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## Chronology of Events January 2003 – December 2003

*Aron Seal and Michael Munroe*

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8 January  
*Gun Control*

Federal Justice Minister Martin Cauchon announces that the federal gun registry will remain, despite demands from eight provincial governments that spending on the program be halted. The provinces say they may refuse to prosecute those who fail to register their weapons. They seek the program's suspension pending a full audit of spending.

13 January  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) Chief Perry Bellegarde calls for the *First Nations Governance Act* to be entirely rewritten, warning that Aboriginal people and organizations will enthusiastically oppose it in its current form. The Act, he argues, violates the treaty rights of Aboriginal bands while doing little to address First Nations issues.

14 January  
*Political Parties*

Liberal leadership contender Allan Rock withdraws from the Liberal leadership race. Rock is believed to have been in second place. Among his reasons for dropping out of the race, Rock cites the difficulty of fundraising against



4–5 February  
*Health Care*

The First Ministers' Conference on Health Care produces a new Accord on Health Care Renewal between the federal and provincial governments in which the federal government commits to increasing health-care funding by \$34.8 billion over five years. The first ministers further agree to create a National Health Council, an independent institution for the regulation of health-care provision, and to pursue numerous reforms in, among other areas, home care, record keeping, technology access, and drug coverage. Critics of the plan note the unclear mandate of the council and the fact that funding increases fall short of previous targets. The three territorial leaders, believing the funding increases to be insufficient, refuse to sign the agreement.

11 February  
*British Columbia*

The Speech from the Throne highlights the government's commitment to the Aboriginal treaty process, promising additional financial resources and more equitable agreements. It further notes the importance of partnership and cooperation with the federal government, particularly with respect to extension of the Trans-Canada Highway and development of offshore oil and gas resources.

18 February  
*Finance*

The 2003 federal budget is released by Finance Minister John Manley. The document projects a 20 percent increase in federal spending over three years and a reduction of the debt to \$507.7 billion by December 2003, and a balanced budget for 2003–5. Highlights include \$17.3 billion over three years and \$34.5 billion over five years for health care, an increase of the National Child Benefit to \$2,632 for the first child in 2003 and \$3,243 by 2007, \$3 billion for the environment over five years, and \$3 billion for infrastructure (including roads, sewers, and other municipal projects) over ten years. The budget also includes \$2 billion directed towards health care, education, policing, and water systems on First Nations reserves. Critics argue that the budget is a demonstration of the fiscal imbalance existent between levels of government and that infrastructure investment falls short of urban needs.

18 February  
*Alberta*

The Speech from the Throne highlights a feeling of discontent with Alberta's relations with the federal

government. It describes how the province is often ignored on national issues. In the words of Premier Ralph Klein, the speech is designed to send a warning that Alberta must not be ignored on key national issues such as the national gun registry, the Kyoto Accord, and Senate reform. He insists, however, that the speech is not an expression of Albertan separatist sentiment.

25 February  
*Political Parties*

The federal Liberal Party announces that 10–16 November is the date of its leadership convention. The party further sets out the rules for the campaign, including a \$75,000 entry fee, a 40 percent tax on campaign spending beyond \$400,000, and a \$4 million cap placed on spending during the campaign period (excluding polling and travel). Leadership candidate Sheila Copps alleges that



1–2 April  
*Education*

Provincial education ministers develop an action plan for strengthening collaboration on educational issues at the 83rd meeting of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC.) They seek streamlined assessment standards, enhanced online learning and teacher training, and developments in the teaching of official languages. They criticize the federal creation of the Canadian Learning Institute, arguing that it duplicates work already done by the CMEC and encroaches on provincial jurisdiction.

2 April  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

NDP MP Pat Martin speaks for 26 hours at a meeting of the House of Commons' Aboriginal Affairs Committee in opposition to the *First Nations Governance Act*. He seeks to prevent committee members from voting on a motion to limit Commons debate on the bill. The motion passes easily, however, when a procedural loophole is used to end Martin's filibuster.

