

Number 202

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Numbers Tell The Story

1. Estimated cost of removing "degrading murals" of Indians from **BC Legislature** : **\$280,000**
2. Projected revenues for territory of Nunavut for 2007-08 fiscal year : **\$1.05-billion**
3. Proportion of these revenues that will be "transferred" from Ottawa : **95%**
4. Percentage living on \$2 or less a day in Egypt : **44%**
5. Percentage living on \$2 or less a day in the Philippines : **51%**
6. Ratio of Latino teens surveyed in Montgomery County, Maryland, who carry weapons : **3 in 10**
7. Ratio of these teens who admit involvement in gang-related activities : **1 in 5**
8. Ratio of Mexicans who would move to the **US** if they could : **46%** (32 million adults)
9. Ratio of those who said they would be willing to enter illegally : **about half**
10. Ratio of US-born Hispanics who say illegals hurt the economy : **34%**
11. Ratio of Hispanics born elsewhere who agree with this sentiment : **15%**
12. Number of times pianist **Oscar Peterson** married : **4**
13. Number of wives who were Caucasian : (the last) **3**
14. Number of Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan to end of 2007 : **74**
15. Percentage of Canadians who say Chinese goods should be more stringently inspected than products from other countries : **47.3**
 1. (Toronto **Star**, June 25, 2007)
 2. (**The Walrus**, November 2007)
 3. **Ibid.**
 4. (**AFP**, Nov. 8 2007)
 5. (**Asian Pacific Post** May 17 2005)
 6. (**IHT**, Aug. 25 2005)
 7. **Ibid.**
 8. (**NPR** Aug. 16, 2005 (Pew Research Hispanic Centre))
 9. **Ibid.**
 10. **Ibid.**
 11. **Ibid.**
 12. (**Globe and Mail**, December 26, 2007)
 13. **Ibid.**
 14. (**CTV** Dec. 31, 2007)
 15. (**Canadian Press**, Dec. 29, 2007)

Not Dark Enough

According to the ever-fretting **Toronto Star**, of the Ontario Legislature's "107 **MPPs** ... only 11 – or 10 per cent – are members of visible minorities. That percentage bears little resemblance to the province's overall population, one of the most diverse in the world, where visible minorities make up 19 per cent of 12 million Ontarians. [But] **MPPs** say... people at **Queen's Park** know the racial and gender mix is wrong and things are improving, albeit slowly. [**Alvin Curling**, retired Black cabinet minister, says] in his day, it was a big deal for someone of colour to be elected. It was a big deal when he became the second black person to become an **MPP** (after **Leonard Braithwaite** in 1963). Ditto when he became the first Black cabinet minister and the first Black Speaker of the Legislature. "There is a comfort now that if a Chinese or an Indian or a Black (is there), it's not looked upon as, *oh, there's a Black in the House now.*" Curling said." (**Toronto Star**, December 1, 2007) First of all, the huge influx

of non-White immigration to Ontario is of relatively recent vintage. Like it or not, it is still unusual for newcomers to gain a seat in the legislature before the bags are unpacked. This conceit that Canadians present an unyielding wall of race animus is tedious and insulting. In reality, between 1904 and 1907, Toronto's **Vice Chairman of the Board of Control**, a position second only to that of mayor, was held by a Black man. **William Peyton Hubbard** was first elected alderman of Ward Four (roughly Trinity-Spadina) in 1893.

