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## Veterans Affairs not extending benefits to recent low-income veterans

'It is not just the initial injury, it's the consequential aftermath or the secondary trauma related to the initial injury, and everything that goes around that,' says retired naval Lieutenant Louise Richard

By ROBERT SMOL

Despite heavy lobbying from groups representing disabled veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs is standing firm and refuses to extend existing funeral and burial benefits beyond low-income world war and Korean War vets to include recent veterans.

The funeral and burial program was designed to ensure no Canadian veteran, lacking proper means at the time of death, end up being dumped in a so-called potter's field. Under the current regulations, all honourably released veterans from the two world wars or Korea are entitled to apply to the funeral and benefits program if a financial review of their estate proves they died without the means to provide for a dignified burial.

"It is a program that we started in 1921 and the main legislative authority that comes for this is based on what is called the veterans funeral and burial regulations," said retired Colonel Alex Bialosh, executive director for the Last Post Fund, the organization designated by Veterans Affairs Canada to administer the program. "It is a set of regulations produced by Veterans Affairs and approved through the Privy Council; and all the rules, regulations, and criteria on who is eligible and how much we pay and don't pay is pretty well entrenched in those regulations."

However, unlike their fathers who may have served in the world wars or Korea, Canadian Forces veterans who joined after 1953 normally cannot apply for the same funeral and burial benefits.

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Photograph by Sam Garcia, The Hill Times

**It's game on, people:** Amid opposition threats of a fall election, Prime Minister Stephen Harper, pictured at the Fairmont Chateau Laurier in Ottawa last week, announced the board of directors for a new Mental Health Commission of Canada. Parties and observers are waiting for an expected, yet unconfirmed, Parliamentary prorogation.

## Support the troops campaign 'suppresses dissent,' say experts

By CHONGLU HUANG and RITA DEVLIN MARIER

The Conservative government's partnership with the Support Our Troops merchandise campaign and Red Friday rallies is politicizing the slogan, creating "suppression of dissent" against the Afghanistan mission and a potential "blind cult following" for the war, say experts.

For many Red Friday rally participants, such as Brian Muntz, founder of the Red Fridays Foundation of Canada, supporting the troops simply means showing non-partisan allegiance with the

men and women who are risking their lives to serve their country.

"We have to stand behind them and say 'thank you,' because they're serving our country in the name of democracy and human rights," said Mr. Muntz, whose parents were liberated from Nazi occupation by Canadian forces in the Netherlands during the Second World War.

"Red Fridays are strictly to support the men and women fighting and their families," Mr. Muntz told *The Hill Times*. "I would not want anyone to

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## Feds' 'direct participation' in national health care being limited: documents

By BEA VONGDOUANGCHANH

The Conservative government's approach to national health care is one of "collaborative federalism" with "little or no hierarchy" and the provinces and territories are trying "to limit the direct participation of the federal government" in the review of health policy and programs, according to a 2006 Health Canada briefing package released to *The Hill Times*.

"Over the next months, the federal health portfolio will need to continue to seek support for its

agenda from the federal Cabinet and Parliament, the public, and provincial/territorial (P/T) governments," said a briefing note in a package created for Susan Cartwright when she was appointed associate deputy minister of the department in 2006. (Ms. Cartwright has since advanced to the position of foreign and defence policy adviser to the Prime Minister.) The documents were obtained by *The Hill Times* through an access-to-information request, released a year after the request was filed.

"[Provincial and territorial governments] want

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## Opposition parties play confidence showdown on environment, Afghanistan

Bill C-30 or its equivalent and ending the Afghanistan mission must be addressed in a potential fall Throne Speech or opposition parties will vote against it

By BEA VONGDOUANGCHANH

The environment and Canada's mission in Afghanistan will be top issues in the fall session of Parliament as the opposition threatens to pull the plug if Bill C-30, the Clean Air and Climate Change Act, is not brought back to the House for debate and if the government doesn't clearly announce that it will withdraw Canadian troops by February 2009.

