

# The Chronicle Herald

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2011

INDEPENDENT SINCE 1824

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA



**McDonald's killer gets day parole / A3**



**Mother's cancer scam / B1**



**SMU hockey saved / D1**



Carol Lee Loebenberg from the 1990 Halifax world figure skating championships legacy committee shows off the skates she donated to the cause of keeping the Commons oval during a rally at city hall Tuesday. (ERIC WYNNE / Staff)

## Oval will be here a long time

**Council OKs making outdoor ice track permanent at a cost of about \$5.7m**

By **PAT LEE** and **MICHAEL LIGHTSTONE**  
Staff Reporters

**H**ALIFAX REGIONAL council Tuesday approved the permanent operation of the Canada Games skating oval.

Council's blessing was given after a four-hour debate on such issues as cost, location, user safety and planned corporate sponsorship from a beer producer.

Cost of the outdoor ice rink on the Halifax Commons is likely to be factored into the municipality's tax bill

to property owners. The oval will be in the city's draft 2011-12 budget, which council is to discuss in April.

The vote Tuesday was not unanimous. Dartmouth-area councillors had concerns, saying the municipality has other fiscal priorities.

But the oval backers on council won out. In a recorded vote, councillors ratified a decision of committee of the whole by a tally of 17-2.

Even though the oval project and its hefty price tag — expected to be about \$4.3 million for 2011-12 and \$1.4 million for the following year, plus \$400,000 in annual operating costs — were not originally on the

**INSIDE:** Oval puts Nova Scotia on fast track / D1

city's slate for the coming year, staff told council there are options for covering the cost.

Phil Townsend, Halifax Regional Municipality's director of infrastructure and asset management, said the "unexpected" startup costs of the oval can be dealt with over three years through a variety of actions, including accepting corporate and private funding.

"There is significant interest in financially supporting this," he said. "Even without actively seeking support, almost \$1 million has been offered to date."

See **OVAL** / A2

## Leaders retreat to issues

**Small-business tax credit, student grants among pledges by Harper, Ignatieff**

By **BRUCE CHEADLE**  
The Canadian Press

**OTTAWA** — Help for small business. A boost to post-secondary students. A kick in the shins to the big banks.

It was a day of ideological retrenchment on the campaign trail Tuesday as the three major federalist parties retreated to their traditional policy corners for a breather.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper peeled a page from his recent stillborn budget to reannounce a modest one-year, \$1,000 tax credit to help small businesses protect against increases to employment insurance premiums.

Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff made his first big policy pitch of the 36-day campaign that culminates May 2 — a \$1 billion-a-year pledge for new, tax-free student grants to assist roughly a million Canadian families with college or university costs.

And Jack Layton of the NDP reprised his own hardy perennial: a vow to legislate lower interest rate charges on consumer credit cards.

Even Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe went

See **LEADERS** / A2

### INSIDE

- Parties line up their candidates / A4
- MacKay: Tories would help small businesses / A4
- Disgraced Tory staffer out of campaign / B1
- Greens' May sees red over debate exclusion / B1

## Woman fighting for \$48,000 in support payments

**Ex-husband who burned down home says he can't pay because he can't work**

By **BEVERLEY WARE**  
South Shore Bureau

**BRIDGEWATER** — Stewart Veinotte poured gasoline inside the home just outside Bridgewater that he shared with his wife, lit it and then sat on the tailgate of his pickup, calmly smoking a cigarette as he watched it burn to the ground.

He did it because he didn't want his wife, Gwen, to get the house in their divorce.

Two years later, in 2004, Veinotte was sentenced to 34 months in jail, served just six and now owes his ex-wife almost \$48,000 in support.

She has been fighting nine years now to get the money.

"I'm getting nowhere," said Gwen Tanner, who asked to go by her maiden name for this story. "Maintenance enforcement is just totally inadequate and they're just not doing enough to him."

Papers from the provincial Maintenance Enforcement Program show that as of March 14,

Veinotte owes his ex-wife \$47,763.13.

Veinotte acknowledged Tuesday he owes Tanner that amount of money but said he can't pay it because he has been unable to work for about six years. He said he is waiting for hip replacement surgery but "hopefully" will be able to work after the surgery.

He doesn't know when that will happen and was upset Tanner went public with their case, saying such information is "supposed to be private." Veinotte also said he meets regularly with his caseworker to talk about payments.

The provincial Justice Department handles maintenance enforcement. Spokeswoman Tara

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REACHING 297,100 NOVA SCOTIANS DAILY

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### WEATHER

**HALIFAX:** Mainly sunny with cloudy periods becoming variably cloudy. High 6.  
**GREENWOOD:** Mainly sunny with cloudy periods becoming variably cloudy. High 5.  
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Volume 63 Number 75



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## DATA FILE

## TODAY IN HISTORY

In 1972, Canadian sailors got a daily rum ration for the last time, ending a navy tradition dating back to 1667.

