

## CANADA

# Vote: Harper vows to keep heat on

Continued from PAGE A1

"This is a corrupt party which is in the process of ruining the country's finances and which is now ignoring the democratically expressed will of the House of Commons. This government does not have the moral authority to govern this country," Mr. Harper said outside the House.

"This doesn't mean there isn't going to be another opportunity," Mr. Martin responded. "There will be a budget vote and there will be opposition days before the end of the month."

Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe vowed to find a way to bring down the government, but, like Mr. Harper, gave no hint about his plans. "We won't wait for them. We will keep on finding ways to finish with this government."

When asked what was next for the Opposition, Conservative House leader Jay Hill stole a line from former Liberal prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

"Just watch me, I guess, is a pretty famous line. Parliament is over tonight. It's done," said Mr. Hill, who would not even confirm his party will show up for work today.

"There's a chance just about anything could happen."

Mr. Valeri had made clear even before the vote that the Liberals did not consider the motion, which called for the government to resign, one of confidence, and that they will continue to govern and bring forward legislation as usual.

In fact, the Liberals have six new bills they intend to introduce in the next two weeks.

Mr. Valeri said the motion was merely "procedural" because it asked the public accounts committee to rewrite a report so that it calls on the government to resign.

It would only be considered a legitimate vote of confidence by the government if the committee overwhelmingly voted in favour of this motion, said Mr. Valeri. That is unlikely, considering the Liberals and NDP have a majority on the committee.

Mr. Valeri rejected charges the Liberals are afraid to face a confidence vote and are trying to force the Conservatives and Bloc Québécois to defeat the budget, which contains cash for cities, the environment, the Atlantic provinces and child care, something the Tories appear reluctant to do.

He added the opposition will have plenty of opportunity in the coming days and weeks, perhaps as early as tomorrow, to defeat the government on two budget votes — both considered matters of confidence — and three opposition days, which have now been rescheduled to take place at the end of May.

