

Civil liberties lawyer retiring

Alan Borovoy

"No other individual has contributed more to ensuring that the civil liberties that we all hold so dear in this country, and often take for granted, remain a world standard for our way of life"
— Edward Greenspan

TORONTO – Prominent lawyer Alan Borovoy, best known for his work as general counsel of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) since 1968, is retiring.

He will be honoured at a gala dinner on April 28, 2009, at the Royal York Hotel.

"No other individual has contributed more to ensuring that

the civil liberties that we all hold so dear in this country, and often take for granted, remain a world standard for our way of life," stated Edward Greenspan, one of Canada's most famous defence lawyers, who will act as emcee for the event. "He has given so much to this country that we wanted to honour his

important achievements and to see him off in style."

Before joining CCLA, Borovoy worked with other human rights and civil liberties organizations, including the National Committee for Human Rights of the Canadian Labour Congress, the Ontario Labour Committee for Human Rights and the Toronto & District Labour Committee for Human Rights.

Proceeds from the event will benefit the work of the Canadian

Civil Liberties Education Trust, a charitable organization that performs research and public education on civil liberties.

Nathalie Des Rosiers will be the organization's next General Counsel, effective July 1, 2009.

To discuss sponsorships, reserve tables at the event, or for further information, contact Caitlin Smith, Coordinator, Fundraising & Membership, at csmith@ccla.org or 416-363-0321.



Mike Cohen
QUEBEC CONFIDENTIAL

Threat of separatism on hold again

MONTREAL – Officially, the organized Jewish community here always remains neutral during provincial elections. However, it is no secret that the very first time the separatist Parti Québécois was elected to power under their founder, the late René Lévesque, the Jewish community took a hit that it would never recover from. Families bolted the province in droves, with Toronto being the primary beneficiary.

The PQ did hold a referendum in 1980 to seek a mandate to begin negotiations for independence, but they failed. During the past 29 years power has shifted back and forth between the PQ and the federalist Liberals. There was another referendum in 1995 that came razor close to succeeding, as 49.6 per cent of Quebecers voted to secede. Premier Jacques Parizeau was so infuriated that evening he blamed the loss on "money and the ethnic vote." The remarks were seen as clearly pointed towards the Jewish community. Parizeau resigned, Lucien Bouchard assumed power and support for separation began to slip away.

Jean Charest's Liberals were elected in 2003 with a comfortable majority, but four years later they only managed to secure a minority government. Charest rolled the dice at the end of October and called a snap election. Last week the gamble paid off, as he won a slim majority of 66 seats. Federalists can now breathe easy for four years, unless Charest loses four members and finds himself in minority territory again.

When Charest first left his job as leader of the then tiny Progressive Conservative Party in 1998 to take over the provincial Liberals he was seen as the key to federalist resurgence in Quebec. It took him five years to win power and when he did, most of his actions were sharply criticized, bringing his ranking in the polls to significantly low levels. Early on in that mandate he tried to make nice with the Jewish community by promising special funding for Jewish day schools. But the plan was poorly orchestrated. The PQ cried foul, controversy erupted over special treatment for the Jews and Charest pulled the offer from the table, never to be seen again.

Most observers were convinced Charest would not be able to win another election. But then he got a gift in new PQ leader André Boisclair, who was clearly ill prepared to run for the premier's job. In the April 2007 vote, Charest won with Quebec's first minority government. The PQ was decimated, finishing third and prompting Boisclair's quick resignation. On the other hand, Mario Dumont, the leader of the Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ) had a breakthrough performance, coming within eight seats of forming the government. The standings were: Liberals 48, ADQ 41 and PQ 36.

Charest took the close call as a message and pledged to do things differently this time around. His first act was to establish a smaller cabinet of 18 ministers. That move ended up angering the Jewish community as neither of its two members in the National Assembly, Lawrence Bergman (D'Arcy McGee) or Russell Copeman (NDG) were given seats at the cabinet table. For Bergman, in particular, this was seen as a significant demotion, given the fact he had served as revenue minister the previous four years.