14 April  
*Quebec*

The Quebec Liberal Party, led by Jean Charest, wins 75 of the province's 125 seats and is elected Government of Quebec. The incumbent Parti Québécois wins 45 seats and the Action Démocratique du Québec wins 4. The result is interpreted as a reflection of declining support for Quebec sovereignty. Charest states his commitment to working with other governments in the Canadian federation. His campaign had downplayed national unity issues in favour of health care and fiscal management.

14 April  
*Municipalities*

Saskatchewan municipalities are promised \$20 million by the federal and provincial governments for infrastructure projects through the Canada Saskatchewan Infrastructure

- 24 April  
*Aboriginal Peoples*
- Indian Affairs Minister Robert Nault reaffirms his commitment to the *First Nations Governance Act*. He dismisses the significance of a protest planned for Parliament Hill, saying that protests are becoming so common that politicians are growing immune to them. Opponents of the Act, including the Canadian Bar Association, are enraged by Nault's comments and warn that the Act could be defeated in court for undermining constitutionally protected Aboriginal rights.
- 24 April  
*Fisheries*
- Federal Fisheries Minister Robert Thibault announces a ban on cod fishing in much of the East Coast. The announcement is expected to have a significant negative impact on East Coast economies, particularly those of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- 24–26 April  
*Alberta*
- Mark Norris, Alberta's economic development minister, attends a three-day conference in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the U.S. Council for National Policy. Norris discusses Alberta's role in George Bush's plan for a continental energy strategy and lobbies the U.S. administration to allow Albertan companies to bid on contracts for postwar operations in Iraq. Federal Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham is untroubled by Norris's attendance at the event, saying Canadian provinces are welcome to promote their interests independently in the United States.
- 28 April  
*British Columbia*
- The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform is formed to review the provincial electoral system. The assembly will be chaired by Jack Blaney, former president of Simon Fraser University, and will be composed of 158 randomly selected citizens, two from each of the province's ridings. All assembly recommendations will be put to referendum and implemented if the results satisfy two criteria: firstly, 60 percent popular support overall and, secondly, majority support in 60 percent of electoral districts.
- 28–29 April  
*Fisheries*
- Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Roger Grimes travels to Ottawa seeking a reversal of the federal government's cod-fishing moratorium. Although his lobbying is unsuccessful, he remains committed to pushing for a reversal of the decision.

30 April



province and two from each territory, with veto power over legislation affecting areas of provincial jurisdiction.

20 May

*BSE*

The World Reference Lab in England confirms that a cow from northern Alberta has tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). The United States, Australia, Japan, and South Korea ban Canadian beef imports. Although Alberta and federal government officials insist that the public risk is contained, by the end of week seventeen Canadian farms are quarantined for BSE: twelve in Alberta, three in British Columbia, and two in Saskatchewan.

27 May

*Premiers*

Quebec Premier Jean Charest releases a proposal for the creation of a Council of the Federation. The council will help provincial leaders develop common positions on issues of joint significance and evolve united strategies for dealing with the federal government. The plan will be formally presented to the other premiers at the Annual Premiers' Conference in July.

29 May

*Municipalities*

Paul Martin, in an address to delegates at the Creative Cities Conference, promises to transfer a portion of federal gasoline taxes to municipalities if he becomes prime

of tighter border controls with the United States, the message being sent to children, and the implications for police operations against organized crime.

31 May

*Political Parties*

appointments. They further call on the federal government to be more active in lobbying for the reopening of the United States border to Canadian beef exports.

14 June  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

Roberta Jamieson, chief of Ontario's Six Nations, affirms her opposition to the *First Nations Governance Act*. She argues that the Act would give First Nations a level of status in intergovernmental relations that would be lower than that enjoyed by cities.

