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Cyberspace is world's new battleground

Estonia claimed to be under attack last spring, but not by guns or bombs. This assault came in the form of data requests from more than a million computers. It overwhelmed the Baltic nation's computer networks, crashing e-mail for its parliament, taking down emergency phone lines and freezing online services of government offices, banks, universities and hospitals.

Estonia accused Russia of conducting a cyberwar in retaliation for a decision to move a Soviet-era war memorial. The Russian government denied involvement.

Likewise, when hackers somewhere in China infiltrated a United States defence department network in September , Chinese officials denied its army had any role. (British, French, German and New Zealand officials have complained of similar China-based hacking.) Though no one accused China of acts of war, both events revealed how the Internet is reshaping warfare.

The Internet creates real risks for societies dependent on information networks. In an experimental cyberattack in March , researchers at the U.S. Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory managed to make a generator self-destruct.

Computer attacks don't just threaten other computers but the larger infrastructure. Viruses could become as dangerous as missiles. At the same time, cyberattacks have the potential to minimize the costs of conflict in lives and dollars. Instead of demolishing an electrical grid, cyberattacks offer militaries the option of disabling it temporarily.

Although hotly debated in the 1990s, discussions of cyberwar's risks and potential had gone dormant since 9/11. But the Estonia event quickly put cybersecurity back on NATO's agenda. And after the defence department breach, U.S. President George W. Bush conceded the vulnerability of American systems to cyberattack and the government's need to develop defences against them.

Countries must, however, do more than recognize cyberspace as a new battleground. They also need to know when and how they can deploy weapons. What are the rules of cyberwar?

For more than a century, nations have devised rules of international law, such as the Geneva Convention, which seek to avoid war or minimize human suffering when conflicts occur. And as new technologies emerge, nations have weighed whether to draft new rules, such as treaties restricting biological, chemical and laser weapons.

Governments and scholars so far, however, have resisted calls to craft new rules of international law to govern attacks on or by computers. Conventional wisdom suggests that the laws we have extend by analogy to cover cyberspace.

And they do. But serious "translation" problems make them ill-suited to the task. For example, the United Nations Charter clearly prohibits states from using force except in self-defence or with UN authorization.

So does that ban Russia from computer attacks on Estonia? It might. Or is it a "use of force" only if the target is physically harmed? Or only if it leads to death and destruction? Or simply whenever the target is critical to a nation's security? Similar uncertainties surround rules on neutrality and civilian distinction.

Such uncertainty can unintentionally escalate conflicts if participants have different interpretations of what's permissible. Or states might shy away from cyberattacks entirely if they don't know what's allowed -- even in cases in which those attacks might cause less harm than the bombs they'll use instead.

Existing laws of war also focus primarily on conflicts between nations. But 9/11 and the ongoing asymmetrical warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan underscore how insufficient that approach is.

Cyberwar undoubtedly will attract groups like al-Qaida; the technology is inexpensive, easy to use and can be deployed from almost anywhere. As the Russia-Estonia and China-U.S. cases show, it is also hard to pin the origins of a cyberattack on a country rather than on individual hackers.

When the laws of war don't apply -- even by analogy -- a complex set of other international and foreign laws kicks in. For example, assume the hackers in the Estonia case were indeed operating from Russia but had no ties to the government or military. Under existing rules, Estonia should respond by asking Russia to police its own territory. To counterattack would violate Russia's sovereignty. With new rules, however, nations could agree to waive sovereignty concerns and permit a direct response in certain cases, such as cyberattacks by terrorists that all nations might want thwarted.

The status quo presents dangers that countries need to stop ignoring. We need new rules of international law so military commanders can operate with greater certainty in cyberspace, and can use new cybertools in ways that reduce the collateral costs of conflict.

War has entered the Information Age, and it's time for international law to get a needed update.

Duncan B. Hollis is an associate professor of law at Temple University and a contributor to the international law blog *Opinio Juris* .

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Chr tien's twisted fact

Jean Chr tien's memoirs offer insight into numerous subjects ranging from separatism to the sponsorship scandal, but the former prime minister's comments about Afghanistan cannot be accepted at face value.

Entitled My Years As Prime Minister, Chr tien's book criticizes Paul Martin, who followed him as prime minister, for taking too long to decide what to do with Canadian troops in Afghanistan. The result, in Chr tien's view, was that the Forces became embroiled in the "killing fields" of Kandahar.

Historians may be left to sort out who did what and when, but Chr tien's comment leaves an inaccurate impression. By implication, he is trying to separate himself from the current Canadian campaign in the Kandahar area, which indeed has been deadly.

There is no question that the Kandahar area has been, and is, a dangerous place for Canadian troops. Many of the 71 Canadian soldiers who have been killed in Afghanistan were in that part of the country. Canadians have always known, however, that the Kandahar area was a prime Taliban base. Chr tien, as prime minister, would certainly have known this.

Perhaps Chr tien has forgotten that he was the prime minister on Oct. 8, 2001. On that day, his defence minister, Art Eggleton, announced that the government was sending more than 2,000 Canadian men and women to serve with the American-led coalition that confronted the Taliban government. The Taliban had assisted al-Qaida, which launched the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington that killed Canadians as well as Americans.

The Canadian contribution drew from the land, sea and air components of the Armed Forces. In particular, Chr tien's government decided to send an unspecified number of troops from the special unit known as Joint Task Force 2, an elite anti-terrorist, commando-style force.

Martin's decision to send troops directly into Kandahar was merely an extension of the policy Chr tien initiated. Chr tien should acknowledge this. There are many questions that may legitimately be raised about the Afghan mission, but Chr tien's involvement in it is not one of them.

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Harper deserves a little more time

Stephen Harper and his Conservatives have governed Canada for over 20 months. Based on the speech from the throne delivered in Ottawa yesterday, they deserve to govern for a while longer. And Liberal Leader Stephane Dion should find a way to set aside his obvious political objections and let this happen.

Saying this does not award top marks to the Conservative government's latest road map for where it would lead Canada. There were, in the throne speech delivered by Gov. Gen. Micha lle Jean, only a few times when the Conservatives came close to galvanizing the nation, when they abandoned the pedestrian rhetoric of bureaucratic managers and aspired to speak with the inspired tones of visionaries.

Moreover, the speech itself is a cunning weave of politics and policy. It is a snare laid for the opposition parties that might be tempted to force an election, as well as a set of initiatives designed to convince the Canadian public that this minority government is not drifting but knows where it wants to go. But when rhetoric is removed from reality, when the fat is cut away from the meat, there is enough in what the Conservatives would do to justify giving them a chance to do it.

The government's most appealing initiative lies in the Canadian Arctic. It is a timely, comprehensive proposal that would improve life for the people living in Canada's most northerly territories while reinforcing Canada's sovereignty and right to resources in a part of the world increasingly desired and claimed by others.

The government's plan to resolve this country's commitment to Afghanistan is also sensible. While the Conservatives advocate a role for Canadians in Afghanistan until 2011, they will put the issue to a vote after a newly formed panel has examined the matter.

Canadians could benefit from other policies brought forward in this throne speech such as initiatives to open more international markets to Canadian exports and to knock down interprovincial trade barriers within Canada.

Are their questions about, as well as flaws in, this throne speech? Absolutely. The Conservatives speak the truth when they say it is impossible for this country to meet its Kyoto accord commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions. But though the throne speech says they want to start making substantial cuts in those emissions as soon as possible, the Conservatives need to show Canadians a more detailed plan to convince them that those cuts will actually come. This, in fact, is their most important test.

The Conservatives deserve a chance to at least try to complete the political painting this throne speech has

sketched out. The full reason for this lies beyond Ottawa. Before 2007 ends, it will have seen voters cast ballots in Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and the Northwest Territories. Election fatigue grips the land. The federal politicians should give voters a rest.

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PLAYING CHICKEN; The Tory's throne speech is either a blueprint for the next session, or an election platform -- Stephane Dion will be forced to choose the road ahead; Speech bolsters region's transit hopes

Waterloo Region's hopes of federal money for a rapid transit system are a bit brighter after last night's throne speech, reckons Chair Ken Seiling.

