

# Anger over Air India payout

- Families say they have been treated like troublemakers
- They want to move on, says local chair of association

Ottawa's offer of \$24,000 for each person killed in the Air India bombing has angered the "poorly treated" families of its victims.

"Most families feel the amount is very small," says Dr. Bal Gupta, the Toronto-based chair of the Air India Victims Families Association.

The \$7.9-million payment for all 329 victims of the terrorist attack was announced last week at a teleconference with about 40 families in Toronto.

The ex gratia payment — made by the Canadian government out of good will and without legal obligation — is for the poor treatment the families received by the government for years after the June 1985 bombing.

In the Air India inquiry report, retired justice John Major suggested the families receive an ex gratia payment for the "administrative disdain" to which they were subjected.

Most of the families settled their legal claims for compensation between 1985 and 1991, receiving on average \$75,000 US for the loss of each non-earning adult or child, said Gupta. The amount was paid by Air India, the



► Dr. Bal Gupta

Canadian government and about 20 companies named in the civil cases.

By comparison, Gupta said, the U.S. government took the initiative to set up its own fund and paid families substantially more per victim for wrongful death. Such families received \$2.1 million on average.

Although Gupta acknowledged the U.S. compensation was for the loss of life, not as an apology for how families were treated, he said it's difficult to separate the two.

"It's basically symbolic, so, emotionally, people will think it's compensation," said Gupta, who lost his wife, Ramwati.

Mike Patton, a spokesman for Public

**280** The attack on Air India Flight 182 claimed the lives of 329 people; 280 were Canadians, mostly of South Asian descent.

Safety Minister Vic Toews, said he understands that some Air India families may feel they have not been compensated adequately.

"If in light of information or if they haven't already settled, families have recourse through the courts," he said.

Patton said the ex gratia payment is final and cannot be negotiated. "This government has made this offer in good faith."

He said the amount was determined by considering ex gratia payments for people forced into reserve schools, Japanese internments, Chinese head tax payments and others treated inappropriately by the government.

Asked for a dollar figure he would be happy with from the government, Gupta said he won't offer a specific amount, adding that victims' families just want to finally put everything behind them.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

## Yorkville. Sandwiches



► Yorkville's Zaza Espresso Bar co-owner Raffaele was on Bellair Street yesterday handing out pork in a bun sandwiches to passersby to promote his new venture Zaza Paninoteca. Raffaele, who is from Italy, is known as an affable host with a penchant for calling all the ladies "bella," always with a smile.

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## Affable host serves sidewalk samples

### Festival funds

- David Miller's gift is part of the festival's \$100,000 campaign to build a Creation Lab for independent artists to create, produce and innovate.
- Miller is directing his \$10,000 matching donation to the Time and Space program, which will subsidize the cost of space rentals for independent companies.
- During the festival, which runs to July 17, Miller will match every dollar patrons donate to the Creation Lab, up to \$10,000.

## Miller's Fringe Festival donation not light

As city councillors sharpen their pencils to deal with an estimated \$775-million budget shortfall, former mayor David Miller has donated \$10,000 to the Toronto Fringe Festival. The money, the largest private donation in the festival's 23-year history, is also the single largest philanthropic donation Miller says he has ever made.

"It's important for individuals to give. But it's also

really important for our governments to support the arts," he said. "It's through things like the arts and events like Pride where we come together as Torontonians and celebrate our differences and learn who we are."

Miller, who as mayor had his tie cut off during a Fringe Festival sketch, said he has always enjoyed the 10-day showcase.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

# City may spend millions on cash-strapped ski park

Toronto's parks department tried last year to find a company to operate the money-losing Earl Bales Park ski facility. It failed.

The department then suggested closing the facility for a winter. Council disagreed.

Now, as the city begins contemplating major service cuts, the department is proposing to replace Earl Bales' old, slow chairlift and undertake other renovations, at a possible cost of about \$2 million.

Toronto's two municipal ski parks have received scrutiny during several

budget crunches, but were defended by both left-leaning councillors and fiscal conservatives such as Mayor Rob Ford for offering cheap access to an expensive pursuit.

The department wants to replace Earl Bales' archaic two-person chairlift with a four-person lift. To do this, and improve the lighting and ski chalet, it plans to spend up to \$200,000 this year and ask council for up to \$2 million more in 2012.

Coun. James Pasternak (Ward 10, York Centre) said he supports saving the North York facility and im-



► Students from Taiwan try skiing while in Canada. They went to Earl Bales in March 2010 because they could get there by TTC.

STUART LAIDLAW/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

proving it. He said he has been told the current chairlift is unsafe. "If the lift is unsafe, then clearly, we have to invest the funds to make it safe, or we have to shut it down. The ski hill is a pretty popular community asset," he said.

Deputy Mayor Doug Holyday concurred.

"No matter who operates it — unless we're going to close the ski hill down, which we're not — it needs new machinery. I don't like that we've got an expense, but you have to face the facts."

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### Repairs

- North York Alpine Racing Club president Clive Kessel said the chairlift has broken down several times, most frighteningly on one cold night in March. More than 20 children and teens waited in the air for two hours for the fire department to lower them after it stalled.

- About 7,000 people registered for skiing and snowboarding in 2009, while 54,000 made drop-in visits.