"Political Maturity" Of South Asian Community

Remember the Kosovars? Like many other groups, they were "fast-tracked" into Canada, a process that winks at dull routine to hustle 'em in (tubercular or not) as quickly as possible. In the **UK**, fast-tracking means something quite different -- weeding out manifestly frivolous or unfounded refugee claims at the front end to remove dubious individuals *before* they strap on the feed bag. In 2003, when **Laibar Singh** entered Canada on a forged passport, he was allowed to stay and launch a refugee claim in Montreal. His claim, that India had him pegged as a Sikh terrorist and would torture him if returned, was turned down along with subsequent appeals. Nevertheless, he was granted, or finagled, a number of extensions. Last year, Singh's career as a labourer came to an end when a massive stroke left the 47-year-old paralyzed (from which point his arguments would take a new tack -- that return to India was akin to a death sentence as he could not receive proper treatment there. (An odd claim when India is the world's premiere destination for elective surgeries). But lo, when deportation loomed, the paralyzed man was nowhere to be found. The optics on this file have admittedly been dreadful, with headlines like "Canada attempts to deport cripple on human rights day," but it hasn't helped that **Canadian Border Services Agency** is forever skulking on the margins, superfluous and dumb. "**Harsha Walia**, who calls herself a spokeswoman for the South Asian community ... said Singh has a legal right to stay in Canada because he wasn't under a removal order at the time he became paralyzed, as he was still legally applying to become a refugee. But documents from Singh's detention review hearing on Aug. 13, 2007, indicate a *conditional departure order* was issued in 2003 when he made a refugee claim in Montreal. The issuing of the conditional order is standard for any refugee claimant and it's put on hold until the refugee hearing is complete. Singh's refugee claim was turned down in 2004. In 2005, an application for a judicial review before the federal court was also turned down, according to the **Immigration and Refugee Board** hearing. After that, Singh relocated to the Vancouver area [Surrey] without providing a change of address to **CBSA** and a warrant was issued for his arrest. **CBSA** eventually learned of Singh's whereabouts in 2006 after he became disabled and [even with his track record] *cancelled the warrant* because of his serious medical treatment." (**Vancouver Province**, December 23, 2007) Typically, by August, when deportation was again pending, Singh had again vanished. He was shopped around to various Sikh temples before he was accepted at an Abbotsford *gurdwara*. In due course, yet another deportation order was prepared for December 10th. On this occasion he complied -- sort of: "Singh's arrival was carefully orchestrated. The temple that sheltered him delivered him to the airport, but refused to help him in, saying it was the responsibility of **CBSA** and its medical team. 'We delivered him to the airport at 11:30 as **CBSA** told us to, but they have to go and get him with their medical team,' said **Surdev Singh Jatana**, the general-secretary of the *Gurdwara*. 'He's got the support of the entire community.'" (**Vancouver Sun**, December 10, 2007) If so, this is a

novel interpretation of "support." When the airport stratagem succeeded -- as anticipated, **CBSA** dared not wade through the mob to drag the man from the taxi -- Mr. Jatana's *gurdwara* declined to have its house guest back. All of this sets a deplorable precedent; today's lesson is that mobs may subvert the rule of law without the inconvenience of blowing airliners out of the sky, assassinating visiting politicians or derailing the democratic process through mass sign ups and constituency swamping. During the demonstration, various foghorns called for boycotts of the government in power, the complicit airline, and anyone else of whom the mob disapproved. "Addressing the protesters, former Canadian revenue minister **Herb Dhaliwal** said the decision to deport a 'helpless man showed the mean-spiritedness of this government.' Dhaliwal said: 'The deportation order highlights that this Conservative government has no respect for the South Asian community. ... It is a second **Komagata Maru**. The South Asian community has shown its political maturity by exposing the arrogance of this government.'" (Earth Times, December 11, 2007) In the year since his stroke, the federal government has invested an estimated \$408,000 in Mr. Singh's medical expenses -- no clue as to how much has been siphoned off captive taxpayers to cover his legal fees. Sad isn't it, when a quadriplegic can run circles around Canada's deportation process.

Giant Claim From Giant Family

"A northern Alberta family facing deportation to Mexico has been allowed to stay while **Immigration Canada** decides whether a claim to Canadian ancestry will be enough to grant citizenship. **Johan Dyck**, 42, said the federal department is sending the documents he will need to try to prove he has Canadian connections through grandparents who were from Canada but emigrated to Mexico in the 1920s. [And we always thought that for immigration purposes, there was no such thing as 'Canadian ancestry?'] 'They told me there's a door that opened for us in Canada,' he said. 'They gave us a second chance.' The 'proof application' would usually take about three months to process, but Dyck said immigration officials in Edmonton told him his case has been given higher priority. 'They didn't tell us how long it would take but they told me they're going to work with the (federal immigration) minister from Ottawa.' Dyck said he feels more optimistic now than he was in late October, when his family received a notice to leave Canada and return to Mexico, where he, his wife, **Helena**, and most of their 14 children were born. After he received the notice, Dyck told the **Immigration Settlement Services** agency in Grande Prairie that he immigrated to Canada with his family after they received death threats from individuals allegedly connected to the criminal drug trade while they were living at a Mennonite colony in the Campeche state of southern Mexico. ... Income is now coming back into the household as some of the family have returned to work. But there had been a few lean days when the Dyck family were living on the charity and goodwill of others. 'There was a family who came out here and gave us a little bit of money and a little bit of food,' he said. 'They got a farm out there (south of Hythe). They just saw us in the paper and they thought about helping.'" (Edmonton Sun, November 21, 2007) Odd that this gigantic family depends on the kindness of local farm families -- Mennonites have essentially cornered the immigrant settlement business elsewhere.

