamentary privilege in the matter.

The Editor



ALBERTA

The fall sitting of the third session of The Nineteenth Legislature was the lengthiest in Alberta's history, extending from October 14 to December 15. On October 26, the six opposition members launched a filibuster sparked by a leaked management letter written by Auditor General **Douglas Rogers** to the Treasury Department. In the letter, the Auditor General expressed concern over certain management practices in the handling of Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund investments. Through the filibuster, the opposition sought to focus attention on the subject of government accountability for the fund. Opposition members placed substantial emphasis on the lack of information that had been provided on a \$60 million loss sustained by the fund during certain bond transactions. The Provincial Treasurer, **Lou Hyndman**, explained however that these losses resulted from investment decisions deliberately taken and must be seen in the context of the \$1.6 billion gain realized by the fund over the previous three years.

Accountability for the management of the fund was also the thrust of *An Act to Amend the Auditor General*

Act, proposed by the Leader of the Opposition, **Ray Speaker**. This bill would require the Provincial Treasurer to table all management letters of the fund in the Assembly. The government argued that the provisions of the bill would seriously compromise the control system used to ensure proper management of fund monies. A motion to have the bill read a second time was declared lost on a division.

On December 7, after the opposition's tactics to delay the Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital development appropriations had continued for several weeks, the Attorney General and Government House Leader, **Neil Crawford**, introduced a motion of closure or technically, a motion to limit debate. Following lengthy debate, which included an all night sitting, the motion was passed.

Halfway through the filibuster, on November 25, the opposition put forward a motion that challenged a ruling made by the Speaker of the House, **Mr. Gerard Amerongen**. It arose from a point of privilege which charged the Premier with inconsistencies between statements he made to the legislature concerning interbasin water developments and documents that had been leaked to the New Democratic Party. On November 24, the Speaker had ruled that **Grant Notley**, Leader of the NDP, who sought to raise a point of privilege, would have to wait until Premier **Peter Lougheed** was present to defend himself. The opposition challenged the Speaker's ruling directly from the floor of the House, contrary to parliamentary practice. The following day, the opposition put forward a formal motion challenging the ruling of the Speaker. On the motion by the Government House Leader, the House unanimously agreed to debate the point of privilege without waiting for the expiry of the usual minimum notice of 48 hours. Prior to debate, the Speaker chose to leave the House. The Deputy Speaker replaced him for the duration of the debate. A division was called and the challenge to the Speaker's ruling was lost, 51 to 4.

One of the more significant bills to receive Royal Assent during the session was the *Petroleum Incentives Program Act*, an Act to establish a fund for petroleum exploration incentives. In addition, the *Natural Gas Pricing Agreement Amendment Act*, authorizing the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission to make payments to the federal government pursuant to the energy agreement of September 1981, received Royal Assent. Another Act receiving Royal Assent was the *Electric Energy Marketing Act*, which will establish an agency to purchase, pool, and resell electric energy produced in the province. The agency will also serve as an agent for electric energy imported into or exported from the province. The Legislature also considered the *Transportation of Dangerous Goods Control Act*, which complements federal and other provincial legislation concerning the adoption of uniform standards applying to the transportation of dangerous goods. This bill received second reading, before the Christmas adjournment.

Two other bills of potential import were introduced. Mr. Notley presented *The Public Information and Personal Privacy Act*, which would guarantee the right of the public to obtain public information with respect to the operation of government. **Mr. John Gogo**, MLA for Lethbridge-West, introduced *An Act to Amend the Alberta Evidence Act*, which would provide that communications with an MLA pertaining to his role as a member of the Legislative Assembly, would be privileged.

The Report of the Select Committee To Review Surface Rights was tabled in November. The Committee recommended that the current system for determining levels of compensation to landowners be improved by requiring that operators give "an up-front payment to the landowner in recognition of the force-take aspect of the operator's activities." The Committee members also identified sections of the *Alberta Surface Rights Act*, which in their opinion, required amendments. These sections included assignment of compensation, settlement of disputes,

and right-of-entry. The Report of the Select Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act was tabled in November. Among its recommendations were suggestions to have the investment committee explore ways in which the fund could be made available directly to Albertans, to increase communication with Albertans on the operation of the fund and to debate the Committee's Annual Report.

