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## Chronology of Events January – December 2004

*Aron Seal and Stephanie Quesnelle*

An index of these events begins on page 405.

6 January  
*BSE*

The United States Department of Agriculture confirms that a Washington State cow found in December 2003 to be infected with BSE was originally exported from Canada. Genetic tests show the cow to have originated in Leduc, Alberta. Further tests are needed to determine how the cow became infected with the disease. This is the second case of mad cow disease involving Canada in less than a year; a northern Alberta cow infected with the disease was discovered in May 2004.

8 January  
*Softwood Lumber*

Provincial governments reject an American proposal to resolve the softwood lumber dispute. The offer would have given Canadian lumber producers duty-free access to 31.5 percent of the U.S. market. The provinces want a larger quota and explicit details on what reforms are needed for full access to the American market to be restored. Federal International Trade Minister Jim Peterson insists that negotiations with the United States will continue in pursuit of an acceptable agreement.

9 January  
*BSE*

Agriculture Minister Bob Speller announces a \$92 million increase in federal funding for BSE testing. The funding should allow for the testing of as many as 30,000

animals per year, up from 5,500 in 2003. Speller's plan comes in response to recently released U.S. Department of Agriculture DNA evidence, which established Alberta as the origin of an American cow that was found in December 2003 to be infected with BSE. Critics, however, note that the number of cattle tested will remain less than one percent of the 3.5 million slaughtered in Canada each year.

10–11 January  
*British Columbia*

The first meeting of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform is held. The assembly, composed of 160 randomly selected citizens, will spend eleven months considering various reforms of the province's democratic process. All of the assembly's recommendations will be put to referendum on 17 May 2005.

13 January  
*Canada–U.S.  
Relations*

The first official meeting between Prime Minister Paul Martin and U.S. President George W. Bush takes place at the Summit of the Americas in Monterrey, Mexico. Bush agrees to allow Canadian companies to bid for Iraqi reconstruction projects, to favour an integrated North American approach in dealing with BSE, and to consult Canada before deporting any Canadians to third countries (in reference to the Maher Arar affair). The talks produce little, however, with respect to softwood lumber.

14 January  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

The Quebec government negotiates a peaceful ending to a thirty-six-hour standoff in Kanesatake. Dissidents had been holding sixty non-Kanesatake police officers hostage without food in their police station. The outside officers, recruited from other First Nations to help quell a growing crime problem on the reserve, were seen by protesters as a hostile takeover of the reserve's police. The protesters agree to lay down their arms in exchange for the safe evacuation and departure of the outside officers. Critics argue that the Quebec government gave in to the protesters' demands, undermining the authority of Grand Chief James Gabriel and his efforts to restore law and order on the reserve.

15 January  
*Alberta*

A nine-member provincial government task force begins touring the province soliciting popular opinion on Alberta's place in Canada. The task force has been labelled the

“firewall committee” by opposition parties, a reference to a plan endorsed by the Alberta Residents League that calls on the provincial government to opt out of the *Canada Health Act* and establish its own public pension plan, police, and tax collection. Task force chairman Ian McClelland insists that the committee will not consider any calls for Alberta’s separation from Canada.

19 January  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

Quebec Public Security Minister Jacques Chagnon establishes a new policing plan for the Kanesatake native reserve which partners the band’s police forces with the RCMP and the Sureté du Québec. Kanesatake leaders, however, are not included in negotiation of the arrangement. Grand Chief James Gabriel questions whether the plan will do more than the existing anti-drug partnerships with the RCMP. Gabriel’s opponents argue that the provincial and federal police are no more welcome than the officers that had been held hostage the previous week.

22–23 January  
*Municipalities*

The mayors of Canada’s largest cities come together at a summit hosted by Toronto Mayor David Miller. The mayors agree to collectively push for, among other objectives, full GST exemption for all municipal spending, a share of federal gasoline tax revenues, and a formal agreement relating to municipal relations with other levels of government.

27 January  
*Child Care*

The Quebec Court of Appeal, in a unanimous and strongly worded decision, rules that the federal government’s national parental leave program infringes on provincial jurisdiction. The ruling calls for the option of provincial opt-out with funding for independent parental leave plans. The federal government will appeal the decision to the Supreme Court.

28 January  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

The ten commissioners for the Assembly of First Nations Renewal Commission are formally appointed by Assembly Grand Chief Phil Fontaine. Commissioners were chosen to represent the diverse regions, circumstances, and interests of First Nations across the country. The federally funded commission was created to produce recommendations for reforming the structure of the assembly.

28 January  
*Security*

A public inquiry is launched into the reasons for the September 2002 deportation to Syria of Maher Arar, a Canadian citizen. American officials arrested Arar while he was changing planes in New York en route home from a vacation in Tunisia. He was subsequently deported on suspicion of connections to al-Qaeda. The mandate of the inquiry will be to investigate the involvement of Canadian officials and institutions in Arar's deportation and to make recommendations towards improving Canada's treatment of similar security investigations. American officials claim that Canadian information was part of the basis for Arar's deportation.

29 January  
*Health Care*

The inaugural meeting of the National Health Council is held in Toronto. Composed of twenty-six members from both federal and provincial governments, the council is mandated with monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the 2003 First Ministers' Accord on Health Care Renewal, most notably with respect to provisions concerning accountability and transparency. Included in this mandate is the monitoring of provincial spending of federal transfers. Some provinces see the council as federal interference in provincial jurisdiction; Alberta has refused to take part in the council in any capacity, while Quebec, which has its own health council, is participating only as an observer.

29 January  
*Same-Sex Rights*

Broadening a reference filed in 2003, the federal government asks the Supreme Court to rule on whether the traditional definition of marriage is consistent with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The original reference asked the court only to review questions relating to the framing of a law affirming the right to same-sex marriage, not the question of same-sex marriage itself. Though a hearing on the original reference had been scheduled for 16 April, the addition of the new question is expected to delay proceedings until after the expected spring election.

30 January  
*Energy*

A federal environmental review panel is created to review the Mackenzie Gas Project. The project, a joint undertaking of the Aboriginal Pipeline Group and private corporations, will be studied for possible effects on the

environment and wildlife in the Northwest Territories. Two Inuvialuit members will sit on the panel to represent Aboriginal interests.

30 January  
*First Ministers*

Prime Minister Paul Martin meets with the premiers in Ottawa. He confirms that \$2 billion of the 2003–4 federal surplus will be transferred to the provinces for health care spending as per a Jean Chrétien promise. Martin further pledges to increase provincial involvement in international relations. Premiers remain concerned, however, about the lack of long-term funding increase guarantees from the federal government.

2 February  
*Throne Speech*

The federal government promises billions of dollars in new social spending and transfers in the Speech from the Throne. Proposals include \$7 billion in GST rebates for municipalities and \$3.5 billion over ten years to clean contaminated federal environmental sites. Also discussed are commitments to reduced hospital waiting lists, education and skills development for Aboriginals, expansion of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, meeting Kyoto Accord objectives, and the creation of a national security policy. Critics see the speech as a collection of pre-election campaign promises, many of which impinge on provincial jurisdiction. They also note that western alienation received no mention.