17 June  
*Alberta*

Alberta Justice Minister Dave Hancock vows to fight a federal bill in favour of same-sex marriages. Hancock, calling marriage a clear provincial jurisdiction, affirms a willingness to challenge the legislation as far as the Supreme Court if the federal government fails to recognize the province's position. Premier Ralph Klein has already stated his intention to invoke the notwithstanding clause to protect the traditional definition of marriage. Cauchon's bill is a response to a 10 June 2003 Ontario Court of Appeal ruling requiring recognition of same-sex marriages as a Charter right. Ontario and British Columbia have already legalized same-sex marriage in response to the ruling.

17 June  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

Jean Charest, Quebec premier, and Ghislain Picard, regional chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, undertake the creation of a Joint Council of

cooperation with the federal government on cross-jurisdictional issues through annual first ministers' meetings. They further agree to create a common regulatory framework to control automobile insurance rates, and they call on the federal government to undertake a comprehensive review of the equalization program.

19 June  
*Health Care*

The federal government offers Ontario an assistance plan worth \$250 million to cover economic losses associated with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The plan falls short of the Ontario government's request for 90 percent of the \$1.13 billion in additional health-care costs borne by the province. Ontario Municipal Affairs Minister David Young calls the amount "outrageous" and rejects the offer in protest.

25 June  
*Economic Growth*

In a speech to the Economic Club of Toronto, federal Finance Minister John Manley forecasts 2.2 percent growth for 2004, one percentage point lower than had been foreseen in his February 2003 budget. Manley cites SARS, BSE, and the rising value of Canadian currency against the American dollar as the reasons for lower growth. Despite the slowdown, however, Manley insists his government will maintain a balanced budget and will not have to cut back on program spending. While he acknowledges the benefits Canada will reap from the American decision to cut taxes and run deficits to provide economic stimulus, he does not believe Canada should follow suit.

25–26 June  
*Finance*

A provincial-territorial meeting of finance ministers is held in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The ministers discuss issues relating to fiscal imbalance, equalization, health care, census revisions, and disaster relief. They compile a list of recommendations to be presented at the Annual Premiers' Conference in July.

28 June  
*Premiers*

Quebec Premier Jean Charest travels to Manitoba to meet with Premier Gary Doer. They discuss a range of issues, including health-care funding, federal-provincial relations, and plans for a Council of the Federation. Charest hopes to speak with as many premiers as possible before the Annual Premiers' Conference in July; he has already met with Newfoundland's Roger Grimes and Prince Edward Island's Pat Binns when the two visited Quebec.

23–28 June  
*Alberta*

Alberta Premier Ralph Klein undertakes a mission to Washington and New York to promote the Canadian cattle industry and energy sector. He reports that U.S. Vice-President Dick Cheney, though committed to lifting the American ban on Canadian beef as soon as possible, cannot provide a precise date for when Canadian imports would be allowed. Klein suggests the possibility of co-hosting an energy summit with Cheney in the near future to discuss ways to reduce the cost of exploiting oil sands, an idea later endorsed by federal cabinet minister Anne McLellan. In reference to Canada's decision not to support the American-led invasion of Iraq, Klein argues that Canada can maintain an independent foreign policy while pursuing a positive relationship with the United States.

30 June  
*Newfoundland and  
Labrador*

The provincial government's Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada releases a 214-page report assessing the progress of Newfoundland and Labrador since the union with Canada in 1949 and the current state of the province's role in the federation. While the report rejects separation, the commission stresses that the status quo of the province's place in Canada, marked by fiscal dependency, high debt, and high levels of emigration and unemployment, is unacceptable. The report calls for a new collaborative relationship with the federal government and the other provinces and territories. It seeks institutional change, including Senate reform, more organized and regularly scheduled first ministers' meetings, and a stronger federal presence in the province. Specific proposals are made for more cooperative arrangements to deal with fisheries issues, a more equitable sharing of oil revenues under the Atlantic Ac-



territorial health and social expenditures. Division exists, however, with respect to the proposed National Health Council. Jean Charest, Ernie Eves, and Ralph Klein express concern about the possibility of withholding subsidies if health-care delivery conditions are not met. The premiers agree to support the principle of the council's creation while waiting for the new prime minister to discuss mandate details.

