

Minister heads delegation to Mexico

Secretary of State for External Affairs Mark MacGuigan has announced that he will lead the Canadian delegation to the fourth meeting of the Canada-Mexico Joint Ministerial Committee in Mexico City January 7-9, 1981. Three other Cabinet members will accompany Dr. MacGuigan — Agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan, Energy, Mines and Resources Minister Marc Lalonde and Minister of State for Trade Ed Lumley.

The ministers and officials will have three days of meetings with their Mexican counterparts, during which they will discuss a wide range of issues including trade, energy co-operation, agricultural co-operation as well as a variety of multi-lateral questions.

The Canada-Mexico Joint Ministerial Committee was formed in 1968 in recognition of the broad range of contacts between the two countries and of a mutual desire to foster the further development of relations. The January meeting will be the fourth, and the second one to take place in Mexico City.

In 1980, two-way trade between Canada and Mexico has grown rapidly, with Canadian exports in the first half of the year up by 126 per cent and imports up 57 per cent.

The number of high level contacts between the two countries both governmental and private, has also increased significantly in the past year or so. Close to a quarter of a million Canadian tourists now visit Mexico annually.

Niagara water pollution

The Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C. sent a diplomatic note, November 28, to the United States Department of State concerning water quality problems in the Niagara River and their consequences for the health and property of Canadians.

The embassy also transmitted to the Department of State a summary of the Environmental Baseline Report on the Niagara River, prepared by Environment Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Environment for the Canada-Ontario Review Board on Water Quality.

The report summarizes Canadian data on water quality (suspended sediment), bottom sediment and biota collected in the Niagara River between 1975 and

1979. It states that concentrations of total DDT, PCB's, aldrin/dieldrin, endosulfan (thiodan), lindane and cadmium exceeded the specific objectives of the Canada-U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement at certain stations in the lower Niagara River on at least one occasion during 1979. In addition, other synthetic chemicals, for which no specific water quality objectives have been developed, were also detected.

In the note, the embassy said many of the chemicals detected are frequently found in association with incompletely treated wastes from industries operating in the vicinity of the Niagara River and this data give rise to additional and specific concerns on top of those which were indicated in another note sent by the embassy in April 1980.

Continuing risk

In particular, the Canadian government is concerned that serious operational problems are still being experienced at the Niagara Falls (New York) Waste Water Treatment Plant and that agreement does not appear to have been reached between the United States Environmental Protection Agency and Niagara Falls officials to proceed with rehabilitation of this plant, said the note. The embassy reiterated the government's concerns that there may exist a continuing risk to the health and property of Canadians and sought assurances that urgent steps be taken to resolve any administrative difficulties which might further delay the rehabilitation of the Niagara Falls Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Information requested

Secondly, while U.S. agencies have provided general information regarding the operations of SCA Chemical Waste Services, Inc., and their possible impact on the water quality of the Niagara River, recent disclosures reported in the Canadian press relating to past actions at the site give rise to further concerns. The Canadian authorities wish to request further information on this matter, said the embassy.

In the note, the Canadian embassy said it welcomed the expression of willingness in the Department of State's note of May 21 to co-operate in seeking a solution to these problems. It said the embassy would be pleased to discuss the findings of the report and any other information regarding pollution sources to the Niagara River.

Former Quebec premier dies

Former Quebec Premier Jean Lesage described as the "father of the Quiet Revolution" in the 1960s, died of cancer, December 11, in Quebec City. Mr. Lesage was 68.

"Jean Lesage will go down in history as the father of the Quiet Revolution, but it is an expression which doesn't nearly begin to sum up what he was," Quebec Liberal opposition leader Claude Ryan said as he announced the death in the National Assembly, December 12.

All of Quebec will regret the loss of the father of the Quiet Revolution, Quebec Premier René Lévesque said in a message to the Lesage family.

In Ottawa, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau said that Mr. Lesage was "one of those who most greatly contributed towards the affirmation of Quebec within Confederation".

Mr. Lesage's body lay in state in the Red Room of the National Assembly in Quebec City for three days prior to the funeral in the Quebec Cathedral.

Social reforms

During the Lesage regime from July 1960 to June 1966, the Quebec school system underwent a complete restructuring, a provincial pension plan was introduced, hydro power was nationalized, spending controls in government were implemented, electoral reform was enacted and the civil service union was organized.

Mr. Lesage began his political career on the federal level in 1945 when he was elected Liberal member of Parliament for the Quebec riding of Montmagny-Islet. By 1952 he was parliamentary secretary to Lester B. Pearson, then Minister of External Affairs. In 1953, Mr. Lesage became a member of the Louis St. Laurent Cabinet, serving briefly as Minister of Resources and Economic Development, then as Minister of Resources and for the North.

Although he retained his seat in the 1958 general election, Mr. Lesage left federal politics in June 1958, shortly after he had been chosen head of the Quebec Liberals. For the next two years he ran the party from outside the National Assembly. Mr. Lesage served as his own finance minister for both terms he was premier and also held the federal-provincial affairs portfolio from 1961-1966.