4–5 February  
*Democratic Reform*

Prime Minister Paul Martin releases *Ethics, Responsibility, Accountability: An Action Plan for Democratic Reform*. The plan brings together many promises Martin made during the 2003 Liberal leadership campaign. The proposals include more free votes, increased MP influence over legislation, annual review of cabinet ministers, and committee review of senior federal appointments. However, Liberal House Leader Jacques Saada announces the following day that there will be no free vote on gun registry spending estimates, despite suggestions to the contrary by Roger Gallaway, his parliamentary secretary. Budgetary questions, says Saada, are matters of confidence that cannot be put to free votes. Opposition parties, arguing that free votes on budget issues would reduce waste and mismanagement, accuse the government of evading the principles of the action plan.

9 February  
*Quebec*

Claude Ryan dies at age seventy-nine. Ryan led the Quebec Liberal Party from 1978 to 1983, playing an integral role in the victory of the No side in the 1980 sovereignty referendum.

10 February  
*Sponsorship  
Program*

A scathing auditor general's audit of the federal sponsorship program is released. Words such as "appalling" and "scandalous" are used to describe numerous alleged cases of fraud and money laundering by institutions such as the RCMP, Via Rail, and Canada Post. The program, designed in principle to increase the public visibility of the federal government in the wake of the 1995 referendum, paid over \$100 million to individuals and groups with links to the Liberal Party as well as large sums for events and advertising of questionable value. Prime Minister Paul Martin responds by announcing a public inquiry into the handling of the program and by recalling Alfonso Gagliano, who was minister of public works at the time of the alleged scandal, from his current position as ambassador to Denmark.

12 February  
*Atlantic Canada*

The Council of Atlantic Premiers meets in Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador. The premiers create an Atlantic Canada Action Team to promote Atlantic Canadian food products, particularly beef. They reiterate calls on the federal government for a long-term health-care funding increase and a more equitable equalization calculation structure.

17 February  
*Alberta*

The Speech from the Throne includes plans for a provincial trade and policy office in Washington, D.C. The office will seek to promote Albertan interests, particularly with respect to agriculture and natural resource development. Alberta Economic Development Minister Mark Norris hopes the federal government will agree to house the office in the Canadian Embassy to reduce costs. No provinces currently have trade offices in Washington. Also discussed in the speech is the creation of a committee of federal, provincial, municipal, and non-governmental leaders to evaluate the sustainability of Alberta's water supply.

17 February  
*British Columbia*

The Liberals table the first balanced budget of their tenure, projecting a \$100 million surplus for the coming fiscal

year. Announcements of new spending include \$1.04 million over three years for health care, \$313 million over three years for education, and \$1.3 billion over three years for transportation infrastructure. The government further announces a lower than expected deficit for the third quarter of the 2003–4 fiscal year, savings the government intends to devote primarily to Olympic preparations, health care, and education. Critics view the elimination of the budget deficit as the government solving a self-created problem, given the large tax cuts implemented by the Liberals at the beginning of their term.

17 February  
*Energy*

A Royal Society of Canada report on British Columbia offshore oil drilling is released. The study, commissioned by the federal government, concludes that there are no gaps in scientific knowledge that prevent the lifting of federal and provincial moratoria on offshore exploration. It stops short, however, of directly calling for a lifting of the bans. Federal cabinet ministers are divided over whether the ban should be lifted.

19 February  
*Health Care*

Premier Ralph Klein, angered by a continuing impasse in federal-provincial health-care reform discussions, threatens to push forward with market-based health-care reforms despite *Canada Health Act* regulations. The value of his plans, he argues, would exceed the associated penalties. It is the first time a premier has openly suggested opting out of the Act.

20 February  
*Equalization*

Finance ministers from equalization-recipient provinces leave a meeting with federal Finance Minister Ralph Goodale very dissatisfied. Agreement is not reached on reforms to methods of equalization calculation that would increase payment amounts; under the status quo, a weakened Ontario economy will result in a \$3 billion reduction in total equalization payments for the coming year. The provincial ministers further fail to obtain a federal commitment on permanent increases in health-care funding. They warn that they will not cooperate with the federal government on municipal funding increases if the federal government does not cooperate with respect to health care.

23–24 February  
*Council of the  
Federation*

The inaugural meeting of the Council of the Federation is held. The council was founded in 2003 to promote inter-provincial-territorial cooperation, closer ties between council members, recognition of Canadian diversity, and leadership on issues important to Canadians. Accomplishments from the meeting include the release of a work plan aimed at reducing internal barriers to trade, the creation of an agreement founding the Secretariat on Information and Cooperation on Fiscal Imbalance, and the establishment of the Council of the Federation Award for Literacy to recognize workplace literacy programs and strategies. The premiers further establish priorities for future cooperation on issues relating to health care, equalization, emergency responses, and youth involvement in government. Not all discussions are positive, however; the premiers offer dire predictions on the sustainability of national health care, fearing the end of the current system by 2010 if funding levels do not increase.

6–7 March  
*Political Parties*

Deep internal tensions in the Liberal Party are exposed as two Paul Martin supporters defeat Jean Chrétien loyalists to win riding nominations for the upcoming federal election. Sheila Copps loses to Tony Valeri in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, and Carolyn Parrish defeats Steve Mahoney in Mississauga-Erindale. Both races were marked by mudslinging and allegations of fraud.

8 March  
*Finance*

The Conference Board of Canada releases an update of a 2002 report that confirms the continuing fiscal imbalance between the federal and provincial/territorial governments. The report projects steady increases in the federal surplus and the collective provincial/territorial deficit through 2020. Health-care costs, borne primarily by the provinces, are projected to be the single largest cause of expenditure growth in Canada. Provincial finance ministers see the findings as evidence of the need for reforms to health-care funding and equalization.

19 March  
*Same-Sex Rights*

The Quebec Court of Appeal, in rejecting an appeal to a September 2002 Superior Court ruling, makes Quebec the third province in Canada to legally recognize same-sex marriages. The Superior Court ruling granted same-sex couples the right to marry pending a two-year moratorium

to allow for the possibility of an appeal. The appeal, filed by the Catholic Civil Rights League, is rejected on the basis of changing attitudes towards the definition of marriage. The court ruling explicitly states that licences for same-sex marriages can be issued immediately.

20 March  
*Political Parties*

Stephen Harper, with 56 percent of first-ballot votes, wins the leadership of the Conservative Party of Canada, defeating former Ontario Health Minister Tony Clement and former Magna International CEO Belinda Stronach. He is supported by a majority of delegates from all regions except Quebec and Atlantic Canada. Harper was pivotal in negotiating the merger of his Canadian Alliance with the Progressive Conservatives to form the new Conservative Party. He had run for the leadership on his record as Alliance leader and his success in uniting the country's right. Detractors fear that under Harper the Conservatives will be unable to establish strong support in central and eastern Canada.

22 March  
*BSE*

Prime Minister Paul Martin announces nearly \$1 billion in new aid for Canadian farmers. Most funding will go to cattle farmers affected by BSE, the rest being directed to specific issues such as drought and pests as well as to offsetting shortfalls in funding for existing farming programs. Martin dismisses suggestions that the timing of the announcement reflects plans for a spring election.