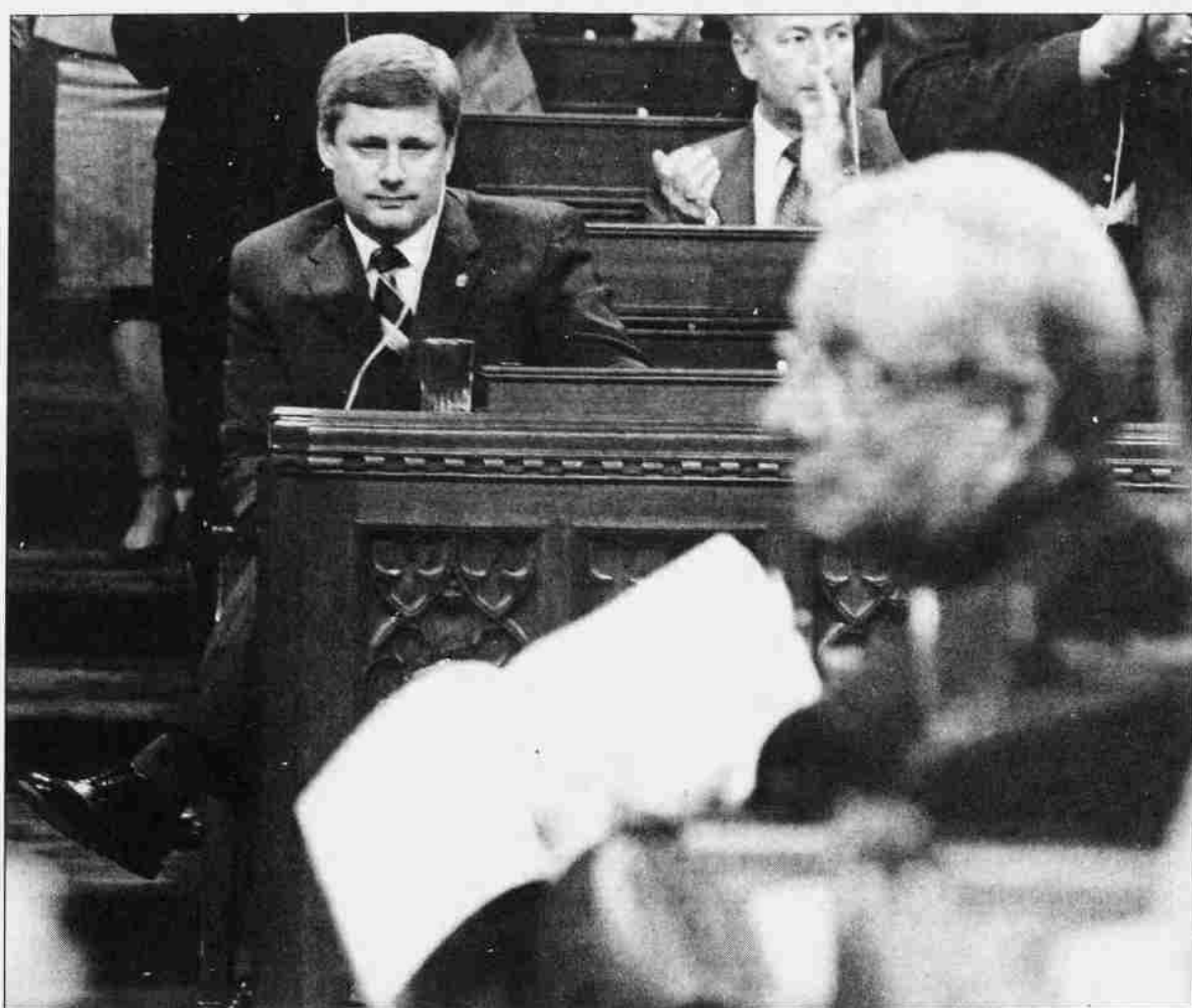
"We are not afraid to be held accountable," Mr. Valeri said. "The fact of the matter is that either through the budget or through opposition days, there is an ability to hold the government to account and we are laying that out for you."

Two Liberal cabinet ministers — Justice Minister Irwin Cotler and Natural Resources Minister John Efford — were absent from the vote yesterday, along with independent MP Chuck Cadman.

Mr. Cotler was reportedly in Montreal for a family funeral, Mr. Efford was ill and Mr. Cadman is undergoing cancer treatment in B.C.

The two other independents — Carolyn Parrish and David Kilgour — voted with the government.

A top Liberal strategist noted that had these MPs been present, the vote might have been tied and Speaker Pe-



Under the icy glare of Conservative leader Stephen Harper, Prime Minister Paul Martin casually flips through a Commons procedural book during last night's tense bid by the opposition to topple the government.

ter Milliken, a Liberal, would have broken the tie. Mr. Milliken would be expected to cast a vote in favour of the status quo — maintaining the Liberals in office.

Conservative MPs Dave Chatters and Darrel Stinson, both of whom have cancer and made the trek to Ottawa despite their illnesses, received a standing ovation by almost the entire Commons when they cast their votes.

As Conservative and Bloc MPs rose bench by bench to vote, Liberals relaxed in an obviously scripted pose of nonchalance.

Mr. Martin thumbed his way through what could have been a slim briefing book. Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan pored over newspaper articles in the Library of Parliament's daily clipping book. Public Works Minister Scott Brison, in a pose of determined relaxation, flipped his BlackBerry in his hand.

As the drama built up leading to the vote, the constitutional implications became even more murky.

Ottawa Centre NDP MP Ed Broadbent, the dean of the Commons, said at one point earlier this week it was a confidence vote. "Now, I'm not sure," he said after question period. "I go back and forth."

Liberal insiders say it will likely be next week before debate on the budget wraps up, because a long list of Liberal and NDP MPs are expected to want to debate the budget, and a vote will not take place until after that happens. However, the consensus is there will be an election this spring.

If the opposition were to win a clear non-confidence motion in the next two weeks, the election would be held in late June.

