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## Chronology of Events July 1995 – June 1996

*Andrew C. Tzembelicos*

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4 July 1995  
*Health Policy*

Health Minister Diane Marleau promises the provinces the federal government will continue to provide guaranteed funding for health care. She also refuses to waver on a deadline, to be imposed on the 15 October 1995, which would see a cut in transfer payments to those provinces which continue to allow the operation of clinics in the practice of extra-billing for essential medical services.

14 July 1995  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

An impasse is reached in negotiations between the federal government and the province of British Columbia over cost-sharing issues. The dispute concerns a land claims package the provincial government is offering to the Nisga'a band, valued by the province at \$175 million, for which the federal government is only willing to commit \$140 million.

21 July 1995  
*Sovereignty – Quebec*

Alberta Premier Ralph Klein declares his province will not agree to negotiate ties with an independent Quebec under any circumstances.

26 July 1995  
*Sovereignty – Quebec*

Quebec Premier Jacques Parizeau offers a leaked federal document as proof the Chrétien government is engaged in a federalist conspiracy to influence voting in the upcoming referendum. Parizeau's allegations are based on informa-

tion contained in the document outlining plans by the federal government to use subliminal advertising and two non-profit organizations to promote national unity.

27 July 1995  
*Sovereignty – Quebec;  
Aboriginal Peoples*

Rosemary Kuptana, President of the Inuit Tapirisat, says the Inuit that inhabit Northern Quebec will boycott the upcoming referendum because it doesn't address Inuit concerns regarding self-government, or guarantee the province of Quebec will uphold previous land-claims settlements negotiated with the federal government.

15 August 1995  
*GST Reform*

In response to statements made by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien that a new taxation scheme will likely replace the GST in the next federal budget, Alberta Premier Ralph Klein appeals to Chrétien to exempt his province from all new national sales tax incentives.

16 August 1995  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

Indian Affairs Minister Ron Irwin announces a new federal policy for aboriginal self-government which would give aboriginal communities similar powers to those of municipalities. The proposed policy is met with criticism from native leaders, who claim it is too limited and undermines previous government initiatives.

17 August 1995  
*Environment*

In a movement towards the harmonization of environmental policy, Canada's environment ministers agree on proposed legislation to protect endangered habitat on federal lands. The legislation is expected to serve as the foundation for a coordinated national approach to environmental protection by the provinces.

25 August 1995  
*Premiers – Annual  
Conference*

Canada's premiers conclude a two-day annual conference in St. John's. The principal topic of discussion is the need to establish national standards in health care, social assistance, and postsecondary education, and to limit the federal government's role in these areas. In demanding greater input over these areas, the premiers establish three councils of provincial ministers to develop a unified approach by the provinces to the issue of social-policy reform. At the meeting the premiers also send a warning to the Quebec government that a sovereign Quebec will be unable to maintain the privileged trade status it currently holds with the other provinces.

30 August 1995  
*Immigration*

Due to fiscal restraint, Ontario Attorney-General Charles Harnick says the province is no longer willing to provide legal aid for new immigrants and refugees and that the responsibility to provide such services lies with the federal government.

7 September 1995  
*Sovereignty –  
Quebec*

Quebec Premier Jacques Parizeau tables a sovereignty bill, unveiled a day earlier, and a 43-word referendum question in the provincial legislature. The question, criticized by Quebec Liberal Leader Daniel Johnson as a vague attempt to dupe Quebecers into opting for sovereignty, reads: "Do you agree that Quebec should become sovereign, after having made a formal offer to Canada for a new economic and political partnership, within the scope of the bill respecting the future of Quebec and of the agreement signed on June 12, 1995?"

8 September 1995  
*Sovereignty –  
Quebec*

In response to a challenge by Guy Bertrand, a Quebec Superior Court Judge rules that the Quebec referendum process is illegal and serves as a threat to rights protected by the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. However, he stops short of issuing an injunction to halt the referendum, citing the will of Quebecers to determine their province's future.

8 September 1995  
*Health Policy*

The National Health Forum, established and chaired by the prime minister a year earlier to study the provision of health-care services, releases its first report. The report rejects claims of a funding crisis in the Canadian health-care system, suggesting that in comparison to international standards, Canada's health-care expenditures are high.

11 September 1995  
*Elections –  
New Brunswick*

The Liberal government of New Brunswick, led by Premier Frank McKenna, returns to power for a third consecutive term. The Liberals get a majority government capturing 47 of the legislature's 55 seats; the Conservatives gain official Opposition status with six seats, and the NDP wins one seat. Seats at dissolution, before a redistribution of seats to a total of 55, were: Liberals, 42; Conservatives, six; Confederation of Regions, six; and NDP one, with two Independents and one vacancy.

- 11 September 1995  
*Sovereignty – Quebec* After months of speculation, Quebec Premier Jacques Parizeau confirms that the province's referendum on sovereignty will be held on 30 October 1995.
- 13 September 1995  
*Sovereignty – Quebec* At a news conference in Ottawa, Bloc Québécois Leader Lucien Bouchard announces that sovereignists will only accept results favouring separation. He insists that if the referendum fails to produce a vote for Quebec sovereignty, then subsequent referendums will be held until a vote for sovereignty is achieved. Bouchard's announcement comes only one day after Referendum Minister Lucienne Robillard's declaration that the federal government will honour the "democratic process" of the referendum, despite the outcome.
- 15 September 1995  
*Federal-Provincial Relations – BC; Aboriginal Peoples* In Victoria, Indian Affairs Minister Ron Irwin and his BC counterpart John Cashore announce that the two governments have negotiated a joint, cost-sharing plan that will allow both governments to contribute equally to settle 44 native land claims in the province.
- 18-20 September 1995  
*Health Policy* A two-day conference involving Canada's health ministers concludes with accusations by provincial ministers that the planned \$7 billion in cutbacks to transfer payments by the federal government threatens the future of medicare.
- 19 September 1995  
*Sovereignty – Quebec* Prime Minister Jean Chrétien declares in the House of Commons that the federal government will not acknowledge Quebec's independence if Quebecers vote in favour of sovereignty by a narrow margin.
- 19 September 1995  
*Aboriginal Peoples; Health Policy* In Calgary, more than 500 Aboriginal Peoples stage a demonstration directed at the federal government to protest the decline of Canada's health-care system, which they maintain affects them more than any other Canadians. The rally serves to launch a two-day "emergency" conference on aboriginal health issues.
- 21 September 1995  
*Sovereignty – Quebec* Leaders from the Bloc Québécois, Parti Québécois, and Parti Action Démocratique unveil their vision of an independent Quebec, with a document entitled "Our Hearts at Work."