23 March  
*Finance*

The federal government, facing lower than expected growth and fallout from the sponsorship scandal, releases a cautious budget for 2004 that follows through on previous commitments but establishes few new ones. A promised \$2 billion one-time health-care transfer to the provinces is included, as well as a municipal GST exemption worth \$7 billion over ten years. Also covered are military tax exemptions, postsecondary education financing, and infrastructure investment. Critics of the budget include Assembly of First Nations Grand Chief Phil Fontaine, who fears that the lack of new funding for Aboriginal concerns may reflect low Liberal commitment to First Nations. Provincial leaders note the lack of permanent health-care funding increases or equalization reforms.

24 March  
*Alberta*

Ralph Klein's government tables its eleventh consecutive balanced budget. Highlights include \$1 billion in debt reduction, \$142 million on corporate tax cuts, an 8.4 percent increase in health-care spending, a 5.7 percent increase in education spending, and \$900 million in new provincial building project expenditures. Budget figures are based on the expectation of 3.6 percent economic growth and an \$11 per barrel decrease in oil prices. Opposition parties accuse the government of deliberately underestimating revenue so as to facilitate election period spending.

30 March  
*Public Transit*

The federal, Ontario, and Toronto governments announce a \$1.05 billion funding agreement for the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC). The money, to be received over five years, will be spent primarily replacing old subway cars, streetcars, and buses. Toronto Mayor David Miller says the agreement reflects the increased commitment to municipalities by the federal and provincial governments. Some, however, feel the funding is not enough to bring the TTC into good repair.

30 March  
*Quebec*

Finance Minister Yves Séguin tables a balanced budget for the 2004–5 fiscal year. Included are \$200 million in tax cuts, \$547 for the establishment of a child assistance program, \$243 million in supplements for low-income earners, a 5.1 percent increase in health care spending, and a 2.7 percent increase in education spending. Opposition parties note that \$880 million in government assets needed to be sold to balance the budget, as well as the fact that tax relief amounts do not offset levies introduced by the government at the beginning of its tenure.

5 April  
*Energy*

The final report of the Canada–U.S. task force investigating the August 2003 Great Lakes power outage is released. The report concludes that the blackout, which affected nearly 50 million people in Ontario and eight U.S. states, could have been prevented through stronger regulatory rules on energy suppliers and more effective enforcement of existing standards. Responding to the task force's analysis, Natural Resources Minister John Efford emphasizes the need for the federal government to work with the provinces to implement the recommendations of the report, noting that while the federal government and the National

Energy Board manage energy exports, the provinces are responsible for power supply regulation.

6 April  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador vows to end the slaughter of Red Wine River caribou by Quebec Innu hunters. The Innu are protesting the unwillingness of the Newfoundland and Labrador government to recognize their Labrador territory land claim, and they assert that the protest hunt will continue until negotiations are held. Red Wine River caribou are classified as endangered both provincially and federally, with the smallest herd numbering fewer than a hundred animals. The Innu Nation of Labrador's call for its Quebec counterpart to stop the hunt has also been ignored.

16 April  
*Health Care*

Prime Minister Paul Martin, in a Toronto speech, outlines his government's plan to "fix health care for a generation." He promises reforms that include the hiring of more doctors and nurses, reducing waiting times and lists, better home care, and the creation of a pharmacare program covering catastrophic drug costs. He assures provincial leaders of his commitment to achieving a long-term funding agreement towards the pursuit of these objectives, conditional on the provinces' commitment to the pursuit of a sustainable, universal health-care system. The premiers offer cautious approval of Martin's plan but warn the federal government not to impinge on provincial jurisdiction. Alberta Premier Ralph Klein remains committed to his government's planned reforms, including user fees, privatization, and extra services for wealthy patients.

19 April  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

More than seventy Aboriginal leaders meet with Prime Minister Paul Martin and numerous MPs at a summit in Ottawa. Both sides, in describing the results of the meeting, use words such as "extraordinary". Martin promises a new era of collaboration with Aboriginal leaders, including a restructuring of the Department of Indian Affairs and an updating of the *Indian Act*. He calls these reforms steps towards an eventual goal of Aboriginal self-government.

19 April  
*BSE*

U.S. officials expand the list of cuts of Canadian beef exportable to American markets. A case of mad cow disease

found on an Alberta farm in May 2003 led the United States to close its border to Canadian beef exports; prior to this announcement, the only reopening of the U.S. markets to Canadian beef, in August 2003, was limited to selected boneless cuts. Canadian cattle producers will now be able to export to the United States a wider list of beef products, including ground beef and bone-in cuts. Canadian officials are encouraged by the announcement but will continue to push for a complete lifting of restrictions on beef exports.

23 April  
*Ontario*

Speaking in Markham, Ontario, Premier Dalton McGuinty proposes wide-ranging bilateral provincial-federal agreements on issues such as health-care funding and immigration should negotiations with other provinces not prove effective. McGuinty hopes for a leadership role for Ontario in achieving consensus between the provinces and Ottawa, given the positional proximity of the province with the federal government compared with other provinces. He emphasizes the importance of immediate long-term solutions. McGuinty's address follows Premier Jean Charest's comment the previous day that "pan-Canadian" health-care agreements are not necessary for reform.

29–30 April  
*Sport*

A Canadian policy against doping in sport is adopted at a federal, provincial, and territorial conference of ministers responsible for sport, recreation, and fitness. The policy, which reaffirms Canada's commitment to international leadership in combatting drug use in sport, will ensure Canadian compliance with the World Anti-Doping Code, set to come into effect in 2004. The ministers further discuss possible measures to increase participation in and funding for physical activity.

30 April  
*Canada–U.S.  
Relations*

Paul Martin makes his first official visit to the White House. He obtains a commitment from President George W. Bush that the United States will drop its ban on Canadian exports of live cattle "as soon as possible," though no exact date is given. The two also discuss such issues as the ongoing softwood lumber conflict, continental security, and Canadian contributions to the reconstruction of Iraq. The tone of Martin's meetings with American officials is described as positive, particularly given the

coldness of relations between Bush and the former prime minister, Jean Chrétien.

4 May  
*Fisheries*

Federal Fisheries Minister Geoff Regan announces a limited reopening of cod fishing in the Gulf of St Lawrence. Newfoundland and Quebec fishermen will be allowed to fish 6,500 tonnes of cod in designated areas of the gulf. The announcement is welcomed by fishermen and their unions, many of whom were left unemployed by the cod moratorium imposed in April 2004. Scientists are outraged, however, given the continued scarcity of cod in the gulf. Noting the likelihood of an upcoming federal election, they deem that the reopening is compromising science in favour of political gain.

6 May  
*Fisheries*

Federal officers cite a Portuguese ship for illegally fishing the protected American plaice flounder off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. The move is touted by Prime Minister Paul Martin as a first step in a Canadian crackdown on the fishing of low-stock fish by foreign vessels. Newfoundlanders have been calling for such a crackdown for many years. Since international treaties allow prosecution of vessels in international waters only by their home countries, however, the owners of the ship cannot be brought to justice without Portuguese cooperation; as a result, critics call the ship's indictment little more than unenforceable rhetoric and electioneering.

10–11 May  
*Sponsorship  
Program*

Charles Guité, former head of the federal sponsorship program, and Jean Brault, founder and head of Groupaction, are charged with six fraud-related counts by the RCMP. Both plead not guilty and are released on bail. The following day, the Liberals use their committee majority to suspend the parliamentary inquiry into the scandal. They seek to review the accumulated testimony and write an interim report. The suspension of proceedings will become a formal end to the probe if, as anticipated, an election is called before the committee reconvenes. Opposition MPs are furious, calling the suspension an attempt to hide the scandal's exposure in a pre-election period. They note that more than ninety potential witnesses have yet to pass before the committee.