"C-30 is very important to us," said Liberal Whip **Karen Redman** (Kitchener Centre, Ont.). "We've said we're committed to that, and it's our expectation that the government is going to respect the will of Parliament. Certainly we will bring it up as an issue and we have opposition days and many vehicles at our disposal to make sure that the government doesn't prorogue and try to fight off what is clearly the will of Parliament."

After last week's Liberal caucus meeting in St. John's, Nfld., leader **Stéphane Dion** (Saint Laurent-Cartierville, Que.) told media that if Parliament is prorogued, his party would be willing to vote against a possible Throne Speech if it did not include environmental initiatives as strong as those found in the revised Bill C-30, currently at report stage in the House. The government has continually said that Bill C-30 is a "license to pollute" and that it would introduce a carbon tax. It has implemented a regulatory regime in order to "balance" the economy and the environment instead.

"It's fear mongering," Mr. Dion told reporters last week, when

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## NEWS

# Those involved say the Support Our Troops campaign and Red Friday rallies are not political and are only intended to lend support for the soldiers

'We have to stand behind them and say 'thank you,' because they're serving our country in the name of democracy and human rights'



Photographs by Jake Wright, *The Hill Times*

**C'mon nation, support the troops:** Clockwise from bottom left: Dressed in red, demonstrators held a Red Friday rally on the Hill last year. Canadian radio personality Lowell Green was on site. Defence Minister Peter MacKay being sworn into his new portfolio this year. Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

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believe that when they're asked to wear red, they're supporting a war activity."

But experts say supporting the men and women in Afghanistan includes support for the mission—that the two views are inseparable. Randal Marlin, a propaganda expert and philosophy professor at Carleton University, said the public needs to be wary of a slogan as innocuous as "support our troops" and that the idea behind the slogan may distract from the controversy of the mission.

Prof. Marlin said everyone supports the men and women risking their lives for their country, but it's the political implications of the war that should be discussed and questioned. Although Prof. Marlin said he is "not convinced it's wrong for Canadians to be in Afghanistan," he nevertheless wants to get away from the "military spirit" of the war.

"War is a terrible thing and we should be careful about freeing up troops," said Prof. Marlin. "We need to be sure we don't get into a situation of a blind cult following to increase troop [deployments]. Supporting the troops by not giving up on the mission makes retreat impossible in that mentality."

Prof. Marlin said he worries that associating support for troops in human terms with support for the Afghanistan mission may create a situation in which it becomes impossible for anyone to question the politics behind the war. "The overall impact is the suppression of dissent... and encouraging military solutions to problems," Mr. Marlin said.

It's quite deliberate that the Conservative government associates the troops and the mission and appears at Red Friday rallies, Jeff Keshen, a war expert and history professor at the University of Ottawa, said in an interview.

"It's a very clever way of building support for the [troops] without actually addressing the issue [of the mission]," Prof. Keshen said. "You can't talk about one without talking about the other."

High-profile public figures, such as Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier and Prime Minister Stephen Harper (Calgary Southwest, Atla.) have attended Red Friday rallies to encourage troop morale in Afghanistan and public support for the mission. Gen. Hillier attended a recent rally on Aug. 24 with new Defence Minister Peter MacKay (Central Nova, N.S.) and hockey personality Don Cherry, who all wore red as they took the stage to voice their support for the troops at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto.

"It is not my job, nor my responsibility, to articulate why we do certain missions but let me just tell you, as soldiers, we have to believe that there's a nugget of a mission before we will go out and do it," Gen. Hillier said at the rally. "Before we go on a mission where we risk life and limb, as our soldiers do every single day, we have to believe in the mission."

CANEX, the retail branch of the Canadian forces, began the Support Our Troops ribbons, magnets and stickers initiative in May 2005 at the grassroots level, Brian Tweedle, CANEX's director of merchandising and marketing, said in an interview with *The Hill Times*. It was inspired by the support the troops campaign in the U.S. for American soldiers fighting in the Iraq war.

