

National Campus News

From University Newsrooms Across Canada

Endangered species unhappy with Anderson

OTTAWA (CUP) – A cougar, a whooping crane, a monarch butterfly and a Vancouver Island marmot were among the endangered species that crashed the unveiling of the Liberal party's platform launch today.

Activists dressed as various Canadian endangered species attempted to join the crowd at the posh hotel lobby in downtown Ottawa.

Hotel staff and RCMP members escorted the group out of the foyer moments before Prime Minister Jean Chrétien arrived to give the platform speech.

Lee Ann Mallett, deputy director of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), said the group intended to raise the profile on the lack of species at risk legislation in Canada, which the Liberal party has fallen short of enacting in both of their previous terms of government.

"The Liberals have broken so many promises that they've made," said Mallett.

Mallett, who escorted the costumed group, said they didn't intend to interrupt the event, rather, they hoped to remind the Liberal party, the media and the public that there is still no legislation protecting Canadian

endangered species.

"There are people actually thinking that we have species at risk legislation seeing as the Liberals have introduced so many times now," she said. "We're hoping to remind them that the legislation is dying on the order paper."

Mallett added that she was hoping to sit in on the platform presentation and even have the prime minister pose with the costumed activists. She added that IFAW hoped voters would be mindful of the issue when going to the polls this month.

"Endangered species are a indication of the

health of the environment," she said. "If they should become extinct, it would be a warning to us all. We shouldn't be losing any species."

Environment minister David Anderson was sitting just inside as the costumed group left the foyer. He later responded to the group's concerns, saying that endangered species legislation would be a high priority, should he hold onto his position as environment minister.

"I'm reintroducing the [species at risk] bill immediately as the house resumes," he said. "If we had not had an election, the endangered species bill would have been passed in June,

but as we're having an election the bill will still be passed in June."

Elizabeth May, the executive director of the Sierra Club of Canada, pointed out that the section of the platform on endangered species did not actually commit the Liberals to providing legislation.

"They're tired of breaking promises," she said. "They've told us twice that they would bring it in and both times failed to."

But Anderson explained that his government had hoped to have the legislation in place during the past session. He blames the delay

on the opposition party and environmentalists with unrealistic demands.

"I tried very hard to get consensus on endangered species and there was an opposition motion in the house to kill the bill, there were also some [environmental non-governmental organizations] that wanted to kill the bill."

Anderson explained that the process of getting the bill passed would have to involve all stakeholders, including land owners and industry and wouldn't necessarily be as strong as some environmental groups were calling for.

Students protest private universities

TORONTO (CUP) – The provincial government's controversial private university bill passed second reading today at Queen's Park, despite protests by students at a media event this morning.

Dianne Cunningham, Ontario's minister of training, colleges and universities, was confronted by 12 protesters after she addressed a group of grade nine students gathered in the lobby of a downtown Toronto government building as part of Take Our Kids To Work Day.

Led by staff from the Canadian Federation of Students' Ontario division (CFS-O), the protesters burst out in song after the minister finished her remarks. "We all need an education. We don't need no private u's. No corporate cronies in the classrooms. Hey, Cunningham, leave our schools alone," they shouted to the tune of Pink Floyd's Another Brick in the Wall. Security presence was heavy at the event.

When the protesters arrived waving placards that said "No Private Universities," 10 uniformed officers entered the lobby. Before speeches began, the students were asked to leave their placards outside. "I don't understand," said Odelia Bay, one of the protesters and a member of Ryerson Polytechnic University's student union. "Some words and propaganda are allowed in the building and others aren't?"

In response, a security guard told her that only government approved documents were allowed at the event.

"If people want to listen to the presentation that's fine, but this isn't a place for protest," said Staff Sgt. Barry Farndon of Ontario Government Protection Services.

In addition to marking Take Our Kids To Work Day, the event was held to promote the government's career development services, including the JobGrow and Training hotline. "Whatever your goal is – and it doesn't have to be college or university, it can be the workforce – we can help you," said Minister of Education Janet Ecker, who spoke alongside Cunningham.

More than 20 grade nine students from downtown high schools listened to Ecker and Cunningham's remarks. Many of them smiled and laughed when the protesters began singing.

Ian Henderson, an information officer with the ministries of education and training, colleges and universities, was in the crowd with his 14-year-old daughter. "Part of the day is for my child to learn a bit about what I do at work, and dealing with complaints is a reality of what I do," he said after the last chorus of the chant. "What I'll say to my daughter afterwards is that this is what democracy is about." Other audience members were also sympathetic to the protest.

"Everyone has a right to voice their opinion," said Colleen Grozelle, a manager at the JobGrow hotline. "I don't think this is the right forum for it, but with tuition as high as it is and with this new legislation I can understand why they're here."

Cunningham left the event shortly after she finished her remarks. She refused to answer questions from both the protesters and the media. Later, at Queen's Park, she moved Bill 132 – the private universities bill – forward for a second reading. It passed easily with the support of all 51 government members. Erin George, CFS-O chairperson, said the legislation means the end of quality and accessible post-secondary education in the province and possibly the country.

She said the introduction of private universities would jeopardize the entire post-secondary system because of trade liberalization agreements.

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