

Politics

Copyright bill to be tabled before summer if no election: sources

The Conservative government is preparing to table its copyright reform bill if there is no election this spring, *The Hill Times* is hearing.

Sources say the bill will depart in two key ways from the last piece of legislation, tabled by the Liberal government in June 2005, which died on the Order Paper when Parliament dissolved for the 2006 election.

Reflecting the policies of the Conservative government, the bill is expected to depart from the Liberal legislation by providing stronger legal protection for rights-management technologies (also known as technological protection measures, or copy and access controls); as well as an educational exception for classroom access to free web materials, addressing concerns raised by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

The bill has also undergone a large amount of technical fine-tuning, and although some issues remain unresolved, bureaucrats in Canadian Heritage and Industry Canada will be under pressure to get a bill before Parliament this spring if the government decides not to trigger an election.

Some observers now consider it unlikely that, this spring, the Conservatives will try to engineer their defeat on a confidence vote in the House because, given the political environment, the party does not seem to have a clear opportunity to win a majority government.

Copyright is considered one of the most divisive and lobbied areas of federal policy-making. The government is not expected to introduce a bill in advance of an election because there will be unhappy industry and public interest groups, creating unnecessary nuisances at a time when the government is trying to focus on campaigning.

The previous bill proposed to implement two treaties of the World Intellectual Property Organization, which the former Liberal government signed in 1997. Action on implementing the treaties has come at a slow pace largely because industry groups are divided about how to proceed with amendments.—*Simon Doyle*

Will there be a spring election?

Will it be spring or fall 2007? Winter or spring 2008? Or fall 2009? Some say even Prime Minister **Stephen Harper** (Calgary Southwest, Alta.) doesn't know if he wants to call a spring election and it's already spring.

What about panellists on CBC TV's *The National's* weekly, prestigious 'At Issue' show? *Toronto Star* syndicated national affairs columnist **Chantal Hébert** told CBC's **Peter Mansbridge** last week that "every signal" picked up in Quebec over the last 10 days indicates there won't be a spring election. "Whether that is just blowing smoke so that the opposition, in the end, gets blamed for an election, I don't know, but every signal that you get here is that there won't be a spring election if Stephen Harper can help it."

National Post columnist **Andrew Coyne** said he still predicts a spring election and pointed to the most recent leadership polling numbers released by SES Research, indicating 42 per cent in favour of Mr. Harper and 17 in favour of Liberal Leader **Stéphane Dion**.

"The party numbers are much closer, but leadership numbers tend to be leading indicators in terms of the party numbers," said Mr. Coyne.—*The Hill Times*



Goings-on in Ottawa: Public Works Minister Michael Fortier and Daniel Paillé, top, held a press conference last week to announce that Mr. Paillé, a former PQ Cabinet minister, will probe into the Liberal federal government's polling practices from 1990 to March 31, 2003. Mr. Fortier told reporters there were 'disturbing' questions raised by the auditor general in 2003. The Liberals called it a 'witch hunt,' and political columnists were provided with more copy. Meanwhile, Ontario Ombudsman André Marin, above left, held a press conference to say the Ontario government and the federal government were fighting over 'a tempest in a teapot' and the province can't avoid its responsibilities for a \$230,000 mental-health centre in CFB Petawawa to help the children of soldiers in Afghanistan cope with stress of the war. Ottawa offered a one-time \$100,000. Above right, Reuters reporter David Ljunggren, chaired the press conference at the National Press Theatre.

Photographs by Jake Wright, *The Hill Times*

POLITICS PAGE

Thompson, Bryden, establish Lucille Broadbent Legacy Fund for breast cancer

In honour of Ed Broadbent's late wife, **Lucille Broadbent**, national reporters **Rosemary Thompson** and **Joan Bryden** are establishing a new charity fund to provide financial support to breast cancer patients.

The fund will launch at an event on the Hill next week hosted by House Speaker **Peter Milliken** (Kingston and the Islands, Ont.), in collaboration with the women of the press gallery. All MPs and national reporters are invited.

The event will establish a new fund called the Lucille Broadbent Legacy Fund to provide financial support to breast cancer patients in need. The fund will be administered by the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation.