- 21-22 September 1995  
*Social Programs*
- Provincial welfare ministers end a two-day meeting in Winnipeg, discussing topics such as Ottawa's new block-funding formula for social services and a \$7 billion decrease in federal government spending in the areas of health, education, and welfare over the next two years.
- 22 September 1995  
*Senate – Appointments*
- Prime Minister Jean Chrétien makes four more appointments to the Senate: William Rompkey, a Newfoundland MP and former Cabinet minister; Doris Anderson, a professor from Charlottetown, PEI; Lorna Milne, a politician and community activist from Brampton, Ontario; and Marie-Paule Poulin, a former CBC vice-president and senior federal official from Sudbury. The new standings in the Upper House are: Conservatives, 51; Liberals, 50; Independents, three.
- 25 September 1995  
*Fiscal Policy; Budgets*
- Moody's Investors Service of New York commends Canada's provinces, particularly those in the west, for their progress towards realizing the goal of deficit reduction.
- 27 September 1995  
*Sovereignty – Quebec*
- Bloc Québécois Leader Lucien Bouchard boasts that the federal government will have to negotiate with an independent Quebec in the event that the referendum results favour sovereignty because the Canadian economy would collapse under the strain of the national debt. Bouchard's remarks come a day after remarks by Federal Finance Minister Paul Martin suggesting that Canada will not negotiate an economic association with an independent Quebec.
- 29 September 1995  
*Sovereignty – Quebec*
- Prime Minister Jean Chrétien rejects an opportunity, offered by Quebec Premier Jacques Parizeau, to engage in a pre-referendum debate which would include Chrétien, Parizeau, Bloc Québécois Leader Lucien Bouchard, and Quebec Liberal Leader Daniel Johnson.
- 30 September 1995  
*Sovereignty – Quebec*
- Results of a Léger & Léger poll, released one month before the referendum asking Quebecers how they will vote in the upcoming referendum, finds 45.1 percent of Quebecers plan to vote "No" compared to 43.8 percent who plan to vote "Yes," in favour of separation. The survey shows 11.1 percent of Quebecers polled are undecided.

- 2 October 1995  
*Aboriginal Peoples*
- Richard Kahgee, Chief of the Saugeen First Nation, signs a declaration assuming control of nearly 300 kilometres of shoreline around the Bruce Peninsula in southwestern Ontario. Kahgee says the band is not interested in any financial settlements from the federal government, only recognition of the claim by 1997.
- 2 October 1995  
*Economy*
- Newfoundland Premier Clyde Wells tells the St. John's Board of Trade that the federal government should waive taxes for businesses that become established in the province. Wells' arguments for giving tax breaks to businesses emphasize the need to attract investment to the province and offset the economic damage done by the federal government's mismanagement of the fishery.
- 7 October 1995  
*Sovereignty – Quebec*
- Quebec Premier Jacques Parizeau appoints Bloc Québécois Leader Lucien Bouchard chief negotiator for the proposed partnership between Canada and a sovereign Quebec. The goal of the appointment is to exploit Bouchard's popularity with the province's electorate.
- 12 October 1995  
*Sovereignty – Quebec; Aboriginal Peoples*
- The Cree and Inuit of Quebec announce they will not be participating in the upcoming referendum on sovereignty to be held by the Quebec government, but will instead hold separate referendums before 30 October.
- 13 October 1995  
*Sovereignty – Quebec*
- A Léger & Léger poll, taken with just over two weeks remaining until the referendum, suggests that support for sovereignty has increased since a poll taken at the end of September. The poll shows that 45 percent of those polled plan to vote "Yes" in the referendum, while 42.4 percent of respondents plan to vote "No." The results also find 11 percent of respondents are undecided and 1.6 percent have no plans to vote.
- 14 October 1995  
*Party Leadership*
- Alexa McDonough, former leader of the Nova Scotia New Democratic Party, is elected the new leader of the federal party after a weekend convention held in Ottawa.
- 15 October 1995  
*Health Policy*
- Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland are the provinces facing financial penalties from the federal government for failing to meet a federally-imposed deadline by Health Minister Diane Marleau to eliminate

extra-billing by private clinics for essential medical services. Temporarily, the Chrétien government decides to tally the penalties without making any deductions from the transfer payments.

15 October 1996  
*Sovereignty –  
Quebec*

In a televised appearance on Quebec's TVA network, Reform Party Leader Preston Manning enters the referendum fray, suggesting a decentralized Canada is a united Canada. He also suggests giving the provinces greater control over bilingualism, but is unwilling to give special status to Quebec in a renewed federation.

16 October 1995  
*Elections –  
Northwest Territories*

After a day of polling, residents of the Northwest Territories elect the last members to the Legislature under the territorial government structure. The territory is scheduled to be divided in 1999, creating the new territory of Nunavut.

17 October 1995  
*Disputes; Federal-  
Provincial Relations  
– Quebec*

The Government of Quebec files a law suit against the federal government demanding compensation for \$127 million in stabilization payments it claims were never made by the federal government in fiscal year 1991-92.

