

NATION

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From free golf to \$500 wine, MPs are gifted

PRIME MINISTER IS MOST GIFTED OF ALL

35 made mandatory declarations since 2006

JACK AUBRY
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

OTTAWA — A golf membership at a tony club worth more than \$10,000. Four tickets to an NBA Raptors game. A bottle of wine worth more than \$500. A Mark Messier New York Rangers jersey, signed No. 11, and a case of COLD-FX.

Or how about a stringed instrument from Mongolia? A "gratuitous" family portrait painted from a picture? A freebie membership for a now-closed press club? A putter?

These are a few of the gifts — some valuable, some mundane — that have been accepted by members of Parliament during the past 18 months. A CanWest News Service survey of the public registry has found about 35 MPs declared gifts received after the January 2006 election. More than half of the declarations were from cabinet ministers or parliamentary secretaries.

According to conflict of interest rules, ordinary MPs must report any gifts with a value of more than \$500 on a public registry maintained at the office of the federal ethics commissioner.

Senior office holders, including cabinet ministers and top bureaucrats, must register gifts with a value of more than \$200.

By far the biggest gift recipient

"I don't think it is appropriate to keep gifts."

ETHICS EXPERT ROBERT MCDIARMID

is Prime Minister Stephen Harper — which isn't surprising, given the universal tradition of gift exchanges among foreign leaders at international gatherings.

For instance, in the span of just eight months, Harper received two "cotton on cotton" rugs from Afghan President Hamid Karzai — one on an official visit to Afghanistan in March 2006, the other when Karzai visited Ottawa in October 2006.

One hopes someone in the Harper family likes wine and fresh dates, because this appears to be a popular gift combo from African countries. In December 2006, the prime minister received two cases of Algerian wine and three boxes of fresh dates from the president of Algeria, and six bottles of Tunisian wine, one case of olive oil and one leather chest, also containing fresh dates, from the president of Tunisia.

And what do Canada's ministers give their foreign counterparts?

A list, obtained through an Access to Information request, revealed that Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay gave U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice a bottle of ice wine and a case of CDs that included Canadian singers Francine Levesque, Holly Cole, George Canyon and Michael Bublé, along with music by the National Arts Centre Orchestra. The value of the romantic package was blanked out by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Harper spokesperson Carolyn Stewart Olsen said that, like his predecessors, the prime minister keeps most gifts from other governments if they are valued between \$200 and \$1,000 and turns over pricier items to the federal treasury.

The registry, however, indicates the only gift Harper passed along to the "government inventory" was a jewelled portrait of himself that he received with a

carrying case from the Than Chau Ngoc Viet gemstone company during an APEC summit in Vietnam in November 2006.

Stewart Olsen said despite being discouraged by government officials, Canadians tend to want to give the prime minister a gift when he tours the country.

"We say, 'Look, why don't you give to a charity or something?' but it still happens," she said.

Some observers have protested an apparent contradiction in the federal rules, which allow politicians to accept event tickets and other gifts, but prohibit federal public servants from doing so.

But veteran Liberal MP Roy Cullen, for one, sees no problem in the gifts. He recently stated he had accepted four tickets to attend a Toronto Raptors basketball game in March 2006 as guest of Labatt Breweries. The tickets, he said, were "just a matter of hospitality that goes on all over the world in various sectors."

"If Labatt thinks they are going to buy me with a couple of Raptors tickets ... I'm sure they know better so I don't get upset about those sort of things," said Cullen. The Ontario MP also acknowledged that, now that he is in opposition, he gets fewer invitations. In power, he conceded, "one has to be careful."

Political science professor Robert MacDermid, an ethics expert at Toronto's York University, believes Canadian politicians should not accept gifts from other governments or the private sector. Presents from other leaders, he argues, should be turned over to the national archives.

"I don't think it is appropriate to keep gifts since the person in that office is a representative of the people," MacDermid said, adding that official presents "aren't personal like birthday gifts. It is really a gift to the people of Canada."

Last year, after becoming prime minister, Harper put the word out that he always pays for his hockey tickets and Treasury Board President John Baird advised Conservatives they were expected to do the same.

However, the prime minister has not always been so fastidious. According to the gifts registry, Harper, while in opposition, accepted tickets to the 2004 Grey Cup game, which he attended with his wife, and did not register the gift with the ethics commissioner until after a fellow Conservative MP publicly denounced her colleagues for failing to disclose their free attendance at that Ottawa game.

According to the registry, a wide range of gifts are dealt out around Parliament.

Commons Speaker Peter Milliken, for instance, received a \$500-bottle of wine from his counterpart in the Australian House of Representatives.

Two opposition MPs — Liberals Marcel Proulx and Michel Guimond of the Bloc Québécois — accepted memberships at golf clubs in their ridings. Proulx's cost an initiation fee of \$9,000 plus annual dues of \$3,200.

Harper, meanwhile, got a free membership to the Rideau Club, valued at \$500. "As far as I am aware, the Rideau Club gives honorary memberships to all PMs," Stewart Olsen said.

Things may be about to get more stringent, however, with the recent appointment of a new ethics commissioner, former Justice Department bureaucrat Mary Dawson, and the introduction of a maximum fine of \$500 for office holders who contravene conflict of interest rules.

OTTAWA CITIZEN

Minorities should try to fit in: poll

Quebecers least accepting of differences

JANICE TIBBETTS
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

OTTAWA — A majority of adults in this country think minority groups should be encouraged to change their cultural ways to be like the rest of Canadians, according to a new poll.