The merchandise campaign now includes the collaborative involvement of CANEX, the Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency and the Department of National Defence, Mr. Tweedle said.

The ribbons and other products are part of a visual awareness campaign for people to show "their support for the military, both for the military and to the spouses and dependents, who are behind when they are posted overseas," he said.

Mr. Tweedle said the campaign started out small with grassroots support, with the first magnets going on sale in May 2005.

But then, "our initial order sold out tremendously fast, so we doubled our order. We placed another order, it sold out, we doubled that order, so it was that type of amazing growth and demand for this type of a program. And then we expanded into different product lines, and then we got into clothing," Mr. Tweedle said. "It's grown tremendously from something that was just once a small, little yellow car magnet."

Two wives of Canadian military troopers, Lisa Miller and Karen Boire from CFB Petawawa, started the first-ever Red Friday rally in April 2006. They were inspired by an email that originated from the United States, which asked people to wear red on Fridays to support the soldiers killed or injured in Afghanistan. Mr. Muntz also received the same American email and said he decided to launch the website [www.red-fridays.ca](http://www.red-fridays.ca) to Canadianize the initiative.

"The merchandise, or buying the gear, is just one way in particular [to support the troops], the wear red on Fridays as well," said Stephanie Webster, public affairs officer for the CFPSA. "The 'write to the troops' [program] is there, so there is a link to DND through our website. The [Support Our Troops website] is something that our agency has put together, working in conjunction with the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces," she said. As of deadline last week, the Canadian Forces did not return calls inquiring about DND's relationship with the Support Our Troops initiative.

Mr. Tweedle said profits from the sales of the CANEX merchandise, which is the only Support Our Troops merchandise sanctioned by the Canadian Forces, are reinvested into programs to support the military and their families.

"So last fiscal year, \$1 million was returned directly to the base, wing and unit funds, to spend on morale and welfare programs for the military," he said. "And that's just from the sale of the Support Our Troops merchandise."

When asked if the merchandise had the objective of raising support and visibility for the mission in Afghanistan, Mr. Tweedle said that the Support Our Troops campaign is not political. "It is support for the troops who are doing their duty, and nothing else. It is support for our troops who are putting their lives on the line," he said.

Capt. Wayne Johnston, who oversaw the Canadian Forces' display at the CNE, agreed in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "This is about people, people, people," he said. "There's a lot of muddling: if you support the troops you support the mission. I'd say, absolute nonsense. It's for the troops."

Capt. Johnston is head of the Canadian Forces' Operation Connection, which brought equipment and forces' personnel for display at the CNE. The operation has the objective of letting Canadians know "who we are and what we do, here and abroad," Capt. Johnston said.

At the rally, Mr. MacKay echoed Gen. Hillier's comments by saying that the Canadian military is making a difference in Afghanistan, explaining how boys and girls are able to go to school in Afghanistan and women can work. However the mission is a controversial one with increasing casualties and critics saying that Canada should abandon its "search and destroy" combat approach. The opposition parties are calling on the government to withdraw its troops either immediately or by the end of the mission in February 2009.

Skepticism about the mission is strong among Canadians, said Nick Nanos, president of SES Research. "Canadians agree with what we're trying to achieve, such as democracy and human rights, but they doubt whether we can achieve that in this mission," Mr. Nanos said.

Stephen Staples, president of the Rideau Institute on International Affairs, said the government has a "strategy to conflate two things: the public's concern for the individual men and women who are in the

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## HILL CLIMBERS

# Grit and Tory staffers leave to attend grad schools, Verner hires new chief of staff

By RITA DEVLIN MARIER

Parliament Hill has not escaped the annual back-to-school frenzy, with two staffers leaving the Hill in September to return to the academic world.

**Jennifer Chiu**, press secretary to International Trade Minister **David Emerson** (Vancouver Kingsway, B.C.), is leaving the minister's office at the end of this week to pursue a master's degree in journalism at Carleton University's prestigious Norman Paterson School of International Affairs.

