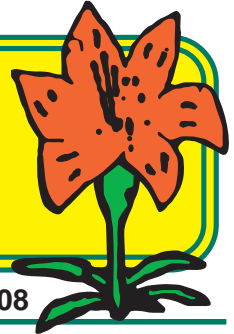


Seniors' Voice



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Eternal Vigilance is the price of Liberty. Power is ever stealing from the many to the few.

CCPA EDITORIAL : — October 2008

Running On His Record???

When he called the election in September, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said he would be running on his government's record. Regrettably, however, most voters are not well informed about the policies, actions and legislation that the Harper minority government undertook during its 32 months in office. This is because they were inadequately reported and explained by the media, or were implemented so stealthily or incrementally that they escaped attention.

Even many of the Harper government's actions that were publicized at the time were later forgotten or buried in the accretion of later events.

This is a government that has been covert and manipulative. Elected on a promise to bring "a culture of accountability" to Ottawa, it has concentrated all power in the prime minister's office and ruthlessly thwarted the efforts of parliamentary committees to hold it accountable. Most cabinet ministers, backbenchers, and senior bureaucrats were muzzled. If one of them dared to speak out without getting prior approval from the PMO, he or she was sharply reprimanded.

Under Harper's stewardship, economic growth has slumped to its lowest rate in almost two decades. Not all the factors driving this slowdown are within the government's control, but its fixation on exporting our natural resources, rubberstamping hundreds of foreign takeovers, and letting the dollar soar unchecked have killed hundreds of thousands of industrial jobs and

plunged the manufacturing sector into a meltdown.

Harper has continued and intensified the unnecessary reduction of Canada's business taxes (even though they're one of the lowest in the industrialized world), draining billions from the federal treasury that could have been used to improve our health care system, provide national child care, create a national drug coverage plan, and invest in the development of green technologies and renewable energy.

Instead, Harper's finance minister boasts about reducing government social spending to its lowest level since the 1960s. Some of the government's deepest cuts were to programs designed to help the most vulnerable among us achieve equal status and treatment.

In foreign affairs, Harper continues to send Canadian troops to Afghanistan, where nearly 100 of them and thousands of civilians have been killed and countless others wounded in a misguided war whose main purpose is to pave the way for a U.S. pipeline. Under the federal Tories, Canada has lost its standing as a respected and independent peacekeeper as Harper cozies up to the disastrous Bush administration in the U.S. His government's ongoing efforts to push Canada into a servile economic integration with the U.S. through the secretive Security and Prosperity Partnership threaten the tattered remnants of Canadian sovereignty.

"Selfishness, greed and lust for power, are the enemies of a civilized society."

On the environmental front, Harper dismissively abrogated Canada's participation in the Kyoto accord, reneged on our commitment to a promised reduction of global-warming greenhouse gases, and adopted a permissive plan that will allow these emissions to increase, especially from the massively polluting tar sands projects in Alberta.

The details of the appalling Harper government record would fill a book—and indeed they have. A new CCPA book, *The Harper Record*, has just been published, with more than 40 researchers and analysts describing what Harper has actually done—or failed to do—in every area of his administration.

An election campaign should be the best time to expose all this dirty political laundry, but unfortunately, when most media coverage is focused on the antics of party leaders or on their rants and attack ads, an in-depth examination of policy matters tends to be ignored. CCPA members and Monitor readers, however, can access the full contents of the Harper record book on our website.

So it's now easy for anyone wanting to do so to find out what the record really is that Harper should have been running on—and what the electorate should have been voting on. ■

Worth Quoting

Harper and listeria

"In August, Canada experienced the worst epidemic of listeriosis in the world, with at least 16 people dying from contaminated cold cuts produced by a Toronto meat processing plant.

What went wrong? *Listeria* is the biological agent, cold cuts the vector, but the ultimate cause may be found in risky government decisions. "Last November, the Canadian government transferred inspection duties for ready-to-eat meats from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to the meat industry. Voluntary

self-inspection came largely as a substitute for government inspection.

"Maple Leaf Foods was an early adopter of the government's new plan. And why not? The new policy made self-inspection easy, especially since the government had also left national standards for listeria lower than in many other countries, including the United States, which tolerates no listeria bacteria at all.