17 October 1995  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

BC Aboriginal Affairs Minister John Cashore releases figures detailing the costs of treaty settlements with the province's aboriginal groups, estimated to cost taxpayers nearly \$10 billion. The figures are based on a combination of land and cash transfers, and will be paid for through a cost-sharing plan between the federal and provincial governments.

23-24 October 1995  
*Environment*

At the conclusion of a two-day meeting in Whitehorse, Federal Environment Minister Sheila Copps announces that she and her provincial counterparts have reached an agreement to regulate vehicle emissions and fuels in Canada. The ministers also take advantage of the opportunity to release a draft framework agreement for public consideration. The agreement, known as the Environmental Management Framework Agreement, is to serve as the foundation for the harmonization of federal and provincial environmental policy.

25 October 1995  
*National Unity;*  
*Sovereignty –*  
*Quebec*

In a televised address to the nation, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien appeals to Quebecers not to vote for sovereignty in the upcoming referendum. Chrétien also says his government is willing to recognize Quebec as a distinct society, and that no changes will be made to the constitution without Quebec's consent.

27 October 1995  
*National Unity;*  
*Sovereignty –*  
*Quebec*

In an effort to inspire support for federalism and to send a message to Quebecers that Canadians want them to remain part of the nation, over 100,000 Canadians join together in a giant rally in Montreal. The rally is interpreted by sovereignist leaders as a last-minute ploy to trick Quebecers, and a violation of referendum laws by the federal government (because it allowed transportation companies to offer cheap fares to Montreal).

30 October 1995  
*Sovereignty –*  
*Quebec*

After an eight-week referendum campaign, Quebecers narrowly vote in favour of the province remaining in Canada, giving the federalist forces 50.6 percent support, the sovereignists 49.4 percent. The results are interpreted by the media as a sign that the federal government underestimated the strength of the sovereignist message, and the ability of Bloc Québécois Leader Lucien Bouchard to sell it to Quebecers.

31 October 1995  
*Sovereignty –*  
*Quebec*

In the aftermath of the referendum, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announces that Canada's premiers support a plan by the federal government to introduce federal legislation recognizing Quebec's distinct status in Canadian society in the constitution. Chrétien also confirms that he has no immediate plans to open new constitutional negotiations with Quebec.

31 October 1995  
*Sovereignty –*  
*Quebec*

In a surprise post-referendum development, Quebec Premier Jacques Parizeau announces he will resign as premier. Parizeau's resignation is attributed to a number of factors, most notably to statements he made in a concession speech on referendum night in which he criticized "money and the ethnic vote" for the defeat of sovereignty.

31 October 1995  
*Education*

The Newfoundland legislature passes a proposed constitutional amendment granting the provincial government permission to enact changes to the denominational school



system. The amendment will be forwarded on to the federal Parliament for approval, and is expected to be passed before year's end.

1 November 1995  
*Maritime/Atlantic  
Provinces*

In light of the narrow federalist win in the Quebec referendum on sovereignty, Nova Scotia Premier John Savage urges the Atlantic provinces to consider uniting as a single province.

2 November 1995  
*Western Provinces*

Canada's western premiers conclude a three-day annual conference in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. The main topics of discussion at the meeting included: greater decentralization; the \$7 billion in budget cuts to social spending by the federal government; and the state of the federation after the referendum.

3 November 1995  
*Cabinet – Quebec*

Quebec Premier Jacques Parizeau makes changes to his government in a mini-Cabinet shuffle. The most significant change is Parizeau's appointment of Louise Harel as minister of immigration and culture — in addition to her post as employment minister. Harel replaces Bernard Landry, who, in the aftermath of the referendum, was vocal in blaming Quebec's ethnic voters for the sovereigntist loss.

7 November 1995  
*Sovereignty –  
Quebec*

Pierre Côté, Quebec's Chief Electoral Officer, announces he is preparing to investigate charges of voting irregularities in the province's referendum on sovereignty in three Montreal-area ridings with an unusually high number of rejected ballots. The investigation is in response to a request made by Liberal Leader Daniel Johnson.

8 November 1995  
*Federal-Provincial  
Relations – Ontario*

In a letter to federal Human Resources Minister Lloyd Axworthy, Ontario Social Services Minister Dave Tsubouchi rejects a cost-sharing offer from the federal government in support of new day-care centres in the province. Tsubouchi considers the offer to be short term, and not in the interest of the province.

9 November 1995  
*Sovereignty –  
Quebec*

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien distances himself from promises he made in the aftermath of the referendum when he said his government would focus on issues concerning Quebec. Instead, he says job creation is "the first priority" on his agenda.

- 16 November 1995  
*Health Policy*
- In its ongoing dispute with Alberta over user fees charged by private clinics, the federal government announces that it is deducting \$420,000 from its monthly cost-sharing payment to the province.
- 20 November 1995  
*Environment*
- At the end of a day-long meeting, federal Environment Minister Sheila Copps finds little support from her provincial counterparts in favour of a stronger role for the federal government in regulating greenhouse gas emissions.
- 21 November 1995  
*Sovereignty – Quebec; Party Leadership*
- Bloc Québécois Leader Lucien Bouchard announces he will seek the leadership of the Parti Québécois. Bouchard insists he is unwilling to negotiate any new constitutional deals with the federal government. Bouchard temporarily allays federalist fears by saying another referendum is unlikely before 1997 — when a constitutional conference is required, according to the *Constitution Act*.
- 24 November 1995  
*Education*
- The Council of Ministers of Education releases its first report examining the state of education in Canada. Principal findings show the number of students enrolled in postsecondary education have doubled in the last two decades, while there are fewer available spaces, shrinking budgets, and higher debt loads. As a solution the ministers suggest dismantling barriers between both the provinces and postsecondary institutions, making it easier for students to transfer credits.
- 28 November 1995  
*National Unity*
- Prime Minister Jean Chrétien unveils his government's new strategy for handling the sovereignty issue by introducing a new veto bill. The bill asserts that the federal government will not make any changes to the constitution without approval from Quebec, Ontario, the Atlantic region, and the west through a "regional veto." Other elements of the strategy include a resolution to grant Quebec status as a distinct society, and a proposal to decentralize control over labour-market training.
- 28-29 November 1995  
*Trade – Interprovincial*
- Provincial trade ministers, moving to expand on the Agreement on Internal Trade signed in July 1994, attempt to increase interprovincial trade by abolishing a requirement

forcing all companies to register in each province before they can operate.