Originally from Fort Erie, in southern Ontario, Ms. Chiu came to Ottawa to complete a bachelor's degree in journalism at Carleton University. She began her career on the Hill in September 2004, working in the communications shop of **Stephen Harper's** (Calgary Southwest, Alta.) OLO. She then moved on to work in the war-room during the last federal election campaign.

Shortly after the swearing in of the newly elected ministry, in 2006, Ms. Chiu moved to Minister Emerson's office and started working as his press secretary. In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Ms. Chiu said she greatly enjoyed her job in the minister's office. Some perks of the jobs included accompanying the minister on a trade mission to China and on NAFTA meetings in Vancouver and Mexico, she said.

Ms. Chiu will begin her master's at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs on Sept. 10. She said working for the minister of international trade sparked her interest in the subject. "I'm going to study international trade policy. It was actually the minister who encouraged me to get my master's in that," she said.

Ms. Chiu told *The Hill Times* that she has not yet thought about returning to the politi-

cal world after school. She also said that a replacement for her had not been named yet, but the minister's communications director, **François Jubinville**, is there to help and will be answering calls in the meantime.

Carleton University's Norman Paterson School was established in 1965 thanks to a grant from the late Senator Norman McLeod Paterson. In a survey published in February 2007, Canadian experts ranked the school second in North America for master's degrees in international affairs. The school's alumni includes **Alexandra Bugailiskis**, Canada's ambassador to Cuba; **Jim Judd**, director of CSIS and **David McLaughlin**, chief of staff to Finance Minister **Jim Flaherty** (Whitby-Oshawa, Ont.).

**Tait Simpson**, communications officer for the Liberal Party's head office in Ottawa, will also be leaving the Hill to pursue a graduate degree this fall. Mr. Simpson will begin a master's in business administration at Oxford University on Oct. 1. He will be a member of the University's Christ Church College.

Mr. Simpson is originally from Ottawa, but completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Western Ontario and an M.A. at UBC. While in university, he worked in Ottawa for two summers, one as an assistant to the head of the Canadian Tourism Commission and one as an intern for what is now the communications firm Fleishman-Hillard.

Mr. Simpson's first full-time job on the Hill was as a ministerial assistant to **Jim Peterson**, minister of international trade in former Prime Minister **Paul Martin's** (LaSalle-Émard, Que.) Cabinet. He described his time working for Mr. Peterson as a great experience. After the Liberals were defeated in the January 2006 election, Mr. Simpson became com-

munications officer for the party, a post he held for more than a year and a half. "The highlight of this time on the Hill was [the] Liberal convention in Montreal; watching the Dion green spread across the floor on the Saturday of the leadership convention with the lights down, the DJ playing, and then the announcement of Dion as leader," Mr. Simpson said.

Mr. Simpson did not say if he planned to work in government or politics following his MBA at Oxford, but he did say he hoped to be back in Ottawa to help in the next election campaign. He said that the opportunity to go to Oxford University played a big part in the choice of his program, in addition to that fact that he was "always interested in finance, investments as well as how organizations are structured and work."

Mr. Simpson's last day in the office will be Sept. 21. The Liberal Party new head office communications officer is **Dan Lauzon**.

## Verner gets new chief of staff, other ministers still unclear on staffing issues

Heritage Minister **Josée Verner** (Louis-Saint-Laurent, Que.) got a new chief of staff following the staff movement as a result of the Aug. 14 Cabinet shuffle. **Emilie Potvin** will be filling the shoes of **Denis Jollette**, who was Ms. Verner's chief of staff when she was minister of international cooperation. Mr. Jollette did not follow Ms. Verner to her new office after the Aug. 14 shuffle.

Ms. Potvin was previously chief of staff to Secretary of State and Chief Government Whip **Jay Hill** (Prince George-Peace River, B.C.). In *The Hill Times'* Seventh Annual Terrific Twenty-Five Staffer Survey, more than 90 staffers were asked to rank their peers in six categories. Ms. Potvin ranked 21st in the survey published June 18. The whip's office said a new chief of staff for Mr. Hill had not yet been confirmed.

