



NATION

Snowstorms delay flights, clog roads

by The Canadian Press

Five people have died in car accidents and icy conditions continued to frustrate both air and road travellers Wednesday as Alberta was pounded for a second day by a winter storm.

"We've been waiting for 3 1/2 hours now, and I can tell you it's a little frustrating," said John Kirby, who was trying to return to his home outside Toronto.

Kirby and others at Calgary International Airport faced delays Wednesday due to fog and freezing drizzle.

Calgary — which had a green Christmas — saw the return of winter Tuesday with five centimetres of snow that left most highways in southern Alberta in treacherous condition.

Two people died in a crash Tuesday in southeast Calgary. John Ambrose Stack, 25, and Charlotte Amy Gordon, 24, both of Calgary were killed in the two-car accident.

An icy highway near Nanton, about 80 kilometres south of Calgary, was blamed for another collision that killed Heber Fullmer, 66, and Edna Fullmer, 59, a Calgary couple who were traveling to a family reunion Tuesday.

Things were a bit better on the roads Wednesday. City police attended to more than 200 road traffic accidents in the 32-hour period between noon Tuesday and 8 p.m. Wednesday night.

In Edmonton Wednesday, 10 centimetres of snow caused dozens of accidents, including one in which a man in his 70s was killed.

Women's clothing store bankrupt

by Southam News

TORONTO — Pennington's Stores Ltd., a national retailer of large-size women's apparel, has been petitioned into bankruptcy by its creditors.

The cash-strapped 150-store chain ran out of time in its efforts to find a rescuer before a receivership hearing held Wednesday. The company has a store in Prince George at Pine Centre Mall.

The Mississauga, Ont.-based company needed a minimum of \$5 million to keep it out of receivership, but could not find its 11th hour white knight to hold off a group of about 100 creditors.

"They've been shopping for financing or a white knight that didn't materialize, they didn't make it," said Murray Page, a lawyer for a group of trade suppliers owed about \$8 million.

Frozen dip



Blair Matthew uses a chainsaw to cut through the ice of Henderson Lake in Lethbridge, Alta., while Ron Bain sunbathes. The pair were getting a jump on their 'Polar Bear' cousins, preparing for an icy dip in the lake as part of a holiday celebration.

CPP WILL RISE

Taxes to hold line in '95

by JOHN WARD

OTTAWA (CP) — New Year's Day brings football bowl games and the occasional twinge from over-indulgence. But this year at least, there aren't any major tax increases in store.

The only national jump is in Canada Pension plan contributions. The levy, collected as a payroll tax from employers and workers, is to rise to a maximum \$850.50 in 1995 from \$806.

Last spring the pension plan recorded the first annual deficit in its 28-year history and had to dip into its accumulated surpluses.

Federal and provincial income taxes will hold the line as of Jan. 1. Spring budgets may change that in some provinces, although governments in Alberta and Saskatchewan have hinted at a tax break.

Unemployment insurance contributions — which jumped in 1994 — are frozen. The Post Office lost a bid for a rate hike, so a first-class domestic stamp stays at 43 cents.

Not everything is rosy.

Down east, Marine Atlantic ferry rates are going up. Out west, British Columbia is raising the cost of motor vehicle licences and some auto insurance premiums.

Ferry costs will go up two to three per cent. A round trip between Cape Tormentine, N.B.

What will change

OTTAWA (CP) — A quick look at some of the legislative and regulatory changes Canadians can expect effective Jan. 1:

- Maximum annual Canada Pension plan contributions rises to \$850.50 from \$806.
- British Columbia raises motor licence fees an average of 2.5 per cent.
- Fees on Marine Atlantic ferries go up by between two and three per cent. For example, a one-way passenger fare between North Sydney, N.S. and Port aux Basques, Nfld., rises to \$17.75 from \$17.
- British Columbia minimum wage up to \$7 from \$6, Ontario's rises to \$6.85 an hour from \$6.70.
- In Newfoundland, new or expanding businesses can qualify for a corporate tax break.
- Ontario offers a refundable tax credit for research and development projects by small and medium-sized businesses.

and Borden, P.E.I., will rise by 50 cents to \$7.75 and the return fare for passenger cars rises 75 cents to \$18.75.