The speech laying out the Conservatives' agenda specifically referred to the need to support public transit and transportation infrastructure.

Seiling says that's an important confirmation the Harper government is behind projects such as regional rapid transit, which could cost an estimated \$245 million to \$630 million.

"It bodes well for us," Seiling said. "We've been trying to get them to flesh out for the past year or so where exactly they stand on some of these projects."

He's hopeful money could be promised sooner rather than later for a project that already has the McGuinty government's pledge to foot two-thirds of the bill.

"(The Conservatives have) expressed their regular support for our (project), and I'm hoping now that they've reconfirmed that in the throne speech, we'll begin to see some of these project approvals begin to flow," Seiling said.

But Kitchener Councillor Berry Vrbancic, acting mayor in Carl Zehr's absence, saw holes in last night's speech that ought to cause concern for cities.

He said municipalities need more details on what a new infrastructure program, called the Building Canada Plan, would mean for them.

Across Canada, cities and towns are facing overdue infrastructure repairs that are closing in on \$100 billion, and they need a concrete commitment of support from Ottawa, Vrbancic said.

"That cost cannot be borne by taxpayers at the local level through property taxes," he said. "That's just not sustainable.

"The fact there wasn't more said on the kinds of investments that are necessary to ensure Canadian municipalities are strong, competitive economic engines was the biggest disappointment."

Most municipalities would welcome the plan to recruit 2,500 new police officers -- but they also need a long-term funding commitment for police forces, too, he said.

Vrbanovic, also vice-president at-large of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, said time will tell exactly what the Conservatives mean by a reference to limiting federal spending in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

"That could suggest in the future things like the gas tax won't flow to municipalities," he said.

But language like that -- which says provinces can opt out of shared-cost programs and get federal compensation -- plays well in Quebec, said Peter Woolstencroft, a political scientist at the University of Waterloo.

On the whole, the Conservatives laid out an agenda within their "comfort zone" but with a few provocations for the opposition parties on the Afghanistan mission, climate change and the GST cut, Woolstencroft said.

"This was not an in-your-face speech from the throne. I think it's a very safe, reasonable speech."

Not surprising were references to tougher crime legislation and a stronger military, which he said are a nod to the party's core constituents.

Most interesting, Woolstencroft said, will be the reaction today from the Liberals, who have the power to force an election by voting against some of the key elements in the throne speech. It will be an important test of the confidence the party has in leader Stephane Dion.

"The only Liberals who want an election tonight are those who want to get rid of Stephane Dion," Woolstencroft said. "The Liberals have a very difficult choice to make."

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ILLUSTRATION: Photo: THE CANADIAN PRESS / Prime Minister Stephen Harper listens to Governor General Michaëlle Jean read the speech from the throne yesterday to begin the second session of the 39th Parliament. ;
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
NOTE: Ran with "IN THE SPEECH" which has been appended to the end of this story INSIDE: THE RECORD'S VIEW, A10 CHANTAL HEBERT, A10 FULL TEXT OF THE THRONE SPEECH AT TheRecord.com
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PLAYING CHICKEN; The Tory's throne speech is either a blueprint for the next session, or an election platform -- Stéphane Dion will be forced to choose the road ahead; Liberals take stock, face tough decisions

The Conservatives have laid out a road map they hope will bring them closer to a coveted majority government, promising major tax cuts and sweeping anti-crime legislation in yesterday's throne speech.

But the speech also declares Canada cannot meet its greenhouse-gas reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol, drawing fire from opposition parties and environmentalists.

If the speech is defeated in a confidence vote, Prime Minister Stephen Harper will hit the campaign trail in pursuit of a majority and use the document as the backbone of his election platform.

If it survives, Harper has already declared that he expects a freer rein in imposing his agenda on Parliament and is prepared to use the threat of confidence votes to make it happen.

The NDP and the Bloc Québécois immediately announced they will vote against the speech, while Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion said he will consult his MPs and senators before deciding what to do.

The centrepiece of the 16-page speech, which Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean read in a formal ceremony in the Senate, includes the announcement of a new Tackling Violent Crime bill.

The omnibus legislation will include measures on impaired driving, age of sexual consent, stricter bail conditions, and mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.

Harper has made it clear that his new law-and-order legislation will be a confidence matter -- meaning an

opposition defeat of the bill will trigger an election.

The government also plans to announce a toughening of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, as well as multi-year tax cuts for individuals and businesses, and a one-percentage-point cut in the GST.

The Tories say the crime legislation will simultaneously reintroduce a number of bills that had been blocked last spring by the three opposition parties.

"Unfortunately much of this legislation did not pass," says the speech. "That is not good enough to maintain the confidence of Canadians."

Dion must now decide where he would rather spend the fall: on the hustings trying to halt Harper's quest for a majority government, or in Parliament trying to stop him from governing like he already has one.

Dion ripped into the speech for its abandonment of Kyoto, its ambiguity on Afghanistan, and its failure to address poverty.

But he quickly added that he will consult his party before announcing his intentions today, and cautioned that Canadians wouldn't want a third election in three years.

The bleakness of Dion's immediate prospects was underscored as his party found itself once again mired in noisy disarray yesterday.

Dion's Quebec lieutenant Marcel Proulx suddenly announced his resignation and when Dion offered the job to MPs Denis Coderre and Pablo Rodriguez, he was rebuffed.

Most Liberals are expected to advise Dion to take a dive in the throne speech vote to avoid an election. Allowing Parliament to survive also carries considerable risk for the Liberals.

Harper appears intent on spending the coming weeks seeking to demolish the Liberals' credibility on the issues they hope to use in an election campaign.

The throne speech provided one clear example with the repudiation of Kyoto: "Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol within the compliance period, which begins on January 1, 2008, just 77 days from now," it says.

Dion has called climate change the greatest threat facing the planet and has emphatically insisted that he has an industrial-emissions plan that would help Canada meet its Kyoto targets.

If Dion lets the throne speech pass while other opposition leaders vote against it, the NDP and Bloc will certainly accuse him of rolling over on the greatest issue threatening humanity.

But it's not all smooth sailing for Harper, either. He is still well short of majority territory in public opinion polls and he trails the Liberals in vote-rich Ontario.

NDP Leader Jack Layton has urged the Liberals to stand up for their principles and vote against the government.

"Why would Mr. Dion and the Liberals prop up the Conservative government when its agenda and direction are so clearly wrong for Canada?" Layton said.

"He's going to have some explaining to do. Because he will have given Mr. Harper a mandate to govern. Mr. Dion and the Liberals, I hope, are going to at least show up and not play hooky in the vote."

The awkwardness won't end there for Dion.

On crime bills and on anti-terror legislation, Dion had expected to steal votes from the NDP on the left by standing up for civil liberties and a more compassionate justice system.

Since Harper has made it clear that he will make law-and-order votes confidence matters, Dion might have to consistently throw in the towel to avoid an election.

The Liberals had also hoped to campaign on Afghanistan because, like other opposition parties, they want Canada to pull out of its combat mission in Kandahar by 2009.

But Harper threw Dion a curveball by naming a panel that will spend the next few months examining what Canada should do beyond 2009 -- and he put a Liberal in charge, ex-deputy prime minister John Manley.

The government also used the throne speech to promise a Commons vote on the Afghan mission. At the same time, the Tories hinted strongly that they would prefer to stay the course beyond 2009.

The speech says Canada should build on its accomplishments and shift to accelerate the training of the Afghan army and police so that the Afghan government can defend its sovereignty.

"This will not be completed by February 2009," says the speech, "but our government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011."

The government sets out five broad priorities for the next session of Parliament: strengthening Canada's sovereignty and place in the world, building a stronger federation, providing economic leadership, tackling crime, and improving the environment.

Also mentioned, the Tories are proposing to grant honorary citizenship on Burmese dissident Aung San Suu Kyi.