12 May  
*Nova Scotia*

The federal and Nova Scotia governments announce a \$400 million plan to attempt to clean the tar ponds of Sydney, Nova Scotia. The ponds, which contain a million tonnes of tar left over from the production of coke during the twentieth century, are filled with toxic material and have been linked to health problems, including cancer and liver disease. Although more than \$100 million has already been ineffectually invested in the cleaning of the ponds, officials insist this effort will be successful.

15 May  
*Political Parties*

The Bloc Québécois is the first party to officially unveil its platform for the upcoming election. The party focuses on five issues: democracy, sustainable development, demographic shifts, services for Quebecers, and the internationalization of Quebec's voice. Though the platform contains no direct discussion of sovereignty, Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe insists that the goal of an independent Quebec remains the ultimate objective of the party.

18 May  
*Ontario*

The 2005 provincial budget is tabled in the Ontario legislature. It introduces an Ontario health premium, a levy deducted from wages by employers towards improvements in health care. Including revenue generated from the premium as well as other sources such as increased alcohol and tobacco taxes, the government expects to invest \$4.8 billion in new health-care funding over the next four years. Opposition parties criticize the government for breaking its election promise not to raise taxes. They note that the new premium, despite not being formally called a tax, bears all the characteristics of taxation. Other budget highlights include a \$2.1 billion increase in education funding and a two-thirds reduction in the provincial deficit.

20 May  
*Gun Control*

Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan announces plans to reform the federal gun registry. If re-elected, the Liberal government will eliminate fees for registering firearms and cap the program's expenses at \$25 million per year. McLellan further outlines proposed stiffer penalties for firearms-related crimes. Critics deride the proposals, saying the government would be better off scrapping the registry entirely.

20 May  
*Political Parties*

The Green Party of Canada unveils its platform for the upcoming federal election. Issues discussed include increases in gasoline taxes, rebates on the purchase of fuel-efficient vehicles, and promises to not run deficits without a referendum-approved mandate. Leader Jim Harris, noting the consistent 5 percent party support recorded in polls, boldly predicts that the party will receive one million votes and be represented in the next parliament.

21 May  
*Municipalities*

Eighty-nine formerly independent municipalities are granted the right to hold referendums on megacity demerger. To force a referendum, 10 percent of eligible voters in each former municipality must sign a register over the course of two days. Voters in the former municipalities are angered by the undemocratic manner in which the megacities were created; the former Parti Québécois provincial government had ignored all demonstrations and indications of public will in pursuing its amalgamations. Referendums will take place on 20 June.

23 May  
*Federal Election*

Prime Minister Paul Martin asks Governor General Adrienne Clarkson to dissolve Parliament and officially calls an election for 28 June. Martin defines the election as a choice between visions of Canada, taking direct aim at the Conservatives by calling on Canadians to reject proposals that replicate American values. He highlights the accomplishments achieved over three terms of Liberal government, including seven balanced budgets and \$52 billion in debt repayment.

The opposition parties are equally quick out of the gates. Conservative leader Stephen Harper accuses the Liberals of running on a “campaign of fear” against his party to hide their failures while in government, particularly the sponsorship scandal. New Democratic Party leader Jack Layton contrasts the ideological distinctiveness of his party’s platform with the similarity of the Liberals and Conservatives. The Bloc Québécois, downplaying sovereignty, calls on Quebecers to allow it to defend, in Parliament, Quebec values such as justice and tolerance.

25 May  
*Health Care*

In a campaign speech in Cobourg, Ontario, Prime Minister Paul Martin outlines his party's plans to improve health care if re-elected. Calling health his party's top priority, he commits \$9 billion for reducing waiting times, hiring more doctors and nurses, and creating a national home-care program. He asserts that his plan can be achieved without increased taxes or premiums. Conservative leader Stephen Harper, speaking in Fredericton, New Brunswick, responds by noting that funding problems were created by Liberal governments in the first place. He further questions the source of the funds, noting that Finance Minister Ralph Goodale was unable to provide funding increases in the federal budget not two months earlier.

26 May  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

Inuit vote to accept a historic land claim agreement to gain limited self-government over a 15,800 km territory in Northern Labrador. The Inuit will be granted outright ownership of the land, natural resource rights, law-making abilities, and control over education and social services. The provincial and federal governments must now ratify the agreement.

26 May  
*Political Parties*

The New Democratic Party unveils its election platform. Its promises include \$29 billion in new health-care funding over five years, an additional \$9.9 billion for the national child benefit, and an increase in the basic personal tax exemption to \$15,000. He insists that an NDP government would consistently balance its budget, imposing tax increases on high-income earners and corporations as well as implementing of an inheritance tax to finance his proposals.

28 May  
*Political Parties*

At a meeting of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Prime Minister Paul Martin announces his party's proposed New Deal for Cities. The plan includes a 5 percent share of federal gas taxes, worth \$2 billion, and \$1.5 billion in subsidies for housing growth. Responding to criticisms, Martin insists that the money will come without conditions. Many mayors are disappointed that full funding under the plan will come only in five years.

2 June  
*Ontario*

Fulfilling an election promise, Premier Dalton McGuinty introduces a bill to the legislature to set fixed dates for

provincial elections. Under the proposal, Ontarians will vote on the first Thursday in October every four years, starting on 4 October 2007. Following British Columbia, Ontario will become the second province to implement fixed election dates. The plan seeks to reduce voter apathy and increase electoral turnout.

3 June  
*Political Parties*

The Liberal Party officially unveils its election platform, building on previous announcements made regarding health care and federal-municipal relations. The party promises \$28 billion in new spending over five years while consistently maintaining balanced budgets. Proposals include a national child-care plan based on the Quebec \$7-a-day model, expansion of the Canadian Armed Forces, and increased promotion of wind power as an alternative energy source.

5 June  
*Political Parties*

The Conservative Party is the last of the major parties to unveil its election platform. The party proposes \$58 billion over five years in tax cuts and spending increases, notably with respect to health care and the military. Though his promises cost twice as much as those proposed by the Liberals, leader Stephen Harper insists his plan is feasible without running a deficit.

14–15 June  
*Federal Election*

The two leaders' debates take place in Ottawa. In the French-language debate, Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe launches stinging attacks on both the Conservatives and the Liberals. Insisting as he has over the course of the campaign that the focus of the election should not be sovereignty, Duceppe instigates a heated exchange with Prime Minister Paul Martin regarding the sponsorship scandal and then challenges Conservative leader Stephen Harper on his party's stance with respect to Iraq, social issues, and development. Duceppe blames the Conservatives' inability to make electoral inroads in Quebec on their party's ideological disjuncture with Quebec's interests. Recognizing the gains being made by the Bloc in the polls, both Martin and Harper attempt to paint the party as an irrelevant protest movement.