In British Columbia, vehicle licence fees are to rise by 2.5 per cent. Car insurance premiums will rise by four per cent for about 40 per cent of the province's drivers.

Some businesses will get tax breaks.

In Newfoundland, new or expanding businesses can qualify for a 10-year holiday from provin-

cial taxes if they meet certain criteria.

In Ontario, small and medium-size businesses can get a provincial tax credit for research and development spending.

In British Columbia and Ontario, workers will see a higher minimum wage as of Sunday. The hourly rate in B.C. will be the highest in the country as it rises to \$7 from \$6. The Ontario rate, the country's second-highest, goes to \$6.85 from \$6.70.

Critics denounce Liberal motive for byelections

by DOUG FISCHER
Southam News

OTTAWA — The Liberal government moved to strengthen its hand in next year's Quebec independence referendum Wednesday by calling three byelections for Feb. 13 in ridings where it hopes to run prominent federalist candidates.

But the strategy — hailed as astute by political observers — was quickly denounced as a waste of money by the Reform party and a group representing the poor and elderly.

Two of the byelections — in the Montreal-area riding of St-Henri-Westmount and in Ottawa-Vanier — were made possible after Liberal MPs were given patronage jobs to open the seats for high-profile francophone candidates.

Reform MP Ed Harper called the estimated \$750,000 cost to taxpayers of each byelection "a completely unacceptable financial burden created by nothing more than patronage."

Added Roland Foster, director of a national coalition of poverty groups: "It amazes me how these people (federal Liberals) can always find an argument to justify rewarding their friends."

The byelections, set to coincide with the start of the Parti Quebecois' public consultations on sovereignty, were announced after David Berger vacated his St-Henri-Westmount seat to make way for Lucienne Robillard, a former Quebec health minister expected to play a key role in next year's referendum.

In making the announcement, Foreign Affairs Minister Andre Ouellet — the Liberals' political minister in Quebec — said the government wanted more strong cabinet voices to defend federalism during the referendum campaign.

Political observers believe that if, as expected, she wins the seat and gets a high profile cabinet post, Robillard can help Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

Guy Lachapelle, a political scientist at Concordia University in Montreal, agreed Robillard could not only help fill the vacuum left in Quebec by Dupuy, but also by Chretien and Ouellet, who are not especially popular in the province.

Robillard, 49, could also help bridge the gap between the federal and provincial Liberal parties over referendum strategy, he said.

Berger, named an adviser on small business financing in Prime Minister's Office, became the second MP this month to vacate long-time Liberal strongholds.

Veteran MP Jean-Robert Gauthier opened the Ottawa-Vanier riding when he was named to the Senate. Former United Nations ambassador Yves Fortier is reportedly being considered for the riding candidacy.

The third byelection, in the Quebec riding of Brome-Missisquoi, was made necessary after Bloc Quebecois MP Gaston Pelquin died in a car crash in September.

But the Bloc is expected to retain Brome-Missisquoi with Jean-Francois Bertrand, whose father Jacques was premier for two years in the late 1960s and whose mother won the riding twice for Brian Mulroney's Conservatives.

The Liberals are countering with Denis Paradis, a former president of the Quebec Bar Association.

With Berger's resignation, the standings in the Commons are: Liberals 174, Bloc 53, Reform 52, New Democrats nine and Conservatives two.

Rate hike on the way

OTTAWA (CP) — Canada's weakened dollar could be the financial Grinch for consumers who used credit cards or borrowed to deke their way through the Christmas crunch.

Analysts say the lowest dollar in eight years and uncertainty in the market forced the Bank of Canada to increase the bank rate on Wednesday by 39 basis points to 7.43 per cent — the highest level in two years.

That means banks will be close behind, raising their interest rates — likely by the end of this week — on credit cards, consumer loans and mortgages.

