

Jaffer grilled by MPs over lobbying scandal

JAFFER
CONTINUED
FROM P1
Neither Jaffer, Glémaud, nor their company are registered to work as lobbyists on Parliament Hill, raising concerns about work both men did on behalf of clients they refused to name during the hearing.

Among the people Green Power Generation worked with was Nazim Gillani, an alleged con-man being pursued by authorities for fraud or tax evasion. Gillani boasted in an email that Jaffer would open doors to the Prime Minister's Office after the two had a meeting last September.

It was after that meeting that Jaffer was pulled over by police and charged with drunk driving and cocaine possession. The charges were dropped last month when crown prosecutors decided the case would fail due to problems with admission of evidence as a result of questionable police work.

The strongest allegations of the hearing put that issue front and centre when Liberal MP Pat Martin asked Jaffer whether the cocaine was payment for lobbying services.

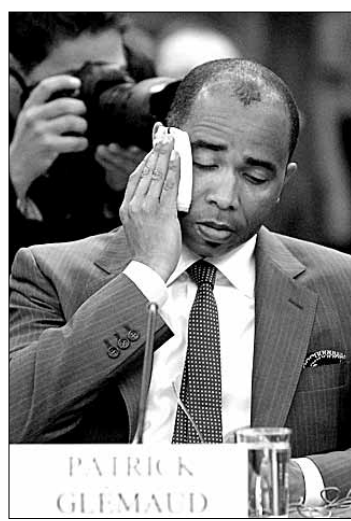
Jaffer and Glémaud repeatedly stated they received no funds to lobby the government and that their company has never received government grants or other money. Jaffer said their business with Gillani went nowhere because there was "no synergy" between the two companies.

Martin, however, suggested otherwise.

"You left with 'no synergy' and a pocket full of cocaine... he was left with the impression that you were going to be great business partners," he said.

Jaffer's wife, Helena Guergis, was ejected from the Conservative caucus and fired from her role as Minister of State on the Status of Women when the PMO was tipped off that she might be entangled in the Gillani affair.

Green Power Generation bills itself as a business that can help bring new green energy companies to market but to date the company has made no money



Patrick Glémaud, business partner of former Conservative member of Parliament Rahim Jaffer, prepares to testify before the Commons government operations committee on Parliament Hill in Ottawa April 21, 2010. REUTERS/CHRIS WATTIE



Former Conservative MP Rahim Jaffer waits to testify before the Commons government operations committee on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on Wednesday. At the hearing, Jaffer was grilled by MPs from all parties over allegations that he had used his political connections to carry out illegal lobbying. REUTERS/CHRIS WATTIE

despite working with several companies—at least three looking to secure funds from the federal government.

Glémaud was pressed and later ordered by the committee chair to name the three companies whose projects he submitted for consideration for the Green Infrastructure Fund. However, he said that he could not remember after earlier saying that two of the companies were not Wright Tech Systems, but he could not remember who the third company was.

Wright Tech has attracted specific attention because the owner of the company has a home in Guergis' riding and it was Wright Tech that Gillani was talking about when he boasted that Jaffer would open access to the PMO. There are also reports that Wright Tech was about to be taken public, and the Toronto Star has reported on Gillani's reputation as a "pump and dump" conman that inflates the price of a company so the stock can be sold off for a lucrative profit.

One of the most contentious points in Wednesday's hearing was how Jaffer described himself on his personal website and whether he was presenting himself as someone with personal connections in the government and able to exploit those connections for potential clients.

Jaffer flip-flopped over specific wording, at times saying a key phrase suggesting he could secure support for projects from the government was not on his site, at other times saying it was on his personal website but was being taken out of context.

Conservative MP Chris Warkentin was incredulous when, after quizzing Jaffer on this specific point, he was later given a print-out from the website which contradicted Jaffer's previous denial.

"This kind of behaviour sullies all of our names," said Warkentin.

While the Liberals have continued to try to link the scandal to the PMO due to allegations Guergis's involvement and Gillani's boast that Jaffer had access there, news commentators were saying after the hearings that Jaffer received no help from his former colleagues.

Jaffer himself said after the hearing that he felt like he had been hung out to dry.

There were some emotional moments during the hearing, particularly at the beginning when Jaffer was close to tears while describing his sorrow for the "almost insufferable" pain he had brought to his family—especially Guergis—over the drunk driving incident.

"She is the most important person in my life and I love her dearly. And it is very unfortunate that her good name has been dragged into my problems so unfairly," he said.

However, he denied ever using drugs, making no allusion to or explanation for the cocaine found in his car.