Also on this date:

- In 1858, the first pencil with an attached rubber eraser was patented by Hyman L. Lipman of Philadelphia.
- In 1901, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that marriages of Catholics by Protestant clergymen were valid.
- In 1981, U.S. President Ronald Reagan was shot while leaving a Washington hotel. The gunman, 25-year-old John Hinckley, said he hoped to attract the attention of actress Jodie Foster. Hinckley was found not guilty by reason of insanity and sent to a mental hospital. Reagan recovered fully after surgery. Also wounded were White House press secretary James Brady, Secret Service agent Timothy McCarthy and District of Columbia police officer Thomas Delahanty. Brady suffered permanent brain damage.
- In 1991, Patricia Bowman of Jupiter, Fla., told police she had been raped by William Kennedy Smith, the nephew of U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy, at the family's Palm Beach estate. Smith was acquitted.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We should be taught not to wait for inspiration to start a thing. Action always generates inspiration. Inspiration seldom generates action.

— Frank Tibolt

## LOTTERIES

Tuesday's unofficial winning numbers:

**Tag:** 227143.

**Keno:** 5, 23, 25, 27, 28, 33, 34, 40, 44, 46, 47, 49, 50, 52, 55, 56, 57, 61, 64 and 66.

**Bucko:** 6, 18, 20, 32 and 36.

## TOP 10 WEB HITS

The following were the top hits Tuesday on TheChronicleHerald.ca:

1. 'Oh my God, he's ripping her apart'
2. Sweet dreams
3. Colds led couple to \$6.5-million lotto win
4. No injuries in van-garbage truck crash
5. Three accused of stock fraud
6. Super seller MacPhee gears down
7. Halifax police issue wanted list
8. Astrological forecast
9. Oval to get permanent home
10. Guess who's coming to your place

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Gwen Tanner's ex-husband burned their Lunenburg County home to the ground nearly nine years ago because he didn't want her to get it in their divorce. Now he owes her nearly \$48,000 in support payments. (BEVERLEY WARE / South Shore Bureau)

## Oval

continued from / A1

Townsend said there's also a surplus of about \$1 million in this year's operating budget that council could tap into, or councillors could defer other projects, such as the \$1 million allotted for new sidewalks.

Property taxes could also be hiked to cover the remaining costs, Townsend said. "In an average household, at \$282,000 of assessed value, that would amount to about \$7 a year," he said.

The sand base under the oval that was used for the Games will be replaced by concrete, said Paul Dunphy, the city's director of community development.

"And the oval will be shifted a little bit to make a little more room on the Cogswell Street side," he told The Chronicle Herald.

Dunphy said summer use for the site will include in-line skating and cycling. The infield will have grass and be available for recreational purposes.

The municipality owns three of the ice surface's six chillers, Dunphy said, and the Canada Games host society owns the other three.

"We'll be talking to them about purchasing them," he said.

Dunphy said the provincial government initially indicated it would buy a couple of the chillers and distribute them to other municipalities, but that notion died.

Staff were looking for council to approve the continuation of the skating oval, which was wildly popular with residents over the winter, and to give staff the OK to accept donations to help fund it.

Coun. David Hendsbee (Preston-Lawrencetown-Chezzetcook) supported retention of the oval but wondered aloud if its pop-

## Support

continued from / A1

Walsh said cases where a spouse isn't paying are frustrating for recipients, and more difficult for the department to enforce.

The Maintenance Enforcement Program is garnishing Veinotte's goods and services tax rebate, which varies from about \$58 to \$122 four times a year.

Support was a prominent issue when Justice Margaret Stewart of Nova Scotia Supreme Court sentenced Veinotte for arson. The judge said Veinotte was trying to control his ex-wife by refusing to give her spousal support or help pay off their debts.

The prosecutor also said Veinotte had "independently determined he is not able to go back (to work)," to avoid paying Tanner support.

Insurance wouldn't cover the loss because the fire was a result of Veinotte's deliberate actions. Tanner was branded a high risk by insurance companies because her name was also on the mortgage, and her car insurance tripled.

The Justice Department did suspend Veinotte's right to have a driver's licence and he was not allowed to register his vehicle in an attempt to get him to make payments, but Tanner found out

that sanction has been lifted. She wants to know why.

"If it was for good reason, if he got a job, that would be fine, but they tell me his situation hasn't changed," Tanner said.

She has been denied a meeting with the program's regional co-ordinator and director. Walsh said Tanner has a caseworker and such a meeting would not change the outcome of a file.

"What are they doing for me? Nothing," Tanner said.

She said she has been told she will get part of Veinotte's Canada Pension when he turns 60 — in 5½ years.

Walsh said the department does have a number of enforcement options, including revoking a driver's licence and passport and taking a lien against a payer's property.

It can also garnish wages, income tax refunds, employment insurance benefits, rebates and pensions. She said the more difficult cases are when a payer is unemployed or the caseworker cannot pinpoint an income source.

"Although some files may be difficult to enforce, we do not give up," Walsh said.

Asked what she would do if she ever got the money, Tanner said: "I've never thought of it because I know I won't get it."