"It's money to help them get through their cancer treatment, because, you know, you lose your job, you lose your income, you can't afford to make ends meet," Ms. Thompson, a CTV national reporter, said last week.

At 71, Ms. Broadbent died in November 2006 after a 10-year fight with breast cancer. Mr. Broadbent quit politics in May 2005 to help take care of her. Ms. Thompson said that after coming up with the idea, she and Ms. Bryden, a Canadian Press reporter, approached the speaker, who was happy to host the launch of the fund.

"There were a lot of journalists who were kind of touched by him leaving politics," she said of Mr. Broadbent, a longtime Parliamentarian and former NDP leader. "Remember he said, 'I'm leaving politics to take care of the love of my life?' We thought we should do something."

The event will be held April 25, 6 to 8 p.m., in the Speaker's Salon, Room 216-N, Centre Block. Donations will be accepted.—*Simon Doyle*

Duceppe shuffles shadow cabinet, prepares electoral committee

Bloc Québécois Leader **Gilles Duceppe** (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, Que.) announced changes to his shadow cabinet last week and appointed some of his MPs to an electoral committee.

Pierre Paquette (Joliette, Que.), formerly the finance critic, becomes House leader and critic for democratic reform; **Paul Crête** (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, Que.), formerly the industry critic, assumes the finance portfolio; **Paule Brunelle** (Trois-Rivières, Que.), formerly intergovernmental affairs and public accounts critic, takes industry; **Vivian Barbot** (Papineau, Que.) assumes the role of intergovernmental affairs critic in addition to her current duties as deputy foreign affairs critic and spokeswoman for Francophonie; and **Diane Bourgeois** (Terrebonne—Blainville, Que.), in addition to her role as spokeswoman for the Asia-Pacific region, takes on the position of public works critic.

Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, Que.), the deputy House leader, now also assumes the role deputy electoral organizer, working with deputy electoral organizer **Louis Plamondon** (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, Que.) and chief electoral organizer **Mario Laframboise** (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, Que.).

On the Bloc's electoral committee, Ms. Barbot becomes responsible for Montreal, **Christiane Gagnon** (Quebec, Que.) for Quebec, and **Marc Lemay** (Abitibi—Témis-

comingue, Que.) for the Quebec regions, a party release said.—*Simon Doyle*

Liberals more trustworthy on environment than Tories: poll

When given a choice between just Liberals and Conservatives, 34 per cent of Canadians believe the Liberals are better-suited to deal with global warming and climate change, compared to 31 per cent who say the Conservatives are better, a poll by Angus Reid Strategies said last week. Thirty-six per cent said they were unsure.

When the question was opened up to all five federal political parties, the Liberal number dropped to 18 per cent, while the NDP received 15 per cent and the Greens received 34 per cent of the confidence from Canadians on being the party that could best deal with environmental issues. The Conservative number also dropped, but still received a 26 per cent vote of confidence.

The poll, conducted between March 6-19 with 3,698 Canadians and a 1.6 per cent margin of error, also found that the environment was important to the majority of Canadians, as 60 per cent of those polled said that federal environmental policies should be focused on making Canada a world leader in combating climate change.

In addition, the poll also found that 87 per cent of Canadians were aware of the Kyoto protocol and 64 per cent of those who knew about it wanted the government to live up to the protocol's commitments. Regionally, Alberta had the lowest support for the Kyoto Protocol at 43 per cent and Quebec had the highest support for the agreement at 77 per cent. For those who believed that something should be done in response to the climate change problem, most did not want to be fined or taxed directly to support the environmental initiatives.

For example, 86 per cent of Canadians supported mandatory green building standards for all commercial and industrial buildings, 80 per cent supported cutting public transit fare in half but 71 per cent of Canadians opposed an additional 25 cent tax per litre of gasoline while 66 per cent were opposed to forcing car owners to avoid driving one day per week.—*Bea Vongdouangchanh*

Harper best PM, but Tories and Grits still neck and neck: SES poll

The Liberal Party has to start making mistakes if the Conservatives want to move into majority territory, says SES pollster **Nik Nanos**. Mr. Nanos said the Conservatives have passed two budgets and have made inroads in Quebec, but the polling numbers are not moving. "What they need is for the Liberals to make mistakes on top of doing well," he said.