In a move aimed at Quebec, the Tories are promising legislation that would place formal limits on the federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas controlled by the provinces.

IN THE SPEECH:

LAW & ORDER

New legislation will include measures on impaired driving, age of sexual consent, dangerous offenders and stricter bail and mandatory prison sentences for gun crimes. The government will provide resources to put 2,500 more police officers on the streets.

ECONOMY

A fall economic update will outline plans to cut taxes across the board, including a further one-percentage-point cut to the GST. There will be a new infrastructure program, the Building Canada Plan.

AFGHANISTAN

There will be a parliamentary vote on the military mission in Afghanistan beyond February 2009. The Tories will push for Canada to stay directly involved in Afghanistan until at least 2011.

ENVIRONMENT

Canada won't meet Kyoto Protocol commitments to cut greenhouse gases, but will reduce emissions 20 per cent by 2020. New water strategy to clean up oceans, lakes and improve access to safe drinking water.

THE ARCTIC

Canada will build a "world-class" Arctic research station to study environmental science and resource development, and to map the Arctic seabed in an effort to bolster Canada's claim to the Arctic.

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Tories pledge tax cuts; Conservative Throne Speech also promises sweeping crime bill, declares Kyoto protocol dead

The Conservatives have laid out a roadmap they hope will bring them closer to a coveted majority government, promising major tax cuts and sweeping anti-crime legislation in yesterday's throne speech.

The speech also declares that Canada cannot meet its greenhouse-gas reduction targets under the Kyoto protocol - which will surely inflame environmentalists and the opposition.

If the speech is defeated in a confidence vote, Prime Minister Stephen Harper will hit the campaign trail in pursuit of a majority and use the document as the backbone of his election platform.

If it survives, Harper has already declared that he expects a freer rein in imposing his agenda on Parliament and is prepared to use the threat of confidence votes to make it happen.

The centrepiece of the 16-page speech, which Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean read in a formal ceremony in the Senate, includes the announcement of a new Tackling Violent Crime bill.

The omnibus legislation will include measures on impaired driving, age of sexual consent, stricter bail conditions, and mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.

Harper has made it clear that his new law-and-order legislation will be a confidence matter - meaning an opposition defeat of the bill will trigger an election.

The government also plans to announce a toughening of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, as well as multiyear tax cuts for individuals and businesses, and a one percentage point cut in the GST.

The Tories say the crime legislation will simultaneously reintroduce a number of bills that had been blocked last spring by the three opposition parties.

"Unfortunately much of this legislation did not pass," says the speech. "That is not good enough to maintain the confidence of Canadians."

Two of the three opposition parties have already strongly indicated that they will oppose the throne speech in a final vote expected next week - which leaves Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion with a dilemma.

Dion must now decide where he would rather spend the fall: on the hustings, trying to halt Harper's quest for a majority government, or in Parliament, trying to stop him from governing like he already has one.

It's not all smooth sailing for Harper - he is still well short of majority territory in public opinion polls and he trails the Liberals in vote-rich Ontario.

But the bleakness of Dion's immediate prospects was underscored as his party found itself once again mired in noisy disarray yesterday.

Dion's Quebec lieutenant Marcel Proulx suddenly announced his resignation and when Dion offered the job to MPs Denis Coderre and Pablo Rodriguez, he was rebuffed.

The Liberals will hold a caucus meeting this morning where it's expected most MPs will plead with Dion to take a dive in the throne speech vote to avoid an election.

Allowing Parliament to survive also carries considerable risk for the Liberals.

Harper appears intent on spending the coming weeks seeking to demolish the Liberals' credibility on the issues they hope to use in an election campaign.

The throne speech provided one clear example with the repudiation of Kyoto: "Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol within the compliance period, which begins on January 1, 2008, just 77 days from now," it says.

Dion has called climate change the greatest threat facing the planet and has emphatically insisted that he has an industrial-emissions plan that would help Canada meet its Kyoto targets.

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But Harper has named a panel that will spend the next few months examining what Canada should do beyond 2009 - and he put a Liberal in charge, ex-deputy prime minister John Manley.

The government also used the throne speech to promise a Commons vote on the Afghan mission. At the same time, the Tories hinted strongly that they would prefer to stay the course beyond 2009.

The speech says Canada should build on its accomplishments and shift to accelerate the training of the Afghan army and police so that the Afghan government can defend its own sovereignty.

"This will not be completed by February 2009," says the speech, "but our government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011."

The government sets out five broad priorities for the next session of Parliament: strengthening Canada's sovereignty and place in the world, building a stronger federation, providing economic leadership, tackling crime, and improving the environment.

n On the environment, the Tories promise to continue fighting climate change, invest in public transit, introduce a clean-water strategy, and protect sensitive wildlife.

n As for promoting Canada's image, the Tories are proposing to build a world- class research station in the Arctic to help assert Canada's sovereignty over the territory. They are also proposing to grant honorary citizenship on Burmese dissident Aung San Suu Kyi.

n In a move aimed at Quebec, the Tories are promising legislation that would place formal limits on the federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas controlled by the provinces.

Harper made the decision to put his government on the line after a raucous spring in Parliament.

Tory ministers struggled to provide answers to simple questions about their files and, in a scandal over the treatment of Afghan detainees, they consistently contradicted each other.

Harper decided to hit the reset button on Parliament after a spring in which his government lost control of the political agenda and dipped in the polls.

Most polls still show them well short of a majority, but many Conservatives see this as an ideal time to seek re-election, given their lead over the opposition and the disarray in Liberal ranks in the wake of three byelection losses in Quebec.

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Throne Speech Highlights

Highlights of the Conservative government's throne speech:

- * A fall economic update will outline plans to cut taxes across the board, including a further one-percentage-point cut to the GST.
- * A Tackling Violent Crime bill will include measures on impaired driving, age of sexual consent, stricter bail conditions, and mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.
- * Canada cannot meet its commitments to cut greenhouse gases under the Kyoto protocol, but will "help lead the effort" to address climate-change worldwide.
- * There will be a parliamentary vote on the military mission in Afghanistan beyond February 2009. Canada should accelerate Afghan army and police training - - a job it says should be done by 2011.
- * Legislation is coming to limit federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.
- * The government will build a "world-class" Arctic research station to study environmental science and resource development, and to map the Arctic seabed in an effort to bolster Canada's claim to the Arctic.

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Harper talks tax breaks, crime

The Conservatives have laid out a roadmap they hope will bring them closer to a coveted majority government, promising major tax cuts and sweeping anti-crime legislation in Tuesday's throne speech.

But the speech also declares that Canada cannot meet its greenhouse-gas reduction targets under the Kyoto protocol, drawing fire from opposition parties and environmentalists.

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But he quickly added that he will consult his party before announcing his intentions on Wednesday, and cautioned that Canadians wouldn't want a third election in three years.

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BYLINE: Michael Staples THE MILITARY
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A new appreciation for the troops

Last week's welcome home celebration at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown was something for the history book.

The gathering provided a rare look at just how much the military has become part of our societal fabric, especially in this area of the province.

The celebration was more than just an opportunity to express thanks to the troops for a job well done in Afghanistan. In many ways, it was a reaffirmation of the admiration and respect people in this part of the province have for the Armed Forces.

Soldiers stood proud as Defence Minister Peter MacKay, Lt.-Gen. Andrew Leslie, the Forces commander, along with base commander Col. Ken Chadder and Lt. -Col. Rob Walker, 2RCR battle group commander, presented Task Force Afghanistan medals to returned soldiers.

Soldiers from the battle group were also awarded the General Campaign Star to recognize their contribution in the war against terrorism.

Needless to say, the just-completed mission was not an easy one; its success came at the price of human life.

Eighteen soldiers from the battle group, including five from the 2RCR battalion, were killed during the six-month tour.

Their absence from the Gagetown ceremony last week was felt; the depth of that feeling showed on many faces.

