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VOL. 13 NO. 72 FRIDAY, JANUARY 21, 2011

COMMENT

An odd place to insist on diversity

Plan to appoint trustees in Alberta sets up clash with Catholic boards

KEVIN LIBIN
in Calgary

If Albertans were inclined to start affirmative action programs for their elected representatives, they could begin with their provincial leaders as easily as anywhere else.

The number of aboriginals in the Progressive Conservative caucus (one) vastly under-represents the 5% of Albertans identifying as First Nations. There isn't a single Jew. And only 20% of Tory MLAs are women. Voters, however, seem to accept that their government does a reasonable job of representing their various hues, genders and creeds fairly. There certainly haven't been many complaints.

But Alberta's Education Minister, Dave Hancock, isn't so sure we can expect the same broad-mindedness from the province's school boards. In the process of proposing updates to the Alberta School Act, he has been on the defensive over proposals to give his ministry power to appoint school trustees to traditionally elected boards, when situations warrant. He would, he insists, use the formidable power only for good.

"Nobody has decided yet that there will be any appointed trustees. What we're talking about is: What's the right kind of governance model which involves all those people whose voices should be heard to ensure that our children get the education they need?" Mr. Hancock has said.

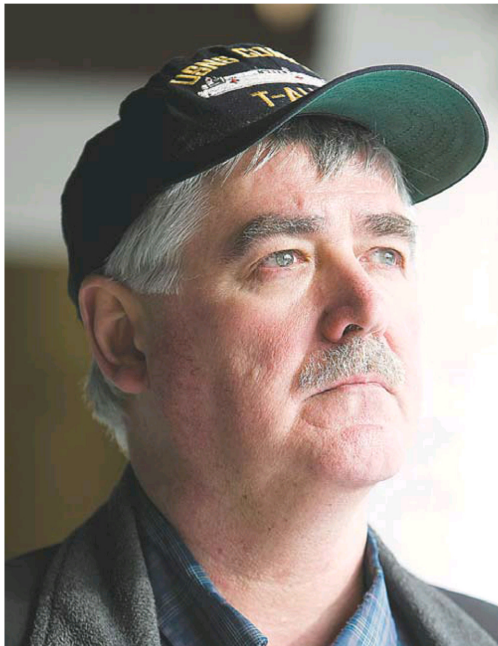
"In some areas we have large immigrant populations who don't participate or get to participate in the election process. How do their issues get heard for what's needed in their area? Aboriginal people might also need to be appointed to ensure necessary diversity.

This has unsettled the educational community. The Calgary Board of Education has said it "strongly disagrees" with the potential of a minister to appoint up to one-third of seats on a school board. The minister would also be able to dissolve boards and appoint a single trustee to take their place.

"The whole notion of appointment goes against democracy. Who does a trustee who is appointed ultimately serve?" asks Harry Chase, education critic for the provincial Liberals.

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MAN faces JAIL for PROTECTING his HOME from MASKED attackers



PETER J. THOMPSON / NATIONAL POST

Ian Thomson's home in Port Colborne was firebombed in August. Niagara Regional Police have charged him with careless use of a firearm in connection with the incident.

Latest case renews calls to implement a version of 'Castle Doctrine' in Canada

BY TAMSIN McMAHON

Ian Thomson moved to a rural homestead in Southern Ontario to lead a quiet life investing in a little fixer-upper. Then his neighbour's chickens began showing up on his property. He warned his neighbour, then killed one of the birds.

The incident began six years of trouble for Mr. Thomson that culminated early one Sunday morning last August when the 53-year-old former mobile-crane operator woke up to the sound of three masked men firebombing his Port Colborne home.

"I was horrified," he said. "I couldn't believe it. I didn't know what was happening. I had no idea what was going on." So Mr. Thomson, a former firearms

instructor, grabbed one of his Smith & Wesson revolvers from his safe, loaded it and headed outside dressed in only his underwear.

"He exited his house and fired his revolver two, maybe three times, we're not sure. Then these firebombing culprits, they ran off," said his lawyer, Edward Burlew.

His surveillance cameras caught the attackers lobbing at least six Molotov cocktails at his house and bombing his doghouse, singing one of his Siberian Huskies. But when Mr. Thomson handed the video footage to Niagara Regional Police, he found himself charged with careless use of a firearm.

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Suspected Sun Sea smuggler arrested

HELD IN THAILAND

BY STEWART BELL

A Sri Lankan suspected of involvement in the voyage of the migrant smuggling ship that brought 492 refugee claimants to Canada last August has been arrested by Thai immigration police.

Nadesan Jeyananthan, 48, who was taken into custody in Bangkok last weekend along with seven others, is described by Canadian and Thai officials as a leading Sri Lankan human-smuggling kingpin in Thailand.

A Thai official said Mr. Jeyananthan was behind a ship that was preparing to sail with 200 Sri Lankans when the voyage was disrupted by police in February. A Canadian official said he is also suspected of helping send the MV Sun Sea to British Columbia, although he was not the main organizer.

So far the group has been charged only with illegally entering Thailand and overstaying their visas. They were arrested in Bangkok's Bang Khen district, where 50 Sri Lankans were picked up in December.

The arrests come as Canada's Conservative government is urging opposition parties to support new legislation that targets human smugglers. On Wednesday, Public Safety Minister Vic Toews said Canada was "a target for increasingly sophisticated global human smuggling networks and further action is needed now."

Since the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka in May, 2009, ethnic Tamils have been fleeing the island and buying their way on to Southeast Asian smuggling ships that charge huge sums for passage to Australia and Canada.

The first ship reached Canada in October, 2009, carrying 76 Sri Lankans. The Sun Sea was intercepted off Vancouver Island last August. Passengers were charged up to \$50,000. The Canadian government alleges that some of the passengers are members of the defeated Tamil Tigers rebel group.

In a decision released this week, the Federal Court approved the release of a Sun Sea passenger identified only as B478, who admitted he had undergone weapons training with the Tamil rebels but fled before completing the training.

The Canada Border Services Agency had argued against his release on the grounds he might not have been forthcoming about the extent of his relationship with the rebels, but the court approved his release on bonds totalling \$7,000.

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WORLD
DITTIAN-IN-CHIEF

Gender politics a drag on school's spirit day

ager of public affairs for the York Region District School Board. "These children are not old enough to even know what 'gender identity politics' are." The school, which runs

INSIDE FP
COLD SHOULDER