The survey found almost six in 10 Canadians — 58 per cent — believe minorities should try to fit the traditionally Canadian mold.

Almost four in 10, on the other hand, said it should be a higher priority to encourage Canadians as a whole to try to accept minority groups and their customs and language.

Older Canadians, Quebecers, and those without university degrees were most likely to believe in a cultural melting pot rather than a cultural mosaic.

The telephone poll of 1,002 adults, which the polling firm Ipsos-Reid conducted exclusively for CanWest News Service and Global Television from June 12 to 14, is considered accurate within three percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

"I think people want minority groups to maintain a certain distinction, but not a total distinction," said John Wright, Ipsos senior vice-president. "There really is a balance here where you

don't come to this country to perpetuate an enclave."

The results indicate Canadian attitudes toward cultural differences have hardened slightly over the past nine years.

A similar 1998 study showed 43 per cent believed Canadians should be encouraged to accept cultural differences.

In the latest survey, only 21 per cent of Quebecers said it should be a high priority to encourage Canadians to accept cultural differences, the lowest number in the country. Saskatchewan and Manitoba residents, at 56 per cent, ranked the highest.

Elsewhere, support for the idea stood at 38 per cent in Alberta, 40 per cent in Ontario, 44 per cent in British Columbia and 49 per cent in Atlantic Canada.

Despite the fact almost six in 10 believe minority groups should change, Wright said the poll shows Canadians are generally accepting of minorities.

A full 82 per cent agreed with the statement: "Canada's multi-cultural makeup is one of the best things about this country."

Two-thirds also agreed that "treating minorities with generosity" is a special part of the Canadian character.

A similar number disagreed when asked if "the fabric of Canadian society is being threatened by the influx of visible-minority immigrants."

The survey also showed 54 per cent strongly or moderately agree that discrimination against minorities is a problem in Canada.

FUEL-EFFICIENCY TO BURN



RAY SMITH CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

GENTLEMEN, START YOUR ... OH WAIT! Todd Hooze in car No. 301 and Dan Gunn in No. 13 get an assist from gravity as they leave the starting ramp in a qualifying heat of the Canary Derby at Vancouver Island Technology Park in Victoria, B.C., yesterday.

B.C. Chinese set up own political party

CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

VANCOUVER — A new British Columbia political party says it wants to bring a Chinese focus to provincial politics.

The Nation Alliance Party, launched last week, says its focus is on the 350,000 Chinese in B.C.

Party leader Wei Ping Chen, a former university teacher in Beijing who came to Canada in 2000, said mainland Chinese immigrants tend not to vote in B.C. elections, and ignore local politics. He wants to change all that.

"Some Chinese said, 'We just

focus on our family, and that's enough,'" said Chen, 48.

He said the party wants to improve the lot of immigrant workers, and promote Chinese family values and safer communities.

"They have high degrees — master's degree or doctor's degree — but their job is just labour job," he said. "They are not satisfied with their situation."

But Chen was reluctant to set out policy positions on gay marriage, abortion or human rights in China. "We would like to create a good environment for the family," he said.

Families are being split when bread-winners move back to Asia to work, leaving their wives and children in Canada, Chen noted. "I would like to encourage them to stay here, and solve the problem for them," he said.

Chen has hopes of eventually making the Nation Alliance a federal and a municipal party. But the party has very little money and only 20 signed-up members. "We are just like a baby born," he said.

VANCOUVER PROVINCE

fasttrack

ONTARIO

Canada-wide warrant in killing

OTTAWA — A 19-year-old man is wanted for first-degree murder after a woman was found dead in an Ottawa home. A Canada-wide warrant was issued for Aaron Howard Friday, after neighbours said tactical units bashed in the door to enter the house. The victim hasn't been positively identified, but neighbours said Howard lived at the house with his mother, Deborah Frankel-Howard, a former public servant who once wrote about family violence. She may have been missing for up to 10 days. Aaron Howard was last seen in Ottawa on Thursday night, carrying a black and red suitcase.

MANITOBA

Man killed, two hurt in shootings

WINNIPEG — A man is dead and two other people, including a 15-year-old girl, were taken to hospital after a pair of shootings yesterday morning. A 20-year-old man was gunned down on an inner-city street around 4 a.m. He died after being taken to hospital in critical condition. Residents were tight-lipped, with several suggesting the shooting might be gang-related. Police said the victim is from out of province. In a separate event an hour earlier, a 15-year-old girl and a 37-year-old man were shot. The girl's injuries were not life-threatening, but the man was in hospital yesterday in critical but stable condition.

CANWEST NEWS SERVICE,
WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

LOTO QUEBEC Draw Results : 2007-06-16

649 03 15 31 24 05 09 16 43
33 43 48 bonus 19 30 38 bonus

Astro Day - Month - Year - Sign
03 NOVEMBRE 10 BALANCE 3 184 4 0196

Extra 6893388* \$500,000
05 06 12 17 20 21 23 25 26 28
37 39 41 52 55 59 63 64 66 68
*decomposable in both directions

Draw Results : 2007-06-15

WINNERS	PRIZES
7/7	1 \$2,500,000.00
6/7+B	0 \$135,293.30
6/7	69 \$1,960.70
5/7	4,719 \$97.40
4/7	98,676 \$10.00
3/7+B	95,701 \$10.00
3/7	822,469 Free play
Next grand prize (approx.): \$2,500,000	
Total sales: \$11,977,464	

Extra \$500,000 GRAND PRIZE!

In the event of discrepancy between this list and the official winning list of Loto-Quebec, the latter shall prevail.

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