1 December 1995  
*Social Programs – Reform*

Human Resources Minister Lloyd Axworthy announces that nearly \$2 billion will be cut from unemployment insurance in a new bill aimed at reforming the system. Axworthy says the cuts will help workers in the long term, providing incentives to find jobs and upgrade skills, and creating 150,000 new jobs each year. While he says the bulk of the savings will be applied to reducing the federal deficit, Axworthy maintains that a sizeable portion of the savings will be invested in employment initiatives. These include \$800 million for wage subsidies and loan grants for the unemployed, and \$300 million for job creation in areas of high unemployment.

5 December 1995  
*Federal-Provincial Relations – British Columbia*

Human Resources Minister Lloyd Axworthy decides to withhold \$47 million in transfer payments to British Columbia after the province violates provisions of the Canada Assistance Plan by refusing to pay welfare assistance to applicants who have not resided in BC for at least three months.

7 December 1995  
*National Unity*

Following objections from the province of British Columbia, the federal government declares that BC will also be considered as a "region" in the new legislation providing for regional constitutional vetoes.

9 December 1995  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

In Ottawa at the first meeting of the Sacred Assembly, Indian Affairs Minister Ron Irwin acknowledges a number of suggestions from native people, including protecting native rights from constitutional change and establishing a Council of Reconciliation between native and non-native Canadians.

12-13 December 1995  
*Fiscal Policy; Economy*

A two-day meeting of Canada's finance ministers fails to produce any solutions for deciding how to allocate money for social programs. Despite enduring criticism from several provinces for cutting social programs to finance deficit reduction, Finance Minister Paul Martin and his provincial counterparts agree on the necessity for continued government funding for basic social programs. Other issues on the meeting agenda: reform of the Canada Pension Plan and harmonization of the GST.

- 13 December 1995  
*Social Programs*
- Human Resources Minister Lloyd Axworthy offers the provinces \$630 million towards a national day-care program over a three-to-five-year period. He also offers \$72 million for day care in aboriginal communities and \$18 million for child-care research.
- 13 December 1995  
*National Unity*
- After being quickly passed in the House of Commons by a majority vote of 150 to 101, a bill put forth by the Chrétien government giving regions veto power over constitutional change moves to the Senate.
- 15 December 1995  
*Sovereignty – Quebec*
- Quebec Liberal Leader Daniel Johnson publicly criticizes Prime Minister Jean Chrétien for the narrow federalist victory in the province's referendum. He specifically criticizes the PM for not offering Quebec any constitutional changes until only a few days before the vote.
- 17 December 1995  
*Sovereignty – British Columbia*
- A new provincial party, the BC First Alliance, is established in British Columbia with the principal goal of promoting BC sovereignty. The party is led by Roger Rocan, a former salesman.
- 18 December 1995  
*Aboriginal Peoples*
- In a joint agreement, the federal government and the province of Saskatchewan agree to a cost-sharing initiative aimed at educating the province's Aboriginal Peoples about criminal justice.
- 20 December 1995  
*Fisheries*
- Federal Fisheries Minister Brian Tobin announces a plan to streamline the Atlantic fishery by reducing the number of professional fishers from 24,600 to 13,250.
- 26 December 1995  
*National Unity*
- In an interview with CTV, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien says Canada is a difficult country to govern because of the divergent number of interests that need to be balanced. The interview runs a day after the prime minister's Christmas message, reminding Canadians not to take the federation for granted.
- 28 December 1995  
*Premiers – Newfoundland*
- After ten years, Newfoundland Premier Clyde Wells announces he is leaving politics and will resign as premier and leader of the provincial Liberals once his successor is appointed.

- 1 January 1996  
*Maritime/Atlantic Provinces*
- An economist based in Nova Scotia, Ralph Winter, says a union of the Atlantic provinces is not economically or politically feasible in Canada's current environment.
- 3 January 1996  
*Maritime/Atlantic Provinces – Cooperation*
- Prince Edward Island Premier Catherine Callbeck announces that her counterparts in the Maritimes have offered Prince Edward Island full status under a new veto formula created by the federal government to deal with constitutional change.
- 4 January 1996  
*Federal-Provincial Relations – Newfoundland*
- Federal Justice Minister Allan Rock announces the federal government will proceed with constitutional amendments necessary in order to enact substantive changes within the Newfoundland school system.
- 8 January 1996  
*Federal-Provincial Relations*
- BC Employment Minister Glen Clark, whose department is responsible for marine policy, announces his province is interested in assuming control over west coast lighthouses to prevent their automation. The lighthouses are currently maintained by the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.
- 8 January 1996  
*Sovereignty – Quebec*
- Guy Bertrand files notice with the Quebec Superior Court seeking an injunction to prevent any further referendums on Quebec sovereignty. It marks the second time he has petitioned the courts to seek an injunction against the sovereignty referendum process.
- 9 January 1996  
*Social Programs*
- The contents of a nine-province report of the Ministerial Council on Social Policy Reform and Renewal, commissioned by the Annual Premiers' Conference in August 1995 (Quebec abstaining), is reported in the media. The report calls for an intergovernmental statement of principles to guide social policy reforms and an agenda for change involving a major realignment of responsibilities, giving the provinces the lead role in social policy.
- 12 January 1996  
*Electoral Reforms*
- As a result of shifts in population, Canada's electoral boundaries are officially changed to accommodate six new seats in the House of Commons — four in Ontario and two in British Columbia — bringing the total number of seats to 301. The new boundaries are based on 1991 census data.