"The Harper government has reversed much of the progress [on food safety] made in the past... Harper has said he is 'very troubled' by the listeria outbreak. So are we." ■

—*Canadian Medical Association Journal*.

Thought

**"War is not an act of God,
but a crime of man."**

**Cordell Hull, former
U.S. Secretary of State**

Seniors' Voice

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Will the Economic Boom Reduce Poverty in Saskatchewan?

By Garson Hunter, Fiona Douglas and Sarah Pedersen

Saskatchewan has experienced rapid economic expansion in the past two years. Recently the media has vociferously claimed the “Saskaboom” will bring about unprecedented opportunities for the people of Saskatchewan. Despite the unprecedented increases in the prices of oil, natural gas and potash and windfall government revenues, levels of poverty in the province have not significantly declined.

This report, presented by the Social Policy Research Unit (SPR) Faculty of Social Work at the University of Regina, covers a greater expanse of the poor in Saskatchewan than have previous poverty reports. See “SaskNotes: vol;5 Iss.5 *Report Card on Child Poverty in Saskatchewan.*)

A central theme of this report is that economic recovery from the recessions of the early 1980s and 1990s, balanced budgets and reduced provincial debt have not challenged poverty. Policy emphases based on neo-liberal economics have been a failure for the poor and working poor. The Saskatchewan government needs to use its newfound wealth to address the problems of poverty with programs that will leave a legacy for all.

Poverty Statistical Highlights: 2006 Census

Saskatchewan’s overall poverty rate is 15.3 % (140,000). Canada’s overall poverty rate was 14.5%. For Saskatchewan children under 18 years of age, the poverty rate stood at 19.9% (42,000 children), whereas the national average was 15.8%. Saskatchewan was second only to British Columbia (21.9%) in having the highest child poverty rate in Canada.

The poorest in Saskatchewan were children living in female lone-parent families, with a poverty

rate of 47.5% (19,000). The national rate among this group is 42.6%. Unattached individuals under 65 years of age face a high poverty rate at 40.7% (38.4% for males and 43.9% for females).

Saskatchewan’s unattached elderly (over 65) also faced a high poverty rate at 28% (13,000). The national rate among unattached elderly was 34.9%.

The average low-income gap – the amount of money needed to bring Saskatchewan poor up to the poverty line - \$8,100. For families of two persons or more, the gap was \$9,600; for unattached people, \$7,300. 1.4% of the provincial GDP would lift all the poor in Saskatchewan from poverty.

How much would it cost to raise Saskatchewan’s poor from poverty?

\$256 million would raise Saskatchewan families of two or more up to the poverty line; another \$370 million would lift the unattached poor to the poverty line. This is a total expenditure of \$626 million. Saskatchewan’s GDP for 2006 stood at \$45,922,000,000 (\$45.9 billion). Therefore, expenditures of 1.4% of the provincial GDP aimed at the poorest segment of the population would lift Saskatchewan from poverty. Clearly, Saskatchewan is currently in the position to use its financial leverage available to deal with poverty. ■

Editorial note: In 1990, the House of Commons in Ottawa, unanimously passed a resolution to eliminate poverty in Canada by the year 2000. By the end of December, 2000 poverty was worse than in 1990. Perhaps, with the rapid economic expansion that has occurred with “Saskaboom”, we could become the first Canadian province to eliminate poverty.

Having public services run by private firms a colossal flop

“The plague of privatization – and its dark twin’ deregulation – have robbed citizens of their joint properties: railroads, airlines, air terminals, and public space.” By Dalton Camp

A friend, standing in line at a railway station wash-room in Britain, observed the following sign, erected by management: **“Due to service improvement there are reduced toilet facilities on this floor.”**

British Rail, once a wholly owned public railway, has been sacrificed to the gods of privatization. Instead of one publicly-owned railway, privatization gave Britons 25 new railways. These, Britons were assured, would provide improved service, healthy competition, lower fares, and further delights.

The result has been chaos. There was an awesome decline in the quality of passenger service, frequent delays and cancellations, not to mention the increased danger to life and limb now provided by a public service driven by the lust for private profit.

And profits there are: privatized railroading has proved a gravy train for investors. As for the public, its rewards have been few, and of course the government is still shelling out millions of pounds in subsidies for maintenance and other infrastructure costs. The British experience speaks eloquently to the high public cost of free market capitalism.

