

the government of Quebec is obligated to hold a referendum on Quebec sovereignty by October 26, 1992. The amendments to the referendum legislation have the effect of substantially shortening this referendum period from 84 to 47 days, with 29 days devoted to the campaign proper. For a referendum to be held on October 26, the National Assembly now has to be convened by September 9 at the latest. An enumeration would then commence, to be concluded by September 26. The referendum question itself will have to be unveiled by September 12, and would be subject to 35 hours of debate in the Assembly. The official campaign would then begin on September 27. Were these amendments not made, the government of Quebec would be obligated to introduce the referendum question by August 4. Through this shift in dates the government of Quebec

is effectively giving itself and all other constitutional actors, but most especially the federal government, five extra weeks to prepare their constitutional strategies and positions leading up to a very historic autumn.

QUEBEC REFERENDUM LAW CHALLENGED

The Equality Party of Quebec, under the leadership of Robert Libman, filed a motion in the Quebec Superior Court on May 26, challenging the constitutionality of various elements of that province's referendum legislation.

At a Montreal press conference both Libman and party counsel Julius Grey asserted that provisions of the Referendum Act violate the Charter rights of freedom of association and expression. The act stipulates that all parties, groups and individuals wishing to formally campaign and

make expenditures in a referendum campaign must organize themselves into two omnibus campaign committees for the purpose of advocating the Yes or No option. Once comprised, these committees must adhere to the strict expense regulations mandated by the Act. The Equality Party has argued that such requirements violate their freedom of association in that they may be forced to associate with certain groups with which they would wish not to be associated. In turn, they are not entitled to exist as a separate campaign entity, free to engage in independent expenditure-making. This restriction is viewed as a violation of the Equality Party's freedom of expression guaranteed under the Charter. A first court date is scheduled for June 29.

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CANADA WATCH CALENDAR

June 23	House of Commons adjourns for summer recess (subject to being recalled on 48-hours notice)	July 15	Parliament resumes sitting to debate constitutional proposals
June 28	PM meets with territorial and aboriginal leaders in Ottawa	July 25-Aug. 9	Olympic Games, Barcelona
June 29	PM meets with premiers (excluding Robert Bourassa) in Ottawa	Late August	Quebec Liberal Party Convention expected to define party policy for fall referendum
June 30-July 2	Queen Elizabeth in Ottawa for Canada Day celebrations	August 27-28	33rd Annual Premiers' Conference, Charlottetown, hosted by Premier Joe Ghiz
July 6-8	G-7 Meeting in Munich, Germany (PM to attend)	September 12	Last day for Premier Bourassa to announce referendum question for October 26 referendum
July 9	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Helsinki Finland (PM to attend)	September 21	House of Commons scheduled to resume sitting
July 11	Prime Minister Mulroney returns from Europe		