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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

During the sixth session of the ninth Council of the Northwest Territories some twenty ordinances were enacted including changes in the NWT *Elections Ordinance* and a new *Council Retiring Allowances Ordinance*.

Among other things the new election law now provides that proxy voting be extended to include every elector who is away from his polling division in the course of his regular employment. Certain election documents must now be translated into the Athabaskan (Indian) languages as well as the two forms of Inuktitut. Disabled voters will be able to vote by means other than proxy since returning officers must provide, where possible, level access to polling stations. For the same reason the ballot box may now be taken to the door or curb.

Several changes were made to the pension provisions of NWT legislators. For example the base upon which contributions can be made was expanded to include annual indemnities, per diem indemnities and salaries. The age at which one can receive benefits was reduced from 60 to 55 years. Members will now be allowed to buy back previous service by way of installments over a period not exceeding 15 years.

On November 12, 1981 a special committee of the Legislative Assembly tabled its report *The Impact of Division of the NWT*. It dealt with the prospect of separating the NWT into two distinct territories, one in the east and one in the west. The report presented four alternative boundary proposals, examined the cost of establishing a second territorial capital. It also looked at the potential consequences for economic growth and the evolution of responsible government in the north, but did not deal directly with issues of native land claims, resource ownership or the devolution of power.

Subsequently the Assembly adopted a *Plebiscite Ordinance* which provides for both the holding of a plebiscite on the specific issue of dividing the Territories, and offers a general framework for the holding of future plebiscites in the Territories. The Ordinance provides that there is to be held, on a date determined by the Commissioner, a plebiscite that will ask the following question:

In response to a proposal to create a new territory in the eastern part of the Northwest Territories, the Legislative Assembly has agreed to hold a plebiscite.

If a majority of the voters agree that the Northwest Territories should be divided, the Legislative Assembly will request the Government of Canada to divide the Northwest Territories and create a new territory in the eastern part of the Northwest Territories.

If the Government of Canada agrees to divide the Northwest Territories, the Legislative Assembly will also request

that a federal boundaries commission be appointed to consult with the people of the Northwest Territories and to recommend the exact boundaries of the new territory. On these terms; Do you think that the Northwest Territories should be divided? ...Yes...No

With respect to future plebiscites, the Commissioner will be able to initiate a plebiscite on any issue that he feels is of importance to the Northwest Territories. Canadian citizens over the age of majority who meet the residency requirements, and who are not otherwise excluded under the Ordinance, will be able to vote at a plebiscite. The residency requirement for the question of dividing the Territory will be three years of ordinary residence immediately prior to April 14, 1982, the date set for the plebiscite.

The Editor



QUEBEC

Members of the National Assembly had to attend two special sittings after adjournment for the Christmas holidays, to bring an early settlement to the strike paralyzing the Montreal Urban Community transit system.

Called for the first sitting on Friday, January 15, 1982, the members unanimously passed Bill 47, aimed at resuming negotiations with a conciliator and ordering the strikers back to work at one minute after midnight on January 17.

When the striking MUCTC employees defied the special legislation, the ministers and MNAs were recalled on January 20 for what turned out to be a very brief sitting. The House suspended its work almost immediately to await the results of a back-to-work vote being held in Montreal. Rumour held that the government planned to introduce a bill stripping the unions involved of their certification. When the sitting resumed, it was only to hear the Speaker adjourn the assembly until February 23. Since the striking workers had voted to return to work no bill was tabled.

These two sittings were a continuation of the third session of the 32nd Legislature, which opened on November 9, 1981. While the constitutional issue returned to the Order Paper, the debates focused primarily on the budget submitted by the Minister of Finance, **Jacques Parizeau**, and some of the government's administrative measures.

The Opposition conducted two filibusters, the major one on Bill 16, transforming Hydro-Québec into an equity-funded corporation with authorized capital of \$5 billion divided into 50 million shares with a nominal value of \$100 each. Under the new act, these shares would remain in the public domain and would be assigned to the Minister of Finance. The government could declare dividends in the thirty days after the corporation submits financial information on the surplus available for distribution. No dividend could be declared, however, when the payment of that dividend would reduce Hydro-Québec's capitalization rate to less than 25 per cent at the end of the fiscal year.

