

COMMONWEALTH AND US COMPARISONS WITH KEY BILL CLAUSES

	<u>Draft UK Bill</u>	<u>Australia</u>	<u>Canada</u>	<u>New Zealand</u>	<u>USA</u>
Exemption of information whose disclosure is prohibited by statute.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Retrospective access	Full access for personal records and other records less than 3 years old immediately; full access a year later	Full access for personal records; up to 5 years before introduction of FOI Act for rest	Full (phased in)	Full	Full
Free/minimal charge for personal information	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Higher fees for other applications	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Papers	Not exempted	Exempted except for "factual information"	Exempt	Exempt	((((Exempt (((
Cabinet Discussions	Not exempted	Exempt	Exempt	Exempt	(
Ministerial certificate (or equivalent) exempting disclosure	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

FORTHCOMING DOMESTIC BUSINESS

THE QUEEN'S SPEECH AND THE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME

1. The immediate need for the establishment of a Queen's Speeches and Future Legislation Committee, the drafting of the Queen's Speech and the settling of the legislative programme are covered in a separate submission.

THE ECONOMY AND PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

First month

2. The Budget and the National Recovery Programme (see Annex B).

Before summer recess

3. Strategy for this year's public expenditure survey. Cabinet will need to set the framework of policy on the level and growth of public expenditure as a whole, within which discussions on expenditure programmes can take place in the autumn.

4. Begin preparation of the national economic assessment.

5. Policy on credit management and control of price rises.

6. Policy on pay for the annual round beginning in the autumn. Settle arrangements for the introduction of a statutory minimum wage. (See Annex C on public sector pay.)

DEVOLUTION

First month

7. Immediate decisions will be needed on the arrangements for developing proposals for Scottish devolution. Devolution to Wales and the English Regions can be pursued on a longer time-scale. (See separate brief on devolution.)

EDUCATION

First month

8. Proposals for legislation on extension of nursery education, reducing class sizes, ending selection of pupils at age 11, introducing new system for school reorganisations, phasing out the Assisted Places Scheme, re-absorbing Grant Maintained schools and City Technology Colleges into mainstream of the local education system, and establishing the Education Standards Commission and General teaching Council.

Before summer recess

9. Reform of curriculum and examinations, including establishing five-subject A level.

10. Replace student loan scheme with grants and targeted help for housing and vacation hardship.

ENERGY

Before summer recess

11. Initiate action to restore public control of National Grid.

12. Decide on proposals for establishing Energy Efficiency Agency and Renewable Energy Agency.

13. Develop national energy policy including enhanced recovery of oil from North Sea; reduced coal imports; stopping "dash for gas"; requiring companies to invest in R&D.

ENVIRONMENT

First month

14. Decide strategy for United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED - the "Earth Summit") in Rio in June. Consider what measures should be adopted to achieve commitment to stabilise CO₂ emissions at 1990 levels by end of decade, with significant cuts in early years of new century; consider response to expected European Community (EC) proposals for a carbon/energy tax.

Before summer recess

15. Consider line to take on resumption of commercial whaling, in time for International Whaling Commission meeting in June.

16. Establish Environmental Protection Executive to enforce pollution standards, and develop a national waste strategy.

HOME AFFAIRS

First Month

17. Decide handling and agree timescale for action on freedom of information. (See separate brief.)

18. Review and settle policy on refugees and asylum as the first stage in consideration of immigration and citizenship laws more generally.

Before Summer Recess

19. Settle policy on repeal of Prevention of Terrorism Act and replacement legislation (next annual renewal date March 1993).

20. Establish Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry into concentration of media ownership.

21. Decide handling and timescale for legislation on equal pay, sex discrimination and race discrimination; and for any early action concerning children.

Other Issues

22. Policy on crime prevention and detection; on prisons and sentencing; on the Police and Criminal Evidence Act; and on legal aid.

HOUSING

Before summer recess

23. Extension of mortgage rescue schemes and front-loading of mortgage tax relief for first time buyers. (The package might also include action on gazumping, though that is less urgent.)

24. Setting up the new Housing Bank to use receipts from council house sales by local authorities.

Other issues

25. Measures to deal with homelessness by improving access to housing benefit and utilising surplus public sector properties.

26. Policy on council house rents, on private sector renting, and on housing benefit.

INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Before summer recess

27. Formulation of proposals for the establishment of a National Investment Bank, Regional Development Agencies in England, and British Technology Enterprise. Timetable for creation of Technology Trusts throughout Britain.

28. Development of a Consumers' Charter; and stronger regulation of utilities, with standards enforced through a Consumer Protection Commission.

