

CANADA/ WORLD

U.S. retailers feel impact of sagging loonie

BELLINGHAM, Wash. (CP) — John Morgenson loves the Canadians who shop at his store in the Bellis Fair mall on the edge of this city 75 kilometres southeast of Vancouver. The manager of Bellis Fair's JCPenney department store tells his employees — dubbed associates — they should also love Canadians. "We tell our associates, 'Recognize a Canadian. Tell them how much you appreciate their business.'"

Morgenson loves the fact that Canadians — mostly Vancouver-area residents — still travel to this city of about 60,000 people even though Canadian dollars are only worth 65 cents US.

"I love them for still coming down here," Morgenson says in the cluttered office from which he's spent two years managing the



JCPenney outlet, one of five department stores among 130 stores at Bellis Fair. "It's amazing, at this exchange rate, that they would even be coming down at all," says the Dallas native, his feet up on

his desk.

Retailers in this region and others near the Canada-U.S. border are watching Canada's sagging loonie as closely as Canadians. But there's a twist in their interest. To them, the battered buck is a reminder that fewer Canadians are coming south to shop, which is bad news in a region closer to

Vancouver than Seattle. It didn't happen overnight. In 1991, about half JCPenney's Bellis Fair customers were Canadian — a fact measured by currency and credit card receipts. In 1998, the figure is at 13 per cent, a level Morgenson describes as the "icing on the cake" of efforts to make a profit. "It's not like Canadians have stopped coming to Bellingham," says Bellingham mayor Mark Asmundson. "We still see lots of Canadian visitors, but proportionately, it's not as great as it once was. It has been a gradual thing." The drop has been echoed across Whatcom County, a region of about 160,000 people that includes nearby Blaine on the Canada-U.S. border and Bellingham.

Shoppers sorely missed

BELLINGHAM, Wash. (CP) — Quotes on the low loonie's impact on Canadian shopping in this region of northwestern Washington state: "It's amazing at this exchange rate that they would even be coming down at all," — JCPenney manager John Morgenson, on Canadian shoppers. "It's not like Canadians have stopped coming to Bellingham. We still see lots of Canadian visitors, but proportionately, it's not as great as it once was. It has been a gradual thing." — Bellingham Mayor Mark Asmundson. "I don't think you could talk to any merchant who is happy with what is happening." — Blaine Mayor John Hoberlin. "I don't think it takes a rocket scientist to factor (the loonie) into the equation," — Charles Christensen, manager of Bellingham's Bellis Fair mall, on sliding sales.

Tax-free status under the gun?

OTTAWA (CP) — When the tax man came calling at a recent gathering of Indian chiefs, he ignited a furor that some aboriginals say shows a hardening of government policy on taxing Indians. The Ontario government inspector, for the first time that Indian leaders could remember, was looking for provincial sales tax to be charged on aboriginal arts and crafts at a Toronto convention and trade show. He left empty-handed. But some Indians fear the surprise visit was a sign their tax-free status is under increasing scrutiny following several recent court rulings that favored governments over aboriginals when it comes to paying tax. "They're trying to change the rules of the game," said one aboriginal representative.

Backyard bicker ends in death

WINNIPEG (CP) — A shooting in which a woman died in an apparent dispute over a pet cat and some tire tracks seems to stem from a long-standing quarrel. Friends and neighbors of Gabrielle Chartrand, 28, said she and her next-door neighbor, who shared a courtyard in their townhouse complex, bickered constantly from the moment they met. "It was so loud at times, everybody stopped what they were doing to listen," said a longtime resident who didn't want to be identified. "Everyone knew they didn't get along," said another neighbor who didn't want her name printed. Earl Davis, 77, has been charged with second-degree murder. Police seized a .38-calibre handgun.



Police and paramedics rush woman to hospital after she was shot.

Dozens share their pain with Kennedy

ELIE, Man. (CP) — Two women wait under an unblinking Prairie sun in a dusty parking lot on the Trans-Canada highway for more than an hour for Sheldon Kennedy. Then they stand aside until the hockey player autographs his way through cards, T-shirts and miniature hockey sticks for an endless line of well-wishers contributing to his fund to fight child sexual abuse. Finally, the young women step up to where he sits amid drifts of pungent smoke from a barbecue being held in his honor. The first, in a loose T-shirt and cutoff jeans, can't stop the tears as she tells that she too was a victim of childhood sexual abuse. The second, in a smart business suit, betrays her inner turmoil only with a tremor in her voice. Kennedy says such encounters have become commonplace. "Ten or 15 times a day," he says. "It's amazing. I mean, it's just such a silent thing. Obviously it's a silent thing. It's been a major problem in society for such a long time. All we need to do is recognize and understand it . . . You can't tell me that girl that was just here wasn't in major pain." The former NHL forward hid his own pain for 15 years before he broke silence and put minor hockey coach Graham James in prison for 3 1/2 years.