- 18 January 1996  
*Fiscal Policy;*  
*Economy*
- Despite opposition from Saskatchewan and British Columbia, federal Revenue Minister David Anderson insists the federal government will continue developing a plan to harmonize the GST with provincial sales taxes. It is estimated the initiative could save more than \$500 million.
- 19 January 1996  
*Trade – International*
- Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, seven of Canada's premiers, and 300 Canadian business people conclude a two-week trade mission to Asia, with stops in India, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia. "Team Canada" is successful in negotiating potentially \$8.7 billion in commercial agreements.
- 23 January 1996  
*Disputes; Federal-Provincial Relations*  
*– British Columbia*
- Unable to reach an agreement with the federal government, the province of British Columbia files a lawsuit demanding \$47 million in transfer payments the federal government has withheld because the province has ostensibly breached provisions of the Canada Assistance Plan..
- 25 January 1996  
*Cabinet – Federal*
- Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announces a major Cabinet shuffle, with a new focus on job creation and national unity. While the prime minister makes more than two dozen changes to his Cabinet, the most publicized are the addition of two new Quebec members: Stéphane Dion, a political science professor, as minister of intergovernmental affairs and president of the privy council and Pierre Pettigrew, a trade consultant and foreign policy expert, as minister for international cooperation and minister responsible for francophonie. With the changes, the Cabinet totals 25 full members.
- 26 January 1996  
*Sovereignty – Quebec*
- Newly-appointed Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Stéphane Dion angers Quebec sovereignists by saying that if Canada is divisible, then so is Quebec.
- 26 January 1996  
*Premiers – Newfoundland*
- Following his election as leader of the Liberal Party of Newfoundland, former federal Fisheries Minister Brian Tobin is sworn in as premier of Newfoundland.
- 29 January 1996  
*Premiers – Quebec;*  
*Sovereignty – Quebec*
- Following his acclamation as leader of the Parti Québécois, former Bloc Québécois Leader Lucien Bouchard is sworn in as Quebec's new premier. He promises Quebecers his government is committed to the goals of deficit reduction, education, and regional development.

- 30 January 1996  
*Sovereignty – Quebec*
- Taking a tough stance on Quebec sovereignty, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien insists his government will not recognize an independent Quebec based on a narrow majority if a subsequent referendum is held.
- 31 January 1996  
*Culture*
- A committee appointed by the federal government to study the future of three of Canada's cultural institutions, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Telefilm Canada, and the National Film Board, releases its long-awaited report. The principal recommendation of the committee, chaired by former CBC president Pierre Juneau, is a levy on telephone, cable, and satellite television users which would earn an estimated \$1.1 billion in revenue per year for the federal government once established.
- 1 February 1996  
*Senate – Appointments*
- Prime Minister Jean Chrétien appoints Liberal MP Shirley Maheu to a recently vacated Senate seat. The appointment marks the end of Conservative dominance in the Senate. The new standings in the Upper House: Liberals, 51; Conservatives, 50; Independents, three.
- 2 February 1996  
*Sovereignty – Quebec*
- A day after gaining control of the Senate the Liberals use their majority in the Upper Chamber to pass the government's controversial legislation giving constitutional veto powers to Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia, the Prairies, and the Atlantic Region. The legislation passes with a vote of 48 to 36.
- 4 February 1996  
*Federal-Provincial Relations*
- In Montreal, Alberta Premier Ralph Klein suggests that the federal government might prevent Quebecers from seeking sovereignty if Ottawa were to respect the constitutional division of powers.
- 9 February 1996  
*Social Programs*
- Finance Minister Paul Martin concludes a two-day meeting with his provincial counterparts by announcing the establishment of a joint federal-provincial panel seeking the views of Canadians on reforming the Canada Pension Plan.
- 14 February 1996  
*Sovereignty – Quebec*
- Indian Affairs Minister Ron Irwin angers sovereignists by suggesting that native territory in Quebec does not belong to the province. Irwin's remarks serve as a follow-up to a warning he issued just days earlier, suggesting that attempts

to include Aboriginal Peoples and federalists in a sovereign Quebec could lead to violence.

15 February 1996  
*Aboriginal Peoples;  
Federal-Provincial  
Relations –  
British Columbia*

After lengthy negotiations, representatives from the federal and provincial governments reach a tentative agreement with the Nisga'a Indians in British Columbia. The parties agree to surrender 1,930 square kilometres of land to the Nisga'a, in addition to providing them with \$190 million in remuneration. Among other tenets, the agreement also protects the Nisga'a as Aboriginal Peoples under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

15 February 1996  
*Social Programs*

Taking a tough stand on unemployment insurance reform, Human Resources Minister Doug Young says the federal government will penalize individuals attempting to take advantage of the welfare system. He also announces two amendments to the initial blueprint for UI reform, unveiled by Lloyd Axworthy in December. The amendments include more favourable provisions for seasonal workers, and an increase in the length of time an employee must work before UI eligibility.

17 February 1996  
*Party Leadership*

Michel Gauthier takes over as Leader of the Bloc Québécois from Lucien Bouchard, and as leader of the Official Opposition in Parliament. In a short speech, Gauthier affirms his dedication to realizing Quebec sovereignty, but also says he respects Canada's Parliament and its institutions.