The Liberal MNAs charged that the government wanted to take advantage of Hydro-Québec's good administrative record and force the corporation to pay dividends to the government and bolster its budget after approving rate increases, which would become a form of hidden taxation. They argued that before changing Hydro-Québec's status, the government should call an election

on the issue, as the Lesage government did in 1962 before nationalizing the private electric utilities. The opposition dragged out the debate on second reading as long as possible, and opposition members continued to block the bill during the detailed study in committee. The bill passed only after another debate on a motion by Government House Leader **Claude Charron** calling on the committee to report back to the House so the text could be moved through the final stages before adjournment.

As a compromise move, the government agreed to let Bill 39 die on the Order Paper. The opposition had been citing this bill as evidence that the government was overburdening taxpayers, who were already facing economic hard times. This bill emerged from the budgetary statement on the government's 1981-82 fiscal policies. The Minister of Finance had announced certain changes to the system of duties and taxes on liquor, to personal income tax and to the fuel tax. This was sufficient cause for the opposition to launch a running battle to block passage of a bill containing such measures, as an increase in the fuel tax from 20 to 40 per cent; inclusion of the sale of beer (except in taverns) under the 8 per cent sales tax; a reduction in tax deductions from 5 to 3 per cent for 1982.

Mr. Parizeau explained that the most recent federal budget coupled with a series of events over the past six months had forced him to adjust the budget framework more closely to the requirements of the day. He claimed that Ottawa was showing an increasing determination to destabilize the position of Quebec's public finances.

The constitutional issue resurfaced in the House during this session, which opened only days after the end of the conference on repatriating the Constitution, held in Ottawa. Premier **René Lévesque** introduced a motion, which was carried, stating that the National Assembly could only accept the proposed repatriation of the Constitution under certain conditions, one being that Quebec retain the veto it had exercised over the federal resolution on repatri-

ating the Constitution. The Opposition voted against the motion, but did join the government in passing Bill 43, turning to the Court of Appeal to have this right of veto recognized.

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BRITISH COLUMBIA

The provincial economy dominated the thrust of the Throne Speech which opened the fall session of the legislature on 23 November 1981. Members were asked to approve budgetary measures to counter the anticipated slow down in real economic growth. Wage restraint and privatization of select government activities were two specific proposals referred to in the Throne Speech. In the field of housing the government promised to introduce measures to restore the existing housing stock and to increase the supply of multiple unit accommodation. The disposition of appropriate Crown Land for housing will be accelerated, and a residential land supply strategy for every community in the province will be put in

place. The Speech promised special emphasis on first-time buyers to be incorporated in these measures by promoting "rent-to-own" programs.

Legislation to expand the Labour ministry to include employment is also planned for this session. The objective behind this proposal is to strengthen the ties between vocational and apprenticeship training programs and the job market. Moreover, in recognition of the large number of women in the provincial labour force, the government promised to set an example for other employers to follow by appointing a deputy minister responsible for women's opportunities within the soon to be renamed Ministry of Labour and Employment. The recent appointment of **Jill Bodkin** as the first woman deputy minister in this province was noted in the Speech and the government indicated that other similar senior appointments could be expected.

The government also called for a review of election legislation this session "... to improve the accuracy and timeliness of our voters list and streamline other aspects of election administration." A motion by **Frank Howard**, NDP member for Skeena, following the Throne Speech prolonged the traditional Opening Day ceremonies. He wanted to establish a 9th Select Standing Committee on fair election practices but the motion failed to win government support.

Opposition criticism during the 6 day debate on the Throne Speech centered on the lack of government planning to improve the long term economic prospects in the province. On 23 November 1981, **Graham Lea**, NDP member for Prince Rupert, moved an amendment to the Speech, seconded by **Colin Gabelmann**, NDP member for North Island, which read as follows:

The amendment is that this House regrets that the Speech of His Honour fails to recognize that the economic policies of the government have resulted in economic stagnation, and further, fails to provide proposals for strengthening the economy of the province so as to

provide full employment opportunities for all our people.