**Diane Ablonczy** (Calgary—Nose Hill, Alta.), Secretary of State for Small Business and Tourism, has hired **Rob Taylor** as her new chief of staff. Since the January 2006 election of the Conservative government, Mr. Taylor has worked for



Photograph by Jake Wright, *The Hill Times*

From the Hill to school: Hill staffer Jennifer Chiu, pictured above with International Trade Minister David Emerson, is off to school this fall.

**Rob Nicholson** (Niagara Falls, Ont.), both when he was government House leader and most recently as his director of Parliamentary affairs at Mr. Nicholson's office as minister of justice.

Ms. Ablonczy has also hired **Jason Valentin** as her new policy adviser. Mr. Valentin has been working for Ms. Ablonczy for three years now while she was an MP. He previously worked as a Parliamentary secretary assistant in Minister of Finance **Jim Flaherty's** (Whitby—Oshawa, Ont.) office.

Hill Climbers also learned this week that **Nicole Lascelle**, Ms. Verner's former communications director, was no longer with the minister. **Richard Walker**, the press secretary for the minister, and **Daniel Morneau**, the minister's senior policy adviser, communications, are dealing with media inquiries and communication issues in the meantime.

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# 'The government knows the war is unpopular and increasingly so'

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forces along with support for the mission they're undertaking specifically....

"The government knows the war is unpopular and increasingly so," Mr. Staples said. "But the government also knows that support for the troops—the soldiers themselves—is very high. It's very much a tactic by the government to say, 'You can't support the troops and not

be supportive of the mission at the same time.' They can say that but I don't think people buy it."

Mr. Staples, a strong critic of the Afghanistan mission, said many citizens who support the troops don't support the mission and believe the troops should come home. "The Conservative politicians are desperate to be seen with groups of people that might be supportive of the military mission," Mr. Staples said. "All the politicians are looking for positive photo

opportunities in dealing with this very unpopular war."

He said the strategy could backfire on the government because of its "transparent, manipulative maneuver" to "turn concern for supporting the troops into some kind of lever to win more support for this war."

According to Mr. Staples, the Conservatives are trying to "insinuate that if you're critical of the mission, you somehow are against the men and women serving in the armed forces.... Canadians are sophisticated enough to be able to tell the difference."

Still, many Canadians believe showing support for the troops in the form of Red Friday rallies, bumper stickers, yellow ribbons—and getting politicians on board—are positive, even a necessary duty for citizens.

"What they're trying to do is show the Canadian public, the politicians and the troops in Afghanistan that what [the forces] are doing is the right thing," said Paul Manson, former chief of the defence staff from 1986 to 1989 and current president of the Conference of Defence Associations Institute.

The rallies and campaigns are to show the opposition parties and general population that there are people who support the soldiers and that Afghanistan is a worthwhile mission, said Mr. Manson, who strongly believes that to support the troops is to support the mission as well.

"The people who criticize the [Conservative] government are being incredibly cyni-

cal," Mr. Manson said. "It's the government's job to support their own policy and attend these rallies. They would be criticized if they did not. They are politicians and they are expected to appear and show interest."

Mr. Manson said there is a lack of balanced coverage in the media regarding the Afghanistan mission, with an emphasis on the negative and not enough information about all that the forces have achieved.

"The people who are demonstrating their support for the troops are, in a way, fighting the media that are raising uncertainty about the mission," Mr. Manson said.

Across the country, municipalities have been debating whether to put the Support Our Troops slogan on municipal property such as police and fire vehicles. In Calgary, city council opposed putting the stickers on city property. In Toronto, however, council voted in favour of putting ribbons on fire trucks and emergency medical service vehicles.

Ottawa city councillor Alex Cullen told *The Hill Times* that Support Our Troops stickers are political and signify more than just supporting the troops. Mr. Cullen said he has asked the police services board to review Ottawa Police Chief Vernon White's decision to put the stickers on the city's police cruisers. "My position is that we should not allow public property to become political billboards," he said.


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