



STRONACH'S STORY

Lise Jolicoeur's insider take. p. 28



SATNAM'S STORY

Satnam Vaid's fight. p. 6



SOLDIER'S STORY

Ishmael Beah talks. p. 20



THE HILL TIMES

EIGHTEENTH YEAR, NO. 884

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSWEEKLY

MONDAY, APRIL 23, 2007 \$4.00

Government quiet on overhauled Clean Air

Opposition parties say Conservatives will let controversial Clean Air Act die on Order Paper

By BEA VONGDOUANGCHANH

The wholly-overhauled and controversial Clean Air Act, Bill C-30, won't be on the Order Paper in the foreseeable future because the government is afraid to pass it and be forced to comply with world-leading environmental standards, say opposition parties.

Chief Government Whip **Jay Hill** (Prince George-Peace River, B.C.) confirmed that it would not be up for debate for at least two weeks. "We only project ahead a couple of weeks and I haven't seen it on our plans for the next couple of weeks," he said, adding that it's up to House Leader **Peter Van Loan** (York-Simcoe, Ont.).

When Mr. Van Loan described the projected House business for this week, he did not mention Bill C-30 on the agenda.

Liberal MP **Pablo Rodriguez** (Honoré-Mercier, Que.) criticized the government for not calling it for debate.

"C-30 was their plan. It was a very bad plan with no short term objectives or specific measures, so it was changed by the three opposition parties and now I think it became a good bill, but it's theirs and they don't want to use it so they're afraid to bring it back because we're going to adopt it and they're going to be forced again to respect Kyoto," Mr. Rodriguez said last week. "They're looking at the left, they're looking at the right, they don't know what to do. They're freaking out and they're probably going to come out with another bill a year-and-a-half after the election. How's that for action?"

NDP Leader **Jack Layton** (Toronto-Danforth, Ont.) asked the government when it would bring the committee's dramatically amended report to the House for debate last Thursday, but received an indirect answer from Prime Minister **Stephen Harper** (Calgary Southwest, Alta.).

"The future of this issue is in the hands of the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister table the bill before the House? When will he do it so we can debate, amend and vote on the Clean Air Act, Bill C-30? When will he do it?" Mr. Layton said.

Please see legislation on Page 5

Gay staffers wed



Photograph by Jake Wright, The Hill Times

Celebrating Charter: Bryn Hendricks, Grit MP Bill Graham and Glenn Hendricks. Hill staffers Bryn and Glenn got married last month and say they're the first gay Hill staffers to wed. Story. p. 23

Bloc to reach deeper into Québec City area, says Guay

By SIMON DOYLE

Following the flat showing of the Parti Québécois in the March provincial election, the Bloc Québécois is extending its political feelers into the Quebec City area to assess the needs of the electorate, communicate with Quebecers and attempt to restore its profile, Monique Guay, the party's deputy electoral organizer, says.

"We have already opened an office in Quebec City, because we know there's some difficulties for us there. The people are not reacting the same way as they're reacting in Montreal or in the regions, and we're trying to find out how we can try to work with the people in that region. We're trying to be as present as possible," Ms. Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, Que.), also the Bloc deputy House leader, told *The Hill Times* last week.

The party opened a political office in Quebec City last fall, and Bloc Québécois Leader **Gilles Duceppe** (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.) is now making regular

Please see story on Page 4

Chief Electoral Officer should impose limits on pre-writ TV advertising spending: MP

NDP MP Pat Martin says financing politics is 'complete free-for-all'

By ABBAS RANA

The Conservatives' spring offensive TV ads and the Liberals' recent radio ads are not considered election expenses, so the sky's the limit, but Canada's Chief Electoral Officer should finally impose limits on the amount of money registered political parties can spend on pre-writ campaigning, says

NDP MP Pat Martin. Mr. Martin (Winnipeg Centre, Man.) said political parties with larger campaign war chests have an unfair advantage over those that don't.

"Financing politics in Canada is a complete free-for-all. It's like the Wild

Please see story Page 19

Classic lobby pits broadcasters against satellite and cable giants

Protection of the Rights of Broadcasting Organizations is controversial, and heating up

By SIMON DOYLE

A classic lobby is heating up over an emerging international treaty on broadcasting rights, pitting a major broadcasters association against a coalition of communications giants, including Rogers, Bell, and Telus.