19 February 1996  
*Agriculture*

Due to the elimination of the western grain transportation subsidy, also known as the Crow benefit, Agriculture Minister Ralph Goodale announces that Prairie farmers will receive \$1.6 billion in compensation, with the largest disbursement going to farmers in Saskatchewan — nearly \$902.7 million. In addition to the compensation package, Goodale also details a \$300 million transition payment to be used for infrastructure purposes.

22 February 1996  
*Premiers – BC*

Following his election as leader of the NDP after a weekend leadership convention, former Finance Minister Glen Clark is sworn in as the British Columbia's new premier.

22 February 1996  
*Elections –  
Newfoundland*

In an overwhelming sweep, Brian Tobin wins a majority government one month after being sworn in as premier. Tobin's Liberals capture 37 of the province's 48 seats. The



Conservatives retain their status as Official Opposition with nine seats, while the NDP continues with one seat; Yvonne Jones garners the lone Independent seat. Standings at dissolution of the legislature were: Liberals, 35; Conservatives, 16; NDP, one, with one Independent.

23 February 1996  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

An interim report by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples is released suggesting that Canada's Aboriginal Peoples have a constitutional right to establish and control their own justice system. The report is one of a series issued by the commission since its creation in 1991.

23 February 1996  
*Social Programs*

Human Resources Minister Doug Young announces the federal government is scrapping a \$630 million national child-care initiative because it was not endorsed by the provinces. To compensate, Young says the government will negotiate separate cost-sharing, child-care schemes which will address the needs of individual provinces.

26 February 1996  
*Senate –  
Appointments*

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien fills another vacancy in the Senate, appointing New Brunswick businessman Joseph Landry.

27 February 1996  
*House of Commons*

House of Commons Speaker Gilbert Parent announces the Bloc Québécois will remain the Official Opposition in the House, despite being tied with the Reform Party at 52 seats each. The BQ's status as Official Opposition party was questioned by the Reform Party when Lucien Bouchard resigned his seat in the House, leaving both parties with an equal number of seats.

27 February 1996  
*Speech from the  
Throne*

Beginning the second half of his mandate with a Speech from the Throne, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien outlines the direction his government plans to take over the next two years. A predominant theme is the issue of Quebec sovereignty, which the Chrétien government plans to counter through further decentralization of power to the provinces. The speech also suggests Canadians will have an opportunity to participate in deciding Canada's fate. Among other themes discussed in the speech: the establishment of a new social union, subject to provincial cooperation; the federal government's commitment to job creation; and harmonization of the GST with provincial sales taxes.

1 March 1996  
*Electoral Reforms*

In an effort to prevent decreased participation in federal elections, Chief Electoral Officer Jean-Pierre Kingsley proposes staggering voting hours across the nation. In his report Kingsley also proposes holding election results from the Atlantic provinces until the polls close in British Columbia.

6 March 1996  
*Budgets – Federal*

Federal Finance Minister Paul Martin unveils the 1996 budget which emphasizes deficit reduction and predicts the federal government will meet or exceed a \$32.7 billion reduction target in 1996-97. Among other budget highlights:

- announcement of the allocations to provinces for the cash portion of the CHST transfer according to a five-year schedule attempting to steer a middle path between strict equal per capita shares and current allocations;
- creation of joint federal-provincial agencies in the areas of tax collection and food inspection;
- the amalgamation of old-age security, the guaranteed income supplement, and tax break incentives into one tax-free Seniors Benefit, to take effect in 2001;

7 March 1996  
*Senate –  
Appointments*

After appointing Liberal Senator Bud Olson Alberta's new lieutenant-governor, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien fills the vacancy in the Upper Chamber, naming former Alberta Liberal Party Leader Nick Taylor to the seat.

8 March 1996  
*Health Policy –  
Alberta*

Alberta Health Minister Shirley McClellan announces the province's intention to create a health charter, which will include a list of essential medical services. McClellan says the province is taking the initiative because it does not want to wait for the federal government to generate a list under the *Canada Health Act*.

11 March 1996  
*Sovereignty –  
Quebec*

In a televised speech in Montreal, Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard addresses 400 invited members of the province's anglophone community. Bouchard takes the opportunity to invite his audience to participate in determining the future of Quebec.

15 March 1996  
*Sovereignty –  
Quebec*

Although voicing scepticism, Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard says he will consider serious offers of Canadian unity proposed by the other provinces. However, he

also suggests the only offers he will consider serious will be those that have already been approved by both the federal and provincial governments. Bouchard's remarks come just one day after he suggests that another referendum will only be held after Quebec's next provincial election (which could be held as late as 1999).

20 March 1996  
*Economy;*  
*Fiscal Policy*

In the Bank of Canada's annual report, Governor Gordon Thiessen commends the federal and provincial governments for their efforts at deficit reduction. As a result he predicts an improvement in overall economic performance. However, he also cautions that any political instability could bring economic instability.

22 March 1996  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

In a formal ceremony, members of the federal and provincial governments and the Nisga'a sign a tentative and historic land-claims agreement. A final agreement is expected within two years.

25 March 1996  
*Elections – Federal*  
*Byelections*

In six federal byelections, the Liberals win five while the Bloc Québécois retain the seat of former Leader Lucien Bouchard. Prime Minister Chrétien touts the victories as an indication that the Canadian public is confident in his government's abilities. Conversely, a poor showing on behalf of the Conservative Party leads to increased speculation about a merger between the PC and Reform Parties. The new standings in the House of Commons are: Liberals, 177; Bloc Québécois, 53; Reform, 52; NDP, nine; Conservatives, two; with two Independents.

28 March 1996  
*Social Programs*

Canada's premiers endorse an historic manifesto seeking control of health-care policy from the federal government. The manifesto, prepared by health and social service ministers, involves all provinces except Quebec.

28 March 1996  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

Based upon recommendations from a two-year old report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the federal government offers Quebec's Inuit \$10 million in compensation for displacing approximately 90 natives to the High Arctic in 1953.