Charest did all of the right things over the next year and a half, staying on message and talking tough to the federal government. Dumont, who resigned last week after his party was reduced to eight members, turned out to be no match for him. Yes, Charest pandered to Dumont's demands to stage public hearings on how far society should go to accommodate requests for religious and cultural adjustments from individuals from minority groups, but the report was filed and essentially stashed away. The PQ elected a new leader, Pauline Marois, who did not look like much of a match for Charest.

With the economy in trouble Charest called the election. Ironically, it was Prime Minister Stephen Harper and now former Federal Liberal leader Stéphane Dion who probably caused him to be elected with such a small majority. With Harper's government about to fall, he went on the attack against "the separatists" while Dion made a pact to work with Gilles Duceppe and his separatist Bloc Québécois. Whereas Charest was cruising towards at least 70 seats, all of the theatrics in Ottawa gave Marois a much needed shot in the arm on the eve of the vote. Separatists were enraged and they literally brought the PQ back to life. They now have an impressive 51 seats.

It is kind of ironic that Dion, the man who devoted so much time and energy to battle the separatists, may have been the trigger for the PQ's revival.

Mike Cohen is the Jewish Tribune's Quebec bureau chief. He can be reached at info@mikecohen.ca.

Think carefully before new spouse moves in



John Syrtash

Q: I am intending to marry this year. I have a house which is currently rented and I am living in a rental apartment. After marriage I will continue living in the apartment and my house will also continue to be rented. In case of a divorce, do I have to split my rental house with my spouse even though it will not be our matrimonial house and is solely in my name?

A: The value of a rental property as of the date of marriage is not considered a "matrimonial home" unless both of you reside in it on the date of separation. So unless you both move into it and reside in it on the day you separate, then its value as of the date of marriage is excluded from any calculation of your "net worth" when calculating property division.

However, its increase in value from the date of marriage to the date of separation, if you still own that rental property, will be included in calculating your net worth- this is called "net family property." It is subject to calculation on how much you may have to pay your wife in any property settlement, when comparing the increase of your net worth from the date of marriage to the date of separation. That increase in net worth (net family property) is compared to your wife's increase in net worth and the person with the higher increase pays the "poorer" spouse an "equalization payment" to "equalize" any difference between the two spouses over the course of the marriage.

The exception is the matrimonial home, meaning the home the parties resided together on the date of separation (not to be confused with any property either party may have owned and later sold on the date of marriage.) The entire value, even the premarital value of the matrimonial home is included in the net worth (net family property) of the registered owner.

I strongly recommend that anyone who owns a valuable home, with their new spouse about to move in, sign a marriage contract to exclude its premarital value in the event of separation, unless that new spouse is about to invest significantly with their own money. A person with substantial equity should think carefully when getting married before allowing their new spouse to simply "move in."

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PHOTO: ATARA BECK

Chabad Rabbi Yonah Vilenkin, director of Tzivos Hashem Organization, uses a hands-on approach

Public school students make olive oil for Jewish workshop

TORONTO – A week before Chanukah, grade 4 and 5 students at Sheppard Public School participated in a Jewish Cultural Workshop titled Olive Oil Press as part of the school's promotion of cultural diversity.

According to Ira Applebaum, school principal, the message is: "A little light dispels a lot of darkness."

Chabad Rabbi Yonah Vilenkin, director of Tzivos Hashem Organization, uses a hands-on approach; for instance, the students can have fun squeezing oil out of the olives that are on dis-

play and use it to light the menorah.

Sheppard Public School will be the site of the Toronto Board of Education's Afrocentric Alternative School in September 2009. "It's a very multicultural neighbourhood," said Michael Kennedy, vice-principal. "I would say there's no majority group."

Trustee James Pasternak was instrumental in bringing in this Chanukah event, Kennedy added. "We're always interested in hearing about different cultures and traditions."

Wednesday, Dec. 24, 8 pm

The Domino Effect:

Judaism & Christianity & The Parting of the Ways

Thursday, Dec. 25, 1-4 pm

Even the Missionary Can Quote Scripture:

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