Hundreds mourn slain detective

TORONTO (CP) — Hundreds of people lined up over the weekend to pay their last respects to a police officer stabbed to death last week. Mourners, some wearing blue ribbons, waited for more than an hour outside of a suburban church. Many brought flowers and cards. Det.-Const. Bill Hancox was stabbed to death during a plainclothes stakeout late Tuesday night. He is the first officer killed in the line of duty this year in Canada. Some of those who lined up knew

the 32-year-old detective while others were strangers. "I didn't know him," said Grace Montello, who came with a small bouquet of daisies. "But I feel safe in my home because of people like him. He didn't die in vain. It mattered to me." A funeral with full police honors is set for today. Up to 10,000 mourners — many of them police officers from across North America — are expected for the ceremony in Pickering. During the weekend visitation, a police honor guard stood watch by the

doors of the church while officers on horseback stood vigil by the steeple. Inside the church a sea of flowers surrounded the coffin, which was draped in a Canadian flag. Perched on top was Hancox's hat and a single cream-colored rose. Not far away sat Hancox's wife Kim, quietly speaking with friends and family. Mrs. Hancox is pregnant with the couple's second child. Hancox's father Bill greeted each visitor, shaking their hands and exchanging words of sympathy.

Book about Walker hints at incest

by HELEN BRANSWELL
Canadian Press

Barbara Walker feared her husband, Albert, was having an incestuous relationship with another one of their daughters years before the embezzler fled Canada with their second child, Sheena, a new book about the murderer reveals. The book also suggests the relationship between Albert and Sheena Walker — who posed as man and wife in their years on the run — was incestuous. It disclosed police found photographs "of a kind one would not normally expect between father and daughter" following Walker's 1996 arrest for the murder of Ronald Platt. However, A Hand in the Water: The Many Lies of Albert Walker, does not conclusively answer the burning question hanging over Walker's story: Who fathered Sheena Walker's two little girls? Author Bill Schiller has spent a decade abroad for the Toronto Star, most recently as the newspaper's London-based European bureau chief. His book, published by HarperCollins, hits stores in Canada today. Schiller, who spent a year researching and writing the book, is the only journalist to date to have interviewed Walker himself, visiting him four times in prison during the summer of 1997 as Walker awaited trial. The visits stopped when Walker demanded a substantial sum for his continued co-operation. Walker began a life sentence in July for the

murder of Platt, the Englishman whose identity he assumed to build a new life for himself, his daughter and her two children on the spoils of millions of dollars plundered from clients of his financial services company in southern Ontario. The book says that in the 1980s, Barbara Walker became suspicious about her husband's relationship with one of their four children. She says she burst in on the two in bed when the girl was around 14 but wasn't clear whether she had interrupted horseplay or something more disturbing. With care not to raise the ugly spectre of incest in case she was mistaken, she warned her about "older men," but the girl said nothing against her father. The book confirms Barbara Walker's claim that her ex-husband paid for his oldest daughter, Jill, to have breast implants when she was 16. Schiller reveals that in addition to questionable photographs, police found erotic lingerie among Albert and Sheena Walker's belongings. Barbara Thomson, who befriended Albert and Sheena Walker early in their time in England, said that on a four-day trip Walker shared a bedroom with his 15-year-old daughter, despite Thomson's offers to bunk with her. Thomson said Sheena appeared to be "under his spell," and Schiller believes she wasn't far off the mark. Among the possessions police seized from Walker's home was a book on hypnosis.

Byelection to replace Charest Manning asks PM to lift sanctions on India, Pakistan

OTTAWA (CP) — There's going to be at least one fall election in Quebec this year. A federal byelection will be held Sept. 14 in Sherbrooke, the seat vacated when former national Tory leader Jean Charest quit at the end of April to take charge of the Quebec Liberals. The announcement Sunday from the federal government came amid rumors that Premier Lucien Bouchard is toying with calling a post-Labor Day provincial election. Charest represented the riding since 1984. He was part of two majority Tory governments under Brian Mulroney and Sherbrooke stuck with him in the 1993 election when Canadians elsewhere dumped all but Charest and one other Conservative. He handily won the seat again in 1997. Before Charest, the riding had been Liberal since 1968.

ISLAMABAD (CP) — Reform leader Preston Manning says Canada should abandon the economic sanctions it levelled against India and Pakistan. Manning said Canada should abandon its boycott of India and Pakistan and instead offer "third party arbitration" to help settle outstanding issues between the two countries. "Sanctions end up hurting the poor and could help spread the Asian economic downturn into South Asia," said Manning. He said the sanctions are ineffective because France and Germany continue to trade with India and Pakistan. The opposition leader and reform foreign affairs critic Bob Mills were in Islamabad to meet with Pakistani cabinet ministers. Canada imposed economic sanctions against the two countries in May after they both tested nuclear weapons. After condemning the actions of India and Pakistan Prime Minister Jean Chretien had said "going down this route is fatal for these two countries." Sanctions included banning military exports to Pakistan and the withdrawal of a transfer of \$14 million in cancelled Indian aid to Pakistan.

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