

Top court widens study of Charter clause as it accepts Saskatchewan case

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JUSTICE REPORTER

The Supreme Court of Canada agreed Thursday to hear an appeal of a Saskatchewan case on the Charter's notwithstanding clause, adding a broader national scope to legal questions already in motion at the top court in a landmark Quebec secularism case.

Both the Saskatchewan and Quebec cases revolve around potential limits on governments' use of Section 33 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the notwithstanding clause. The cases mark the first time the top court has weighed these issues in depth since the late 1980s.

The Supreme Court's decision to add a second notwithstanding clause case to its list of pending hearings follows last week's decisions in Alberta and Quebec to use the clause in new laws. Section 33 of the Charter allows legislators to override some rights and shields legislation from legal challenges.

Last January, the Supreme Court agreed to hear a Quebec case over the province's secularism law. In 2019, Quebec deployed the notwithstanding clause to protect Bill 21, which banned some public-sector workers, including teachers, from wearing religious symbols such as hijabs on the job.

All the legal arguments have been filed at the top court, but a hearing has not yet been scheduled.

Saskatchewan used the notwithstanding clause in 2023 to shield legislation governing transgender children. That law requires parental consent at school when children younger than 16 want to change their name or pronouns.

■ CLAUSE, A4

Tory MP Jeneroux resigns, becoming second to leave caucus within days

STEPHANIE LEVITZ
EMILY HAWS OTTAWA

Edmonton Conservative MP Matt Jeneroux has announced he's resigning, another surprising development during a high-stakes week for the minority Liberal Parliament.

Mr. Jeneroux told The Globe and Mail that he is not crossing the floor to the Liberals but provided no specific details on what led to his decision to leave.

Earlier this week, Nova Scotia MP Chris d'Entremont left the Conservatives to join the government, attributing his choice partly to a disagreement with Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre's style.

His move preceded a vote on the government's first budget, and put the Liberals one step closer to the majority vote needed to get it passed. They currently have 170 seats out of 343.

Opposition Whip Chris Warkentin told The Globe, however, that Mr. Jeneroux will remain a member of the Conservative caucus until next year.

Mr. Warkentin said he also anticipates Mr. Jeneroux will vote with the Conservatives and against the Liberals' budget when it comes up for a final vote later this month.

After Mr. d'Entremont's defection, the Liberals let it be known that he wasn't the only one they were courting. Mr. Jeneroux had been on a list of names circulating around Ottawa of others who might cross.

His office had issued a statement on Wednesday denying that he was going to leave his party.

Mr. Warkentin said his departure had been in the works since the April general election.

"He had hoped we'd be in government," Mr. Warkentin said.

■ MP, A4

Liberals clear first confidence vote on budget ■ A3

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Food-safety agency to proceed with cull of 300 ostriches after Supreme Court rejects appeal ■ A4

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Tens of thousands trapped in North Darfur city under control of paramilitary fighters ■ A5

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BRAZIL'S NEW FRONTIER

Ahead of UN climate summit, a plan to drill for oil in the mouth of the Amazon basin underscores tensions in the country ■ A8

Fishermen in the Brazilian town of Oiapoque clean their boat near the river shore after a 40-day trip on the water. Locals depend on the river and its rich ecosystem to survive. RONAN LIÉTAR/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Ontario training fund's recipients have increasingly hired lobbyists, analysis shows

JEFF GRAY
JILL MAHONEY
YANG SUN

Organizations that won millions of dollars in grants from an Ontario worker training program at the centre of a political storm have increasingly hired professional lobbyists over the past five years, including several government-relations firms with close ties to Premier Doug Ford.

According to an analysis by The Globe and Mail, the proportion of companies, unions and other groups that received cash from the Skills Development Fund and hired lobbyists shot up 60 per cent since the program was launched in 2021.

The fund and the role of lobbyists have been the subject of questions from opposition parties at Queen's Park since the release of a report by Ontario Auditor-General Shelley Spence last month. Her audit concludes that the distribution of \$1.3-billion in grants under the program, which gives money to organizations to train workers, was "not fair, transparent or accountable."

The report says the Labour Minister's political staff overruled evaluations by non-partisan bureaucrats and doled out hundreds of millions of dollars to organizations with lower scores on their applications, while higher-ranked applicants were overlooked. Plus, the audit said, dozens of groups hired professional consultants to lobby the Labour Minister or his department before

they were selected. But the report did not name lobbying firms or recipients.

Labour Minister David Piccini's office has for weeks refused repeated requests to provide a comprehensive list detailing how much money each recipient was awarded in all of the program's rounds and how their applications were ranked by bureaucrats. That refusal has helped fuel charges from the opposition that the fund is used to reward connected lobbyists and large Progressive Conservative donors.

The Globe analyzed the program using partial information from the government and cross-referenced it with data from Ontario's public accounts, lobbyist registry and political donations database.

■ FUND, A15

Once thought 'lost forever,' fabled Florentine Diamond was tucked away in a Quebec vault for a century

ERIC ANDREW-GEE

Palest yellow and large as a quail's egg, the Florentine Diamond is among history's most fabled gemstones.

Its 137 carats, intricately cut, passed through the hands of one European dynasty after another — the Medicis, the Habsburgs — before disappearing in the fog of two world wars. The mystery of its whereabouts inspired rumours, fiction, even a high-priced perfume.

Now, the mystery has been solved. The descendants of its final known owner, Zita of Bourbon-Parma, the last Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary, revealed on Thursday that the Florentine Diamond has been safely tucked in a vault all along — in Quebec.

The story of how the famed rock ended up there is one of imperial collapse, resistance to Hitler and Canadian hospitality. In telling that tale, along with



The 137-carat Florentine Diamond will be put on public display as soon as possible. NASUNA STUART-ULIN

those of more than a dozen other pieces of glittering Habsburg jewellery once presumed lost and now set to be publicly displayed in Canada, Empress Zita's grandchildren are hoping to thank the country that took their family in.

"Leaving the items here in Canada is out of gratitude for the country which gave my grandmother 10 years of peaceful living," said Lorenz von Habsburg, one of her grandsons, sitting in a Montreal boardroom overlooking the city on Thursday morning. "It was a safe haven for my grandmother, and a safe haven for the jewels."

The origins of the Florentine Diamond, like so much of its subsequent history, are both colourful and disputed. The stone appears to have begun its epic in the hands of the Medicis, Renaissance Europe's most influential family and governors of Florence (hence the diamond's name), who liked to show it off in official portraits.

■ DIAMOND, A7

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