If they are forced to wait until the end of May to exercise their opposition-day privileges, an election would not take place until July, something likely to anger most Canadians who take their holidays at that time.

According to a new poll by Decima Research, forcing a spring election

could hurt the Conservatives almost as much as testimony from the sponsorship inquiry could lower support for the government.

The Tories are keeping their next procedural moves closely guarded. Mr. Hill indicated he might join the Bloc Québécois in pleading his party's case for an election before Gov. Gen. Adrienne Clarkson.

"We're not ruling out anything at this point. We're taking this one step at a time and we've been doing this for a couple of weeks now, ever since they cancelled our opposition days," Mr. Hill said.

"That blocking of democracy is continuing on the part of the government, so we just take this one day at a time, one step at a time."

John Williams, the Conservative chairman of the public accounts committee, refused to say what tactics the Tories and Bloc might take to pass the amendment through the committee and force a confidence vote on the government's terms.

Earlier in the Commons, Mr. Duceppe, who has teamed up with Mr. Harper's Tories, accused Mr. Martin of putting Canada in a "constitutional crisis," by failing to do the right thing and resign because he does not have the confidence of Parliament.

WITH FILES FROM JOE PARASKEVAS, CRISTIN SCHMITZ AND THE CANADIAN PRESS

## Only House can rule on confidence

BY CRISTIN SCHMITZ

Don't expect Gov. Gen. Adrienne Clarkson or House of Commons Speaker Peter Milliken to resolve partisan wrangles over whether votes engineered by the Conservatives and Bloc Québécois amount to expressions of non-confidence in the minority Liberal government.

Legal authorities agreed "confidence" in a government, or lack of it, is a question that can only be determined by the Commons as a whole. In other words, not by the prime minister, opposition leaders, any individual politician, and certainly not the Governor General.

If MPs disagree over whether a matter is one of confidence — for example, because a motion is not clearly worded, or because the motion may be ambiguous as a matter of procedure, as yesterday's successful opposition motion demanding the government resign arguably was — it is incumbent on the government or the opposition to table a motion that will clarify the intentions of the House.

The Governor General, who normally takes the advice of the prime minister, would only disregard the prime minister's advice in exceptional circumstances, experts suggested.

For example, if the prime minister asked the Governor General to dissolve Parliament in order to thwart the ability of MPs to vote on a clear motion of non-confidence, she might be expected to decline until the vote was held.

Nor would the Speaker of the Commons wade into confidence debates.

"The Speaker would refuse to intervene because that's not his field," said Camille Montpetit, co-author of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, the authority on the subject.

"The matter of confidence is not a procedural issue. It's a political issue," he stressed. "Therefore, it's a matter of interpretation. The Commons will (vote) on a question (and) whether the government will interpret that as an opinion of non-confidence is the prime minister's prerogative. The governor general will normally act on the advice of the prime minister."

Mr. Montpetit noted tradition dictates that if a government is defeated in the House on a confidence question, then it is expected to resign, or to seek the dissolution of Parliament so an election can be held.

What amounts to "confidence" varies with the circumstances. Clear-cut confidence motions include explicitly worded motions that state the House does or doesn't have confidence in the government, or motions that are declared by the government to be questions of confidence.

But a number of motions are implicitly considered to be confidence matters, including motions related to the budget, or in reply to the speech from the throne.

### BY THE NUMBERS

#### Voted in favour of the motion:

99 Conservatives and 54 Bloc Québécois. Total: 153

#### Voted against the motion:

129 Liberals, 19 NDP and two independents — David Kilgour and Carolyn Parrish. Total: 150

**Absent:** Liberal cabinet ministers Irwin Cotler and John Efford, and independent MP Chuck Cadman. There is one empty seat.

**The future scenario if everyone is in the House:** Mr. Cotler and Mr. Efford support the government. Mr. Cadman has said he'll vote with his constituency, which two different polls have indicated don't support a spring election. This would create a tie.