16 July

*Aboriginal Peoples*

Phil Fontaine is elected grand chief of the assembly of First Nations, defeating incumbent Matthew Coon Come and Ontario Six Nations Chief Roberta Jamieson. After defeating Coon Come on a first ballot, Fontaine obtains 61 percent of second-ballot votes over Jamieson. Fontaine had previously served as grand chief from 1997 to 2000. Fontaine seeks equal First Nations participation in meetings between provincial and territorial leaders and will work for significant amendments to the *First Nations Governance Act*. His platform emphasizes working with governments rather than alienating them through rhetoric.

22 July

*Political Parties*

John Manley withdraws his bid for the Liberal Party leadership, pointing to a campaign poll showing 75 percent of delegates supporting Paul Martin and expressing no propensity to change their minds. Sheila Copps reaffirms her commitment to staying in the race despite polls indicating support for her as low as 5 percent.

28 July

*Aboriginal Peoples*

The Government of British Columbia and the Tsawwassen Nation release an agreement-in-principle granting the Tsawwassen \$10 million and ownership of a 700 ha area in British Columbia's lower mainland. The agreement further provides the band with commercial fishing rights and \$1 million allocated to increase fishing capacity. The agreement-in-principle must now be approved by band members.

5 August

*Nova Scotia*

The Nova Scotia Conservative government of John Hamm is reduced to a minority, winning only 25 of 52 legislature seats. The New Democratic Party takes 15 seats and the Liberal Party wins 12. Hamm had campaigned on his government's record, notably the province's first balanced budget in four decades and a 10 percent income tax cut.

Analysts attribute Hamm's fall to increases in automobile insurance premiums and the cost of living during his term in office.

15 August  
*Ontario*

A joint task force is struck to investigate the cause of the 14 August power outage in Ontario and the eastern United States. The task force, to be co-chaired by Canadian Natural Resources Minister Herb Dhaliwal and U.S. Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham, will bring together government officials and energy providers from both countries. Ontario Premier Ernie Eves later claims the province should have been given an active role on the task force. While Dhaliwal welcomes the province's participation and input, he rules out a top-level role.

23 August  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announces that the *First Nations Governance Act* will not be a priority of his government when Parliament resumes. His statement is taken as an indication that the Act will not be ratified before Chrétien's retirement.

29 August  
*British Columbia*

Selection of voters to sit on the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform begins. Jack Blaney, assembly chairman, announces that preliminary letters will be sent to 200 randomly selected people in each provincial riding, 158 of whom – a man and a woman from each riding – will join Blaney and two electoral reform experts to develop recommendations for reform of the electoral system in the province. The assembly will hold its first meeting in January 2004.

1 September  
*BSE*

The U.S. government partially lifts its ban on Canadian beef. Exports of boneless cuts of animals are allowed on condition that animals of different age groups are slaughtered in different plants. No full lifting of the ban is planned in the near future.

3 September  
*Western Canada*

The Canada West Foundation releases "An Action Plan to Reduce Western Discontent." The report outlines ten recommendations for improving the relationship between the federal government and the western provinces, including reduced party discipline in the Commons, Senate appointments based on provincial and territorial recommendation, and non-constitutional Senate reform.