In the English-language debate, the three opposition leaders repeatedly attack Martin on his government's record, most notably with respect to the sponsorship

scandal. Harper criticizes Martin for having called an election before the release of the results into the scandal's investigation, despite promises not to do so, and calls the Liberal platform a campaign of fear designed to hide the party's record in government. Harper takes heat of his own, however, from the other three leaders on his party's stance on moral issues. New Democratic Party leader Jack Layton attacks Harper on his promises to allow free votes should questions of abortion or gay marriage be brought before Parliament, and Martin presses the Conservative leader to tell Canadians whether he would use the notwithstanding clause to overrule court rulings in favour of gay marriage.

17 June  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

The Saskatchewan government suspends all subsidies to the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan (MNS) following allegations of electoral irregularities. The MNS election of 26 May was marred by claims of voters turned away at polling stations and missing ballot boxes. Some fear that funding suspensions will inhibit dialogue between the MNS and governments without strengthening the nation's electoral structures.

18 June  
*Alberta*

In a defining moment of the election campaign, Prime Minister Paul Martin calls on Premier Ralph Klein to announce his proposed health-care reforms before the 28 June federal election. Klein intends to outline his sought reforms publicly on 30 June, two days after the election. Martin accuses Klein of wanting to wait for the election results in the hope of a Conservative win, and he muses that Stephen Harper would allow Klein to violate the main tenets of the *Canada Health Act*. Klein responds by accusing Martin of fear-mongering; Harper insists he would expect Klein to uphold the principles of medicare if he becomes prime minister. Martin's accusation will be a cloud over Harper for the duration of the election.

20 June  
*Municipalities*

Thirty-two municipalities win the right to demerge from megacities in the Province of Quebec. Referendums on demergers were held in eighty nine former municipalities across the province; to demerge, municipalities needed to obtain a majority of votes cast as well as a 3 percent voter turnout. Municipal mergers had taken place in 2002 under the Parti Québécois government; the Liberal Party had

platformed in 2003 on allowing municipalities the opportunity to regain their independence. The new cities will become officially demerged on 1 January 2006.

21 June  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

The Commission on First Nations and Métis Peoples and Justice Reform releases its final report, *Legacy of Hope: An Agenda for Chance*. Created in 2001 following the surfacing of allegations of systemic discrimination in Saskatchewan's policing in 2000, the commission looks to examine the relationship between the provincial justice system and First Nations peoples and to find ways to incorporate Aboriginal culture into judicial structures. Included among the report's 122 recommendations are an expansion of the Aboriginal court worker program, creation of an Aboriginal advisory committee to advise the government, and prioritized use of alternative punishments to jail. Saskatchewan Justice Minister Frank Quennell says his government will "wholeheartedly endorse and adopt" the broad themes of the report.

21 June  
*Security*

The public inquiry into the deportation of Maher Arar begins in Ottawa. The inquiry seeks to establish the involvement of Canadian authorities in Arar's deportation to Syria in September 2002 by the United States on the suspicion of al-Qaeda connections. Arar denies having any connections to terrorism. The federal government insists that Canadian officials did not suggest Arar's deportation to American authorities.

28 June  
*Federal Election*

The results of the federal election give the Liberal Party a fourth consecutive term in office, albeit in a minority government. Paul Martin's Liberals obtain 135 of a possible 308 seats, with the Conservatives taking 99, the Bloc Québécois taking 54, the New Democratic Party taking 19, and one independent victory. Though the Liberals do not preserve their majority, the results are surprising in view of recent polls that had put the Liberals and Conservatives in a virtual dead heat. Martin calls his party's loss of 42 seats a reflection of the need for his government to do better, but he insists that he will succeed in making his minority government work. Though disappointed, Conservative leader Stephen Harper promises to hold the Liberals accountable after having increased his

party's size as the official opposition. Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe calls his party's showing a victory for Quebecers, while NDP leader Jack Layton is proud of his party's gains despite predictions of an even stronger showing. The Green Party makes a positive showing as well, receiving 4 percent of the popular vote and qualifying for federal funding as an official party.

30 June  
*Health Care*

Alongside announcements of \$700 million in new health-care funding, Premier Ralph Klein tables the Graydon Report on Health Care Funding, a set of recommendations made by a 2002 provincial health-care task force under Conservative MLA Gordon Graydon. The report calls for an increased private share of health-care expenses through the implementation of a health-care deductible and of increased health-care premiums. The premier was criticized for waiting until after the end of the federal election to release the report, a delay believed to have contributed to the decline in support for the Conservatives. Klein further alludes to plans for more radical change to health care in the province should his government win re-election in the fall, expressing a willingness to forge ahead even if his plans contravene the *Canada Health Act*.

7–9 July  
*Western Canada*

The Annual Western Premiers' Conference is held in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. Unanimous support is expressed for the principles of the *Canada Health Act*, but the premiers insist that more money and flexibility is needed from the federal government to sustain the current system. The premiers foresee a window of eighteen months in which a new health-care agreement can be negotiated before another federal election can be expected. The Western Energy Alliance is created by the leaders to cooperate in developing and promoting the energy sector in the region. The premiers further call on the federal government to push for a reopening of the U.S. border for exports of Canadian beef and to create a comprehensive BSE recovery plan.

12 July  
*Alberta*

Premier Ralph Klein announces a \$3 billion addition to a debt-retirement account that will allow the province to pay off its provincial debt fully. Obligations will be repaid from the account as they mature in order to avoid

penalties. The province will become the only one in Canada to be entirely debt-free.

13 July  
*Ontario*

An inquiry begins into the 1995 shooting of Dudley George at Ipperwash Provincial Park. The long-awaited hearings will investigate the death of George at the hands of the Ontario Provincial Police during a standoff over native claims to the land. The inquiry seeks to understand the decisions taken by the police and the provincial government leading to the shooting in the hope of preventing similar violence in similar clashes.

13–15 July  
*Telecommunications*

The Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission refuses to renew the licence of CHOI-FM, a Quebec City “shock” radio station. The decision comes following continued complaints citing offensiveness and vulgarity despite warnings to clean up the station’s broadcast content. CHOI becomes the sixth station, all Quebec-based, to be removed from the airwaves by the agency. Defenders of the station decry the decision as federal censorship and an attack on freedom of expression in Quebec.

Two days later, the CRTC approves nine new specialty channels for broadcast on Canadian cable television. Included is al-Jazeera, an Arab-language news station with a history of anti-Semitism. Despite the imposition of stringent content regulations, the station’s approval dismays many Jewish communities. Members of Italian communities decry the exclusion of RAI International, an Italian-language specialty channel, from the newly approved stations. The decisions lead to controversy surrounding the proper role of the regulatory body.

14 July  
*Same-Sex Rights*

A Yukon Supreme Court ruling changes the territory’s common-law definition of marriage to include same-sex unions. Yukon joins Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia among the jurisdictions allowing gay marriage.

20 July  
*Federal Politics*

Prime Minister Paul Martin unveils a thirty-nine-person cabinet. Many top positions are left unchanged, including that of Ralph Goodale as minister of finance, Anne McLellan as deputy prime minister and minister of public safety, Irwin Cotler as justice minister, and Reginald Alcock as president of the Treasury Board. Eight first-

time ministers are appointed, including Ken Dryden (Social Development), Ujjal Dosanjh (Health), Tony Valeri (house leader), and David Emerson (Industry). Shifted ministers include Pierre Pettigrew (from Health to Foreign Affairs), Lucienne Robillard (from Industry to Intergovernmental Affairs and president of the Privy Council), and Liza Frulla (from Social Development to Heritage). Four former cabinet ministers are excluded, including David Anderson and Denis Coderre. Sixteen of the ministers come from Ontario, eight from Quebec, six from Atlantic Canada, five from British Columbia, three from the Prairies, and one from the Northwest Territories.

