

## CHAPTER 2

### The Committee's Hearings and Discussions

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On December 20, 1982, the Senate adopted a motion establishing a Special Joint Committee "to consider and report upon ways by which the Senate of Canada could be reformed in order to strengthen its role in representing people from all regions of Canada and to enhance the authority of Parliament to speak and act on behalf of Canadians in all parts of the country". The Committee's report was to include recommendations concerning the method of selection and length of term of senators, the powers of the Senate, the distribution of seats, and other matters that the Committee considered relevant to the reform of the Senate. An identical motion was adopted in the House of Commons on December 22, 1982.

On April 21, 1983 the two houses of Parliament appointed 8 senators and 10 members of the House of Commons to the Committee. The Committee convened for the first time on April 28 and elected the Honourable Senator Gildas L. Molgat and Mr. Roy MacLaren, MP as joint chairmen. Mr. MacLaren was appointed to the Cabinet on August 13, and the Honourable Paul Cosgrove, P.C. was elected to replace him on September 20. Following the prorogation of Parliament on November 30, the Committee was reconstituted in the Senate on December 8 and in the Commons on December 13.

The Committee was able to draw on the experience of a number of its members who had worked with the special joint committees on the Canadian Constitution that sat in 1970-72, 1978 and 1980-81, with the Special Senate Committee on the Constitution (1978-79), and with the Senate sub-committee on Certain Aspects of the Constitution (1980). Some members had also had experience at the provincial level while others had been federal Cabinet ministers.

As an initial step, we reviewed past proposals for reform. Numerous reports or bills have dealt with aspects of this issue since 1968. We were able to benefit from the thought that has been given to the subject by the federal government and by the governments of British Columbia, Alberta and other provinces. Senate reform has also been the focus of various parliamentary committees, the Task Force on Canadian Unity, the Ontario Advisory Committee on Confederation, the Constitutional