Leslie put the mission and the presentation of the medals into context when he said they were a symbol of Canada's gratitude and were given to those who responded to the call of going overseas at the risk of losing everything.

"It doesn't cost a lot to make, but, by golly, the price to wear it can be high," Leslie said. "The medal is not very big, but it is far bigger than any other because of what you had to do to earn it."

If the looks on the faces of soldiers can be used as a simple measuring stick of appreciation, it is fair to say medal recipients will cherish their award for years to come.

The event brought out a strong kindling of emotions by all present, including army spouse Gwen Young of

Oromocto.

She said the work being done by Canadian troops in Afghanistan goes beyond re-building, training and providing security. It has also served to shed new light on the Canadian Forces. This is true, as more and more Canadians are looking at their military differently these days.

"These are troops trained to make peace after years of being seen as peacekeepers," Young said.

"They are (now) involved in more dangerous situations in the most unforgiving areas of the world.

"I can understand the public having difficulty dealing with the decision to send the troops into such a controversial 'war,' but that is their exact job. It is what they are paid and trained to do."

Young said looking back at Cyprus and the former Yugoslavia, she cannot help but wonder where those regions of the world would be now if not for Canada's help.

"As a Canadian in uniform, my husband had the opportunity to visit France (and) he was greeted with smiles, hugs and handshakes.

"All these years later, Canada's support was remembered and appreciated. I hope that is the way Canadian troops will be received in all of Afghanistan some day, sooner rather than later."

Young's comments are, undoubtedly, food for thought.

It will be interesting to see if, years down the road, the current Afghan mission will be viewed as a huge success. Until then, it's time to sit back and appreciate this new love affair the Canadian public has with its military.

Michael Staples covers the military for The Daily Gleaner. He can be reached at staples.michael@dailygleaner.com.

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Throne speech; In our view: PM's gamble with power and voters is a high- stakes game

Last night, Prime Minister Stephen Harper was doing a little gambling.

Sure, he was busy with the Speech from the Throne, but basically he was rolling the dice on the government's future.

And while Harper may believe Baby needs new shoes, we wonder about the price he might pay for those booties.

Harper gave fair warning earlier this month that he intended to play a tough game by declaring any bill dealing with crime, the environment, foreign policy or economic issues a confidence motion as those topics are central to his government's agenda. There's been little doubt this meant the throne speech would be a confidence vote under Harper's definition of confidence.

The PM is making more than a bit of a stretch in defining confidence so broadly, say the pundits, but he is not the first prime minister to feel powerful and decide to make the most of it.

The prime minister, even with his minority government, is indeed in a position of power given the disarray of the Liberals. That party's serious split behind the scenes -- business as usual for the Liberal Party -- has been spilling out into public for several years now. It used to be the party that knew how to pull it together long enough to win an election, but it seems to have lost that special touch.

And that leaves Harper feeling lucky, a bit hungry for a majority government and ready to let it all ride on a dice toss.

But all gamblers have losing streaks. And depending on what, if any, issue topples the government, Harper may create his own.

First of all, Canadian voters, those few who can be dragged to the polls, are a cranky bunch. They tend to take a dim view of unnecessary elections and punish the party that put them through the turmoil. They might just see Harper as the cause of the government's fall.

Then there's the cost, which hit \$277.8 million in 2004, up almost \$80 million from 2000. That won't put reluctant voters in a good mood.

And finally, there's Harper's talent for misjudging what the average Canadian holds near and dear. Early in his stint, Harper could not seem to wrap his mind around with what fervour Canadians embraced environmental

issues. If the government fell over a non-confidence motion dealing with Kyoto, it just might give the Liberals an issue to run with.

The same holds true for Canadian troops' role in Afghanistan.

We don't buy the argument that Harper needs to renew his mandate to govern on this throne speech. He was elected to do the job with a minority government no matter the issues.

It may be days or weeks before we know if Harper's gamble pays off.

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Letters | Military missions merit scrutiny

Many letters to the editor in this paper suggest Canada would not be a free and democratic country today if it were not for the actions of our military in previous years.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

It is clear our rights were achieved through peaceful negotiation and political brokerage which culminated in the British North America Act, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Repatriation of the Constitution.

It is true that in the Second World War Canadian soldiers, sailors and airmen fought the spread of fascism and thus protected our rights and freedoms.

Some suggest that because we are supposedly "fighting for our freedoms" in Afghanistan we are not allowed to use these very rights and freedoms when it comes to calling for troops to come home and opposing DND's pro-war propaganda campaign.

As pointed out by Luc Walhain in an earlier letter, the military is not a democratic institution and the government determines what missions they pursue. The best way we can support our military is to vigorously question the motives and rational of our government in sending our troops on these missions to ensure they are just.

There are many reasons to question the missions our government has issued the military. In 2004, Canada participated in the ouster of more than 7,000 democratically elected officials in Haiti belonging to the Lavalas Party, which enjoyed the support of more than 60 per cent of Haitians.

It is clear our government is not being honest regarding what is happening on the ground in Afghanistan. Our foreign affairs minister recently stated, while in Kandahar, "The territory is more secure now today than it was a year ago . . . and the attacks have diminished."

This contradicts all credible research and reports from UN and Senlis Council which state in clear terms Afghanistan is becoming a more violent place, hunger and lack of access to drinking water are endemic, there is a refugee crisis and women are just as oppressed as they were under the Taliban.

It is time we end our military mission and help Afghanistan by facilitating a fair peace agreement between all factions currently involved in conflict, engaging the country diplomatically and offering humanitarian assistance.

Let's recall the words of John Diefenbaker, "You can't change peoples minds by dropping bombs on their

heads."

Charles Fournier

Fredericton

Recycling centre needed

Can anyone out there can tell me why the communities of Tracy, Fredericton Junction, Central Blissville, Hoyt and Wirral don't need a redemption centre?

As an area, we have a school from kindergarten to Grade 8, three post offices, three stores, many garages and two gas stations.

Why, if we are able to keep this much going in a small area, does the government think we can't sustain our own centre? We should be able to support our own business people. Is this not what makes communities grow and prosper?

Winter weather will soon be here, and if we don't have to go a great distance, all the better.

I think everyone would agree this is another way of helping to keep New Brunswick the beautiful province it is. Are we not supposed to reuse, reduce and recycle?

Kim Murray

Central Blissville

Liberal woes in Quebec

Reportedly, Stephen Dion is having political problems in Quebec.

Then again, except for his continual support for Kyoto and his constant complaining about whatever the other Stephen does, what has he really done for Canadians, let alone Quebecois?

He is one of the only party leaders left to come out for or against the Gagetown Compensation Package. A package, I might add, which virtually eliminates any chance of any Royal 22nd Regiment or RBC victims of ever receiving compensation.

Dion might want to start to work for the people in the areas where they need help, which the average Joe can understand -- such as the thousands of victims from CFB Gagetown and not just his pet projects. So far, he has spoken so much about the Gagetown Defoliation Program that Canadians aren't even sure if he knows where Gagetown is or what defoliation means, let alone if anyone was hurt.

There are lessons here for politicians to learn. Take care of the people, and they will vote for you. Neglect their needs in favour of your own pet projects at your own peril.

Cpl. Kenneth H. Young CD (Ret'd)

Nanaimo, B.C.

Serious about child care?

I am not sure to what child-care options Minister Monte Solberg is referring in his recent letter to the editor.

Few options exist in New Brunswick where 86 per cent of children cannot access licenced child care. Fees remain unaffordable to many families, with day care often costing more than housing costs. N.B. has the poorest paid and trained child-care workforce in the country.

The \$5.6 billion to which the minister refers is an income-support program, not child care. What's next? Income supports to families rather than investing in public education and libraries? Replacing government funding to community colleges and universities with direct cash transfers to families?

The experience of other countries in early learning and child care and our own experience in public and post-secondary education show that government leadership is needed.

That is the only way to make sure quality child-care options are available to children and affordable to families. Although parents do appreciate receiving a cheque every month -- it helps with buying diapers and groceries -- it is not child care.