Jaffer, who was the only Conservative MP in Alberta not to get elected in 2008, said he was confident his wife would be cleared of any wrongdoing as the commissioner of lobbying looked into the matter.



Greeters in Polish national costumes welcomed guests to the ball celebrating the Polish Orphans Charity's 10th anniversary on Saturday night. MADALINA HUBERT/THE EPOCH TIMES

Charity raises funds for children of plane crash victims

By MADALINA HUBERT
Epoch Times Staff

TORONTO—It was a bitter-sweet celebration for Toronto's Polish community on Saturday night at a charity ball attended by prominent Polish Canadians and members of the diplomatic community.

Held at Toronto's prestigious Le Royal Meridien King Edward Hotel, the Polish Orphans Charity celebrated its 10th anniversary by donating scholarships to deserving orphans in Poland and surrounding countries.

An extra \$20,000 was donated for children who lost their parents in the recent plane crash that killed 96 people, including Polish president Lech Kaczynski and his wife Maria.

Under the patronage of former lieutenant governor of Ontario Hon. Lincoln Alexander, the charity was founded in 2000 by Toronto-based dental surgeon Dr. Richarda Russ to raise money to build playgrounds for children in Polish orphanages.

Fifty-three playgrounds have been built to date, and the charity has expanded its reach to other countries including Afghanistan, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Ukraine as well as a First Nations community in Canada.

"Canada is such a multicultural country, so we help children not

only in Poland but all over the world," explained Dr. Russ.

Dr. Russ said the key to the charity's success is both its transparency and the fact that it is operated strictly by volunteers. For example, moneys collected go directly into building the playgrounds rather than to the orphanages.

'Canada is such a multicultural country, so we help children not only in Poland but all over the world.'

— Dr. Richarda Russ

Mr. Alexander expressed his support for the event he said was dear to his heart not only because it helps children, but also because he holds great regard for Polish Canadians.

"The Polish people have done a lot for Canada. When anybody does anything for Canada, I love them because this is the land of my birth," he said.

Mr. Alexander holds a special place in Canadian history as the first black man to become a member of the Canadian Parliament,

to serve as a cabinet minister, and as the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. During his mandate as governor from 1985 to 1991, he particularly focused on youth and education.

Although he has attended the balls since the beginning, it was especially important for him to attend Saturday's event in light of the tragic plane crash.

"He would not have missed tonight. It was very, very important for him to be here tonight of all nights," said Marni Beal, Mr. Alexander's partner.

"This is an opportunity for people in the Polish community, particularly in the Toronto community, to come together and to mourn and to also celebrate being Polish, their Polish history, and the good times and the bad times that have gone in the past," Ms. Beal said.

Former Toronto City Councillor Chris Korwin-Kuczynski was one of the masters of ceremonies at the ball. The programme featured the Grand Salon Orchestra under the director of Kerry Stratton, the music director of the Toronto Philharmonic Orchestra. A silent auction, and of course dancing and music were also part of the evening.

The Epoch Times was a sponsor of the Polish Orphans Charity's 10th anniversary Ball Pologne.

Supreme Court gives cities more authority to tax crown corporations

By MATTHEW LITTLE
Epoch Times Staff

OTTAWA—The Supreme Court of Canada may have changed tax revenues for hundreds of Canadian municipalities in a decision last week that will force two Crown corporations in Montreal to give the city an extra \$20 million.

The court settled a three-year fight between the City of Montreal, the CBC, and the Port of Montreal by deciding the latter two should pay Montreal property taxes just like other privately-run corporations.

The issue arose after Montreal changed its tax scheme in 2003 and opened the door to challenging Crown corporations to pay property taxes which are not normally applied to land owned by the federal government. In such cases, a payments-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILT) scheme is applied and the federal government sends cash to the city to offset the cost of services used by the Crown corporation.

The ruling will force the two Crown corporations to pay on par with other similar properties after the CBC and the port challenged the city on the amounts they were asked to pay. The change could add an extra \$20 million to city coffers.

"Municipalities had a lot at stake in this case, and this ruling is a victory," Federation of Canadian Municipalities CEO Brock Carlton said in a statement.

"Fair and predictable PILT revenues are crucial for municipali-



The Supreme Court ruled that the CBC and the Port of Montreal, two Crown corporations, must pay an extra \$20 million in taxes to the City of Montreal. REUTERS/MARK BLINCH

ties struggling to deliver a growing range of services with just eight cents of every tax dollar collected."

Carlton said the ruling gives Canadian municipalities a guarantee that "as federal departments and Crown corporations feel their budgets being pinched by the government's deficit reduction efforts, they won't be able to dodge their property tax obligations either."

The ruling puts tax rates clearly under the authority of the city and could lead to challenges in other municipalities where PILT disagreements are already brewing.

