

\$10,587. Allowance is made, however, to cover the expense of travelling over this far-flung riding — an expanse that would be far greater than travelling in York-Scarborough, where all those voters are located in a fraction of the area of the Yukon.

The spending by political parties is limited to 30 cents for each eligible voter in the country. Penalties for over-spending go as high as \$25,000.

The legislation also makes it a criminal offence to contribute to a party or a candidate except directly and requires that all campaign contributions exceeding \$100 must be disclosed whether from individuals, corporations, unions, other organizations, associations or governments.

"Above all," said Mr. O'Connor, "these limitations will reduce the discriminatory effect of wealth on the system. The wealthy man or woman will not be permitted to spend his or her way into office, nor will he or she enjoy the substantial advantage that money formerly held over the less well-to-do candidate." He noted that this end is further advanced by partial reimbursement to parties and candidates from the public treasury of the costs of a campaign. This applies to successful candidates and those receiving 20 per cent of the votes cast. The rate is 16 cents for each of the first 25,000 voters, and 14 cents for each of the additional voters, plus \$250. Candidates receiving less than 20 per cent of the total vote get \$250.

Perhaps one of the more significant aspects of the legislation is the provision that allows political campaign contributions of up to \$500 to be credited against taxable income. Mr. O'Connor saw this as encouraging a broader base of financial support for the party system.

"We believe that, in principle, the best way to finance the system is by means of a freely given private donation. That is, it is preferable to fund candidates for public office voluntarily, rather than to require all of us to support all candidates through our tax dollars. We do, however, recognize the necessity to give everyone, regardless of wealth and financial ability, an opportunity to convey his or her message to the people of Canada. Thus we have the combination of incentives to give voluntarily, combined with some degree of public reimbursement of expenses of candidates and parties."

The legislation is recognized as still short of perfection and not by any means the last word on legislating more equitability into the election campaign. There is a provision in the legislation to refer certain sections back to a parliamentary committee for review after the first election held following implementation of the bill.

## That's in July

The new election expenses act likely will come into effect July 15, says Chief Electoral Officer Jean-Marc Hamel. The process of setting up the electoral machinery needed to administer the new act was going well, but there was little chance it would be ready before mid-July. Under terms of the legislation, proclamation can come no later than July 15.

In an interview Mr. Hamel said much of the necessary work on the Canada Election Act, about 400 pages, is complete but final publication of the new version probably would not be before the end of March. Mr. Hamel said he and his staff have been receiving "beautiful co-operation" from the

political parties in trying to prepare for implementation of the act. "We've already discussed some of the things we must do before the act comes into effect and we intend to have a few more meetings to discuss such things as the reports they'll have to make to us."

In years with no election, registered political parties will have to show their financial records to Mr. Hamel and his staff within six months of the end of each fiscal year. Following elections, parties and their candidates will have to submit audited reports.

Mr. Hamel said that because these reports will be audited, they will not place a heavy burden on his staff. Between four and six permanent staff members would be needed to administer the day-to-day aspects of the act.

This figure likely will be expanded during elections, but much of the work stemming from violations, real or alleged, will fall under the jurisdiction of a Commissioner appointed under the act.

Mr. Hamel said he expects to name the Commissioner on July 15 at the same time the act is proclaimed. The Commissioner will decide whether complaints related to election expenses are justified and will be responsible for initiating any court action.

"We want to keep the administration separate from the enforcement side," Mr. Hamel said. He now had a director of election expenses, legal advisers and secretaries working on implementation of the bill. A chartered accountant soon would be added.

Because of the delay required before proclamation, any election or bye-election called before that date will not be governed by the act.

# Constituency offices for Canadian MPs

Money to maintain and staff offices in their ridings is now being provided from the public treasury for Canadian members of Parliament. Members are allowed \$500 (about £200) a month for staff and another \$200 monthly for office rental.

The idea is to make members of Parliament more easily accessible to their constituents. People with problems will be able to go to the constituency office and explain their difficulties directly to their member of Parliament or to his secretary. In the past, they would have had to write a letter, telephone the M.P.'s wife, or take a chance at finding the M.P. at home during a weekend.

If all 264 members of the Canadian House of Commons take advantage of the constituency office system, the bill to the tax-payers will be about \$2.2 million (about £1 million) a year. Many members argue this is a small price for what they consider is bringing government closer to the people.

Regulations governing the expenditures were drafted by representatives of all political parties in the Commons.

A member either can have the \$2,400-a-year office allowance or take free space in a federal building. Those taking quarters outside federal buildings must furnish, equip and maintain an office with the \$2,400.

None of the money is touched by the members. Statements for rentals, purchases and salaries all are paid by the House of Commons. Those who overspend the office allowance must make up the difference from their own pockets. The same applies to salaries.

The regulations are reasonably flexible because of the huge differences in constituencies. Members are allowed to open more than one office or hire more than one office worker, but the Government will pay only \$8,400 a year total for office and staff. If a member wants to hire five workers at \$1,200 a year, that's up to him.