If Solberg and the federal Conservatives are serious about early learning and child care, they will not limit the federal spending power in the Speech from the Throne and will pass Bill C-303.

Although child care is a provincial responsibility, federal leadership is essential. It is the federal spending power that led to medicare. Federal transfer money lets provincial governments move more quickly in making quality child care available and affordable to New Brunswick families.

We have a lot of ground to cover; New Brunswick invests \$129 a child in child care, but the national average is \$500 a child.

Bill C-303 will protect federal transfer monies to the provinces and will make sure provinces outside Quebec invest child-care dollars received from the federal government to make quality programs available and affordable.

Jody Dallaire

N.B. Child Care Coalition

Moncton, N.B.

Rural mailbox not safe

I heard a knocking at my door recently, and there stood a representative, the bearer of bad news, of our illustrious mail delivery service, Canada Post.

I was informed that my rural mailbox did not meet their new safety criteria.

Hmmm.

I said the mailbox has been fine for the last 24 years and wondered aloud if The Daily Gleaner paper deliverer would also deem it unsafe. The reply was typical bureaucratic babble garb.

I pointed out I can completely clear the road with my vehicle when I pull up to the mailbox, but the messenger said Canada Post cannot.

My mailbox is placed at a spot that has an unimpeded view of at least two-thirds of a mile down the road. I guess that's not enough for the rocket scientists at Canada Post.

What I see here is the gradual but ultimate erosion of all rural mail delivery. At today's prices, which are totally outlandish for the snail's pace they deliver, I see them working (only in a joking sense of the word) themselves out of a job.

E-mail may be the wave of the future leaving Canada Post to deliver only the odd parcel.

It is time for our elected representatives to put this run-amok branch of the bureaucracy back on track and get back to the business of delivering mail, such as it is.

Randy Campbell,

Royal Road, N.B.

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IODE meeting gets charitable

The Provincial chapter of the New Brunswick IODE held its semi-annual meeting recently at the Day's Inn in Oromocto.

IODE Provincial chapter president Rita Beattie presided during business sessions and workshops by provincial officers, which highlighted the IODE's mission of improving the quality of life for children, youth and those in need through educational, social service and citizenship programs.

Master corporal Della Gagnon of Gagetown gave a vivid, first-hand account of her recent six-month deployment to Afghanistan.

She was presented a certificate of appreciation from the IODE Provincial chapter and was assured that IODE will continue to "support our troops."

Four Afghan shawls were donated to IODE by master corporal Gagnon and will be auctioned off for the Born to Read program.

Other initiatives during the two-day session saw \$410 raised through a freewill offering for the Grannies Helping Grannies project in Africa, sponsored by the Stephen Lewis Foundation. The project assists AIDS orphans.

IODE raises more than \$3 million each year to reinvest in children, families and communities.

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BYLINE: Alexander Panetta
ILLUSTRATION: DION
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Speech pledges tax cuts, crime bill; Kyoto ruled dead

The Conservatives have laid out a roadmap they hope will bring them closer to a coveted majority government, promising major tax cuts and sweeping anti-crime legislation in yesterday's throne speech.

But the speech also declares that Canada cannot meet its greenhouse-gas reduction targets under the Kyoto protocol, drawing fire from opposition parties and environmentalists.

If the speech is defeated in a confidence vote, Prime Minister Stephen Harper will hit the campaign trail in pursuit of a majority and use the document as the backbone of his election platform.

If it survives, Harper has already declared that he expects a freer rein in imposing his agenda on Parliament and is prepared to use the threat of confidence votes to make it happen.

The NDP and the Bloc Quebecois immediately announced that they will vote against the speech, while Liberal Leader Stephane Dion said he will consult his MPs and senators before deciding what to do.

The centrepiece of the 16-page speech, which Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean read in a formal ceremony in the Senate, includes the announcement of a new Tackling Violent Crime bill.

The omnibus legislation will include measures on impaired driving, age of sexual consent, stricter bail conditions, and mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.

Harper has made it clear that his new law-and-order legislation will be a confidence matter - meaning an opposition defeat of the bill will trigger an election.

The government also plans to announce a toughening of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, as well as multiyear tax cuts for individuals and businesses, and a one percentage point cut in the GST.

The Tories say the crime legislation will simultaneously reintroduce a number of bills that had been blocked last spring by the three opposition parties.

"Unfortunately much of this legislation did not pass," says the speech. "That is not good enough to maintain the confidence of Canadians."

Dion must now decide where he would rather spend the fall: on the hustings, trying to halt Harper's quest for a majority government, or in Parliament, trying to stop him from governing like he already has one.

Dion ripped into the speech for its abandonment of Kyoto, its ambiguity on Afghanistan, and its failure to address poverty.

But he quickly added that he will consult his party before announcing his intentions today, and cautioned that Canadians wouldn't want a third election in three years.

The bleakness of Dion's immediate prospects was underscored as his party found itself once again mired in noisy disarray Tuesday.

Dion's Quebec lieutenant Marcel Proulx suddenly announced his resignation and when Dion offered the job to MPs Denis Coderre and Pablo Rodriguez, he was rebuffed.

Most Liberals are expected to advise Dion to take a dive in the throne speech vote to avoid an election. Allowing Parliament to survive also carries considerable risk for the Liberals.

Harper appears intent on spending the coming weeks seeking to demolish the Liberals' credibility on the issues they hope to use in an election campaign.

The throne speech provided one clear example with the repudiation of Kyoto: "Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol within the compliance period, which begins on January 1, 2008, just 77 days from now," it says.

Dion has called climate change the greatest threat facing the planet and has emphatically insisted that he has an industrial-emissions plan that would help Canada meet its Kyoto targets.

If Dion lets the throne speech pass while other opposition leaders vote against it, the NDP and Bloc will certainly accuse him of rolling over on the greatest issue threatening humanity.

But it's not all smooth sailing for Harper, either. He is still well short of majority territory in public opinion polls and he trails the Liberals in vote-rich Ontario.

NDP Leader Jack Layton has urged the Liberals to stand up for their principles and vote against the government.

"Why would Mr. Dion and the Liberals prop up the Conservative government when its agenda and direction are so clearly wrong for Canada?" Layton said.

"He's going to have some explaining to do. Because he will have given Mr. Harper a mandate to govern. Mr. Dion and the Liberals, I hope, are going to at least show up and not play hooky in the vote." The awkwardness won't end there for Dion.

On crime bills and on anti-terror legislation, Dion had expected to steal votes from the NDP on the left by standing up for civil liberties and a more compassionate justice system.

Since Harper has made it clear that he will make law-and-order votes confidence matters, Dion might have to consistently throw in the towel to avoid an election.

The Liberals had also hoped to campaign on Afghanistan because, like other opposition parties, they want Canada to pull out of its combat mission in Kandahar by 2009.

But Harper threw Dion a curveball by naming a panel that will spend the next few months examining what Canada should do beyond 2009 - and he put a Liberal in charge, ex-deputy prime minister John Manley.

The government also used the throne speech to promise a Commons vote on the Afghan mission. At the same time, the Tories hinted strongly that they would prefer to stay the course beyond 2009.

The speech says Canada should build on its accomplishments and shift to accelerate the training of the Afghan army and police so that the Afghan government can defend its own sovereignty.

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SOURCE: CP

BYLINE: Joan Bryden

PHOTO: Tom Hanson/The Canadian Press

DATELINE: Ottawa

ILLUSTRATION: Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean share a light moment prior to the reading of the speech from the throne in the Senate Chamber last night in Ottawa. The Tories' speech contained major tax cuts and sweeping anti-crime legislation, among other things. Debate on the throne speech will begin today.

WORD COUNT: 771

Tories tackle crime; Liberals in turmoil;; Dion undecided

Roiling disarray in his Liberal party is making Stéphane Dion's decision about whether to bring down the Harper government even more complicated.

There was mounting evidence that his Liberal team - particularly in Quebec - is not ready to fight an election.