The opposition criticized government plans to incorporate a lease-to-own housing plan on the grounds that a buyer purchasing land at a set interest rate the first year of the plan would still face a purchase price at current market value when the plan expired. Furthermore, although Mr. Gabelmann, the opposition housing critic, applauded the government for increasing the provincial second mortgage loan by \$5,000 to a total of \$10,000, he argued that \$10,000 on the \$100,000 price for an average home would still leave home ownership inaccessible to most prospective first-time purchasers. The House divided on the amendment and it was negatived 30 to 21.

A motion to fix a time for the House to reconvene following the approval of the Throne Speech was debated extensively. It resulted in an all night sitting which lasted until 9:48 am on Wednesday, November 25. Throughout the night the opposition argued on economic issues. The House is expected to resume sitting in March to consider a new budget.

Nine government bills were introduced in the fall session, including the pro forma Bill 1. The government party Whip, **George Mussallem**, Social Credit member for Dewdney, introduced the only members bill on the agenda entitled *Dangerous Health Practices Act*. All bills remained at the first reading stage when the House recessed 1 December 1981. Six of the government bills were amendments to existing legislation, among them the *Assessment Amendment Act, 1982*, introduced by **Hugh A. Curtis**, Minister of Finance, and the *School Amendment Act, 1982*, introduced by **Brian R.D. Smith**, Minister of Education. The two new government bills are the *Geothermal Resources Act*, introduced by **R. McClelland**, Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, and the *Land Use Act*, introduced by **William N. Vander Zalm**, Minister of Municipal Affairs. *The Land Use Act* is expected to generate lively debate when

the House resumes sitting in March. The Act provides for the establishment of regional co-ordinating committees comprised of persons appointed by the Environment and Land Use Cabinet Committee. The regional committees are to develop official land use plans at the regional and municipal levels of government for approval by the minister. Opposition to the plan stems from the concentration of power the Act places in the hands of the provincial government.

On Wednesday, 25 November 1981, **Charles Barber**, NDP member for Victoria, rose on a matter of privilege relating to an incident which had occurred during Opening Day ceremonies. The incident involved a guest seated on the floor of the House who had directed the following remarks to the member, "Why don't you shut up. He didn't interfere when you were speaking." The member stated that he had not pressed the matter earlier because he had attributed the remarks to an uninformed guest who was unaware of the special privileges accorded to members of the assembly. His reason for bringing the matter to the attention of the Chair now was that he had discovered the previous day that the person in question was not a member of the general public, but a public servant with the rank of deputy minister in the Office of the Premier. In delivering his reserved decision on 26 November 1981, Mr. Speaker Schroeder ruled that because the member had failed to raise the matter at the "earliest opportunity" the Chair had no authority under the existing rules to permit the matter to proceed without notice. He added, however,

There is no doubt that the onus on the Member raising a matter of privilege is a heavy one but the Chair has no authority to relax these rules, even though the Chair may well be satisfied a *prima facie* case exists.

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SASKATCHEWAN

On November 26, 1981, the fourth session of Saskatchewan's Nineteenth Legislature was opened with the reading of the Speech from the Throne by The Lieutenant Governor **C. Irwin McIntosh**. The Speech dealt with the Saskatchewan Government's role and participation in the recent negotiations for and achievement of a federal-provincial constitutional accord. It also referred to the agreement signed between the province and the federal government relating to the oil and gas industry in Saskatchewan, and indicated that a variety of legislation would be introduced in the session dealing with the areas of agriculture, transportation, justice, environment, health, education and culture.

After completing the requirements of the Address in Reply the House turned its attention to the consideration of legislation. Before the Assembly recessed some twenty-nine individual bills were introduced, by far the most controversial of which was the Home Owners' Protection bill. Intended to assist home owners confronted with high-interest mortgage renewals, the bill was the subject of an emotional debate in the Assembly and has received wide attention throughout the province. It was the only piece of legislation to be passed into law, as *The Home Owner's Protection Act*, prior to the House's adjournment on December 10.

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