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Controversial Views of Candidate Dog Boisclair

By Tu Thanh Ha and Rheal Seguin

MONTREAL — War and mass killings in Central Africa continued to haunt the Quebec election campaign yesterday as Parti Québécois Leader André Boisclair faced more questions about one of his candidates.

In a 2003 book, the candidate, Montreal author Robin Philpot, challenges the idea that the 1994 Rwandan tragedy was chiefly a Hutu-led genocide against the Tutsis.

Mr. Philpot also wrote a book in 2005 that said federalists didn't win the 1995 sovereignty referendum fairly.

In it, without elaborating, he also alleged that naming Michaëlle Jean as Canada's Governor-General was a way to "legitimize the Feb. 29, 2004, coup in Haiti in which Canada took part."

Mr. Boisclair refused yesterday to say whether he endorsed his candidate's point of view about Ms. Jean.

"I'm not here to comment on Michaëlle Jean's appointment. It's an election campaign. I don't see how Michaëlle Jean is now in the political landscape."

Mr. Philpot's credibility is important to the PQ because his book, *Option Canada*, alleges that a secretive federalist group misused money in the 1995 referendum campaign.

The PQ has suggested that Liberal Leader Jean Charest has some knowledge of what happened.

Yesterday, Mr. Boisclair didn't want to comment on a photo of Mr. Philpot shaking hands with Jean-Paul Akayesu, a Rwandan convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda for inciting genocide and permitting or participating in murder, torture and sexual assault.

Mr. Philpot is critical of the international tribunal, and says Mr. Akayesu was framed.

"It's up to voters to be the judge. We're in a democracy," Mr. Boisclair said of his candidate.

Minutes later, Mr. Boisclair contradicted Mr. Philpot's statements on

the International Criminal Tribunal.

Leaving the news conference, Mr. Boisclair was buttonholed by Lucien Moka, president of the Montreal Congolese Community, who told the PQ Leader that he supports Mr. Philpot's views.

"In Congo, my country of origin, there were 4.5 million deaths but no one talks about it, but everyone puts the spotlight on 850,000 deaths [in Rwanda] when it is a figure that's inflated."

With reporters listening, Mr. Boisclair expressed sympathy, but said he trusts the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

"That tribunal you are talking about is a farce," Mr. Moka replied.

The PQ Leader tried to be polite and non-committal, making generic statements such that "one person who dies in such circumstances is one too many."

Speaking with reporters after the encounter, Mr. Moka said: "Listen, to say there was a genocide is to go too far. There were killings."

He said the Tutsis have tried to overemphasize their plight by making parallels with the Holocaust. "The Tutsis often try to get the sympathy of the Jews."

Meanwhile, the Quebec Liberals pursued with a vengeance their attack yesterday on the surging Action démocratique du Québec by releasing a detailed document showing that ADQ Leader Mario Dumont's election promises would cost voters \$6.3-billion over five years. The ADQ has refused to release the cost of its promises until after the federal government tables its budget on March 19, a week before the Quebec election.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has promised the budget will outline his government's plan to solve the fiscal imbalance between Ottawa and the provinces, and it is expected to include hundreds of millions of dollars in additional revenue for Quebec.

The Liberals, nervous about the ADQ's sudden rise in public opinion polls, are pressing Mr. Dumont to outline the total cost of his commitments before Tuesday's leaders' debate. They are anxious to discredit Mr. Dumont as nothing more than a "cowboy" politician whose election promises would lead to higher taxes and increased debt.