

News briefs

Air Canada has given its 20,000 employees and their spouses flight passes on economy-class travel in appreciation for good performance in 1977. The passes, which cannot be used during certain peak travel periods, will be valid for reserved travel anywhere Air Canada flies from February 1, 1978 to January 31, 1979.

Quebec's minimum hourly wage, indexed by law, has risen to \$3.27 from \$3.15. The consumer price index was used as the standard for the new wage, reputedly the highest in North America.

The Law Reform Commission of Canada has filed an informal report to Parliament, recommending the abolition of a centuries-old privilege that protects the pay of federal employees and appointees from garnishment. The immunity has made it legally impossible for any creditor, including a family maintenance creditor, to divert a federal employee's wages for the purpose of paying off a judgment debt, including family support.

The signing of letters accrediting and recalling Canadian representatives abroad, is included in certain functions of the Sovereign that have recently been transferred to the Governor General, with the approval of Queen Elizabeth.

Governor-General Léger calls for a moratorium on the question of national unity in his New Year's message and asks for less talk and more love. In the message, televised January 1, the Governor General and Mrs. Léger ask that the moratorium be for a full year to find a solution to the difficulties facing the nation.

Almost \$30 million was cut from the Federal Government's energy bill in the 1976-77 fiscal year because of conservation measures.

The Department of Labour plans to enforce tougher controls on grain dust

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levels in grain elevators, a move said to reduce Canadian chances of disasters that killed more than 40 people in the U.S. in late December.

Federal Finance Minister Jean Chrétien said recently the Canadian economy would experience a growth rate of 5 per cent in 1978 and the rate of inflation would decrease to 6 per cent from the present rate of almost 9 per cent. He added that the private sector would have to play a bigger role in resolving the problem of unemployment.

The ban on commercial Atlantic salmon fishing will continue in 1978. Fisheries Minister Roméo LeBlanc said recently that compensation payments at 1977 levels would be paid this year to about 700 commercial fishermen who were not permitted to fish because of the ban.

Mount Agassiz ski resort in Manitoba has been confirmed as the site for the Alpine ski events for the 1979 Canada Winter Games. Out of the estimated capital cost for the ski developments of \$480,000 the Manitoba government will contribute a maximum of \$190,000 and the Federal Government will provide up to \$50,000.

The headquarters for Agriculture Canada's eastern and western research divisions will be moved this year from Ottawa to Quebec City and Saskatoon.

Canada will continue to supply Pakistan with essential commodities for industrial and agricultural use through a \$45-million development loan covering the next three years. The agreement will make available such commodities as aluminum, asbestos, copper, lead, newsprint, rubber and zinc. Canada provided a \$30-million, three-year commodity loan in 1973 and has since agreed to expand and accelerate the program because of its effectiveness.

The government of New Brunswick becomes the second province, after Quebec, to seek the status of "participating government" in the institutions, activities and programs of the *Agence de coopération culturelle et technique des pays d'expression française*. Founded in 1970, the ACCT is an international organization whose 26 member states seek, through the common bond created by the use of the French language, to co-operate in the fields of education, culture, science and technology. Quebec has been a member since 1971.

A letter from the author of the Sherlock Holmes stories, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, to world-famous magician Harry

Houdini has disappeared from the Houdini Magic Hall of Fame in Niagara Falls, Ontario. In the stolen letter are ten circled words, which, when combined with a secret code, bear the message Houdini promised to bring to earth if he ever returned. The magician died in 1926. A reward has been offered for the return of the letter, which has been in the museum since 1968.

Defence Minister Barney Danson says that Canada's program for improving its contribution to NATO defence won praise at a meeting of NATO defence ministers. Danson told a news conference that Joseph Luns, NATO secretary-general, singled out the Canadian procurement program and told closed sessions that he was pleased with the Canadian commitment to progress.

The number of U.S. visitors to Canada over the first ten months of 1977 fell by 1.6 per cent to 28.7 million, while the number of Canadians visiting the U.S. was up by 6.6 per cent to 33.4 million. The number of Canadian travellers to other foreign countries jumped 13.3 per cent to 1.6 million. The imbalance of travelling is contributing substantially to Canada's deficit, and is expected to total \$2 billion for the whole year, about twice the travel deficit in 1976.

The Canadian Forestry Service records a total of 8,702 fires from April to October, affecting a total of 1,038,000 hectares. For the 1976 fire season, the corresponding figures were 9,967 fires and 1,607,000 hectares, while the seasonal averages for the preceding ten years were 8,580 fires and 1,092,000 hectares.

Energy Minister Alastair Gillespie said recently he would ask Ontario to reduce pollution standards and the resource tax rate to help the nickel industry. He said that federal and provincial mines ministers would meet in January to discuss mining industry problems leading to layoffs.

Regina, provincial capital of Saskatchewan, has come a long way since the 1880s when the tiny settlement was known by the name of Pile-O-Bones. The city, whose population is now 160,000, celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary this year. Several national sports championships, including speedskating, indoor track and field, basketball, handball, swimming, women's softball and men's baseball, will take place in that city as part of the anniversary celebrations.