The Liberal leader lost both his Quebec lieutenant and the director general of the party's Quebec wing just hours before Prime Minister Stephen Harper unveiled the government's blueprint for the new session of Parliament.

Dion dipped into Liberal ranks in the Senate to fill one vacancy but was still scrambling late yesterday to find a replacement for the other.

During a morning caucus meeting to discuss how they should respond to the throne speech, sources said only six of 30 speakers said Liberals should vote against the speech and topple the government.

But insiders say that Dion himself, despite receiving virtually unanimous advice to the contrary, is hawkish about forcing an election. He fears his reputation as a champion of the environment and progress he's made wooing Green and other left-wing voters will be seriously hurt if Liberals don't vote against Harper's anti-Kyoto message.

Given the disarray in the party, one senior Grit said Dion's preference for an election is "suicidal" while others questioned whether he'd be able to persuade his MPs to follow his lead. Dion will not make a final decision about how Liberals will vote until he's met again with his caucus today.

Insiders say internal party polls paint a much more dismal picture for the Liberals than public opinion polls, including the prospect of being reduced to as little as two seats in Quebec. Also, the latest quarterly fundraising figures are expected to be released shortly, showing the Liberals falling even further behind the Tories in building their campaign war chests.

While Dion was grappling with the throne speech, Hull MP Marcel Proulx confirmed that he resigned over the

weekend as the leader's Quebec lieutenant.

While Proulx said he's a team player and has no problem with being replaced, sources said he quit after learning that Dion had offered the lieutenant's post to Montreal MP Denis Coderre.

However, Coderre declined. Dion then tried to persuade Pablo Rodriguez, another Montreal MP, to take the post. Late yesterday, he was set to announce that Senator Celine Hervieux-Payette will take the job.

Hervieux-Payette is a veteran Liberal with an extensive network and experience as an organizer. She once served as national campaign co-chair for Jean Chretien. Insiders acknowledge that Hervieux-Payette has one big luxury in taking on the challenge: unlike Coderre or Rodriguez, she doesn't have to worry about fighting to hold onto her own seat in an election.

Adding to the perception of disarray, the party's director general in Quebec, Serge Marcil, tendered his resignation yesterday. Robert Fragasso, president of the Quebec wing, said Marcil will stay on the job until the end of the week but has lined up a new job in the private sector.

The Liberal party has been without a national director since last week when Jamie Carroll resigned amid controversy over his allegedly dismissive response to demands to include more Quebecers in Dion's inner circle.

The disarray comes in the wake of the Liberals' humiliating defeat in three Quebec byelections last month, including the loss of the Liberals' longtime Montreal fortress of Outremont.

Since then, insiders close to Dion have been saying that the leader intends to shake up his Quebec team, too many of whom were deemed to have been apologetic about the leader. Dion, whose uncompromising stand against separatism has left him unpopular in his home province, was expected to install people who could be relied upon to promote and defend him.

However, Proulx and Marcil jumped the gun and quit before replacements had been found. That news of their departures should leak out only hours before the throne speech was particularly bad timing for Dion.

"In the circumstances, we can't hide the fact that we're going through difficult times," Fragasso said.

THRONE SPEECH HIGHLIGHTS

A fall economic update will outline plans to cut taxes across the board, including a further one-percentage-point cut to the GST.

A Tackling Violent Crime bill will include measures on impaired driving, age of sexual consent, stricter bail conditions, and mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.

There will be a parliamentary vote on the military mission in Afghanistan beyond February 2009. Canada should accelerate Afghan army and police training - a job it says should be done by 2011.

Legislation is coming to limit federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. The government will build a "world-class" Arctic research station to study environmental science and resource development, and to map the Arctic seabed in an effort to bolster Canada's claim to the Arctic. Canada cannot meet its commitments to cut greenhouse gases under the Kyoto protocol, but will "help lead the effort" to address climate-change worldwide.

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COLUMN: In brief

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Soldier to receive posthumous degree

The University of Manitoba will award a posthumous bachelor of arts degree to an Edmonton-based soldier who was killed in Afghanistan earlier this year.

Cpl. Jordan Anderson, 25, a member of the 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, had been pursuing his degree through the university's military support office.

He had completed nearly all program requirements when he and five other soldiers, along with an Afghan interpreter, were killed by a roadside bomb July 4.

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BYLINE: Den Tandt, Michael

PHOTO: AP

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

ILLUSTRATION: A Canadian soldier places a sack of food on the wheelchair of a disabled man during a recent food distribution at the Canadian base in Kandahar province. The Canadian soldiers distributed food to about 300 needy families.

WORD COUNT: 1825

A failure to communicate; Why you aren't hearing about all the good things Canadians are doing in Afghanistan

The Afghan war is not one conflict but three: a guerrilla war, a development war and a communications war. Canada is gaining ground in the first and slowly winning the second.

We're losing the third.

The military and the media deserve some measure of blame for this. Mainly, though, responsibility falls to Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Even as he struggles to sell the Afghan mission to an increasingly uneasy public, his mania for control is stifling the truth about what's really happening here.

The tragedy is that this truth is extraordinary. It's a story of courage and grit and idealism that, if more Canadians only knew it, would make them very proud. But most don't know it, because the people best positioned to tell it have been gagged.

I came to Afghanistan to find answers to two questions. Is Canada's deployment here still worthwhile, despite the rising toll in lives? And if it is, then why do so many people back home think it isn't?

In the period I've been here, I've spoken to dozens of Canadian soldiers, non-governmental aid workers and Afghans, including some who are very critical of the U.S.-led international effort here and of the Karzai regime. Their message was unanimous: please, Canada, don't go.

Our country has an influence and a reputation here that are vastly disproportionate to the number of troops we have on the ground.

That's partly because we are spending money - a great deal of money, \$1.2 billion committed over 10 years - on rebuilding and redevelopment.

Your tax dollars are helping pay for a vast national demining project, led by Canada but in partnership with the United Nations. Every day on a mountaintop in Kabul, Afghans, mentored by Canadians, carry on the painstaking and dangerous work of removing and destroying the thousands of pieces of unexploded ordnance that litter this country. Canada's Department of Foreign affairs is the single largest donor, contributing \$20 million annually.

Your tax dollars are paying for a project that, this year alone, will help 3,000 war widows in Kabul start microbusinesses. In many cases, the aid begins with a single cow or goat, which allows a mother to feed her kids.

Your tax dollars are paying for the training of a professional Afghan National Army that is increasingly imposing order in the volatile south. Thirty-four thousand troops are already trained. A thousand new troops a month are graduating from the Afghan National Training Centre in Kabul. Canadian soldiers are in the forefront of the training effort, in Kabul and in the south.

Your tax dollars are paying for 200 small aid projects in Kandahar City, all geared toward stimulating local business and trades and developing a functioning local economy.

These efforts are not being carried out on your behalf at arm's length. They're being led, supported and protected by a Canadian military that has learned, through half a century of peacekeeping, how to properly and modestly engage with a foreign culture.

You may have heard that, around the world, no one can tell Canadians and Americans apart any longer. That is false. In Afghanistan, everyone knows the difference. Canadians are leaders here in the delicate trick of combining military power with aid. Other nations in the 37-member international coalition come to our Provincial Reconstruction Team base in Kandahar City to study our methods.

The PRT, Camp Nathan Smith, is a model, an experiment in a new kind of military engagement. The former Liberal government called it the "three-d" approach: defence, diplomacy and development. The Harper government calls it the "whole of government" approach. The two are one and the same: soldiers working hand in hand with RCMP officers, diplomats, lawyers, doctors, specialists in governance and foreign aid workers to help the Afghans manage their own affairs, raise their standard of living and establish a functional state.

You've heard about the 71 Canadian soldiers and one diplomat who've lost their lives in Afghanistan.

You've heard about the CBC journalist and cameraman whose armoured vehicle was blown up by a roadside bomb.

