



PARTY CENTRAL

BY HARRIS MACLEOD

It was one zany evening at One Change Catalyst Awards at the sparkling National Gallery

Of the two-McGuintys Mag Ruffman's preference certainly seemed to be little-brother David, whom she referred to as 'the good-looking brother,' and she told the crowd that she 'asked him for a date.'

Last week was part II of the MPs' two-week Easter Break, and it's the times when MPs are away from Ottawa that Party Central gets the weirdest invitations. The One Change Catalyst Awards, held at the National Gallery last Wednesday night, definitely fit the bill. The cocktail party, awards ceremony, and post-awards cocktail party brought out the likes of former Liberal leader Stéphane Dion, Liberal MP David McGuinty, and actress Mag Ruffman, who played Aunt Olivia on the 1990s CBC TV series *Road to Avonlea*.

This was the first year for the Catalyst Awards, though perhaps it will serve as a catalyst for future award ceremonies. The party was put on by the One Change organization, which is affiliated with Project Porchlight, a program that distributes energy-saving light bulbs. Project Porchlight was started in Mr. McGuinty's Ottawa-South riding, with his help, and has to date distributed more than 225,000 bulbs to Ottawa homes. And according to the person who presented Mr. McGuinty with his Catalyst Award, the low-energy bulbs save his constituents more than \$1-million annually.

Ms. Ruffman, who is to Canadian superstar Sarah Polley as John Stamos is to the Olsen Twins, served as the night's host, which played a major part in the general atmosphere of zaniness that permeated right up to the storeys-high glass ceiling of the National Gallery's Great Hall. She made numerous references to Mr. McGuinty's brother, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, who didn't make it to the ceremony but sent a congratulatory note. Of the two-McGuintys Ms. Ruffman's preference certainly seemed to be little-brother David, whom she referred to as "the good-looking brother," and after Mr. McGuinty collected his award she told the crowd that she "asked him for a date."

Mr. McGuinty, who began his brief acceptance speech by graciously recognizing Mr. Dion, who he called "perhaps the best minister of the environment this country has ever known," commented privately that Ms. Ruffman was "certainly comfortable" and also confessed that he was not a regular watcher of *Road to Avonlea* (he must have had cable).

One Change's mantra is that "simple actions matter," and despite the opulence of the Great Hall, the chi chi catering, and

the three-piece orchestral set, Party Central couldn't shake the feeling of being at a rally put on by a university social justice club. The room was packed with middle-aged people who broke out in "whoos!" throughout the evening in recognition of the various small victories that were being toasted.

Amy Fraenkel, of the United Nations Environment Programme, informed the crowd that "to address carbon and other emissions is actually a benefit economically because you reduce costs ultimately, and you create jobs. It's always politically a lower hanging fruit than some of the other issues we have to confront." This was probably the point in the evening when Mr. Dion, who stood listening at the front of the room, started scanning for an 'Exit' sign. As with any

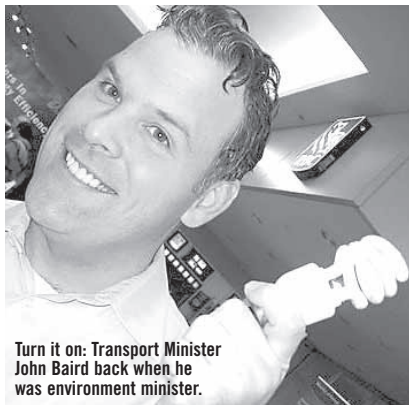
event having to do with the environment, the arts, homosexuals, or any motley combination of the three, the only Conservatives in attendance were the ones displayed holding light bulbs on two TV monitors that flanked either side of the stage.

One such picture was of Transport Minister John Baird, who was formerly the minister of the environment, however no one of any political stripe is ever going to refer to him as the best one Canada has ever known.

One Change founder Stuart Hickox, the last speaker of the evening, told the rapt audience about when he "cornered" Mr. Baird on the Hill and hustled him into getting his picture taken with one of his light bulbs. Mr. Hickox said that after snagging Mr. Baird he then went to see Mr. Dion, who looked thoroughly mortified that this story was being told.

"My next appointment was with Stéphane Dion, and he welcomed me into his office and I said to him, 'I just had my photo taken with John Baird, he agreed to hold a light bulb for the photo.' And Mr. Dion said, 'I can do better than that, we can change a light bulb.'" According to Mr. Hickox, Mr. Dion then proceeded to move the couch in his office so that they could have better access to a light fixture in order to screw in the aforementioned bulb. The crowd guffawed, applauded, and erupted in a torrent of "whoos!" —Party Central is surprised that didn't earn Mr. Dion a Catalyst Award.

hmacleod@hilltimes.com



Turn it on: Transport Minister John Baird back when he was environment minister.

Photo courtesy of One Change



Former Liberal leader Stéphane Dion

One Change Executive Director Stuart Hickox

Actress Mag Ruffman a.k.a. Aunt Olivia shows One Change's newest product

Party Central Photographs by CYNTHIA MÜNSTER



One Change's Jose Palacios shows off their contraption

The scene

Mr. McGuinty in a promotional picture

Mr. McGuinty receives an award from the UN's Amy Fraenkel

Liberal MP David McGuinty and Mr. Dion

Ottawa-Orleans MPP Phil McNeely

Former Ottawa mayor Bob Chiarelli

The meat martini bar

The musical entertainment

Former Ottawa Centre MPP Richard Patten

Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Hickox

The evening's beverages

Chi Chi catering