

OTTAWA CITIZEN

JUNE 12, 2010

ESTABLISHED IN 1845

CLOUDY, 23

GIFT IDEAS FOR DAD

He wins/you win Father's Day tips that are easy on the wallet **REAL DEAL, J16**



THE BODY BEAUTIFUL

Competitors smile, flex and strut at André Maillé Classic **LIFE, J2-3**



BRUNO SCHLUMBERGER, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

'Four months ago, I couldn't feel anything and I couldn't move anything. ... Now I can feel all over to varying degrees,' says René Faucher.

Keeping the Black Dog at bay

Since René Faucher was paralysed during a game of pickup hockey in January, he has fought hard not to surrender to despair. He has no choice, he tells **ROBERT SIBLEY**, because 'the minute the mind stops progressing, the body is sure to follow.'

The nights were the worst. René Faucher would lie in bed unable to move, feeling no sensation in his body, helpless, alone. There was only his mind to keep him company, and it skittered on the edge of despair.

Would he never walk again? How would the family survive? Who would pay the bills? Would he ever feel again? Even when sleep came, there was little relief. He would snap awake in the darkness of his hospital room, his mind thrashing against nightmares that threatened to smother all hope.

In late January, the father of three was playing a game of pickup hockey at the University of Ottawa when a skate caught a rut in the ice. Before he could throw up his arms to protect himself, he slammed head-first into the boards. After emergency surgery, doctors told him he'd sustained a severe spinal cord in-

The Hard Road

One step. Two pounds. Three minutes. At the Ottawa Hospital Rehabilitation Centre, progress is measured in hard-won increments. Whatever the challenge, the goal is

jury that left him paralysed from the neck down. He might never walk again, or, perhaps, breathe without mechanical assistance.

Such a prognosis would reduce many to utter despair. And, for a time, confined to a hospital bed, paralysed and immobile, Faucher endured dark days — and darker nights. "I didn't like going to bed because I was alone with my thoughts. All those negative thoughts. I'd start to think about finances or other stuff. I'd worry about waking up in

the same: To get back home. With unprecedented access to the rehab centre, the Citizen followed four patients on their long journey back. For soundslides, video and stories from the Ottawa Rehabilitation Centre, go to ottawacitizen.com/hardroad

the middle of the night and being alone. The nightmares were pretty bad."

Today, nearly five months later, the nightmares are a fading memory, and fear of the future has given way to greater confidence and optimism. To be sure, Faucher remains confined to a wheelchair, dependent on others for many basic needs, and, some nights, the Black Dog of depression howls. But after months of determined rehabilitation, the 40-year-old has re-

gained sensation throughout his body and recovered some muscle strength and movement. Where once he couldn't hold, much less pick up, a pen or cup, he now writes, uses his iPhone and pours his own drinks.

"Four months ago, I couldn't feel anything and I couldn't move anything. I had some limited motion in my arms and hands, but that was it. Now I can feel all over to varying degrees," he says, beaming as he shows that he can make the muscles around his knees twitch.

Faucher has been living at the Ottawa Hospital Rehabilitation Centre since late February. His days are devoted to physiotherapy, weightlifting sessions, swimming, pool therapy, occupational therapy to help with fine motor skills, and psychological counselling.

See RECOVERY on PAGE A4

Canadians oppose the urge to merge, poll finds

More than half think Liberal-NDP union is a 'bad idea'

BY LAURA STONE

Canadians have given a thumbs-down to the notion of a merger between the Liberals and the NDP, a new poll conducted for Canwest News Service has found.

The Ipsos Reid national survey — conducted this week as Parliament Hill was awash with rumours, speculation and denials about a deal between the two parties — found that voters appear to want none of it.

About 56 per cent of voters think the merger is a "bad idea," while only 30 per cent think it's a good one, with 14 per cent unsure.

In addition, the poll found that among specific voters, 55 per cent of Liberals and 49 per cent of NDP supporters don't like the idea of a merger. Perhaps predictably, neither do the Conservatives, with 75 per cent of voters rejecting an opposition merger.

Liberal voters who support the merger stand at 37 per cent, with 44 per cent for NDP voters and 15 per cent of Tories. The rest are undecided.

"The real issue that you have here is the faithful, the party faithful ... are saying no, we don't want to merge," said John Wright, senior vice-president at Ipsos Reid. "It's not perceived as a good idea by voters and it seems unnecessary when the numbers really haven't changed that much."

If an election were held tomorrow, the Conservatives would remain steady at 35 per cent of the vote, with the Liberals falling two points to 27 per cent and NDP support staying put at 16 per cent.

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Bloc: Quebec will hold another referendum on sovereignty, Duceppe tells the world, **A5**

OBSERVER



OxyContin: A prescription for crime

The Citizen investigates the black-market demand for OxyContin in Ottawa, **B1**

Colossal Canadian coin worth \$4M

100-kilogram Gold Maple Leaf hits Vienna auction house this month

BY RANDY BOSWELL

A giant Canadian gold coin worth an estimated \$4 million is to be sold at auction in Europe later this month, highlighting the sky-high price of the precious metal three years after the Royal Canadian Mint struck the numismatic novelty with the \$1-million face value.

The Dorotheum auction house, based in Vienna, said on Friday that the insolvency of an Austrian financial services and real estate company forced it to part with the massive Maple Leaf coin, one of just five ever made.

Fifty-three centimetres wide and three centimetres thick, the coin features a profile portrait of the Queen

on one side and a sprig of three maple leaves on the other.

The 100-kilogram specimen, which is to be sold at a coin and diamond auction on June 25, had been on loan to an Austrian museum, but was to be transported this week to the Dorotheum.

See COIN on PAGE A2



HANDOUT PHOTO

Dorotheum expert Michael Beckers flanks the massive Gold Maple Leaf, which was unveiled by the Mint in 2007.

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TODAY'S WEATHER

Cloudy.
High 23, low 15.
Sunrise: 5:14 a.m.
Sunset: 8:51 p.m.
SEE PAGE F7.

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