29 March 1996  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

Newfoundland's Innu agree to develop a framework for settling a 48,000 square-kilometre land claim that includes

Voisey's Bay — on Labrador's northern coast — over the next three years. Signatories of the agreement include federal Indian Affairs Minister Ron Irwin and Newfoundland Premier Brian Tobin.

30 March 1996  
*Fisheries*

In response to the decline of west coast salmon stocks, Fisheries Minister Fred Mifflin announces a plan by the federal government to decrease the number of commercial salmon fishing vessels in British Columbia from 4,400 to 2,200. The initiative involves an initial \$80 million voluntary licence buy-back program and new limitations on fishing boundaries.

2 April 1996  
*Social Programs*

Provincial ministers responsible for social programs conclude a two-day meeting in Victoria demanding the federal government clearly define the role of the provinces in the area of social services at a time of increased decentralization and decreased funding from the federal government.

4 April 1996  
*Fisheries*

Federal Fisheries Minister Fred Mifflin is forced to return to the west to contend with opposition to a salmon fishing reduction plan in British Columbia, which the BC government and fishing groups claim is underfunded and financially unviable.

15 April 1996  
*Sovereignty –  
Quebec*

In the House of Commons, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien says he is willing to consider replacing the phrase referring to Quebec as a “distinct society” if there is another phrase more acceptable to Quebecers. Chrétien's comments are in response to a proposal made by Quebec MPs from his party the previous day to refer to Quebec as the “main home” (in French “foyer principale”) of French language and culture in North America instead of as a distinct society.

23 April 1996  
*GST Reform*

Federal Finance Minister Paul Martin announces that three provinces — New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland — have agreed to adopt a new harmonized tax system blending the federal and provincial sales taxes into one 15 percent sales tax. To initiate the new system, Martin says the federal government will pay approximately \$1 billion to the three provinces over four years to compensate for lost tax revenues. In announcing the new

partnership, Martin admits the Chrétien government erred when it promised to eliminate the GST.

25 April 1996  
*Health Policy*

Federal Health Minister David Dingwall, meeting with his provincial counterparts in Ottawa, says serious consideration is being given to the creation of a new federal-provincial agency to manage Canada's blood supply.

26 April 1996  
*Trade –  
Interprovincial;  
Disputes*

Dan Miller, trade and investment minister for British Columbia, says the province has lodged a formal complaint under the Agreement on Internal Trade against the province of New Brunswick for violating an interprovincial trade agreement. At issue is an \$11.3 million offer that New Brunswick extended to United Parcel Service to relocate its headquarters in the province at the expense of jobs in other provinces, including Manitoba and Ontario.

28 April 1996  
*Sovereignty –  
Quebec*

At a Parti Québécois national meeting in Montreal, leader Lucien Bouchard takes a tough stance against the federal government regarding Quebec sovereignty, suggesting that the federal government will not influence a future referendum process in any way.

30 April 1996  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

The federal government allocates \$150 million for the new territory of Nunavut to establish necessary government structures and to train personnel. The territory's debut is scheduled for April 1999.

1 May 1996  
*Federal-Provincial  
Relations – Quebec;  
Aboriginal Peoples*

A long-term dispute between the federal government and the province of Quebec over funding costs for aboriginal education in the province is resolved when the federal government agrees to pay the province \$100.3 million in compensation.

2 May 1996  
*GST Reforms*

Alberta Premier Ralph Klein sends a letter to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien seeking a 1.5 percent reduction in the GST for his province, since the federal government negotiated a lower rate for the Atlantic provinces as part of a federal-provincial tax harmonization agreement.

6 May 1996  
*Federal-Provincial  
Relations – Ontario;  
Aboriginal Peoples*

Federal Indian Affairs Minister Ron Irwin criticizes the Ontario government for terminating negotiations with 25 groups on aboriginal issues in the province.

9 May 1996  
*Federal-Provincial  
Relations – Alberta*

Alberta Premier Ralph Klein announces that his province is considering assuming the marketing role for Alberta's grain farmers. The initiative would be considered a contravention of federal law, which requires all Prairie farmers to sell their grain through the federally-operated Canadian Wheat Board.

10 May 1996  
*Sovereignty –  
Quebec*

Federal Justice Minister Allan Rock, announces the federal government will intervene in the Bertrand case to "protect the integrity of the Constitution and the rule of the law," which he says have been challenged by the Government of Quebec in its efforts to separate from the Canadian federation.

13 May 1996  
*Sovereignty –  
Quebec*

Quebec's Chief Electoral Officer Pierre Côté announces plans to charge individuals involved in organizing the pro-Canada, pre-referendum rally in Montreal in October 1995. Côté also says charges will be laid against pro-sovereignty scrutineers, who he says rejected improperly a substantial number of referendum ballots in federalist ridings.

14 May 1996  
*Social Programs*

Legislation reforming Canada's unemployment insurance system passes in the House of Commons by a vote of 123 to 80. The bill is opposed by members of the Bloc Québécois and the Reform Party.

14 May 1996  
*Sovereignty –  
Quebec*

After considering calling a snap provincial election in response to the federal government's intervention in the Bertrand case, the Parti Québécois government of Lucien Bouchard instead decides to intervene in the case, while introducing a motion in the Quebec National Assembly affirming the province's right to self-determination.

15 May 1996  
*Sovereignty –  
Quebec*

In the House of Commons, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien insists that in any future referendums, the final referendum question will be subject to negotiation — suggesting that he will fight for input by the federal government on future questions. The statement follows remarks Chrétien made a day earlier in the Commons when he threatened to prohibit Quebec sovereignty for contravening Canadian constitutional law and international law.

15 May 1996  
*Fisheries*

British Columbia Premier Glen Clark announces that the federal government is willing to grant his province

additional powers over conservation of the West Coast Fisheries. However, a disagreement between the two governments over Ottawa's plan to reduce BC's salmon fishing fleet by 50 percent remains unresolved.