Prime Minister **Stephen Harper's** personal polling numbers are more than double that of Liberal Leader **Stéphane Dion's**, but the party's numbers are still close enough that if there were an election now, it would produce the same results as on Jan. 23, 2006, says a recent poll by SES.

According to the poll, 42 per cent of Canadians believe that Mr. Harper makes the best prime minister while only 17 per cent believe Mr. Dion would. NDP Leader **Jack Layton** received 16 per cent of the support while Bloc Québécois Leader **Gilles Duceppe** garnered seven per cent and Green Party Leader **Elizabeth May** received four per cent.

Seven per cent of Canadians believed none of the leaders would make the best Prime Minister and six per cent were unsure. Of those who believe Mr. Harper would make the best prime minister, a quarter of them are committed Liberal voters, Mr. Nanos said, which makes Mr. Dion's job of increasing his own numbers more difficult. More alarming for Mr. Dion, Mr. Nanos said, is that the Liberal leader's numbers in Quebec, a province where his name recognition should be the highest, is dead last among the federal party leaders.

"The positive news for Dion is the only way to go is up," Mr. Nanos said, adding that the Liberals need pump up their visibility. "There's an extra pressure now to take the Conservatives head-on and start responding." Mr. Nanos said the Liberals don't necessarily have to respond negatively in attack ads, but that Mr. Dion needs to begin "trying to capture the public's attention and engage them."

The poll, conducted between March 31 and April 5 with 1,000 Canadians, 54 per cent of Canadians are comfortable or somewhat comfortable with a Harper-led Conservative Party majority. Moreover, 49 per cent of Canadians are opposed or somewhat opposed to another election now. Of those who opposed an election, 38 per cent said they didn't want one because it wasn't needed, that there was recently an election and because it would be opportunistic. Of the 45 per cent who supported an election call, seven per cent said they wanted one because the country needs a majority government. Mr. Nanos said it would be a mistake for the Conservatives to try to call an election at this time and that conceivably, now that the budget is passed, the Tories could govern for another year.

"They're probably banking on Harper doing well in government to give him time for Canadians to be more comfortable with him, but the risk in that is that it also gives Dion time for the public to get comfortable," he said.

SES Research's numbers show, however, that the Conservatives have 36 per cent support, which is the same as the national vote in the January 2006 election. The Liberals have increased their support since the last election, from 30.2 per cent to 33 per cent in the poll released last week. The NDP had 16 per cent, the Bloc 10 per cent and the Green Party six, which would produce another minority government. The poll has a 3.2 per cent margin of error.

In Quebec, where the Conservatives are vying for more seats, the Bloc still lead at 37 per cent but the Tories gained eight points to now lead the Liberal Party at 28 per cent. After the arrest of **Jean Lafleur** in connection with the sponsorship scandal, the Liberal numbers dropped to 18 per cent in the province, down nine points.—*Bea Vongdouangchanh*

Harper appoints Benson as Interim Ethics Commissioner

Prime Minister **Stephen Harper** recently appointed Deputy Ethics Commissioner **Robert Benson** as the interim commissioner, after **Bernard Shapiro** resigned from the position unexpectedly last month.

Mr. Benson, a lawyer, has been the deputy since 2004. He also served as the deputy ethics counselor in 1989. Prior to his time in the Ethics office, Mr. Benson was the executive director of the RCMP external review committee and worked as

legal counsel at the Department of Justice.

Advocacy group Democracy Watch, which has taken the Ethics Commissioner to court several times, said that Mr. Benson should not be the new commissioner as he was part of the office that the Federal Court of Canada found to be "incompetent and biased in its enforcement record."

Democracy Watch coordinator **Duff Conacher** said that a truly independent commissioner must be chosen. "Canadians should not have had to endure the past 20 years of federal government corruption, waste and abuse of the public interest caused by lack of enforcement of ethics rules, and should not have to pay the costs of even one more day of sham ethics enforcement," Mr. Conacher said in a press release. "The Supreme Court of Canada stated in 1996 that strict enforcement of strong ethics rules is needed to have a democratic government, and the Federal Court echoed this conclusion in 2004. Federal politicians must immediately choose a new Ethics Commissioner who clearly shares the courts' attitude and has a record of strong enforcement of ethics or similar rules."

