

# Ménard wraps up Parliamentary session

NANCY GIRGIS

A lack of transparency and broken promises are what Canadians and Quebecers have had to deal with from the Conservative Party since the Parliamentary session began on April 13, Bloc Quebecois MPs claim. Marc-Aurèle Fortin MP Serge Ménard, accompanied by his Laval colleagues Nicole Demers and Robert Carrier, met with reporters on June 29 to share his impressions of the 1st session of the 39th Parliament.

Ménard explained that the Tory government has mastered the art of pretending. "They pretend to be tough with criminals, but they remove the gun registry," he said. "They pretend to be concerned with the environment, but they back away from the Kyoto Protocol." He added that the Tories lack transparency and that their true agenda is frightening and would scare most Quebecers.

The government's lack of transparency is evident through Prime Minister Stephen Harper's decision to boycott some media, to extend Canada's mission in Afghanistan and to increase military spending by \$15 billion. Ménard explained that he would have liked to see three conditions before approving the extension of the mission in Afghanistan: to whom prisoners would be confided, the respect of the treaty for land mines and a serious effort to eliminate civilian deaths. "However, the government decided to renew the mission in Afghanistan without respecting any of the conditions we were asking for," Ménard explained. "The government is very able, but is their governance good for Canadians or Quebecers? We don't think so."

## Tories duped Canadians on Kyoto, imbalance

The federal government's decision to back away from the Kyoto Protocol was another deceiving factor according to the Bloc. Ménard deplored the fact that the Conservatives campaigned heavily on environment and have yet

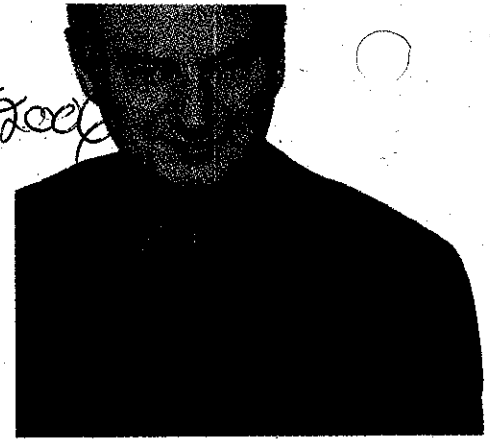
to come up with a plan to replace the Kyoto Protocol. "They deny the necessity of the Kyoto Protocol, and they have destroyed the entire plan set forth by the Liberals," he explained. He also expressed their disdain at the government's refusal to offer money to the Quebec Liberals, who have decided to go ahead with the Kyoto Protocol, pointing out that the province's efforts in the past years have helped reduced Canada's greenhouse gas emissions. Ménard also mentioned that Harper does not seem to realize that Quebecers are deeply concerned by the environment, even though the Coalition Sauvons Kyoto emerged in Quebec and obtained more than 30,000 signatures province wide. "Due to the federal government's attitude towards Kyoto, Quebec and Canada keep backing away from their objectives. This is unacceptable," he said.

Despite their criticism of the Conservative Party, the Bloc Quebecois was the key player when it supported and voted for the first Tory budget. The Bloc allowed the budget to pass due mainly to PM Harper's promise to set up a deadline to solve the fiscal imbalance. However, Ménard and his colleagues point out that the imbalance was widened when Harper decided to break the daycare deal with the province set forth by the former Liberal government. "Despite what Harper says, this problem is not less important today and the Conservatives should keep their promise to solve the fiscal imbalance as early as 2007," he said.

## Tories scarier than Grits: Ménard

Although the Bloc was critical of the federal Liberals during the sponsorship scandal, the party does not believe that the Tories are doing a better job. The Conservatives show less transparency in their decision-making policies than the Liberals, Ménard and his colleagues said. "The Conservatives are scarier than the Liberals, they're not only borrowing America's solutions to problems, but the worst solutions," Ménard said in regards to the Tories' plan to

scrap the gun registry and to increase sentences, adding that the crime rate has gone down significantly since the gun registry was introduced in the mid-90s. Ménard explained that a national gun registry is the best way to fight crime and that it should be left intact. "Since 1991, there has been a 51 per cent reduction in armed robberies, so statistics show that it has done a huge difference in this country," he concluded.



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