**The missing piece:** In the event of a tie, House of Commons Speaker Peter Milliken would cast the tie-breaking vote. He is an elected Liberal MP from Kingston and the Islands.

"The Speaker upholds the status quo," says Patrick Smith, a political scientist at Simon Fraser University. "That's the tradition of the Speaker. The Speaker doesn't vote to change something. So if the House is undecided, the Speaker doesn't decide, in effect, for a change."

"That's what I would assume Mr. Milliken would do."

## Lose Your Weight... Not Your Lifestyle!

Call about our NEW Free-to-Live Program!!



"I lost **26 lbs.** in 13 weeks!"  
— Sandy Berge

free  
to  
LIVE

- Fast, safe, effective weight loss
- One-on-one counseling
- Individualized, nutritionally balanced meal plans
- No injections, no gimmicks
- World's fastest-growing weight loss chain

Call today for your FREE consultation:  
**1-800-764-SLIM**  
(7546)

#### OTTAWA SOUTH

2639 Alta Vista Dr., (S.E. Corner of Bank and Alta Vista, Near Independent Grocer)

#### OTTAWA EAST

534 Montreal Rd. (Corner of Montreal Rd. and St. Laurent Blvd., with Blockbuster and Swiss Chalet)

#### NEPEAN

1843 Merivale Rd. (Just North of Hunt Club, Infront of Costco)

#### OTTAWA WEST

1355 Richmond Rd. (at Carling Ave. across from Walmart and Loeb)



OVER 700 CENTRES WORLDWIDE

"As people vary, so does their weight loss. You may lose more or less than Sandy. ©2005 LA Weight Loss Centres, Inc."

## Kiss: 'It happened. This is Montreal!'

Continued from PAGE A1

"You start all this kissing, it's easy for her to forget what she has to do," he said with a smile.

Once she finished speaking, the princess politely returned the mayor's kiss.

Asked later about his behaviour, Mr. Tremblay denied he had done anything wrong.

"It happened. This is Montreal! It was fantastic. She didn't mind. She kissed me, too," Mr. Tremblay said.

"I don't know if she was amused, but I can tell you her highness was not upset," said royal spokesman Hans Kemp. "She definitely was not upset."

John Aimers, president of the Monarchist League of Canada, says protocol governing royal visits is changing.

"The last time the Prince of Wales came to Canada, Sheila Copps bussed him, and there was a lot of comment about how appropriate it was," Mr. Aimers said. "It is very continental, isn't it?"

Dutch royalty is generally considered more relaxed. However, some travelling with the princess and her husband said the kiss was "unusual."

Those who have touched the Queen, inadvertently or not, have made front-page news. Canadian cycling champion and sportswear manufacturer Louis Garneau put his arm around the Queen in 2002 after a reception at Rideau Hall. And in 1991, Alice Frazier, a Washington woman, gave the Queen

a bear hug when greeting her at her home.

Princess Margriet's two-day visit to Montreal yesterday is designed to honour the part Canadian servicemen played in the liberation of the Netherlands 60 years ago.

"For many veterans it has not been possible to join the extensive and moving celebrations in our country," the princess said. "My visit to Canada is intended to involve them in our celebrations and to express our everlasting gratitude."

Princess Margriet was born in January 1943 in Ottawa, where her mother, Queen Juliana, spent five years in exile during the Second World War. In order for Margriet to retain her royal status, the federal government declared the delivery room at the Civic Hospital Dutch territory and flew the Dutch flag from the Peace Tower so the princess would be a Dutch national. She spent the first five years of her life growing up in Stornoway, which today is the residence of the federal opposition leader.

Princess Margriet is coming to Ottawa tomorrow through Saturday. Her schedule includes a tour of the new Canadian War Museum, the unveiling of a plaque commemorating the liberation of the Netherlands, and a visit to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier for a wreath-placing ceremony.

THE MONTREAL GAZETTE,  
WITH FILES FROM JOANNE LAUCIUS