22 July  
*Federal Politics*

Stephen Harper unveils a forty-person shadow cabinet. Many top faces are parliamentary veterans, including Peter MacKay (deputy leader), Stockwell Day (foreign affairs critic), Monte Solberg (finance critic), and John Reynolds (house leader). Newcomers include Belinda Stronach (trade critic), Jim Prentice (Indian affairs critic), Peter Van Loen (social resources critic), and Steven Fletcher (health critic). Numerous former shadow ministers who made hard-line comments against gay rights and abortion during the election campaign, including Randy White, Cheryl Gallant, and Rob Merrifield, are notably absent. The shadow cabinet includes thirty-two men and eight women. Twenty-six shadow ministers are from western Canada, nine from Ontario, three from Atlantic Canada, and two from Quebec.

28-30 July  
*Council of the Federation*

The premiers meet in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The primary focus of discussions is health care; looking towards their September meeting with the prime minister, the leaders remain committed to achieving a long-term federal-provincial health-care funding and renewal agreement. In an unprecedented proposal, they call for a national pharmacare program managed by the federal government with Quebec opt-out; such a plan, they note, would free up provincial health-care funds and avoid any need for privatization. Though the proposal would cost the federal government billions, pharmacare has been a federal Liberal platform issue since 1997. Other discussions between the premiers include the implementation of the Workplan on Internal Trade and of the National Diamond Strategy,

the furthering of environmental initiatives, promotion of literacy, and interprovincial emergency assistance.

3 August

*BSE*

An auditor-general's report reveals that the Canada-Alberta BSE Recovery Program has provided more benefit to large meat-packing firms than to farmers. The plan, created following the May 2003 discovery of mad cow disease in Alberta and jointly funded by the federal and provincial governments, paid assistance to producers only for a short period and only on the slaughter of animals, causing a flood of supply which depressed the price of raw cattle by more than 60 percent. Alberta provincial officials claim they recognized the flaws in the federal program but were forced to accept it, given the urgency of the crisis.

11 August

*Alberta*

The provincial government committee for the re-evaluation of Alberta's place in Canada, led by Ian McClelland, releases its final report, *Strengthening Alberta's Role in Confederation*. The committee had been referred to as the "firewall committee" by opposition parties. The report dismisses calls for radical change such as separation, independent tax collection, and opting out of the Canada Pension Plan, but it endorses reforms to transfer payments, policing, and intergovernmental communications towards increased provincial autonomy. It further emphasizes the need to push for Senate reform by all possible means.

12 August

*Health Care*

Prime Minister Paul Martin responds to the Council of the Federation's proposal for a national pharmacare program. He calls the plan out of line with the priorities of Canadians, emphasizing home care and shorter waiting lists. Martin extends his government's support only for universal coverage of "catastrophic" drug costs. The premiers caution the prime minister not to dismiss the plan before its formal presentation at the forthcoming First Ministers' Meeting in September.

13 August

*Sponsorship  
Program*

André Ouellet resigns as president of Canada Post. The resignation comes as Revenue Minister John McCallum is considering Ouellet's dismissal following allegations of excessive spending and questionable hiring practises. Though Ouellet insists on his innocence, he asserts that

political pressures relating to the continued sponsorship fallout would have inevitably led to his dismissal.

23 August  
*Municipalities*

The Ontario government signs an agreement with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario binding the province to consultation with the association when proposing changes that would affect municipal budgets. Premier Dalton McGuinty hails the agreement as “historic,” calling it recognition of municipalities as a full-fledged level of government. Toronto Mayor David Miller is infuriated, however, threatening to pull his city out of the association if the deal prevents his city from negotiating directly with Queen’s Park. McGuinty responds by insisting that big cities will continue to have direct relations with the province.

24 August  
*Justice*

Justice Louise Charron and Justice Rosalie Abella, both of the Ontario Court of Appeal, are nominated to fill vacancies on the Supreme Court of Canada. Despite allegations of making selections based on criteria such as gender and support for same-sex marriage, Justice Minister Irwin Cotler insists both choices were made purely on merit. While the selections will be subjected to committee review, the committee will have no veto power. Cabinet will approve the selections following the committee’s review.

29 August  
*Sport*

Canada finishes with twelve medals in the Athens Summer Olympics, tied with Bulgaria for nineteenth place overall. Canadian athletes bring home three gold medals, six silver, and three bronze. The Canadian Olympic Committee decries the poor showing as a reflection of the need for increased funding, and Jacques Rogge, International Olympic Committee president, promises to visit federal officials to petition for greater support. Minister of State for Sport Stephen Owen, however, insists that no new money will be forthcoming.

30 August  
*Quebec*

A motion to force a leadership review in the Parti Québécois fails. Party leader Bernard Landry had faced heavy internal party criticism, with many in his party claiming he has been ineffective in promoting the sovereigntist cause. Some, including the former premier

Jacques Parizeau, have called for the party to run in the next provincial election on a platform of sovereignty declaration if elected as the government. Landry's detractors threaten to challenge him again if he does not advance the cause of the party substantially within one year.

1–2 September  
*Council of the  
Federation*

The premiers meet once again in preparation of their upcoming 13–16 September meeting with the prime minister. Seeking to avoid having federal officials unilaterally set the terms of the meeting, they compose a draft agenda and urge the prime minister to respect it. They reiterate their calls for a national pharmacare program, emphasizing the importance of such a program by quoting the Liberal Party platform from the June federal election. Federal officials continue to insist that universal drug coverage is both not a top priority and not the extent of election promises.

7 September  
*Sponsorship  
Program*

A long-awaited public inquiry begins into the management of the federal sponsorship program. The inquiry, led by Quebec Justice John Gomery, seeks to evaluate why the program was created, how it was managed, what the money was spent on, and how similar scandals can be avoided in future. The inquiry follows a parliamentary public accounts committee investigation into the program that was abruptly ended just before the June federal election. Hundreds of witnesses, both from government and from outside government, are expected to be called to testify before the Gomery Commission.

10 September  
*BSE*

Federal Agriculture Minister Andy Mitchell unveils a \$488 million aid package for cattle farmers. The plan's objectives are to increase domestic slaughter capacity and expansion of foreign markets as well as to provide assistance to farmers until long-term structural market changes are achieved. The Alberta government will further contribute \$230 million in new funds to help achieve the program's goals.

13–16 September  
*First Ministers*

A historic First Ministers' Meeting is held in Ottawa. The events begin with a meeting between the first ministers and Aboriginal leaders in the hope of improving health provision for First Nations people. They agree to develop

a blueprint plan for the improvement of Aboriginal health care for review within one year. They create the Aboriginal Health Transition Fund for the development of specialized health-care delivery mechanisms for Aboriginals, the Aboriginal Health Human Resources Initiative to encourage the training of Aboriginal health-care providers, and various targeted programs to address specific health-care issues in Aboriginal communities. The ministers further agree to hold a First Ministers' Meeting in the near future specifically dedicated to Aboriginal affairs.