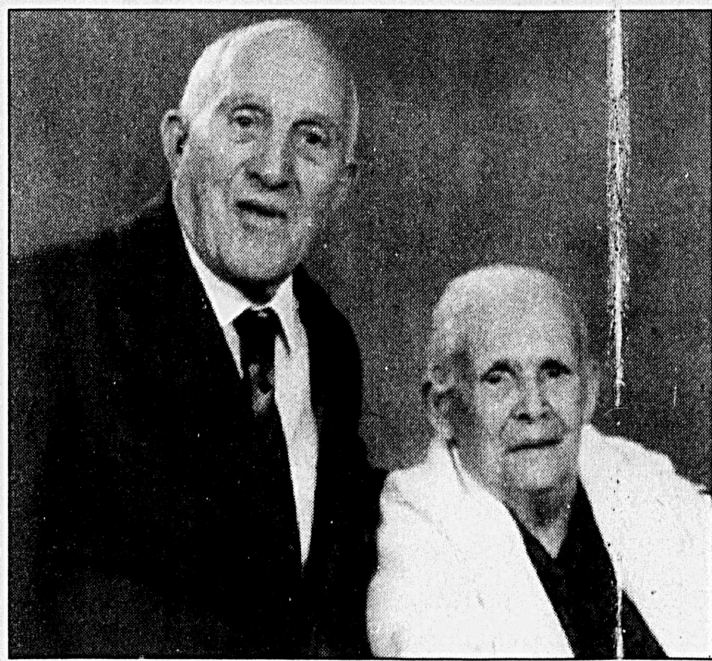
The bank rate responded to

Friday's close of the Canadian dollar at an eight-year low.

Wednesday was the first day of trading for the dollar in Canada after the holiday weekend, and the downward trend continued. The loonie closed at 71.18 cents US, down 0.28 of a cent from Friday's close of 71.46 cents.

Andrew Pyle, a senior economist at MMS International, said the chartered banks could raise their prime lending rate for blue chip clients — now at eight per cent — by a full percentage point.

And with another expected increase in the bank rate next week, prime lending rates could rise again.



Jacob and Maria Wiens died within an hour of each other.

Together in life...and death

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. (CP) — Through 66 years of marriage, Christmas was a time of joy for Jacob and Maria Wiens, shared with their 114 children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

At Christmas 1994, they shared their final wish with each other.

They died peacefully, within an hour of each other, at a local senior citizens' residence.

"He (Jacob) wished this to be the case," said son-in-law Jake Klassen. "He wished they could go together."

Jacob, 86, died of a heart attack about 1 a.m. Christmas morning.

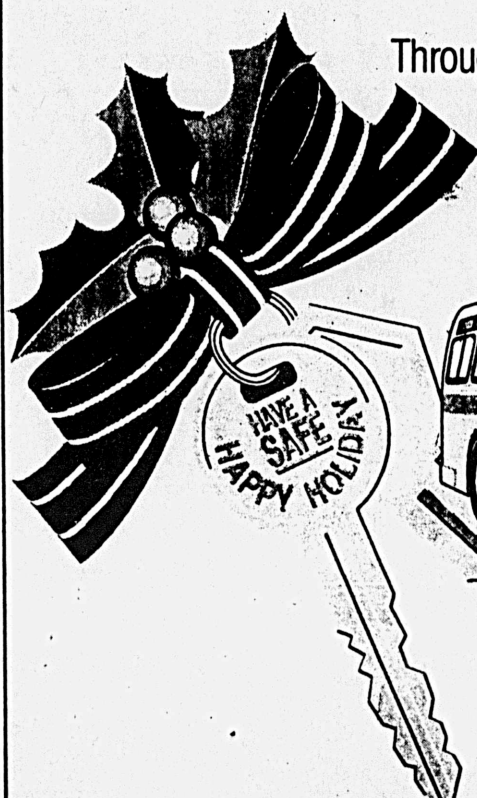
Forty minutes later, shortly after being told of her husband's death, Maria, also 86, passed away quietly.

"At first I thought she did not understand," said Klassen. "Then tears rolled down her cheek."

A joint funeral service was held Wednesday. They were to be buried in adjoining plots.

Prince George Transit System

Leave the Keys at Home



Throughout the holiday season, enjoy the festivities and let our transit drivers be your 'designated driver'. On New Year's Eve take advantage of the FREE bus

rides for a safe journey to and from your evening's celebrations.

Leave the Keys at Home and discover your transit system.

New Year's Eve timetables available on the bus.
No bus service on Dec. 25, Dec. 26 and Jan. 1



City of Prince George



DRINKING DRIVING COUNTERATTACK



Transit Information

563-0011