Consider the illusionary bonanza of deregulation of the airline industry, both in Canada and the United States. While the public was promised the benefits of “open skies” – which would include more competition, lower fares, and improved service – Canada now has a high-cost, non-competitive industry in which flying has become a luxury. In the United States, where its citizens are raised to believe that patriotism and capitalism are synonyms, air travel has become a health hazard and will also soon become a near-monopoly business. Given the lack of regulation, America’s open skies have become filled with bankrupt airlines and high-altitude mergers.

We could, I suppose, travel by bus. But could we live without electric power? The citizens of California are in the process of finding out. Four years ago, the California state legislature voted unanimously to deregulate its power industry, given the assurance, in the language of **The New York Times**, “that market forces would bring power costs down.”

This was, **The Times** added, “a dramatic miscalculation, as it turned out.”

By mid-winter, California’s two largest private utilities were “sliding into bankruptcy.” Responding to the crisis, the government of the state, proclaiming deregulation a failure, promised, in **The Times’** description, “to reassert the state’s control over its power market.” This would include steps to control power plants, grids, and prices. Privatizers and free market proponents complained of these developments, but most Californians likely thought it was better than sitting in the dark.

The plague of privatization has robbed citizens of their joint properties: railroads, airlines, air terminals, “the King’s highways” and public space. And as its dark twin, deregulation, brings only misery to the general population, someone might think to ask if there is any mechanism or method of accountability somewhere.

John Locke put it very simply: Members of the society authorize others to act for them “to make laws...as the public good of the society shall require.” But now we have legislators who make laws only as the **private** good may require.

All this may have been more tolerable were it not for the fact that so much was done in the name of a dubious philosophy, part of which argued that government could not serve the public interest nearly as well as could private interests.

If we have learned anything out of all this misadventure, inconvenience and risky business, **it is that it just ain’t so.** ■

*Dalton Camp was a political commentator and columnist for **The Toronto Star**, where this piece was first published.)*

“Privatization is just a fancy name for the biggest international romp ever mounted by the rich for skinning the poor”

– Senator Eugene Forsey

Seniors' Chat

Attracting and Keeping Nurses

As a Saskatchewan senior, you may have experienced first-hand the compassionate, professional care of our province's valuable, highly skilled nurses - nurses who are committed to providing the best possible care to their patients.

The Saskatchewan government values nurses too. We also recognize that nurses are in short supply around the world. And in Saskatchewan the situation is no different. So keeping and attracting nurses is a top priority of this government.

As the minister responsible for seniors' issues, I would like to tell you about a number of exciting initiatives that our government offers to nurses to attract them to Saskatchewan and to keep them once they're here. Some include:

- **A highly competitive salary** on par with the level offered by Alberta.
- **Tuition rebates of up to \$20,000** over seven years for students who stay in the province after graduation to start their careers.
- **Bursaries** for Saskatchewan students studying health professions in short supply in exchange for a commitment to work in the province's publicly funded health system.
- An **employee retention program** to keep health providers working in the health system.
- A **provincial recruitment agency**, HealthCareersinSask.ca, which connects health care workers with career opportunities in health regions and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency.



Hon. Don McMorris

- **Grants** for relocation to Saskatchewan and recruitment to rural, northern and hard-to-recruit positions.
- **Increasing nursing education seats by 300** to more than 700 seats.
- **Re-establishing a psychiatric nursing program** this fall with an intake of 30 students.
- And **expanding the practical nursing program** from a certificate to a diploma credential.

In addition, we've signed a partnership agreement with the Saskatchewan

Union of Nurses looking for more ways to recruit and retain nurses. And we've committed \$60 million to support it. Together, we'll work with health regions to hire 800 registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses over the next four years.

Our efforts to attract and keep nurses are starting to pay off. Ninety-six per cent of nursing graduates expect to work in Saskatchewan for their first job, based on job offers.

Keeping our new graduates, combined with provincial incentive programs, and national and international efforts by the recruitment agency and health regions, have resulted in almost 1,100 new nurses since October 2006.