The following days are dedicated to general discussion of health care. In an unprecedented fashion, many of the sessions are televised live. After three days of difficult negotiations, a \$41.2 billion, ten-year deal is struck between the first ministers to increase federal transfers to the provinces for health-care delivery. Funding will be allocated through increases in the Canada Health Transfer, the Wait Times Reduction Fund, and federal investments in medical equipment and Aboriginal health. The Health Council of Canada is created to oversee and report on health-care provision and standards. Though the deal is widely applauded, some critics are dismayed that change within the plan comes almost exclusively through funding increases, doing little to address structural problems in health-care provision.

A separate agreement is made for the Province of Quebec. Among other distinctions from the main plan, Quebec is granted the right to set its own objectives and priorities with respect to issues such as waiting times, home care, and acute care. The province is further exempted from oversight by the Health Council of Canada. The side agreement, entitled *Asymmetric Federalism That Respects Quebec's Jurisdiction*, is touted by Prime Minister Paul Martin as a means of strengthening the Canadian federation, but it is criticized by some as preferential treatment for Quebec.

16 September  
*Same-Sex Rights*

A court ruling makes Manitoba the fifth Canadian jurisdiction to recognize and license same-sex marriages, joining Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, and Yukon. The Manitoba case is the first provincial same-sex marriage court challenge that the federal government has not opposed.

- 16 September  
*Sport*
- The National Hockey League imposes a lockout on its players. The league's collective bargaining agreement expired at 10 p.m. the previous day; league players and owners are deeply divided in negotiations for a new agreement. Team owners, claiming large consistent losses, are demanding a cap on player salaries, while players refuse to accept any such measure. Neither side is optimistic about the possibility of a quick resolution to the dispute.
- 18 September  
*Municipalities*
- The mayors of Canada's largest cities, meeting at a summit in Toronto, soften their demands for funding through federal fuel taxes. The mayors call for an immediate 2.5 cent municipal share of federal fuel taxes rising to 5 cents by 2007 (down from earlier calls for an immediate 5 cent share). Federal Minister of State for Infrastructure and Communities John Godfrey rejects the mayor's calls, however, saying that federal commitments to fuel tax redistribution amount only to half the amount demanded by the mayors.
- Speaking at the summit, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty commits the provincial government to reviewing the *City of Toronto Act* towards giving Toronto more independence in managing municipal affairs. Both provincial and city governments will participate in the review.
- 19 September  
*Ontario*
- John Tory is elected leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. Tory, seen as a more centrist choice than his opponents Jim Flaherty and Frank Klees, is expected to move the party away from the hard-right policies of Mike Harris and the Common Sense Revolution. Tory previously served as chief executive of Rogers Cable and ran unsuccessfully in the 2003 Toronto mayoral election.
- 24 September  
*Same-Sex Rights*
- The Nova Scotia Supreme Court rules that banning same-sex marriage is unconstitutional. Nova Scotia thus becomes the sixth Canadian jurisdiction to recognize and license gay marriages. Provincial Justice Minister Michael Baker calls opposing same-sex marriage futile, given the precedents set by rulings in other provinces.
- 30 September  
*Governor General*
- Adrienne Clarkson's term as governor general is extended to September 2005. Both Prime Minister Paul Martin and Opposition Leader Stephen Harper express their support

for Clarkson's ability and impartiality in overseeing the newly elected minority government. Critics, however, are dismayed by the reappointment, given Clarkson's history of lavish spending.

5 October  
*Throne Speech*

The minority Liberal government narrowly averts the defeat of the Speech from the Throne that opens the thirty-eighth Parliament of Canada. Priorities expressed in the speech include debt repayment, equalization reform, health standards under the Health Council of Canada, fuel tax sharing with municipalities, Kyoto Accord implementation, and consideration of democratic reform. The Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives threaten to vote against the speech unless amendments to it are made in accordance with their requests. An agreement is ultimately reached with the Bloc, under which a proposed amendment is changed to remove a reference to Quebec Premier Jean Charest and to replace the term "fiscal imbalance" with "financial pressures some call the fiscal imbalance." The support of the Bloc gives the Liberals the majority it needs to ensure passage of the speech. A Conservative amendment is later accepted by the Liberals to make support for the speech unanimous across the parties.

16–17 October  
*Health Care*

The Annual Conference of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers of Health is held in Vancouver. Following a reaffirmation of the commitment of governments to the principles emerging from the Special Meeting of First Ministers and Aboriginal Leaders to improve Aboriginal health, the ministers devote their attention to implementation of the first ministers' Ten-Year Plan to Strengthen Health Care. Beyond reaffirming the commitment to improve waiting times and access as per the plan, they set up a ministerial task force on pharmaceuticals and agree to work towards the establishment of a set of health goals and targets. Other initiatives emerging from the meeting include the Canadian Health Technology Strategy for the effective use of technology in health-care provision.

26 October  
*Equalization*

An agreement is reached between the first ministers to reform the Equalization and Territorial Financing Formula programs. The proposed changes will increase payments by \$33 billion over ten years, including an immediate \$13

billion increase and a 3.5 percent growth rate thereafter. A panel review of equalization payment allocation is further launched to examine inequities in current methods of funding distribution and to make recommendations. Support for the proposals is not unanimous, however. Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Danny Williams boycotted the meeting because of the conditions that Prime Minister Paul Martin seeks to place on his province's share of oil and gas royalties.

27–29 October  
*Northern Canada*

The Northern Development Ministers' Forum is held in Chibougamau, Quebec. Topics discussed by the ministers include updating the forum's 2004–6 Action Plan, northern recruitment and retention, and transportation infrastructure. The ministers approve *Focus North*, an information package designed to promote the importance of Canada's North. Although Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Andy Scott is not in attendance, the ministers are satisfied with the achievements of the meeting and look forward to meeting with Scott and receiving his support for the discussed principles and initiatives.

1 November  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

A report commissioned by the Saskatchewan government on the integrity of the May 2004 Métis Nation of Saskatchewan (MNS) presidential election is released. The report confirms allegations of ineptitude and organized efforts to subvert the democratic process. In response to the report, the province announces its intention to cut off all intergovernmental relations with the MNS pending a new presidential election with independent scrutiny. The province will also continue to freeze just over \$400,000 in provincial MNS funding, which was withheld during the investigation. Dwayne Roth, winner of the May election, views the government's actions as attempts to undermine Métis hunting rights and land claims. MNS presidential challengers, however, applaud the findings of the report.

2 November  
*Child Care*

The Federal-Provincial-Territorial Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Social Services takes place in Ottawa in pursuit of a national early learning and child-care system. Agreement is reached on the fundamental principles of the plan, including quality, universal inclusiveness,

accessibility, and a developmental focus. The ministers hope to finalize the agreement in early 2005. The federal government has pledged \$5 billion in transfers to the provinces over five years to fund the plan, contingent on agreement and on provincial compliance with the program principles. Claude B  chard, Quebec family welfare minister, insists that federal monies be transferred unconditionally.

5 November  
*Same-Sex Rights*

A family court judge in Saskatchewan rules in support of government recognition of same-sex marriage, declaring that refusal of marriage licences to same-sex couples is a violation of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Saskatchewan joins five other provinces and one territory in granting same-sex marriages. Neither the provincial nor the federal government has challenged the court application.