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ularity was just a fad. He also wanted it moved to another section of the Commons, across from Citadel High School.

Council is also to consider approving the selling of naming rights to the oval. And staff are pondering having all skaters wear helmets.

The 400-metre speedskating oval was built for the Canada Games in February but was open to the public from just before Christmas until March.

Over that time, about 100,000 people took a spin around the smooth ice surface.

Corporate donors like Emera, GoodLife Fitness, Molson Coors Canada and others have pledged financial support.

Coun. Gloria McCluskey (Dartmouth Centre) raised concerns about the cost of building the oval as well as operational expenses in coming years.

"We build, we build, but we don't stop to think about the operational costs," said the coun-

cillor, who also objected to a brewery sponsoring a facility that would be used by children.

Dunphy said no corporate sponsorships are etched in stone. "Council actually didn't give us any direction," he said.

Coun. Dawn Sloane (Halifax Downtown) said not only did the community support the oval by turning out in droves through the winter, the public also sought out sponsorship to help offset the costs.

"A group (Save the Oval) got together because they saw a need for a place like the oval and they've raised over a million dollars," she said.

Sloan said the venue brought much needed "social capital" to the downtown core.

Save the Oval held a small rally at city hall on Tuesday morning as councillors began their deliberations.

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## Leaders

continued from / A1

old school, mounting a rousing defence of French language protections in Quebec.

After three days of often confusing campaign crossfire, Day 4 was about preaching to the choir.

For Ignatieff — the international academic whose work abroad has been turned by the Tories into a cudgel against him — the showpiece was a big boost to a previous Liberal government's popular Registered Education Savings Plan program.

The plan would provide students \$1,000 a year for four years, or up to \$1,500 a year for four years for low-income families. The grants would go into education savings accounts for 14- to 17-year-olds as they approach post-secondary school age, but a Liberal release said current post-secondary students would also benefit from a transition period program.

"This is the kind of investment in education which is a game-changer for our country," Ignatieff said in Oakville, Ont., calling it the biggest investment in post-secondary education in Canada's history.

"It's a billion dollars of new money to make us the best-educated society on the planet."

He said the grants would start rolling in the fall of 2012 under a Liberal government.

Harper, speaking in Regina, panned Ignatieff's education funding promise as tax-and-spend Liberalism.

"They're going to promise everybody billions and billions and billions of dollars," said Harper. "And how's that going to happen? They're very clear, they're going to raise taxes to pay for it. And that's the choice."

Ignatieff has vowed to present a "fully costed" platform that won't raise personal income taxes.

But the Liberals have said they will raise corporate taxes back to the 2010 rate of 18 per cent, up from the current 16.5 per cent. They'll also cancel scheduled cuts that would further reduce the business rate to 15 per cent.

Harper said his latest business tax proposal on rising EI premiums is part of a "responsible and affordable, low-tax plan for jobs and growth that is working for this economy."

The \$1,000 credit for 2011 is being billed by the party as a "new hiring incentive." Harper acknowledged it will go to any employer whose salary base increases and boosts EI costs, whether they hire new people or not.

"Obviously it will help those businesses keep employees," said Harper. "It will also be an incentive for them to increase their employees."

The Conservative government had already moved last fall to reduce scheduled EI rate hikes on businesses and workers, cutting federal revenues by about \$1.2 billion this fiscal year even as the government continues to battle a \$40-billion deficit.

While Conservatives and Liberals glared across the budget ring, New Democrats were taking a run at financial institutions.

Layton said banks shouldn't be allowed to charge consumers interest at a rate more than five percentage points higher than prime.

"I believe that you need strong banks in an economy so that you can have a healthy level of economic activity," Layton told a news conference outside a family home in Brantford, Ont., west of Toronto.

"I think Canadians deserve something in return here — just a little bit of fairness. But you know what?"

"Under Stephen Harper, Canadians pay some of the highest credit card fees in the world — and that's just not right."

Layton says the NDP cap on

interest rates would save the average credit card holder about \$60 a month, or more than \$700 a year.

He acknowledged the credit proposal would likely just shift bank profit margins to other areas of their business.

"They're going to have to figure out a way to make money without being so unfair to the Canadian consumers," said Layton. "I have no doubt that the banks will be sufficiently creative to find a way to do that."

The most significant off-script moment on the campaign trail Tuesday was the revelation that a former Conservative staffer who is under RCMP investigation had turned up working on a key campaign in Edmonton.

Harper, asked about the involvement of Sebastien Togneri

in the riding of Edmonton-Strathcona, tried to take a fire extinguisher to the smouldering ethics issue.

"My understanding is he volunteered for a campaign. My understanding is that he is no longer a volunteer for that campaign," said Harper.

"And that's all I know. That's all I know."

Canada's 41st election campaign was triggered last Friday by a historic vote in the House of Commons that cited Harper's government for contempt of Parliament.

But the issue of ethics, accountability and transparency have not managed to make much of an impact in the first days of the campaign under a fog of coalition debate fanned by the Conservatives.

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