If you have any ideas or concerns about issues relating to seniors, please feel free to write to me at Room 302, Legislative Building, 2405 Legislative Drive, Regina, S4S 0B3, or phone my office at (306) 787-7345. I welcome your comments and look forward to hearing from you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Don McMorris".

The Honourable Don McMorris
Minister of Health



Saskatchewan
Ministry of
Health

‘We’re not going to win this war’

By Mike Blanchfield – Canwest News Service

OTTAWA – The top British commander in Afghanistan said Sunday that western forces could not defeat the Taliban, an assessment echoed by John Manley, who headed Canada’s independent panel into the mission.

“We’re not going to win this war,” Brig. Mark Carleton-Smith told a British newspaper in a report published Sunday, Oct.5. “It’s about reducing it to a manageable level of insurgency that’s not a strategic threat and can be managed by the Afghan army.”

Carleton-Smith also advocated negotiation with the Taliban insurgents, saying “that shouldn’t make people uncomfortable.”

Carleton-Smith’s remarks to the *Sunday Times* of London echoed through the Canadian federal election.

NDP Leader Jack Layton praised the remarks while the Conservative government brushed them aside.

But in a separate interview with Canwest News Service Sunday, Manley did not dispute the scenario presented by the British general in charge of his country’s 7,000 troops in Helmand province, which borders Kandahar.

“I don’t think it’s inconsistent with what we said in our report, or at the time of our report, that unless things changed, NATO was in danger of losing,” said Manley.

Manley, a former Liberal Foreign Affairs minister and deputy minister, headed the independent panel struck by Prime Minister Stephen Harper that recommended more NATO troops and equipment.

Manley’s and Carleton-Smith’s comments come days after Britain’s ambassador to Kabul was quoted as telling a French diplomat the international efforts were “doomed to fail” as well as the

assessment of NATO’s top commander, U.S. Gen. David McKiernan, that “we don’t see progress” and “it might get worse before it gets better.” Manley said he is not surprised to hear such warnings.

“The commitment and willingness of NATO to really put their weight behind the mission is still not particularly evident as far as I can see,” Manley said.

He said NATO committed as many troops to both Bosnia and Kosovo as it has to Afghanistan, a country with more than 10 times the population of each of those Balkan states, and one with much poor infrastructure and far rougher terrain.

NATO countries also placed caveats in their troops in Kosovo, he said, “but they were generally a tool to ensure governments were consulted before their forces were used in particular ways” and were generally waived.

“That’s not the case in Afghanistan. Quite a few countries are prepared to be there as long as they’re not engaged in anything too difficult,” said Manley.

Carleton-Smith said only a political settlement could end the continuing carnage in Afghanistan.

“We want to change the nature of the debate from one where disputes are settled through the barrel of a gun to one where it is done through negotiations.” The general said.

“If the Taliban were prepared to sit on the other side of the table and talk about a political settlement, then that’s precisely the sort of progress that concludes insurgencies like this. That shouldn’t make people uncomfortable.

Defence Minister Peter MacKay said negotiation with less hardened elements of the Taliban remained the prerogative of the Afghanistan government. ■

“The price that good people pay, for their indifference to public affairs, is to be ruled by evil men.” — Plato

Where there's no Will, there's no Way!

Not everybody has a Will. They feel that it's too much trouble or too expensive to make a Will, or they just never got around to it. Or maybe the Will named their late spouse as beneficiary and it has never been amended.

For whatever reason, if you die without a Will you are giving up your right to have an estate plan: instead the province will make a "Will" for you, through the terms of the provincial acts dealing with intestate (dying without a Will) succession.

But that's O.K., since your family will inherit anyway, right? Consider what you can't do if you don't make a Will:

- You can't choose the administrator of your estate (your executor), the courts will do that for you. They will probably pick a close family member (if you have one), but the person they pick may not be the one you would have named.
- You can't choose your heirs. If you leave a surviving spouse and children, they will divide the estate among them. If you leave children only, they will divide your estate equally. Nobody outside your immediate family will likely benefit: nieces and nephews, cousins, etc. will likely receive nothing and your friends will be cut out of the estate entirely.
- You can't decide how much of your estate goes to each heir. For example, if you die leaving three surviving children, they will automatically each get one-third of your estate. That may be O.K. with you or it may not!
- You can't decide when your heirs will receive their shares of the estate. Those over age 18 will get their share immediately. Any part of the estate going to minors will be held in trust and then will be paid to them at age 18, whether they are ready to handle the funds or not.
- You can't protect special needs beneficiaries: a son who is an alcoholic, a daughter who