What you haven't heard about, perhaps, is that the vast majority of the casualties and injuries in this civil war are Afghan. There are four battalions of Afghan soldiers, numbering some 3,000 troops, operating in the south now, mentored and supported by Canadian officers. The Afghans are in the forefront of every combat operation. Eighty-five per cent of the casualties treated for war injuries at Kandahar Airfield, the main coalition base in the south, are Afghan army or Afghan police.

It follows from this that our deployment here is not an occupation: it's a support mission. But few people back home appreciate this, because nobody's covering the Afghan side of the war. The Afghans have no media to speak of, and the Canadian media are focused with laserlike intensity on Canadian casualties. Afghan casualties, even mass casualties, get short shrift in news meetings in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal.

The leading edge of Canada's humanitarian engagement in this country is the PRT, Camp Nathan Smith. But for reasons that defy explanation, only the soldiers stationed there are allowed to speak publicly about their work.

The five officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs, the 10 RCMP officers engaged in training Afghan police and the head of the Canadian International Development Agency mission in the province (with a budget of \$39 million this year alone), are not allowed to speak to the media. They have no coherent communication strategy. This is not their fault. It's the government's fault, because, according to multiple sources here, they

have been gagged by the Prime Minister's Office.

Figure that one out, if you can. You have a government under fire nearly every day, based on the notion that there's no rebuilding going on in Afghanistan. This notion is false.

Yet the very people who could best spread the word about the good works Canada is carrying out beneath the security umbrella provided by our troops are unable to talk about it. This translates into a distorted portrait of the mission back home, which then feeds more political division.

If it weren't so thoroughly stupid and tragic, it would be comical. The military can't get off scot-free either. It has a mandate of public openness, which grew out of the Somalia debacle 14 years ago. Good. But the vast majority of the Canadian army's communications resources in Kandahar Province are located at the Kandahar Airfield - the centre of combat operations.

Reporters at the airfield are supported by satellite and media tents with sophisticated communications equipment.

At the PRT, there's a single media tent. It has no reliable, permanent Internet hookups. There's no satellite for television transmissions, so reporters working there have a difficult time filing stories. As a result, most choose to stay at the airfield, where they don't hear a lot about development work, because it's all based at the PRT.

The media? It's at fault too. Reporters driven by competition and the demands of editors back home are hell-bent on covering Canadians in combat. That's a good thing, as far as it goes. Canadians need a public witness to the exercise of lethal force by their representatives abroad. Combat stories are dramatic and gripping, and the tales we hear about soldiers at war can inspire and move us in a way few other stories can.

But let's face it: the entire mission stands or falls on whether development can succeed. For media organizations to ignore the tangible evidence of progress simply because these stories aren't as dramatic as combat beggars belief. But the evidence here suggests this is precisely what's happening. The irony is that the military itself is supporting the journalists embedded at Kandahar Airfield. Here's why all this matters so much: the Taliban are not fighting a conventional guerrilla war. All their efforts are geared towards forcing Western governments to pull their soldiers out of Afghanistan. So they're fighting a media war designed to stimulate anguished coverage in Western capitals, which then creates political pressure for a pullout.

Every suicide bombing and improvised explosive device attack must be seen in this light. It's about hurting Western troops, but it's even more about causing fear and uncertainty back home. This is why there's such frustration among soldiers here about the posturing and chest-beating in Ottawa each time a Canadian dies in combat. Each cluster of front-page stories is, in effect, a tactical victory for the insurgents. That's a hard truth for any journalist to swallow, but it is true nevertheless.

What happens if we pull out? Some say it would make no difference. The Americans have tens of thousands of troops and they could easily come in and replace us.

Unfortunately, it's not nearly that simple. The Afghans don't trust the Americans. The Americans' approach is different from ours - much more blunt, less culturally sensitive. Canada has an institutional memory now in Kandahar, won by five years of hard work on the ground. Canada has the aid projects, which just now are beginning to bear fruit. Canada has credibility with the Afghans, won by our soldiers' willingness to fight and die on their behalf.

If we pull out in February of 2009, much of that will be lost. The mission will continue, because the United States and NATO have a strategic imperative to ensure that it continues. But if the Canadians leave the setback to it will be huge, and Canada's standing in Afghanistan, and around the world will suffer

immeasurably.

Can any of this be turned around at this late date?

Possibly. But it needs to happen quickly.

If Stephen Harper hopes to sustain the Afghan mission, he must immediately and unconditionally ungag Canadian diplomats and aid workers and police officers in Kandahar City. Indeed, he should instruct them to speak out, loudly, to anyone who cares to listen.

He should ensure opposition politicians see what's being done. Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre arrived in Kandahar last week, travelling as a private citizen. Coderre's trip comes, he says, after his repeated attempts to get on a government flight to Afghanistan were rebuffed.

Rather than impede opposition MPs' access to the mission, Harper should pull out all the stops to ease it - because the truth speaks for itself. Harper should ensure people like Coderre can go to Kabul and stay for as long as they want. The military should fly them to Kandahar City and leave them alone at Camp Nathan Smith for a few days to draw conclusions.

The same goes for Liberal leader Stephane Dion, Bloc Quebecois leader Gilles Duceppe and NDP leader Jack Layton. Let them talk to the soldiers, the aid workers, the diplomats and police officers. Let them gauge the level of commitment by the looks on soldiers' faces as they tell their stories. Most of all, let the critics talk to the Afghans themselves - people who have suffered immeasurably, and to whom our country has made a promise of friendship.

After that, they might still come home and vote for a pullout in February of 2009. But I can't see it happening.

- Michael Den Tandt is editor of the Sun Times in Owen Sound and a national affairs columnist with Osprey Media. He recently returned from an assignment in Afghanistan. Reach him at mdentandt@thesuntimes.ca.

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PUBLICATION: The Chronicle-Herald

DATE: 2007.10.17

SECTION: News

PAGE: A3

ILLUSTRATION: Liberal Leader Stephane Dion takes part in an anti-poverty demonstration with members of his caucus and the protest group Raging Grannies in Ottawa on Tuesday. (FRED CHARTRAND / CP)

WORD COUNT: 975

[OTTAWA- Stephen Harper spread out a chart Tuesday night for a Canada that would be different in significant ways. The prime minister presented a...]

OTTAWA - Stephen Harper spread out a chart Tuesday night for a Canada that would be different in significant ways.

The prime minister presented a coherent, conservative vision of a decentralized Canada in which people would pay lower taxes, laws would be tough on crime, the government would be cautious in tackling climate change, and the military would be committed to sticking out its tough mission in Afghanistan until 2011.

It is a foreboding landscape for the Liberals. No matter how grim their electoral prospects are right now, the country Mr. Harper has laid out is not a country the Liberals want. If they roll over and accept the government's agenda, they will be showing themselves to be guided by their fear of a drubbing, not by their own principles. This does not mean the Liberals will defeat this throne speech and launch an election campaign. They look so vulnerable and disorganized that even a delay of weeks would be valuable to them, but it is hard to imagine this Parliament lasting much past Christmas and impossible to imagine it lasting until spring.

Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe and NDP Leader Jack Layton, who are competing for votes on the left with Liberal Leader Stephane Dion, have made it clear they will not support the throne speech, and they are unlikely to support much of Mr. Harper's agenda.

They are happy, both of them, to watch Mr. Dion squirm and twist in the wind, though perhaps not as happy as Mr. Harper.

The Conservatives, NDP and Bloc all fear and dislike the Liberals, who have power so often. In politics, the best time to hit your opponent is when he is down, as Mr. Dion is now.

As the fall session begins, watch for them to repeat the pattern of wrangling that led up to the throne speech. The Tories will stake out a position. The NDP and Bloc will announce they will not support it and then they will sneer at the Liberals if they are not also ready to vote against the Tories.

Unless something happens to give the Conservatives reason to be more conciliatory, the only mystery is which bill will bring down the government, and whether it will happen on first reading or second. We are likely in for a season of tedious parliamentary wrangling.

The first thing on the legislative agenda is a crime omnibus bill - Tackling Violent Crime - that will bring together a half-dozen bills the Tories were not able to get passed last session. The Tories would love to fall on that, but the Liberals would be fools to let that happen, as voters tend to trust the Conservatives to be tough on crime.