- 4 September  
*Health Care*
- The Annual Conference of Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Ministers of Health takes place in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The ministers commit to expediting discussions regarding the mandate of the National Health Council and also announce progress on the implementation of a number of initiatives from the February 2003 Accord on Health Care Renewal.
- 7–9 September  
*Eastern Canada*
- The 28th Annual Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers takes place in Groton, Connecticut. Issues discussed include cross-border security, air pollution control, biotechnology, information technology, and the August power blackout.
- 20 September  
*Aboriginal Peoples*
- Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Grand Chief Phil Fontaine announces a full review of the organization's decision-making processes. The AFN's organizational structure had been heavily criticized, most notably by Indian Affairs Minister Robert Nault. A similar review under Matthew Coon Come, Fontaine's predecessor, had failed when reform proposals were rejected by governing chiefs. Fontaine stresses his commitment to improving social conditions among First Nations through job training operations and through land claims that increase access to natural resources.
- 23 September  
*Political Parties*
- Over 90 percent of elected delegates to November's Liberal leadership convention support Paul Martin, unofficially ensuring his victory over Sheila Copps. Copps vows to stay in the race until the end.
- 29 September  
*Prince Edward Island*
- The Prince Edward Island Conservative Party, led by Pat Binns, wins its third term as the province's majority government with 23 seats. The Liberal Party comes in second with 4 seats and the New Democratic Party takes one. The election proceeds despite the impact of Hurricane Juan. Binns's victory is attributed largely to his government's past success and his personal popularity. His plans include more doctors and nurses, lower automobile insurance rates, investments in health care, and encouragement of economic growth.
- 2 October  
*Ontario*
- The Liberal Party, led by Dalton McGuinty, wins 72 of 103 seats and is elected Government of Ontario. The

incumbent Conservatives are reduced to 24 seats and the New Democratic Party, winning only 7 seats, loses official party status. McGuinty's platform includes rolling back corporate tax cuts, freezes to postsecondary tuition, and increasing the minimum wage. Analysts and media

merge their two parties. The deal seeks to end the vote splitting between the two conservative parties to which the leaders largely attribute Liberal electoral dominance. The agreement must now be approved by the memberships of both parties. The deal is seen by a number of

Proposals that the secretariat will consider include fixed election dates, Internet voting, party spending limits, and banning partisan government advertising.

30 October  
*Aboriginal Peoples*

The first meeting of the Joint Council of Elected Representatives is held between Quebec First Nations leaders and cabinet ministers. The joint council, a project undertaken by Quebec Premier Jean Charest and the regional chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, Ghislain Picard, is a permanent forum designed to promote interaction between the Quebec government and Aboriginal leaders. Issues to be discussed by the council include autonomy for First Nations, territory, resources, and economic and social development.

1 November  
*Tourism*

At the close of a two-day meeting in Quebec City, federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for tourism sign the Quebec Declaration, a commitment to work together to promote tourism through governments and the private sector. They further create the Canadian Council of Ministers of Tourism, an organization for the strengthening of links between the ministers. The ministers seek to achieve a \$75 billion increase in Canadian tourism by 2010.

3 November  
*Finance*

Federal Finance Minister John Manley delivers his 2003 Economic and Fiscal Update speech to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. He projects that the federal government will maintain a balanced budg3.4(v)mc9.2y3'

growth, and high emigration. He wins on a platform that includes continued ownership of Crown corporations, “sustainable” income and small business tax cuts, and tax incentives to discourage emigration among recent postsecondary graduates.



receiving a single formal vote; critics argue this ease of passage reflects a need for territorial electoral reform.

12 December

*Political Leaders*

20 December

*Aboriginal Peoples*

Incoming Indian Affairs Minister Andy Mitchell announces a cross-country tour to meet with Aboriginal leaders beginning in January. Mitchell's agenda includes improving relationships between his government and Aboriginal leaders and reducing the gap in living conditions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. He states that the *First Nations Governance Act*, will be substantially amended if reintroduced at all.

27 December

*BSE*

The United States Department of Agriculture releases information indicating that a Washington State cow infected with BSE was likely imported from Alberta. Industry officials fear that such a connection will compromise efforts to have American beef markets reopened to Canadian exports.



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