The proposed treaty, the Protection of the Rights of Broadcasting Organizations, is controversial because depending on the form

it takes, it may create a new intellectual property right for foreign broadcasters, and large satellite and cable companies say such a development would cost them a collective \$500-million in annual royalties paid to American broadcasters. Their concern, in part, is the Canadian government's position on the

See story on Page 14



Photograph by Jake Wright, The Hill Times

Very interesting: Bloc Leader Gilles Duceppe, pictured at last week's Hill caucus meeting.

NEWS



Photographs by Jake Wright, Cynthia Münster, *The Hill Times* and from parl.gc.ca

It's Bloc outreach time, sovereigntists: Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe, pictured at last week's caucus meeting on Parliament Hill, announced a new senior electoral team on April 12. It is headed by chief electoral organizer Louis Plamondon, and deputy electoral organizers Monique Guay, above left, and Mario Laframboise, above next to Ms. Guay. They will be supported by regional organizers Vivian Barbot, above right, responsible for Montreal; Christiane Gagnon, for Québec; and Marc Lemay, for the province's regions. The party has set up a regional office in Quebec city to do outreach.

Bloc Québécois extends political feelers into Québec City area

Continued from Page 1

trips to the city every two-to-three weeks, to take part in meetings and increase the party's profile. The party is also working on the ground, through focus groups and political outreach, to assess how Quebecers are feeling and thinking in the region, Ms. Guay said.

"It would be very difficult to explain the reaction," she said of the voting patterns in the Québec City area in the last federal election, where the Conservatives surprised observers by winning a number of seats (and where the right-of-centre Action Démocratique du Québec also made gains in March's provincial election).

"I think they just gave a chance to the Conservatives. I really don't know. There's a change in politics. We feel that on the ground, and we have to analyse that and be very careful, never take anything for granted, and work very hard to win every riding possible in Quebec," Ms. Guay said.

Observers say that, following the Conservative budget and the Quebec provincial election, the Bloc Québécois is sinking into troubled political territory. In the House, with the support of the Bloc, Prime Minister Stephen Harper (Calgary South-west, Alta.) has recognized Quebecers as a "nation" within a united Canada, and the government's budget, which also received Bloc support, increased the federal government's total transfers to Quebec, including equalization payments, by \$2.3-billion more than what the province received in 2006-2007.

Moreover, the Quebec provincial election, on March 26, reduced the Parti Québécois to record lows. Led by André Boisclair, the party fell from official opposition to the third-largest party, with 36 seats. The ADQ, led by Mario Dumont, rose from five to 48 seats in the election, and Jean Charest's Liberals fell from a majority to a minority government, holding just 48 of the legislature's 125 seats.

"In a way the PQ is like the mother

ship of the sovereigntist movement. It's the head office," Nik Nanos, CEO of the SES Research polling firm said last week. The BQ, he said, is a "subsidiary" or a "satellite proxy for the sovereignty movement in Canada," and the problem of momentum is compounded for the party because the PQ and BQ share campaign resources such as staff and volunteers.

"When head office takes a hit, that kind of hit radiates to the Bloc. If the PQ starts having trouble in Quebec, it's the same pool of volunteers working for the PQ and the Bloc. I think psychologically this has to be a bit of a low point for the Bloc," he said.

Mr. Nanos released a poll last week that estimated voting patterns in Quebec without the Bloc Québécois, and found that such a scenario would likely move the Conservatives into majority territory. He wrote in a release that if Mr. Duceppe decides to leave federal politics for the PQ leadership, as rumoured, it would result in a political realignment in Quebec. "The old federal battle lines between sovereigntists and federalists in Quebec would be weakened," he wrote.

The Bloc has lost a number of MPs since the Quebec election. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette-Témiscouata-Les Basques, Que.), former Bloc MP, announced on April 12 that she was quitting the party to sit as an independent, saying that she disagreed with Mr. Duceppe on issues such as last year's vote on same-sex marriage. Yvan Loubier also resigned to run in the provincial election for the Parti Québécois, but did not win a seat, and Michel Gauthier announced he would resign his seat for health reasons.