The government is in the process of naming a new commissioner that will meet the eligibility requirements of the Federal Accountability Act, that is, having experience in legal or quasi-judicial roles.—*Bea Vongdouangchanh*

TPG Technology Consulting CEO to request inquiry into a \$400-million contract at PWGSC

An Ottawa technology company is asking for an inquiry into the process for the awarding of a \$400-million contract for engineering and technical services (ETS) at the Department of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

TPG Technology Consulting, an Ottawa technology company that currently holds a contract worth \$400-million for providing engineering and technical services to the Government of Canada, is claiming that although their proposal "was much lower financially than the other proposals [by tens of millions of dollars]," they could lose this in a contract to another company, CGI.

TPG alleges that **Michael Fortier**, Minister of Public Works, and **Jirka Danek**, director general at Public Works, are both in a conflict of interest.

"Due to Minister's Fortier's relationship with **Serge Godin**, president of CGI and his past business relationship with CGI through **Crédit Suisse First Boston**, the perception may be that the process was unduly influenced. Additionally, just prior to becoming the Minister of PWGSC, Minister Fortier sat on the board of directors at, and still holds preferred shares in, **Delphes Technologies**, which identifies CGI as a strategic partner," says a backgrounder provided to *The Hill Times*.

It says that Mr. Danek worked for CGI for an "extended period of time" and was vice-president at the company from 1986 to 1991.

Don Powell, CEO of TPG Technology Consulting, will hold a press conference on Parliament Hill on Monday to urge the government to hold an inquiry into this issue. As of deadline last week, neither Minister Fortier nor Mr. Danek was available for comment.—*Abbas Rana*

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NEWS

Tories on top, but Liberals say their leader needs more time

'Conservatives have basically drawn a picture of Stéphane Dion for Canadians and there's been nothing to kind of, as a counterpoint to that': Nik Nanos

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said former Liberal MP Joe Jordan who worked on Mr. Dion's successful leadership campaign.

"He's certainly been very, very busy and he's going to a lot of events, he's making a lot of speeches. He's got to take every opportunity to get in front of the cameras and let Canadians take a look and see what his views are on things," said Mr. Jordan.

According to an SES Research poll recently released on who would make the best prime minister, Prime Minister Stephen Harper (Calgary Southwest, Alta.) has a clear edge with 42 per cent support over Mr. Dion (Saint-Laurent-Cartierville, Que.) who had 17 per cent support. NDP Leader Jack Layton (Toronto-Danforth, Ont.) had 16 per cent and Bloc Leader Gilles Duceppe (Laurier-Saint-Marie, Que.) had seven per cent, nationally.

Conservatives have been publicly saying they are planning on capitalizing on Mr. Harper's higher leadership approval ratings during the next federal election.

The poll also indicated that the Conservative Party nationally has the support of 36 per cent of Canadians compared to the Liberals who have the support of 33 per cent and the NDP support is at 16 per cent. In Quebec, Bloc is leading the pack with 37 per cent support followed by the Conservative Party with 28 per cent support, Liberals with 18 per cent and the NDP with 13 per cent.

Nik Nanos, president of SES Research, in an interview with CTV's *Mike Duffy Live* last week, said that the Liberals lost an opportunity to capitalize on momentum they gained after the last Liberal leadership convention. He added that Mr. Dion

lost this political support among Canadians by letting the Conservative Party define him through the negative ads.

"I think there's a combination at play. First of all, I don't think we can underestimate the negative ads. Conservatives have been getting their messages out and the Liberals for all intents and purposes have been silent. Second of all, there's a real missed opportunity for the Liberals. Their ballot numbers peaked right at the Liberal convention, but they weren't able to use that to launch any type of momentum. And finally, I think for Stéphane Dion, he's been too silent. And I think the Liberals really have to start to take the Conservatives on if they want to get some face time. And Conservatives have basically drawn a picture of Stéphane Dion for Canadians and there's been nothing to kind of—as a counterpoint to that," said Mr. Nanos according to a transcript of the show.