Christmas Wars

In the ongoing culture wars, nowhere are the skirmishes taken more personally than at Yule-tide. This year, drug dealers in a Rio de Janeiro slum opened fire on what they mistook for a police helicopter: The contrivance was, in fact, carrying **Santa Claus** to a Christmas party. Santa is also under fire from the temporary U.S. surgeon-general. This Grinch suggested that a not so fat and jolly Santa might be a better role model for kids battling obesity.

Christmas trees were cited as a source of dangerous moulds. On the other hand, **BBC** radio London had to backpaddle when listeners protested the station bleeping the word "faggot" from an old Christmas favourite. There were other hugely positive developments -- mammoth retailers **Wal-Mart**, **Canadian Tire** and **Target** dispensed with the endless euphemisms and finally wished Christmas shoppers a "Merry Christmas." (Why not send an e-mail or letter to assure them of your custom?) Perhaps most heartening of all was **New York City's** decision to allow the **Christian Defence Coalition** to set up a nativity scene in Times Square. According to coalition director Rev. **Patrick J. Mahoney**, "Sadly, we are seeing an erosion and crushing of religious freedoms across America. This is especially true during the Christmas season where there is an open hostility toward public expressions of faith. We must constantly remind our public officials that the Constitution promises freedom 'of' religion not freedom 'from' religion. It is essential that the faith community not be intimidated into surrendering their God given First Amendment freedoms which offers to all Americans the right to publicly worship God free from government interference or harassment." (Christian News Wire, December 14, 2007) Amen to that.

Shawinigan To Shanghai

Under the not-so-Great Helmsman, China would endure civil war, famine, purges and junk science campaigns almost too ludicrous to credit (the mass extermination of sparrows and cottage industry iron foundries spring to mind). It's estimated that **Mao** personally hastened the death of 60 to 80 million of his countrymen. With a track record like that, you wouldn't think a single poem by the addled old coot would carry much weight, but you would be wrong: Mao's 1956 effort, Swimming, extols an already ancient conceit -- that somehow the upper reaches of the Yangtze might be dammed at the **Three Gorges**. His poem concludes, "The mountain goddess if she is still there, will marvel at a world so changed." Wouldn't she just? "In an unprecedented admission of blame, **Communist Party** officials gave a stark warning yesterday of impending disaster in the vast area around the dam if preventive measures are not urgently introduced. For more than a decade China has promoted the world's biggest hydro-electric project as the best way to end centuries of floods along the basin of the Yangtze and to provide energy to fuel the country's economic boom. The Government ignored critics who claimed that the **Three Gorges**, first proposed nearly a century ago and immortalised in a poem by **Mao Zedong**, was an ecological disaster waiting to happen. ... Authorities have already raised concerns over algae bloom downstream from the Three Gorges and a deterioration in aquatic life. ... One of the most worrying consequences of the project has been the sharp increase in landslides around the dam. Studies by geologists have shown that the water seeping out of the reservoir and the huge pressure changes are weakening the banks. One official said that the shore of the reservoir had collapsed in 91 places and a total of 36 kilometres (22 miles) had already caved in. Landslides have produced waves as high as 50 metres (165ft). In July, a mountain along a tributary collapsed. ... Hundreds of thousands of people may have to be moved. A total of 1.3 million have been displaced by the dam already." (London Times, September 27, 2007) But it is the Franken-project's tie-in to the Quebec referendum that is really undermining: "Initially, Western countries and international organizations balked at the project. [But, in 1988, Canadian taxpayers unwittingly shelled out \$12-million for a feasibility study on China's behalf. The report was generally supportive of the **Three Gorges** plan, but warned against creating a reservoir exceeding 160 metres. In 1992, China decided to go ahead with the project -- creating a reservoir 180 metres deep, the length of Lake Superior. That same year, Canada decided] against participating, citing