Bloc MP Pierre Paquette (Joliette, Que.), who has been called Mr. Duceppe's "new dauphin" and is rumoured to have leadership ambitions after being raised to the position of House leader on April 12, acknowledged that the party's ground troops are worn down following the Quebec election, but said that the party's campaign support continues to improve.

"We have a good feeling in our caucus.

I think the most questions we have are the effects of the Quebec election," he told *The Times* after Question Period last week. "We always have to have a better electoral structure, and it takes time. The people after the Quebec election are a little bit exhausted, and now we have to rebuild—but it's not rebuild, it's consolidate—for the next election. The people are there."

Part of that will entail getting ready for potential by-elections in Quebec, which, given the diminishing prospects of spring election, are now expected to be called before the next general election. "The signal that we have is that the Conservative government will try to look at its popularity in Quebec by testing three or four ridings," Mr. Paquette said. "If it will be in the fall or next spring, we will be even more ready than ever."

Vacant or soon-to-be vacant ridings are Outremont (formerly Jean Lapierre's); Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot (formerly Mr. Loubier's); and Roberval-Lac-Saint-Jean (Michel Gauthier's riding).

To add further to the Bloc's apparent troubles, there has been speculation about party defections. *La Presse* reported last week that, on March 30, just following the Quebec election, Bloc Québécois Whip Michel Guimond sent an email to caucus, warning of Conservative overtures to cross the floor.

"I've heard that following the results of Monday's election, the Conservatives have undertaken an operation of solicitation of Bloc Québécois MPs with a view to joining the ranks of their caucus," said Mr. Guimond's email in French, obtained by *La Presse*. "If you have or if you happen to be approached, I count on your collaboration to keep me informed of any kind of attempts."

Ms. Guay said only the rumour mill could generate such talk. "It's a big place of rumours. I've been here for 14 years, so I know," she said. "There's nobody who has been approached in our party to cross to the Conservatives." Nor does Mr. Nanos expect any floor-crossings before party members get a chance to see what happens with the PQ leadership, he said last week, and whether this has any impacts on the Bloc.

Mr. Duceppe announced a new senior electoral team on April 12. It is headed by chief electoral organizer Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu-Nicolet-Bécancour, Que.), a former Mulroney Progressive Conservative, and deputy electoral organizers Ms. Guay and Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil-Papineau-Mirabel, Que.). They will be supported by regional organizers Vivian Barbot (Papineau, Que.), responsible for Montreal; Christiane Gagnon, for Québec; and Marc Lemay, for the province's regions.

Ms. Guay said that herself, Mr. Plamondon and Mr. Laframboise are now developing the party platform for the next federal election, which will reinforce the Bloc's accomplishments in the minority 39th Parliament on issues such as the environment and the fiscal imbalance. During the week-long break from House business on May 21, Ms. Guay, Mr. Laframboise and Mr. Plamondon will split up to tour Montreal, Québec City and the regions to get a better feel for what's happening on the ground, she said.

"Some people voted for the ADQ because they didn't want to vote for the PQ, for many reasons, and they [the PQ] have to analyse that. Many sovereigntists voted ADQ, but that vote won't be transferred rationally to the Conservatives. So, we have to speak to the people and find out exactly how they feel about our own election. That's the work that we have to do now," Ms. Guay said.

Ms. Guay said she believes the Bloc can take credit for the fiscal imbalance transfers in the 2007 budget, for instance, keeping the credit out of Tory hands. "This is not something that will help the Conservatives, but I think it will help us because we have clout. We have brought, into the House of Commons, the fiscal imbalance. Nobody talked about that before. It's a win for us. It's a gain, and I think people realize that," she said. "The feeling of the people of Quebec was that money was due to them."

Mr. Nanos said it is far too soon, however, for observers to predict a dramatic slide for the Bloc. The political winds aren't anything like the 1993 election, which radically changed the political map. "If there is a silver lining in the cloud for the Bloc and PQ, I think the problem with PQ performance in the last provincial election was really squarely on the shoulders of André Boisclair," he said. "So I think it's a little early for federalists to be doing a victory lap in Quebec."

sdoyle@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times