16 May 1996  
*Senate –  
Appointments*

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien appoints Jean Forest, Chancellor Emeritus of the University of Alberta, to replace Liberal Senator Earl Hastings in the Upper Chamber after Hastings dies. The appointment is an unpopular one with Alberta Premier Ralph Klein who had insisted that Chrétien hold an election to choose a replacement for the seat.

21 May 1996  
*Federal-Provincial  
Relations – Quebec*

In a joint effort to promote foreign investment in Montreal, Quebec teams up with the federal government to create a new agency called Montreal International — with both parties agreeing to share in the initial \$10 million costs, with municipal governments and business picking up the balance.

23 May 1996  
*Fisheries*

The federal government announces restrictions on the commercial and sport fishery of chinook salmon in the Queen Charlotte Islands and the west coast of Vancouver Island. The announcement comes one day after the BC Supreme Court denied the province its request for an injunction against the federal government and its plan to reduce the province's salmon fleet by 50 percent.

23 May 1996  
*Sovereignty –  
Quebec*

Quebec Superior Court Justice Robert Pidgeon denies attorney Guy Bertrand an injunction preventing future referendums on Quebec sovereignty.

28 May 1996  
*Elections – British  
Columbia*

In a narrow victory, the NDP government of British Columbia, led by Glen Clark, returns to power for a second consecutive term. The breakdown of seats in the 75-seat legislature was: NDP, 39; Liberals, 33, Reform, two; and Progressive Democratic Alliance, one. Seats at dissolution were: NDP, 50; Liberals, 14; Reform, four; Progressive Democratic Alliance, two; Social Credit, one; Independents, three, with one vacancy.

30 May 1996  
*Interprovincial  
Relations*

A meeting between Ontario Premier Mike Harris and Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard in Quebec City results in a number of initiatives between the two provinces,

including an agreement to grant suppliers in both provinces greater access to public sector contracts. The leaders also agree to explore the feasibility of a high-speed train linking the two provinces, and they agree to work together in demanding compensation from the federal government over sales tax harmonization.

30 May 1996  
*Health Policy*

The government of Alberta announces it will no longer permit private-clinic billing for essential medical services. Since 15 October, when the federal government imposed a moratorium on the practice of extra-billing by private clinics, the province has been penalized nearly \$4 million dollars. The province also agrees to offset the costs of facility fees levied at 40 of the provinces semi-private clinics.

30 May 1996  
*Social Programs*

Human Resources Minister Doug Young announces a new initiative by the federal government to shift responsibility for employment programs to the provinces. Young promises that the Chrétien government will provide a total of \$2 billion in unemployment insurance premiums to those provinces willing to participate in the scheme. And he says the federal government will withdraw from job-skills training over the next three years.

31 May 1996  
*Environment*

At the end of a two-day meeting in Toronto, Federal Environment Minister Sergio Marchi announces that Canada's environment ministers have agreed to harmonize environmental regulations to promote national environmental standards. Towards this goal, the ministers release a statement committing governments at all levels to providing "the highest standards of environmental quality across Canada."

4-5 June 1996  
*Western Provinces*

After a two-day conference in Dawson City, Canada's western premiers and territorial leaders agree on a number of measures they feel could strengthen the social infrastructure. Among them: the need to create a federal-provincial agency to govern the *Canada Health Act*; the need for a national tax collection agency, and a national review of tax policies.

7 June 1996  
*Federal-Provincial  
Relations - Quebec*

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien meets with Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard in Ottawa to discuss the province's economy, and a joint federal-provincial initiative in the



area of job creation. The occasion marks the first formal meeting of the two leaders since Bouchard became premier.

7 June 1996  
*Sovereignty –  
Quebec*

Quebec's Chief Electoral Officer Pierre Côté releases a list of 11 businesses and student associations charged with violating Quebec's referendum law. The charges concern the role played by the organizations in the federalist unity rally held in Montreal several days before the sovereignty referendum. Côté also announces that 28 separatist election officials have been charged for rejecting valid referendum ballots.

10 June 1996  
*Language Policy*

Louise Beaudoin, the Quebec minister responsible for language policy, introduces amendments designed to strengthen the province's French-language charter. A key amendment is a plan to reestablish the Commission de protection de la langue française, a body created to govern and enforce the province's sign language laws.

18 June 1996  
*Fiscal Policy;  
Pension Reform*

A day-long meeting of Canada's finance ministers in Fredericton brings agreement on several guiding principles for revamping the Canada Pension Plan. The ministers concede that future CPP premiums will likely be higher, while CPP benefits will be lower. Ministers also discussed at the meeting the harmonization of provincial sales taxes with the national sales tax in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland, and a \$1 billion compensation package provided by the federal government to those provinces.

20-21 June 1996  
*First Ministers –  
Meeting*

At the end of a two-day annual meeting of Canada's first ministers in Ottawa, the leaders agree on the need to reduce the role of the federal government in several areas including social housing and tourism. They also agree to harmonize environmental policy, and to cooperate in areas that include social program financing, child poverty, and job creation. The meeting produces substantial support for the creation of a national securities commission, a national tax-collection agency, and a national food inspection service. The first ministers begin the meeting by talking briefly about the constitutional amending formula — thereby satisfying a requirement to review the amending formula by April 1997; they also agree that no further discussion on constitutional issues will take place at the meeting.

21 June 1996  
*Aboriginal Peoples;  
Sovereignty*

Ovide Mercredi, Head of the Assembly of First Nations, holds a press conference outside the building where Canada's first ministers are meeting to protest the exclusion of native groups at the conference. Mercredi also suggests that aboriginal sovereignty will be a topic of discussion at the Assembly's upcoming annual meeting.

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