

CANADA

Martin against tax hikes

by Canadian Press

(OTTAWA) — Finance Minister Paul Martin says he has a bias against higher personal income taxes but won't rule out new specialized taxes in the upcoming federal budget.

"If you take a look . . . at my record, there have been no personal tax increases (in the last two budgets), and I certainly have a bias against them," Martin said on Baton Broadcasting's Sunday Edition.

But Martin said he wouldn't dismiss Heritage Minister Sheila Copps' plan for a tax on cable television or video rentals that would pay for the CBC.

He said he doesn't favor earmarked taxes in principle, but would soon meet with Copps and Industry Minister John Manley to discuss the idea.

Martin said he's encouraged by what he sees in the Canadian economy.

"I think things are beginning to look quite a lot better."

Planning for worst

OTTAWA (CP) — A coalition of anglophone rights groups wrapped up a four-day conference Sunday with a commitment to hope for the best, but to plan for the worst.

About 60 people representing eight groups met in Aylmer, Que., to plan strategy on English-language rights in education, social services, sign laws and Canadian unity.

The meetings were not open to the media. Bob May, president of the Outaouais Alliance, one of the groups at the conference, said his members don't want to give away their unity strategy.

"Basically, we've reaffirmed our commitment to keep Canada within Quebec."

But May said the Alliance plans to lobby MPs on Parliament Hill at the end of this month to protect the rights of English-speaking Quebecers in case Quebec decides to separate.

Astronaut can't get job

TORONTO (CP) — Four years ago, astronaut Roberta Bondar captured the hearts of Canadians with her historic

flight aboard the space shuttle.

Now she can't find a job.

No Canadian university will give the country's first female astronaut a permanent base — which could cost up to \$4 million — for her research.

So, Bondar said she's being forced to choose between moving to the United States or giving up science to stay in Canada.

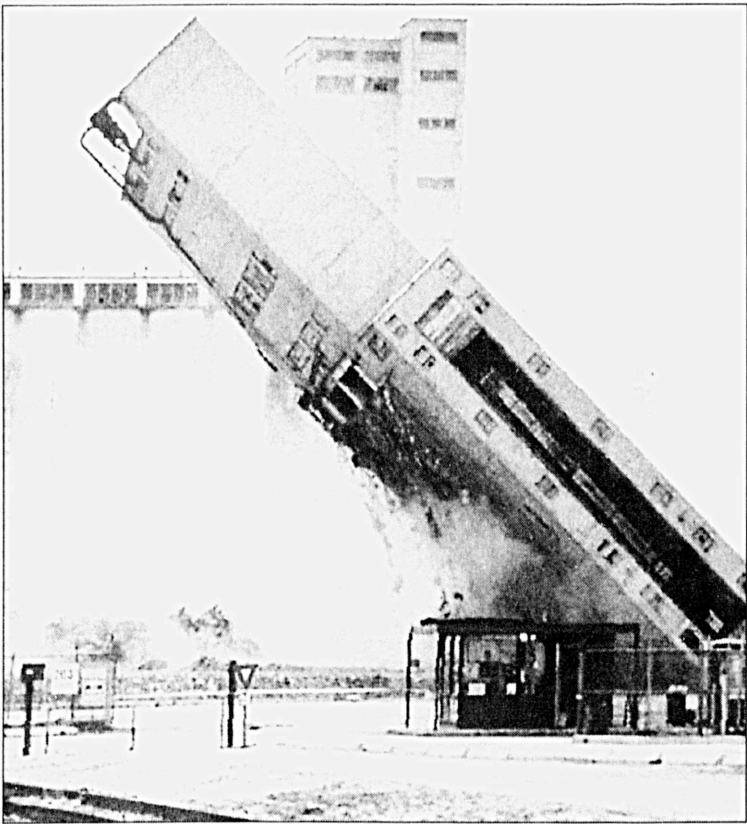
She said she's reluctant to complain, but Canadian universities and industry appear unprepared for her kind of work, researching blood flow to the brain.

Klein fights early parole

CALGARY (CP) — Alberta Premier Ralph Klein wants to kill Section 745 of the Criminal Code, which allows murderers serving a life sentence to apply for early parole.

Klein said on the weekend his government will push federal Justice Minister Allan Rock to repeal the provision allowing application for early parole after 15 years.

He said he was surprised to learn William John Nichols — convicted of the 1976 first-degree murder of Calgary police officer Keith Harrison — was given early parole after serving less than 17 years of a life sentence.



THE VICTORY SOYA MILLS building in Toronto falls after being imploded Sunday. It was the second try at demolishing the building. An attempt in December left it leaning on a slight angle.

No official support for raising CPP age

OTTAWA (CP) — Whenever it's mentioned in official circles — if it is at all — it's uttered in hushed tones, then quickly rejected as something distasteful.

Raising the retirement age to 67 from 65 is an option many analysts are promoting as a reasonable and painless way to help stabilize the Canada Pension Plan.

A government discussion paper says the measure would cut down costs because people wouldn't be able to claim benefits for as long.

But before the paper was even released, Finance Minister Paul Martin made it clear he's not crazy about the idea. He met with his provincial counterparts last week, and most of them avoided the issue.

"Whenever Paul Martin goes out and says I think we should raise the age of eligibility, somebody starts pelting eggs at him," says Robert Brown, a University of Waterloo actuarial science professor. "It's not a happy message."

The government paper — a 62-page discussion of ideas for changing the plan so it will be around for future generations — says an age hike wouldn't be in place until 2011, just in time for baby boomers to start retiring.

The paper makes it clear the hike won't solve all the plan's problems.

But it would cut long-term costs by just over four per cent and shorten the average time a pensioner could collect benefits by about 10 per cent.

The United States announced in

"Whenever Paul Martin goes out and says I think we should raise the age of eligibility, somebody starts pelting eggs at him."

1983 it would gradually increase its retirement age to 67 by 2025.

Brown and others figure it makes sense.

People are living longer than they ever have before and their living standards are higher, so they'll need to work longer to maintain their lifestyle after retirement, he says.

"This is not because Paul Martin says they should," Brown argues. "It's because . . . of the absolute economics of that day and age."

But seniors groups aren't impressed. Tinkering with the age won't affect only pensions, says Edith Johnston, spokeswoman for a seniors lobbying group and herself a pensioner.

Drug plans for seniors begin at age 65, and benefits from private pension plans drop after the CPP kicks in.

Pension consultants doubt corporations will be willing to pick up the slack if the age is boosted by two years.



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The winning numbers drawn in the BC-49 lottery were 12, 13, 17, 24, 27, 37. The bonus number was 28. The four extra numbers were 46, 49, 66, 68.

The winning numbers drawn in the Saturday & Sunday B.C. Keno were unavailable at press time.

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