

CANADA

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THE RECORD A3

Tory tax cuts are bad policy, Dion says

By BRUCE CAMPION-SMITH
OTTAWA

Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion says he would consider reversing Tory cuts to the goods-and-services tax if his party wins power.

Dion said he sides with economists who say the cuts to the GST are bad policy and that income tax cuts are a better way to put money in people's pockets.

That's why yesterday, the Liberal

leader left the door open to rescinding GST cuts introduced by the minority Conservatives, from seven per cent to six per cent last year and another cut to five per cent that will take effect on Jan. 1.

"We will consider if in our plan we need to revisit the decision of the government about the GST. We'll consider it," Dion told reporters yesterday.

The cut to the GST was a key plank of Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's mini-budget yesterday.

But despite their opposition to the move, Liberal MPs abstained from the budget vote yesterday, allowing it to pass 127 to 76, with NDP and Bloc Québécois MPs opposed.

Dion said the GST cut costs federal coffers up to \$7 billion in lost revenue, money that could be used in other ways, including income tax cuts. But despite repeated questions, he refused to be pinned on his party's plans for the GST if they win the next election.

"We will make this debate. We will

not be alone. We know that a lot of people will say it was the wrong decision for Canada," he said.

"When the election will come we'll say to Canadians what we'll do with it," Dion said.

The Liberal decision to sit out the vote is the same strategy the party used with the throne speech earlier month and extends the life of the Tory minority government, perhaps as long as next February or March.

"We will choose the time where we

want to defeat this government. Then Canadians will have two plans. Our plan will be very compelling, very comprehensive, very attractive for Canadians," Dion said.

Liberal finance critic John McCallum (Markham) said the party wants to have a debate about taxes in Canada. "We do want to hear Canadians' views about the best ways to cut taxes in this country," he said.

• Toronto Star

Downtown sinkhole



Crews from London Hydro clear debris from a giant sinkhole that opened early in the morning in the middle of a downtown intersection in London, Ont., yesterday. The street collapse, caused by a break in a water main, led to traffic backups and a power outage, closing much of the downtown area for the day.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Did lawyer go too far beyond legal defence for Hells Angels?

MONTRÉAL

Lawyer Benoit Cliche once literally danced with gangster boss Maurice (Mom) Boucher and other clients who were prominent members of the Hells Angels.

A jury will now decide if the lawyer went beyond social events and legal representation into participating in crimes like mediating drug disputes and derailing police investigations.

The five men and seven women on Benoit Cliche's jury will begin deliberations today to decide if he is guilty of gangsterism, obstruction of justice and assisting a criminal enterprise.

In final arguments yesterday, Crown prosecutor Pierre Proulx described a lawyer who had gone far beyond offering legal defence for members of the infamous motorcycle gang.

Cliche was a childhood friend of one of his clients, prominent gang member Steven (Bull) Bertrand.

Proulx described a 1999 gang wedding attended by Cliche.

"He was very comfortable in that environment, even happy," Proulx told jurors.

"He dances in a group with Mom Boucher, he socializes with these people, he mixes up his roles of father, husband and lawyer."

Cliche's lawyer, Jacques Laroche, urged the jury to avoid convicting Cliche for his childhood associates or choice of clients.

"When these people walk into his office, he can't chase them away," Laroche said.

"These people aren't pariahs, he can go to a marriage of a client, it's not particularly exceptional. There was a priest there, the bride cried. It was a wedding like any other."

Cliche's trial hangs on a series of meetings in 2003 where, the Crown contends, Cliche acted as a go-between in a cocaine and marijuana network run by Bertrand.

The Crown says Cliche helped mediate the disputes among drug dealers including Andre Bernier, who was a paid police informant.

• The Canadian Press



Michael Bryant is Ontario's first minister dedicated solely to aboriginal affairs. He promises a fresh outlook, resolutions.

RECORD FILE PHOTO

New aboriginal affairs minister signals fresh approach to solutions

TORONTO

Less than 24 hours after becoming Ontario's first dedicated aboriginal affairs minister, Michael Bryant was signalling a new direction yesterday as he sat down with Dudley George's brother and pledged to be the first politician to visit the site of a protracted Six Nations protest.

Fresh from a coffee with Sam George, whose brother was killed by police during a 1995 native protest at Ipperwash Provincial Park, Bryant also vowed to implement all the recommendations of the inquiry into the shooting, including establishing an Ontario treaty commission.

"I believe my job is to push the boundaries," Bryant said.

