

□ INTERVIEW □



Mr. Gilles Mathieu

G. M. : The federal government's present idea is to decentralize these major international events so that all the country's regions can be exposed to them. In any case, the Quebec Summit had to be organized jointly because there are two host governments. A joint Secretariat was set up in Quebec City to take some of the load off the Summits Management Office in Ottawa. Since there were three summits, it was felt that a single unit should be created to develop expertise and to apply it generally, but it soon became evident that a single secretariat in Ottawa would not be able to organize the Francophone Summit. Thus a joint secretariat was formed consisting of staff from the federal, Quebec and New Brunswick governments. In other words, the Summits Management Office can concentrate on the Commonwealth Summit, while still taking a part in organizing the Quebec City Summit.

S. G. : *What is the purpose of the Summits Management Office? Exactly what does it do?*

G. M. : Its first function, once established, was to form a team. We had to submit a memorandum to Cabinet to obtain the resources. There was preparatory work to be done in Ottawa first, after which we turned our attention to Vancouver and the Commonwealth Summit.

In the beginning we simply made a few trips to Vancouver to select the major sites. The first decision was to install the Summit at Canada Place, the Canadian pavilion for Expo '86. Once the strategic decisions had been made, it became clear that we would either have to establish from Ottawa a small local office with a staff of five or six, or make a major visit every month. We would also need to remain in regular contact with the people recruited in Vancouver. The original idea was to move the Summits Management Office to the site about two months before the summit, so that we could be on the spot during the intensive phase involving the final details.

The purpose of the Summits Management Office is to organize summits. They vary of course in size, but consider that 48 delegations can mean 800 delegates and 1,000 journalists. This gives rise to problems of transportation, accommodation, hospitality and security, because communication and data processing services must be set up locally for the media. It's no wonder nine months are required to organize this kind of event. It's an enormous job.

S. G. : *That's what most people feel. Why must these three- or four-day summits be prepared nine or 10 months ahead of time?*

G. M. : Important international events generate a great deal of visibility for Canada. It puts you on the map in no uncertain terms. The impact is felt internationally. Moreover, Canada is the only country involved in all three summits. Receiving so many people three times in a little more than nine months creates a considerable impact.

The largest amount is spent on security. Next comes organization, where the costs are distributed throughout a number of items. You of course want the event to be well organized and to have the Heads of State and Government feel that they have been well treated.

S. G. : *Many people question the validity of these events, citing the paucity of concrete results in proportion to the effort and sums of money invested. Are members of the general public aware of the importance of a summit that might be taking place in their own city? Some tend to look more at how much each Head of State is costing them.*

G. M. : I find this to be a misleading approach, since it amounts to ques-