Mr. Duffy, a seasoned veteran of federal politics, told Mr. Nanos on last Tuesday's show that he found it "amazing" that in such a short time the Tories "would be able to paint such a negative number, a negative picture of Stéphane Dion."

Said Mr. Duffy: "Now I'm reminded of what happened when the Liberals painted Preston Manning as a country bumpkin and when Stephen Harper arrived he had horns and a tail. The Liberal PR machine, when they were in government, was very successful at this. These people eventually turned it around to one degree or another. What's it going to take for Stéphane Dion to turn this around?"

Responded Mr. Nanos: "It's actually going to take the Conservatives to kind of turn it around for Stéphane Dion. If we go back to '93, remember Jean Chrétien started off as yesterday's man, the old Trudeau guy, tired. That's all it took. One negative ad that just went a little too far and Jean Chrétien was able to turn that on its ear, create momentum, play the victim. And I think the Conservatives have to be very careful because if they go too negative on Stéphane Dion they might hit a button that might boomerang and cause the opposite and actually help Stéphane Dion."

Meanwhile, some recent media reports

have suggested that some of the Liberals who supported Mr. Dion during the leadership campaign are privately expressing frustration with Mr. Dion's leadership abilities and for failing to control the country's political agenda.

"He has to get things together quickly and become the person you saw at the convention," a senior Liberal source told *The Globe and Mail* recently.

But Mr. Jordan, who currently works as a senior consultant at Capital Hill Group and writes a popular 'In the House,' monthly column for *The Hill Times*, said opposition parties always have a disadvantage in getting visibility because the media spotlight and people's attention are usually on the Prime Minister. He predicted that these numbers will change in the coming weeks.

"It's always a challenge. Any opposition party or any opposition leader will tell you that's one of the key things," said Mr. Jordan.

"This is a game of King of the Hill and the Conservatives are on top of the Hill. So, most Canadians probably aren't that engaged to the point where they drill down and make any kind of real assessment of Mr. Dion."

Mr. Jordan said that Mr. Dion needs some time to make his mark and make himself known to the Canadians. When asked what would happen if an election was called in the coming weeks, Mr. Jordan said:

"Elections have a way of focusing people's attention so I'm not overly concerned about that but he seems to score well on honesty and integrity, he seems to score well on intelligence on these sorts of things... Opposition parties have got to be seen as being ready to govern so it's certainly not great news but it's not anything that we need to panic over."

Liberal MP Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Ont.), who was the first Liberal MP to declare his support for Mr. Dion in the Liberal leadership campaign, said that newly-elected opposition leaders always have a challenge to match the approval ratings of the sitting prime ministers.

He pointed out that Prime Minister Harper also went through a similar challenge when he was elected leader in 2004 and that it took him some time to connect



Photograph by Jake Wright, *The Hill Times*

Mr. Nice Guy: Liberal leader Stéphane Dion not only hasn't responded to Conservative attack ads against him, he's been silent on all fronts. That's why his personal numbers are at 17 per cent, says SES Research pollster Nik Nanos.

with Canadians.

"At the end of the day, whoever is the Prime Minister is seen in the public eye more because he's the Prime Minister, there's much more media focus on him and people often see him in the leadership role," said Mr. Wilfert.

Meanwhile, as of last week, 20 MPs had announced that they won't seek re-election, including 14 Liberals.

The most recent announcement came from Liberal MP Belinda Stronach (Newmarket-Aurora, Ont.) who announced she will rejoin her father's multibillion-dollar business empire, Magna International Inc. It's also expected that more Liberals could decide not to run in the coming weeks.

But Mr. Jordan said that the departure of more than a dozen MPs from the federal politics is not due to their dissatisfaction with the leader's abilities but because most of them have been around for years and it's time to move on.

"Being an MP is a tough job. This is a window where people elected in 1993, they're pretty much maxed out in terms of their service, I fully expected and predicted that you'd have an exodus," he said.

About Ms. Stronach's announcement, he said: "Anytime, somebody of that quality leaves public life, we're all a little worse off. She was very, very good on women's issues, she had taken interest in Third World development which is a challenge, so, hopefully, she will hang around the fringes and continue to play in the sandbox a little bit. People come and go, it's a loss but I don't think it's not something we can't recover from. We'll get good people to replace her."

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