concerns over the project's viability and social impact. The **World Bank** didn't provide funding, saying the project wasn't economically viable. The U.S. withdrew its support, ending its 50-year-old interest in the project, with Washington saying, in 1993, it no longer believed that such dams were a good idea for Americans and thus couldn't recommend building them overseas. Then Canada did an about-face. In 1994, recently elected Prime Minister **Jean Chrétien** led [one of his interminable, clownish trade missions] to China. Mr. Chrétien's **Liberal Party**, which had won power a year earlier, had been on record opposing a Canadian role in **Three Gorges**. But by the time of the China trip, Mr. Chrétien was facing political upheaval in his home province of Quebec, where support for a movement to separate from Canada was surging ahead of a referendum on the subject. Quebec's biggest city, Montreal, was the headquarters of Canada's hydroelectric industry and home to many global power-generating companies. The trade mission was meant to show Canadians that their future was stronger together than apart, says **Sergio Marchi**, a member of Mr. Chrétien's cabinet and later trade secretary. During [the **Team Canada** China roadshow,] Mr. Chrétien surprised people back home and announced his government's support for the **Three Gorges Dam**. Sales followed. In 1997, China awarded turbine contracts valued at \$320 million to **General Electric Canada**, based in Montreal, and two German companies. ... A few months later, Canada's government-run **Export Development Corp.** guaranteed \$160 million of the deal. This opened the door for other companies to sell to China more than \$1.5 billion of crucial high-technology products for the dam. Almost all the amount was underwritten by foreign governments through export credits -- low-interest or interest-free loans to Beijing to help pay for the products. Besides Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden and France all pledged such taxpayer support for the sales -- essentially a subsidy on the dam's total costs. Canada's reversals left China building a dam based on the 1980s Canadian feasibility study but without any follow-up support from Canada. It sold the equipment, but when its aid agency pulled its support, that meant technical help was curtailed. Follow-up studies might have shown that some of the Canadian assumptions were wrong. Most of the engineers had just spent a decade on **Hydro-Quebec's** gargantuan James Bay dam. Built on the sparsely populated, rocky terrain of northern Quebec, the dam was different from the **Three Gorges**, with its silty soil and heavily populated surroundings. Canadian officials today decline to comment on the project, saying it was decided by another government." (**Wall Street Journal**, December 31, 2007)

An Accident Waiting To Happen

"A man visiting Canada from China for the holidays drowned in a pool at the **Blue Mountain Inn** in Collingwood, Ont., on Christmas Eve, an autopsy has confirmed. ... The 67-year-old, whose name has not been released, was visiting the resort with relatives from the Toronto bedroom community of Newmarket. 'I think they thought he was just swimming around the bottom of the pool until he was down there a bit longer than he should have been,' [OPP Sergeant **Andy Sharpe**] said. [According to] **Lifesaving Society of Canada** spokeswoman **Barbara Byers** ... the number of drowning incidents involving people new to Canada or visiting the country is on the rise. 'Many new Canadians come from cultures where swimming and water safety are not part of their cultures,' Ms. Byers said. 'It's getting worse in the last 10 years.'" (**Globe and Mail**, December 29, 2007) Very enriching. Speaking of accidents, "Toronto is the only major city in Canada and the U.S. where pedestrians account for the majority of road deaths. ... In a study done in [2003] by **Sgt Tom Ellis** of traffic services, 57% of Toronto's traffic fatalities were found to be pedestrians. ... Nationally, pedestrians made up only 14% of traffic deaths in Canada and 11% in the U.S. ... Ellis said the ethnic makeup of Toronto contributes to the high pedestrian death toll, with residents

coming from countries with vastly different traffic patterns. 'Diversity certainly has something to do with it,' he said. 'Somebody from a village in a third-world country that's used to crossing a dirt path wasn't brought up where you have traffic coming at 60, 70 km/h.'" (**Toronto Sun**, August 18, 2003) Did somebody mention free health care? According to a **City of Toronto** document, **Economic Benefits of Pedestrianisation for Toronto** (1999), the city averages 37 pedestrian injuries for every pedestrian fatality. Thus, "if we multiply 1996 Toronto pedestrian fatalities (46) by 37, we get an estimated 1702 pedestrians injured in the city that year. If we multiply that number by \$18,060 [average health cost per injured person in a collision], we get a very crude estimate of \$30M in health costs alone." Twenty centuries ago, the Roman poet **Horace** observed, "they change their skies, not their souls, who run across the sea." A sad truth Ottawa has made mandatory.

Immigration Means New Jobs!