"We just want to get solutions. I don't think people care about the constitutional responsibilities. I think they care about getting solutions and government stepping up to the plate. This government is stepping up to the plate."

Bryant said he will travel immediately to his native province of British Columbia to study their treaty commission, established in 1992 to help facilitate aboriginal land claims at the federal level. In his new role, Bryant is now also saddled with the tumultuous land dispute in Caledonia, where almost two years of negotiations have failed to end the occupation of a former housing development site. Bryant isn't promising to end the occupation, which has at times turned violent. But he said he will visit the community as soon as possible — something neither Premier Dalton McGuinty nor Bryant's predecessor have done.

• The Canadian Press

ACROSS CANADA

OTTAWA

Ottawa lifts visa requirements for Czech and Latvian visitors

Citizenship and Immigration Minister Diane Finley has announced that visitors to Canada from the Czech Republic and Latvia no longer require visas.

The decision to lift the visa requirements, said Finley, was taken as part of Canada's ongoing review of travel requirements for new European Union members. Finley says her government is committed to the "free and secure movement of people between the EU and Canada," and to the objective of visa-exempt status for all EU member states.

The visas, designed to ensure that visitors to Canada return to their countries of origin, still apply to six other eastern European countries that were once part of the former eastern Bloc but have since joined the EU. This includes travellers from Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic.

LETHBRIDGE, ALTA.

Mumps outbreak prompts Alberta to offer vaccinations

An outbreak of mumps at the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge College is prompting Alberta Health to offer free vaccinations to post-secondary staff and students across the province.

Those in Lethbridge can go to clinics set up on campus, while anyone born after 1970 will also be eligible for free vaccine starting in early December. Shots will also be offered to all Albertans between the ages of 17 and 26.

WOODSTOCK, ONT.

Married officers in Oxford accuse each other of assault

Two married Oxford Community Police officers are facing domestic assault allegations — from each other.

Constables Steve Berkeley and Crystal Berkeley have been stripped of their guns and reassigned within the force until their legal issues are sorted out. Steve Berkeley faces two counts of assault and uttering death threats. Crystal Berkeley is charged with four counts of assault.

Oxford Community Police Chief Ron Fraser calls it a dark time for the force again. A 26-year veteran staff sergeant was recently found guilty of discreditable conduct for inappropriately touching female colleagues.

KAMLOOPS, B.C.

Massive B.C. search nearly done with no sign of pilot

Searchers will have twice scoured a 20,000-square-kilometre area of B.C.'s rugged southern Interior by tomorrow night but they remain optimistic that 61-year-old pilot Ron Boychuk will be found.

The Nanaimo man was flying solo in his Cessna 172 when he vanished Oct. 23 on a trip from Revelstoke in southeastern B.C. to Qualicum on Vancouver Island. Searchmaster Capt. Brad White says efforts have concentrated in the Lytton area, northeast of Vancouver, over the last several days but, by tomorrow, planes will have combed the entire search grid twice at an altitude of at least 300 metres.

DANIEL'S HARBOUR, N.L.

Buildings threatened by landslides to be destroyed

A handful of houses and businesses perched atop a crumbling cliff in a western Newfoundland town are being burned before the ground swallows the structures whole.

A series of landslides earlier this year in Daniel's Harbour caused a large section of an embankment to plunge into the sea, taking one home with it.

• The Canadian Press

Suspended radiologist overlooked tumours, pneumonia, broken bones

ST. JOHN'S, N.L.

The work of a suspended Newfoundland radiologist was so poor that he missed glaring problems such as tumours, broken bones and cases of pneumonia, the chief of the province's largest health board said yesterday after an in-depth review of nearly 3,800 patient records.

As a result, there could be some patients of Dr. Fred Kasirye who missed out on potentially life-saving treatment, said Louise Jones, interim chief executive of the Eastern Health Authority.

"There have been pneumonias that have been missed, there's been fractures that have been missed, there's been some tumours that have been missed," Jones said during a news conference.

"We did not go back to quantify that. We had over 5,000 reports that were going out and we left

that in the hands of the physicians and the patients themselves."

Kasirye was hired at the Burin Peninsula Health Centre in southern Newfoundland last November. But in May he was suspended without pay after colleagues at the hospital raised concerns over his procedures and decision-making.

The provincial government then ordered Eastern Health to carry out a review of the 6,412 X-rays, CT scans, ultrasounds and fluoroscopies under Kasirye's purview.

The review, conducted by more than 20 other radiologists, found that Kasirye misread 708 exams. It also concluded that 21 of his patients whose exams were misread have died, but not as a result of the errors.

• The Canadian Press

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