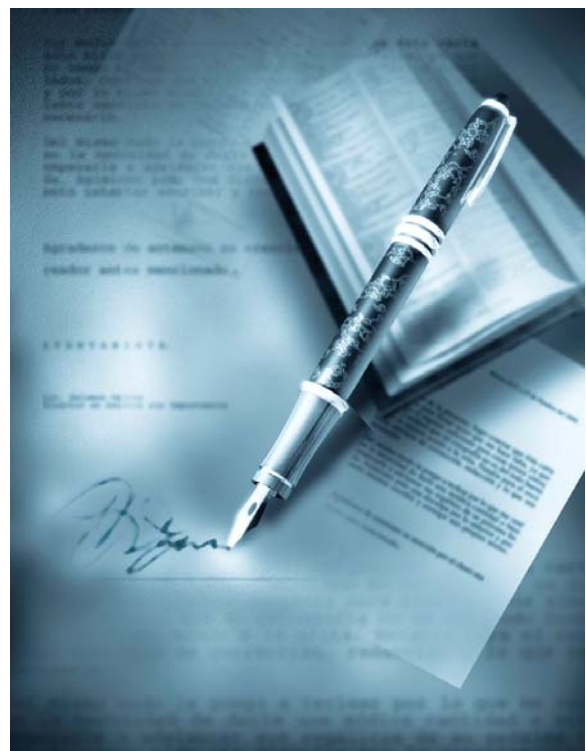
can't manage money, a grandson with a drug problem. All get their shares of your estate if they are age 18 or older.

- You can't provide for contingencies. For example, if your son were to predecease you, you might want his share of your estate to go to his wife, your daughter-in-law. But she is not legally a member of your family and would be cut out of your estate if you died without a will.

Without a will, there's no way for you to be certain that your estate will pass to whom, and when, and in what amounts you want it to. Is it time for you to have a talk with a lawyer?

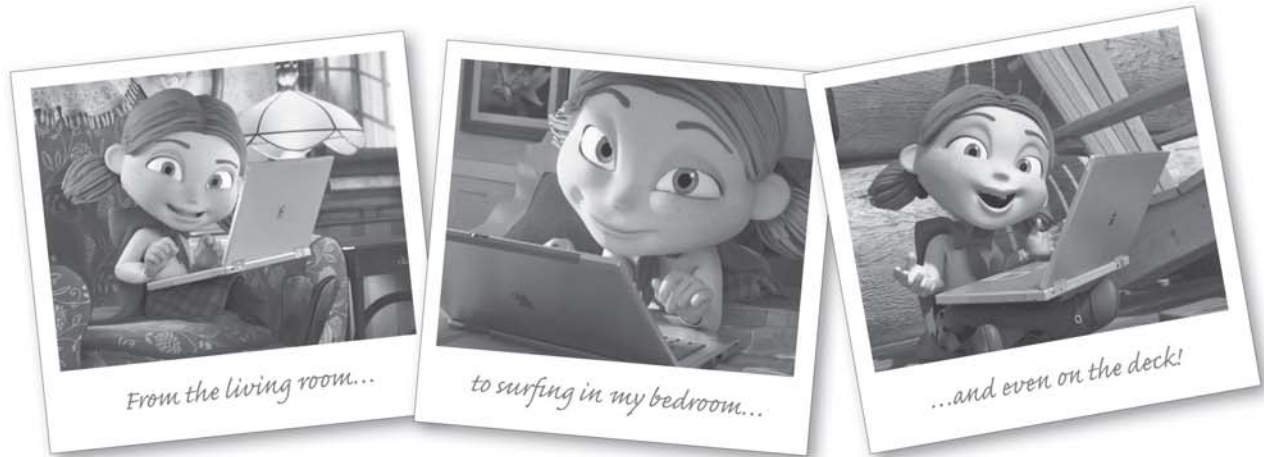
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Submitted compliments of Donna St. Onge, Certified Senior Advisor, Conexus Credit Union, 780-1584



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