A common tactic among reluctant deportees is to stand up, howl, "self-injure" -- whatever it takes to get removed from the aircraft and win a reprieve for another day. The optics are so bad that at any given time, several carriers refuse to handle removals. "**Asylum Airways**, run by an Austrian aviation consultant with ties to British security firms, will operate aircraft for European countries which do not wish to use established airlines for the forced removal of asylum-seekers. The planes will have specially designed seats so that the 'passengers' can be strapped down and restrained by guards. A deal could save the Government millions of pounds compared with the piecemeal contracts it has negotiated with dozens of airlines as well as reduce the number of aborted deportations. Hundreds of asylum-seeker removals have had to be aborted in the past two years because of what the **Home Office** describes as 'disruptive behaviour.' And in the past few months airlines have been criticised for carrying failed asylum-seekers, many of whom allege they have been physically and racially abused by private security guards paid to escort them. [Right. Planeload of holiday makers subjected to the spectacle of security personnel roughing up deportees and calling them names? This one really doesn't fly] **Heinz Berger**, who has set up the **Asylum Airlines** company ... said there was 'ongoing interest all over Europe' for an airline that will organise flights around Europe, picking up failed asylum-seekers from various countries and then flying them back to their home nations around Africa, the Middle East and Asia. A special feature will be bespoke aircraft with padded rooms and restraining equipment." (**The Independent**, December 27, 2007) Canada often collaborates with the US on removals -- one 2004 effort sent nine Nigerians back at a cost to taxpayers of \$28,223.

But What Have You Done For Me Lately?

"For several decades, the **Immigration Department** has sponsored select refugees to come to Canada. ... **Joseph Troxler**, a spokesman for **Citizenship and Immigration Canada**, said refugees have been required to pay the government back for their overseas transportation since 1951. He said the 'transportation loans' were first introduced to assist people displaced by the Second World War. 'The program was meant to provide assistance to disadvantaged newcomers,' he said. [But] agencies that help refugees sponsored by Canada are calling on Ottawa to stop billing those newcomers for their flights. ... Figures provided by **CIC** show many sponsored refugees don't pay their bills. For example, in 2006-07, \$13.1 million was paid for 5,039 plane tickets. That same year, though, \$38.1 million was still owed from delinquent accounts. That doesn't include old debts that have been written off by the government. [In addition,] Ottawa gives sponsored refugees one year's assistance for food and housing." (**CBC**, December 27, 2007) Life is good for them, if not for the Canadian taxpayer.

A Winning Strategy

"A Muslim woman who was fired from a [Vancouver] call centre says she was discriminated against because she couldn't shake hands with men at work. **Chantal Hamel** was fired after working at **RSVP Customer Care** call centre for six days. She says it's because she wore a *hijab*, and because of her religion, she could not shake hands with any male who is not a member of her family. In a complaint filed with the BC human rights tribunal, Hamel says she believed she was doing a good job at the call centre, but she was taken off the phones. The company says Hamel only made five sales in the 31 hours she worked, which is half the minimum sales requirement for that time period." (**CKNW**, December 20, 2007) Nice gambit and possibly inspired by the example of **Halima Muse**. After five years on the job, the Somali single-mom, a **Pearson Airport** wand-wielder, suddenly realized that the regulation neck to toe pant suit was too revealing of her body shape. Ms Muse went home and whipped up a home-made floor length "skirt" for modesty's sake, presumably to hide her fetching gambos from the bleary eyes of tired travellers.. When she was ordered off the job she immediately filed a complaint with those abuse-enablers, the **Canadian Human Rights Commission**. Three months later, no more Joe-jobs for Ms. Muse! The company "agreed to offer the 33-year-old woman a full-time *administrative job in civilian attire at her previous salary and give her full back pay for the time she was suspended.* ... The **Teamsters** and the **Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations** said Monday that they filed a religious discrimination complaint on her behalf." (**Canadian Press**, November 22, 2007) In Canada, one solitary ethnic group is ridiculed for trying to uphold its cultural traditions (see Herouxville, Quebec accommodation hearings and human rights tribunals coast to coast).

CRIME WATCH

Really? No More Victims?