12 November  
*Education*

Canadian Parents for French, a volunteer network of French-language education advocates, releases a national study entitled *The State of French Second Language Instruction*. The report finds that only one in ten students continues French-language studies through to grade 12. Enrolment in French-language programs is shown to be declining in all provinces except Prince Edward Island. The federal government has established the goal of doubling the number of bilingual young Canadians by 2013, and \$350 million over four years was committed to the cause in 2003, but only Ontario has reached a funding agreement with Ottawa on the issue.

16 November  
*Finance*

The federal government, in an economic and fiscal update, announces a projected surplus of \$8.9 billion for the 2004–5 fiscal year – more than double the \$4 billion surplus originally forecast by the government. The update forecasts total federal surpluses of \$61 billion over the next five years, as well as further savings of \$12 billion through bureaucratic expenditure reviews. The government will set aside \$18 billion of projected funds to debt repayment and \$13.5 billion as an “economic prudence” reserve in case of unexpected shocks, leaving the remaining funds for program spending. To the dismay of critics, significant tax cuts are ruled out by the government as a possible

destination for surpluses. Critics further decry the continued unexpectedly high surpluses of the federal government, alleging intentional underestimation.

18 November  
*Political Parties*

Mississauga-Erindale MP Carolyn Parrish is removed from the federal Liberal caucus by Prime Minister Paul Martin. The dismissal is the result of a year-long series of inflammatory public comments and actions by the MP, notably attacks on American policy and on the Iraq war. Parrish had further undermined the prime minister's leadership by affirming publicly in an interview that she "wouldn't shed a tear" if the Liberals lost the next election and Martin was forced to resign. The loss of Parrish reduces the Liberal minority government to 134 seats. The Conservatives hold 99 seats, the Bloc Québécois holds 54, and the NDP holds 19.

22 November  
*Alberta*

Ralph Klein is elected premier of Alberta for the fourth consecutive time. Klein's Progressive Conservatives win 61 legislature seats, down 13 from the party's total on entering the election. The provincial Liberals take 17 seats, the NDP wins 4, and the Alberta Alliance Party finishes with one. The PC campaign was low key, focusing primarily on the government's record and on the continued prosperity of the province rather than on concrete promises. Opposition parties view the reduced Conservative majority as evidence of a desire for change in the province. Klein has said that this will be his last election campaign.

Alongside the general provincial election, a vote is held to elect senators-in-waiting for the province. Consistent with calls for Senate reform, including election of representatives, the vote is seen as a popular recommendation for filling three vacant Alberta Senate seats. Prime Minister Paul Martin has previously stated his intention to disregard the results of the election in choosing Senate nominees. Two previous elections of senators-in-waiting have been held in the province, with only one senator-in-waiting, Stan Waters, ultimately receiving nomination to the Senate.

22 November  
*Immigration*

Federal Ethics Commissioner Bernard Shapiro launches an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the

granting to Alina Balaican of a ministerial permit to stay in Canada by federal Immigration Minister Judy Sgro. Federal opposition MPs allege the permit was granted in recognition of the involvement of Balaican and her husband in Sgro's re-election campaign in Toronto. Sgro insists the permit was granted on humanitarian grounds.

30 November –  
1 December  
*Canada–U.S.  
Relations*

U.S. President George W. Bush makes his first official visit to Canada. Although Bush had previously attended two summits in Canada, he had not previously made an official visit. A planned May 2003 visit had been cancelled following former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's decision not to support the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Prime Minister Paul Martin meets Bush in Ottawa on 30 November to discuss issues including joint security, foreign policy, and beef exports, with Bush pledging on the final issue to act to expedite the reopening of American borders to Canadian cattle. In a public address the following day in Halifax, Bush outlines his government's foreign policy intentions and asks for Canadian support in the "war on terror" and on ballistic missile defence.

6 December  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador ratifies the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement. The agreement grants the Inuit numerous community government rights as well as ownership of 15,800 square kilometres of land. The Labrador Inuit Association approved the agreement in May; only federal approval remains before the agreement becomes law. The Métis people of Labrador, however, stage a protest on the steps of the provincial assembly building, fearing that the agreement will hinder their attempts to reach a land claims agreement.

9 December  
*Same-Sex Rights*

Ruling on a series of non-binding federal government questions, the Supreme Court defends the federal government as the sole arbiter of marriage rights in Canada. The ruling, in affirming marriage to be within federal jurisdiction, prevents provincial governments from using the notwithstanding clause in response to proposed federal same-sex marriage legislation. Alberta Premier Ralph Klein had previously threatened to use the clause should the federal government implement legislation redefining

marriage to include same-sex couples. The ruling also defends the right of religious institutions opposed to same-sex marriage to refuse to perform them. The Supreme Court declines, however, to answer the question of whether restricting marriage to opposite-sex couples is unconstitutional.

21 December  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

Closing arguments conclude in the Samson Cree First Nation court case. The band is suing the federal government for \$1.4 billion, alleging fifty years of mismanagement of oil and gas revenues. The trial has been one of the longest Aboriginal lawsuits in Canadian history, including 365 days of trial. It has also been one of the most expensive, the combined spending of the two sides exceeding \$100 million. The case's ruling is expected to set a new precedent for the way in which Aboriginal oil and gas assets are treated in Canada. Lawyers for the band are already claiming partial victory; in a 17 December interim ruling, Justice Max Teitelbaum ordered that of \$360 million in oil revenues, which the federal government had been holding in a trust fund, be returned to the Cree.

21 December  
*Same-Sex Rights*

The Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador rules that the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage is unconstitutional. Through the ruling, Newfoundland and Labrador becomes the seventh province in Canada to recognize same-sex marriage. Provincial government officials will not challenge the ruling.

23 December  
*Newfoundland and  
Labrador*

Following fruitless negotiations with Finance Minister Ralph Goodale on the issue of offshore oil and gas royalties, Premier Danny Williams orders the removal of all Canadian flags from provincial government buildings. Williams seeks the exemption of such royalties from calculations of equalization payments as per a promise made by Paul Martin during the June election campaign. According to Williams, offers presented by the federal government provide only partial exemptions of offshore oil and gas royalties from equalization calculations. Prime Minister Paul Martin calls the flag removals disrespectful, blasting the premier for using a national symbol as a tool in political negotiations.

26 December  
*Natural Disasters*

An Indian Ocean earthquake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale triggers a violent tsunami that hits more than a dozen countries in South and Southeast Asia. More than 140,000 deaths are reported. The Government of Canada commits \$425 million over five years towards humanitarian aid, rehabilitation, and reconstruction in the most affected countries, particularly Indonesia and Sri Lanka. A further \$20 million is donated by provincial and territorial governments, and more than \$230 million is donated by non-governmental organizations, employee unions, and the private sector.

30 December  
*BSE*

Reports of a second Canadian case of mad cow disease are released by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Cattle industry officials, though dismayed, are not surprised by the finding, given the increased testing implemented following the initial Canadian BSE case in May 2003. Representatives from both the Canadian and the American government insist that the case will not affect the planned timetable for the reopening of the American border to Canadian cattle exports. The previous day, American officials had announced 7 March 2005 as a target date for allowing imports into the United States of Canadian cattle under the age of thirty months.

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