

# Fourth front

## Former PEI premier Lee eyes soft patronage job

by HELEN BRANSWELL  
CHARLOTTETOWN (CP) — Wanted: federal government appointment for a former Conservative premier, preferably something cushy like the Senate. Reply immediately to Jim Lee.

Lee, who was premier of Prince Edward Island from 1982 until last spring, hasn't placed such an ad in newspapers. But he is looking around for a job and he makes no bones about what he wants.

He's lobbying to be sent to the Senate, that great political retirement home on Parliament Hill. He's even written Brian Mulroney to say he's available and keen, but he's had no reply. So for now, he's spinning his wheels.

"I haven't heard anything yet," he says with a hopeful smile that shows he doesn't expect his service to the party will go unrewarded.

The quiet, bear-like Lee has been unemployed since he lost his seat in the late-April provincial election. Joe Ghiz's Liberals put the boot to most of the Island's Tories who had been in office since 1979. The Grits won 21 seats to the Tories' 11 — the mirror image of the outcome of the 1982 election.

On this fall day, Lee, 49, looks at loose ends. He's sitting outside his office, chatting, in no particular hurry to go anywhere.

He has been campaigning for the P.E.I. Senate seat left open in June by the death of Elsie Inman. But speculation on the Island is that the prime minister, who's been under pressure to increase the number of women in the upper house, wants to fill the vacancy with another woman.

Others say Charles MacMillan, a valued Mulroney adviser and twin brother of Environment Minister Tom MacMillan, has the inside track for the seat.

It may seem strange that Lee is so interested in getting into the Senate, considering the criticism he and his government levelled at the upper house over the years.

When he was premier, Lee advocated an elected Senate. His government told the 1983 hearings on Senate reform that public confidence in the body had been undermined by governments who used Senate appointments as political rewards.

Lee says he hasn't changed his mind — he still thinks senators ought to be elected. The current batch "have been awarded by their governments," he notes.

But isn't he looking for the same treatment?

"Yes," he admits with a chuckle. "If my political party wants to reward me and put me in the Senate, I'll accept."

Jim MacNeill, publisher of the weekly Eastern Graphic in Montague, P.E.I., thinks that, instead of getting the Senate seat, the former premier will be appointed chairman of the War Veteran's Allowance Board, which works out of Charlottetown. Former P.E.I. lieutenant-governor Aubin Doirin holds the post now, but his term expires Dec. 9. The salary is roughly comparable to the \$62,000 Lee made as premier.

So for the time being, Lee is a man in waiting. He's devoting about half of his time to the unpaid job of leader of Prince Edward Island's Conservative party. He's no longer a member of the legislature (the Conservatives are being led in the house by Leone Bagnall, who had been education minister in Lee's government and now takes the title Opposition leader) — and Lee has no salary. Although he's put in enough years in the legislature to qualify for a pension, he's one year too young to start collecting.

### Town can't keep up with sign thieves

FREDERICK, Md. (AP) — Stop signs are a favorite, and street name signs are quite popular. But the real collector's items are the ones with a red slash mark over a drawing of a squatting dog.

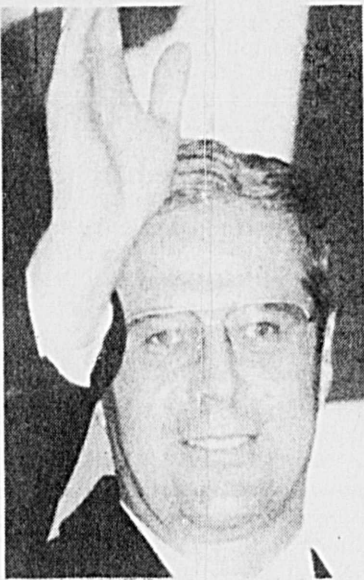
The theft of road signs is becoming more of a problem, says Elton Myers, who has worked in Frederick's paint and sign department for 22 years. He says about 400 city-owned signs disappeared last year, at a cost to taxpayers of about \$6,000.

Signs depicting horses, cows and fire engines have disappeared with regularity, but Myers says the hottest number these days is the Scoop Your Poop sign with the crossed-out dog.

"They're collectors' items," said Myers. About half the dog signs in one section of town disappeared within three weeks, he said.

Another popular target is the sign marking a duck crossing area.

"We still lose an awful lot of those," said Myers. "People go after anything special, anything different."



JIM LEE

While Islanders, especially Tories, wonder about Jim Lee's political future, he's worried about more mundane matters.

"I have difficulties knowing, over the next four years, how I'm

going to put bread and butter on the table. Simple as that."

Lee was a real estate broker and developer but he sold his business back in 1979.

Although he says he hasn't ruled out staying in provincial politics, and he still snipes at the new government, Lee's heart doesn't seem to be in it anymore. And he passed up a chance to try to regain a seat in the legislature.

A bye-election was held Nov. 10 to fill a Summerside seat left vacant when Tory George McMahon was appointed to the P.E.I. Supreme Court earlier this year. Although Lee is from Charlottetown, he was asked to seek the nomination.

But he declined. He says he didn't want to get in the way of local Tories who wanted the nomination.

"I thought it would be wrong for me to come from Charlottetown, go into Summerside and take a nomination and...stymie any of the potential people we have up there.

"I think my opportunity will come to decide what direction I'm going to go in the future," he says sagely.

## FLORA TO 'WALK ON' TV SERIES

by Canadian Press  
Communications Minister Flora MacDonald will make her debut as an actress in a forthcoming episode of a new Canadian TV adven-

ture series.  
MacDonald will appear in The Campbells, a CTV show set in the wilderness of Upper Canada in the 1830s that chronicles the pioneer

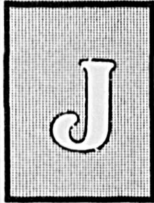
adventures of a Scottish doctor and his three children.  
The minister bid for and won a "walk-on" role in the show — donated by the network.

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