Violent Somali predator **Mohamed Hagi Mohamud** arrived in Canada in 1989 and "spent a total of 6½ years in jail for his various convictions. [And, yet, somehow he still qualifies for early prison release.] He was granted refugee status in 1990. ... In 1997, Mr. Mohamud, then living on the outskirts of Toronto, was convicted of assault causing bodily harm, after pulling a knife on a taxi driver. In 2002, he was convicted of assault causing bodily harm over an attack on a woman in her apartment, during which he repeatedly punched her in the face and kicked her. A year later, he allegedly assaulted a *sex-trade worker* by stabbing her in the neck, but charges against him were stayed by the Crown because of the victim's unreliability as a witness. Only then did immigration authorities seek Mr. Mohamud's deportation. But they chose not to detain him, and he simply didn't show up at his deportation hearing in May, 2004. A Canada-wide warrant for his arrest was not issued for another six months. By then he had moved to the Vancouver suburb of Surrey, where he accosted **Erika Martyn** as she walked home late at night from a SkyTrain station and demanded sex. When she refused, he held a knife to her throat and forced her to his basement apartment. There she was viciously beaten and sexually assaulted by Mr. Mohamud. Courageously, Ms. Martyn smeared her blood on the apartment walls as [DNA] evidence of the attack. She then agreed to let her name be used so she could speak out publicly about the trauma she endured. At the time of Mr. Mohamud's sentencing, Ms. Martyn expressed bitterness over the failure of immigration officials to take earlier action against her assailant. ... Now, the Somalia-born refugee has been cleared by the **National Parole Board** for release from prison after serving the required two-thirds of his 54-month sentence. *This time*, immigration officials are taking steps to ensure that Mr. Mohamud is not out on the streets while they finally move to have him

sent back to his war-torn homeland. [And not before time. *Are we* deporting to the chronic basket case these days? On Dec. 20,] a one-person **Immigration and Refugee Board** upheld a request from the **Canada Border Services Agency** that Mr. Mohamud, 35, remain in custody, pending his deportation, despite his statutory right to release. Prior to [that] hearing, Mr. Mohamud sought unsuccessfully to have the media banned from reporting it, over fears that the public would 'retaliate' against him should he be released. 'He's afraid of violence,' [mouthpiece, **Antya**] **Schrack** said." (**Globe and Mail**, December 21, 2007) Afraid of being on the receiving end evidently; he has no compunction about inflicting it. Note to Ottawa -- the products of chaotic horror pits may not automatically be blue ribbon citizenship candidates.

Patsy Land

"Imagine a Canadian company manufacturing a product which fails to perform properly 43% of the time, resulting in death, injury and suffering, with huge economic and social consequences. ... Imagine most politicians, instead of demanding the product be recalled and those responsible criminally charged, instead attacked as ignorant, simplistic and narrow-minded, anyone who complained about it, including the people victimized by it. ... The product is Canada's statutory release program for violent criminals, which gives the vast majority (save for murderers and designated dangerous offenders) a virtually automatic one-third discount on their prison sentences. ... Even the official failure rate of up to 43% is artificially low. That's because 'failures' only include criminals returned to *federal prisons* after violating release conditions or re-offending. [In other words, sentenced to more than 2 years.] If they re-offend and are sentenced to a provincial corrections facility [a less than 2-year sentence], they're not counted. This subtle distinction is no doubt lost on their victims. ... An independent panel that recently reviewed Canada's corrections system notes in a report to **Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day** that inmates on statutory release account for only 35% of criminals on early release programmes, but 79% of the violent crimes. They re-offend at three times the rate of inmates in other programmes. ... Statutory release is not working, the report, titled **A Roadmap to Strengthening Public Safety**, concludes. Logically, the five-member panel recommends scrapping it and replacing it with 'earned parole.' It warns today's inmates are often violent, gang-affiliated, drug abusers, with few job skills and lacking a high school education, who have no interest in rehabilitation. Instead they 'wait out' statutory release and return to crime. They don't have to wait long. Of all those sent to federal prisons today, 'nearly 60% are now serving sentences of less than three years and have histories of violence.' the report states. Given that, what real chance is there of rehabilitating violent, career criminals in less than three years? Especially when, as the report notes, there's no incentive to participate in rehabilitation programmes because those who refuse are basically treated the same as those who take them. The review panel further recommends a major prison construction program, noting most federal prisons are old and inadequate. They're also overcrowded. A key reason for failed early release programmes is to free up prison space, and because it costs less to have a criminal serve his sentence in the community compared to prison. Unfortunately, it's also way more dangerous for the community. ... Despite these sensible proposals, soft-on-crime federal opposition **MPs**, who control most seats in the **Conservative** minority Parliament, dismissed the report as simplistic, ignorant, narrow-minded and harsh, as did many so-called experts and prisoners' rights groups." (**Toronto Sun**, December 30, 2007) Just remind us again why freedom of speech has to be ruthlessly put down in this country? Oh. Right. Speech might (in some wacko parallel universe) lead to violence. If that was a serious concern, wouldn't violent offenders be taken seriously?