Municipal officials in Toronto, where the city is in a similar disagreement with the Toronto Port

Authority (TPA), embraced the decision, although the port said the Montreal decision has nothing to do with the situation in Toronto.

Geoffrey Wilson, TPA president and CEO, said the decision is actually consistent with the port's views and that the port has a responsibility to pay its fair share for the municipal services it uses.

"We further believe that PILTs payable to the City of Toronto should be relative to what we would pay in business taxes if the TPA were a private-sector operator. The Court's ruling dealt with a dispute that was unrelated to any issues that have arisen in Toronto between the TPA and the City of Toronto in recent years."

The dramatic fall of 'Gorgeous' Guergis

GUERGIS CONTINUED FROM P1
(Since her banishment to the backbenches, where she will sit as an independent, the seats have been shuffled to move another attractive female MP, Rona Ambrose, into view behind the PM.)

Guergis rose from the back benches to cabinet, landing the role as defender of women when Prime Minister Stephen Harper named her the Minister of State for the Status of Women after the last election.

Her dramatic fall from favour began when she exploded in a now infamous outburst at the Charlottetown Airport where she arrived late for a flight and refused to cooperate with airport security.

One airport staff member said it was the worst meltdown he had ever seen, with Guergis cursing and beating on doors. Guergis apologized, but for weeks following the incident opposition MPs hounded the Prime Minister to call for her resignation.

Later a series of letters defending Guergis as an MP sparked further controversy when it was uncovered that they were written by some of Guergis's staffers.

The latest controversy, which alleges she was involved in her husband's business dealings and therefore in a conflict of interest as a Member of Parliament, has spiralled into allegations involving drugs and prostitutes.

Questions swirl about the former minister's role in the business dealings of her husband, Rahim Jaffer, a former Conservative star himself whose own fall from political grace began in 2008 when he was the only Conservative MP in Alberta to not get elected.

That fall reached a new low on Wednesday when it became apparent that any political capital he might have had on Parliament Hill had evaporated. That was the day Jaffer faced a parliamentary committee probing allegations that he and business partner Patrick Glémaud were involved in unregistered and therefore illegal business lobbying.

Jaffer, who might have expected a lighter hand from his former Conservative colleagues, faced charges from two Conservatives that he had sullied the names of all MPs.

Jaffer said he had previously promised Prime Minister Stephen Harper not to get involved in any business that involved lobbying because of the effect it could have on his wife's career.

"I assured him at that time because of my wife's involvement in the government that I would never, ever undertake any business that involved any sort of lobbying activities or that would put any unfair demands on the government to put them in any conflict of interest," he told the committee, recalling his discussion with the PM after he lost the 2008 election.

But as the details of accusations against Guergis and Jaffer have emerged, including that an alleged con man has pictures of the couple partying with expensive prostitutes where cocaine was being used, the opposition parties have pounced.

On Monday, Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff pressed Harper on why he had not asked Guergis about the controversy when Jaffer was arrested for drunk driving and cocaine possession in September 2009.

"The Prime Minister did not call in his minister and ask her about her involvement in Mr. Jaffer's tangled affairs, nor of her possible involvement in some of the criminal charges. He defended her in public for seven months after she made mistake after mistake after mistake," charged Ignatieff.

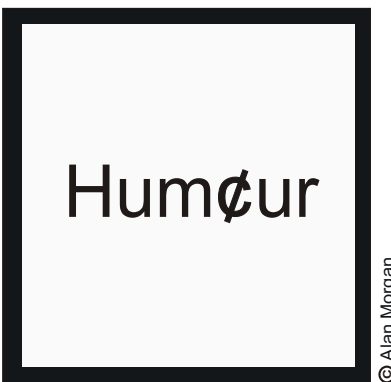
While it is not clear how the PM would have known about Jaffer's business dealings at that time, the opposition has not stopped trying to construe the current allegations against Guergis as reflecting a lapse of judgement in the PMO.

Allegations against Guergis got serious on the previous Friday when Liberal MP Mark Holland brought up a letter dating back to September from Guergis to her cousin, the most senior municipal officials in Simcoe county, urging that he and his council hire Wright Tech Systems and adopt its bio-dryer technology.

"What the letter failed to mention was that her husband, Rahim Jaffer, and his business partner were in a position to personally profit from a company whose business plan had a projected value of more than \$1 billion," said Holland.

Guergis has not addressed the allegations yet except to say she will defend herself in detail when she knows the full range of the allegations against her.

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PUZZLES IN PEACE
Guess the hidden saying, phrase or word(s) suggested by the graphic below



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children helping children through education

SOLUTION ON P7