

News Briefs

Woman held in bank heist

A 39-year-old Gatineau woman is facing armed robbery charges following an afternoon holdup yesterday at a Gatineau bank. Gatineau police said a female suspect entered the CIBC at 25 De La Savane St. and threatened tellers with a knife. The suspect fled on foot with cash. Her hands were covered in red dye, police said, after opening the secured packs. The suspect was nabbed minutes later. The suspect is expected to appear in court tomorrow. Police wouldn't say if the suspect was wanted in connection with other armed robberies involving a female suspect in the Gatineau area last week.

Lost trio found

A Pembroke father and two boys were discovered safe and uninjured yesterday after getting lost and spending the night in the woods near Campbell's Bay. Quebec provincial police said the father, his 11-year-old son and a friend hadn't been seen since about 1:30 p.m. Friday when they went for a boat ride. They were discovered by a search party yesterday morning as they headed back to their boat. Police said they took refuge in a log cabin overnight and hit the trails again in the morning where they encountered a man on an all-terrain vehicle who helped lead them back to their boat.

Girl bound, gagged

MONTREAL — A seven-year-old girl was found bound, gagged and semi-conscious early yesterday morning after her parents reported her missing Friday evening. A search was launched with officials interviewing several neighbours about the girl's whereabouts. Police said one of the residents, a 63-year-old man, appeared suspicious when he was questioned. Police returned two hours later and found the girl in his apartment. The girl was taken to hospital with injuries to her face and will have tests to determine if she was sexually assaulted, police said. The man is being held for questioning, but has yet to be charged.

Surfer saves kids

LAWRENCETOWN, N.S. — A surfer who rescued two children from ocean waters in Nova Scotia yesterday was unable to save a 31-year-old man who also went in to help. Rescue officials pulled the man's body out of the water at a beach near Lawrencetown, located about 25 km east of Halifax. The man was at the beach with a woman and her two children. The man went into the water to help the children after they were carried out by a current. The man's name was not released.

Grits on the money

Educators pleased with Liberal's commitment to the classroom

By LAURA CZEKAJ

AS STUDENTS file back into classrooms for the start of a new school year, educators and experts remain cautiously optimistic the Ontario government will continue to view education as a spending priority.

The Liberal government has highlighted education since winning the provincial election in October 2003. Dalton McGuinty has

even said he wants to be remembered as the "education premier."

The Liberals are attempting to leave a legacy of smaller class sizes, special education funding, labour stability and improved student literacy and numeracy levels.

While the education system might not be flush with cash, educators are seeing the Liberals' impact in a positive light. "They have

in many respects put their money where their mouth is," said Lorne Rachlis, director of education at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.

In the current budget year, the public board has been able to maintain the status quo while at the same time reintroduce some items previously cut during past belt-tightening.

The public board felt the wrath of the Tory government after it passed a deficit budget, leading the province to appoint a supervisor to oversee the board.

That supervision ended in December 2003 after the election of the Liberals.

Delayed announcements

Board chairwoman Lynn Graham said the board has had "good news budgets" for the past couple of years under the Liberals. However, she noted there are still concerns about underfunding of salaries and benefits, delayed grant announcements and transportation funding.

Julian Harlow, deputy director of the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board, said while he welcomes the additional money from the government, at times the constraints built into the funding ties the board's hands making it unable to address specific needs.

Ontario's post-secondary education institutions may be the biggest winners in the near future if recent meetings by provincial premiers turns into a successful lobbying effort directed at securing more funding from the feds.

"Certainly the new provincial government has taken a very strong approach towards providing greater resources for post-secondary education," said David Mitchell, vice-

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president of university relations at the University of Ottawa. "Premier McGuinty has personally been committed to this."

Mitchell added that much still needs to be done to improve Ontario's dead-last ranking out of all the provinces in terms of how much provincial funding is provided to universities and colleges.

"Ontario is so far behind funding university and college education in terms of basic core funding that it is going to take quite a big effort even over a five-year period to get us to the national average," he said.

"Especially when the other provinces are not standing still."

The funding picture for Ontario post-secondary institutions worsens further when compared to those in the U.S.

Algonquin College president Robert Gillett said provincial funding has made a substantial difference in what the college can offer students in terms of programs and services.

"We don't take political sides but we are very pleased that a government has stood up and recognized the importance of the work we are doing," he said. "We hope the Liberal government can now carry on and what ever government comes in the future

SCHOOL BOARD officials are cautiously optimistic Premier Dalton McGuinty will live up to his effort to be known as the "education premier." Critics say he's simply spending money to appease teachers, not to benefit students.

doesn't let it slip again."

Professor Dan Lang, of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, said that while there has been more money flowing from the province to the education system under the Liberals, the government has not made any substantial changes in the funding formula.

of money have been directed in the formula, but the formula is still the formula, it has not changed," he said.

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Teachers benefit

"When we look at how funding has been added, and I repeat that the Liberals are using very much the same formula as the Conservatives did, that when the additional money has been added, it's been added to those parts of the formula that benefit teachers," said Lang.

He said that is likely why the teachers unions haven't been airing their concerns about the formula lately.

"I think we have labour peace mainly because of where those infusions



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