

Ontario's new ombudsman will bring something special to her job

TORONTO (CP) — As a Mohawk Indian who grew up on a reserve, lawyer Roberta Jamieson says she'll bring something special to her new job of handling citizen complaints about government decisions.

"I have grown up seeing many different sides of life," Ontario's new ombudsman said Monday. "I think I'm going to have an extra dimension, extra degrees of sensitivity."

Jamieson's appointment to the public post — at an annual salary of about \$100,000 — was announced in the legislature by Premier David Peterson, who mistakenly identified her as an Ojibwa Indian.

Outside the house, the first native woman to qualify as a lawyer in Canada graciously shrugged off the gaffe, saying she was "confident the premier understands I'm a proud Mohawk."

Jamieson, 37, takes over the post Oct. 30.

She replaces Daniel Hill, who left in March after five years. Eleanor Meslin has served as temporary ombudsman in the interim.

Jamieson was educated on the Six Nations Reserve before obtaining her law degree at the University of Western Ontario in London. She was called to the bar in 1981.

In the last few years, Jamieson has served on a number of government committees and commissions dealing with native issues.

For four years, she served as Indian commissioner of Ontario, facilitating negotiations be-

tween the federal and provincial governments and organizations representing the province's 75,000 status Indians.

Peterson praised Jamieson, in his statement to the house, as an "intelligent, resourceful and humane" person who "knows what initial disadvantage can mean."

But Jamieson said her upbringing doesn't mean she'll carry on a personal crusade in the office.

She will make sure all government ministries and agencies deal with citizens in a "fair, just and reasonable manner.

"And I intend to do that with great energy."

Her appointment comes at a time when the ombudsman's office is in the midst of a dogfight with the Attorney General's Ministry over access to government documents.

The ministry says documents dealing with regulations passed by cabinet are protected by cabinet secrecy.

But Meslin said the information has traditionally been available to the ombudsman, and if it is withheld, the office's jurisdiction will be severely restricted.

She had threatened to take the government to court over the matter.

Jamieson would not commit to that action Monday, saying only that she would consider the issue before deciding what to do.