29. Timetable for return of water industry to public control.

Other issues

30. Initiatives to assist business, including establishment of network of one-stop advice centres.

31. Reform of milk marketing arrangements (the Milk Marketing Board (MMB) is due to submit proposals for reform to MAFF by Easter following proceedings by the European Community against MMB's monopoly); and establishment of a Food Standards Agency.

32. Proposals (including fishing vessels decommissioning scheme) to reduce fishing effort, conserve stocks, and meet European Community targets.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

First week

33. Changes in local government finance: any action affecting chargepayers' bills in 1992/93; and arrangements for local government finance in future years including implementation of fair rates, new systems for allocating central Government grants to local authorities (including an earmarked grant for community care), and the return of non-domestic rates to local authority control.

Before summer recess

34. Statement on abolition of capping.

35. Basis of consultation on new general-purpose authorities to replace district and county councils.

36. Responsibilities of the Greater London Authority, and a timetable for setting it up.

37. Replacement of the Audit Commission with a Quality Commission.

38. Ending of compulsory competitive tendering.

Other issue

39. Implementation of the commitment to give a general power of competence to local authorities.

THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

First month

40. Timetable for removal of the internal market and other structural changes to health service organisation and management.

41. Level of funding for the health service (including the level of charges unless taken later in the public expenditure discussions).

Other issue

42. Establishment of a Health Quality Commission.

THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Before summer recess

43. Availability of Government support for Manchester's bid for the 2000 Olympic Games beyond the items covered by the previous Government's £55 million for initial facilities. (The Manchester Olympic Bid Committee are likely to press for clarification of this point.)

PARLIAMENTARY AND ELECTORAL MATTERS

(i) House of Commons Procedure

First month

44. Leader of the House to bring forward before the debate on The Queen's speech a timetable for action on the Jopling Report on Sittings of the House, to provide a basis for responses to enquiries about the Government's position.

Before summer recess

45. Reach a view on the detailed recommendations in the Jopling Report and give a Government reply (format to be decided) so that there can be a vote on any proposals for change and arrangements can be put in place before the House returns in the autumn, when work on the substance of the legislative programme will begin.

(ii) State aid for political parties

First month

46. A decision will be required before the debate on The Queen's speech on Ministerial responsibility for implementing the Houghton Report and the timescale for action. It would be helpful to decide by then how the proposals relating to political donations could be taken forward.

(iii) Reform of the House of Lords

Before summer recess

47. If reform is to be implemented in time for the next General Election, legislation will be needed by the second Session of Parliament and a plan of action should be agreed before the summer.

(iv) Proportional representation

Before summer recess

48. If action is intended in the first or second Sessions of this Parliament it will be necessary to agree before the summer on the timescales within which the augmented Plant working party should report and on consequential action prior to legislation.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

First month

49. The United Kingdom's negotiating stance on any EC proposal for increased expenditure under the Third Framework Programme and on the UK's general stance the size and content of the European Community's fourth framework programme for funding research and development in key areas of science and technology.

Before summer recess

50. Initiate development of national strategy to promote science and technology.

SECURITY

First Month

51. Settle details of return of unions to GCHQ.

52. Decide strategy on avowal and legislation for SIS and on oversight of intelligence services.

SOCIAL SECURITY

First month

53. Implementation of uprating of pensions and child benefit, and changes to national insurance contributions (Budget item).

54. The balance in the National Insurance Fund.

55. Response to the House of Commons Select Committee report on occupational pension schemes, which recommended an inquiry in the wake of the Maxwell affair.

Before summer recess

56. Formulation of proposals for equality in state pension age through a flexible decade of retirement.

Other issue

57. Proposals for a new National Pensions Plan building on the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme.

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Before summer recess

58. Develop framework of law for employers and unions including restoration of union rights at GCHQ; equal rights and status for all employees; employees' rights to be consulted and informed; and right to union membership and representation.

Other issues

59. Initiatives on training: employers to be obliged to invest minimum amount in training their workforce or make contribution to local or national training effort; reform of Training and Enterprise Councils; each young person in employment guaranteed the right to learn while earning.

TRANSPORT

First month

60. Future of Jubilee Line extension (contingent on £400 million contribution from Canary Wharf developers).

Before summer recess

61. Review of the roads programme.

62. Investment in British Rail and other public transport investment, including the use of private capital.

63. London Underground's draft 10-year strategy.

Other issues

64. End the deregulation of buses.

65. Establish new transport safety inspectorate.

66. Initiatives to tackle congestion and environmental damage including "green light" programme and schemes for concessionary fares and traffic management.

67. Channel Tunnel rail link.

WELSH LANGUAGE

Before summer recess

68. Settle policy for the Welsh Language Act.