The Liberals would rather bring down the government on the Tories' Clean Air Act, a bill that the opposition rewrote last session, saying the first version was too timid in tackling climate change. The throne speech promises a new version of that bill and says the government will give up on meeting Kyoto targets.

Afghanistan is another potential flashpoint. Mr. Harper recently named a panel to advise the government on the way forward - a panel that includes Liberal heavyweight John Manley in what seems to be a Tory attempt to neutralize the issue.

Dion built his leadership campaign on the back of Kyoto, and he can't afford to hold his nose and pass the Conservatives' less aggressive environmental package. The Tories will want to avoid going to the voters on this, as polls suggest voters are more concerned about this issue all the time, and they don't trust the Tories on the environment in the same way that they don't trust the Liberals on crime.

The throne speech says Canada should stay in Afghanistan until 2011, although it's not clear whether Canadians will remain in a combat role, though that would seem to be Mr. Harper's preference and the likely recommendation of the panel. Mr. Dion has been clear that he doesn't want Canada's combat role to continue beyond 2009, so this is another potential election trigger.

Then there's a bill to limit federal spending power in areas of provincial jurisdiction, such as health and education, allowing provinces to opt out of federal programs if they offer compatible programs. This measure, meant to appeal to Quebec nationalists, is likely unacceptable to Mr. Dion, who comes from the federalist tradition of Pierre Trudeau. Liberals will say federal spending helps bind the country together. Tories will say Ottawa should butt out of areas of provincial responsibility.

How you feel about that likely depends on where you live - it will appeal to Quebecers and Albertans, while Ontarians and Atlantic Canadians will be uneasy.

Which measure will bring down the government and when is not clear to anybody. The Liberals can stall for months, wrangling in committees, but sooner or later there will come a vote they can't swallow.

In a news conference last month, Mr. Harper promised to make many bills matters of confidence - to tell the opposition parties to let the Tories govern or go to the polls.

"But there is a 'fish or cut bait' on this," he said. "You can't pass the throne speech one day and the next day say, 'Well, we didn't actually mean to do it or we didn't mean to give you a mandate.' We will take it as a mandate and we will take it as an ongoing question of confidence to get those things done."

Mr. Duceppe and Mr. Layton have decided to fish. Mr. Dion looks like he wants to cut bait, but it does not look like he can keep doing so until spring.

The divided Liberal caucus meets today to decide whether to keep gutting fish or to pick up their nets and cast them in an election campaign that could begin this week or next.

If the Liberals decide, as seems likeliest, to cut bait for now and let the throne speech pass, that only delays the moment when they have to head out on the choppy waters and seek votes.

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PUBLICATION: The Chronicle-Herald
DATE: 2007.10.17
SECTION: Canada
PAGE: A3
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
BYLINE: Joan Bryden
WORD COUNT: 628

Resignations in Quebec add to Dion's woes; Grit lieutenant, director general quit; party divided over throne speech

OTTAWA - Roiling disarray in the Liberal party is making Stephane Dion's decision about whether to bring down the Harper government even more complicated.

There was mounting evidence Tuesday that his Liberal team - particularly in Quebec - is not ready to fight an election.

The Liberal leader lost both his Quebec lieutenant and the director general of the party's Quebec wing just hours before Prime Minister Stephen Harper unveiled the government's blueprint for the new session of Parliament.

Dion dipped into Liberal ranks in the Senate to fill one vacancy but was still scrambling late Tuesday to find a replacement for the other.

During a morning caucus meeting to discuss how they should respond to the throne speech, sources said only six of 30 speakers said Liberals should vote against the speech and topple the government.

But insiders say that Dion himself, despite receiving virtually unanimous advice to the contrary, is hawkish about forcing an election. He fears his reputation as a champion of the environment and progress he's made wooing Green and other left-wing voters will be seriously hurt if Liberals don't vote against Harper's anti-Kyoto message.

Given the disarray in the party, one senior Grit said Dion's preference for an election is "suicidal" while others questioned whether he'd be able to persuade his MPs to follow his lead. Dion will not make a final decision about how Liberals will vote until he meets again with his caucus today.

Following release of the speech, Dion indicated that he has numerous concerns about Harper's agenda, including the lack of a cohesive economic plan, the "ambiguity" over the Afghanistan combat mission, "complete and shocking indifference" towards poverty and, "most worrisome," the weakness of its environmental and climate change plans.

Still, Dion said Liberals must take into account that Canadians "don't want a third election in three years and a half." He predicted "a very lively" caucus meeting today when Liberals finally decide how to respond to the speech.

Deputy Leader Michael Ignatieff appeared much less hawkish than Dion.

"I think it's a question of whether we think it's in the interests of Canadians to plunge Canada into another election over this speech. That's a tough call," he said.

"What I get across the country is people don't want an election now, they're elected out. And any responsible party has to listen to that view very carefully."

For most Liberal MPs, the issue comes down to how to avoid an election in which the Grits are likely to be clobbered.

Insiders say internal party polls paint a much more dismal picture for the Liberals than public opinion polls, including the prospect of being reduced to as little as two seats in Quebec. Also, the latest quarterly fundraising figures are expected to be released shortly, showing the Liberals falling even further behind the Tories in building their campaign war chests.

While Dion was grappling with the throne speech Tuesday, Hull MP Marcel Proulx confirmed that he resigned over the weekend as the leader's Quebec lieutenant.

While Proulx said he's a team player and has no problem with being replaced, sources said he quit after learning that Dion had offered the lieutenant's post to Montreal MP Denis Coderre. However, Coderre declined. Dion then tried to persuade Pablo Rodriguez, another Montreal MP, to take the post. Late Tuesday, he finally announced that Senator Celine Hervieux-Payette will take the job.

Hervieux-Payette, the Liberal Senate leader, is a veteran Liberal with an extensive network and experience as an organizer. She once served as national campaign co-chairwoman for Jean Chretien. Insiders acknowledge that Hervieux-Payette has one big luxury in taking on the challenge: unlike Coderre or Rodriguez, she doesn't have to worry about fighting to hold onto her own seat in an election.

Adding to the perception of disarray, the party's director general in Quebec, Serge Marcil, tendered his resignation Tuesday.

The Liberal party has been without a national director since last week when Jamie Carroll resigned amid controversy over his allegedly dismissive response to demands to include more Quebecers in Dion's inner circle.

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PUBLICATION: The Chronicle-Herald

DATE: 2007.10.17

SECTION: Front

PAGE: A1

WORD COUNT: 83

THRONE SPEECH HIGHLIGHTS

- Across-the-board tax cuts will include a further one-percentage-point GST cut.
- A Tackling Violent Crime bill will target impaired driving, age of sexual consent, stricter bail conditions and mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.
- Canada cannot meet its commitments under the Kyoto Protocol but will "help lead the effort" to address climate change worldwide.
- A parliamentary vote will be held to determine the future of the mission in Afghanistan beyond February 2009.
- Legislation will be brought in to limit federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.
- A "world-class" Arctic research station will be built to study environmental science and resource development.

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PUBLICATION: The Chronicle-Herald

DATE: 2007.10.17

SECTION: Front

PAGE: A1

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Alexander Panetta

ILLUSTRATION: Prime Minister Stephen Harper listens to Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean read the speech from the throne to begin the second session of the 39th Parliament in the Senate chamber on Tuesday. (Fred Chartrand / The Canadian Press); Prime Minister Stephen Harper listens to Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean read the speech from the throne to begin the second session of the 39th Parliament in the Senate chamber on Tuesday. (Fred Chartrand / The Canadian Press)

WORD COUNT: 880

Blueprint for a majority?; Throne speech promises major tax cuts, bill to get tough on violent crime

OTTAWA - The Conservatives have laid out a roadmap they hope will bring them closer to a coveted majority government, promising major tax cuts and sweeping anti-crime legislation in Tuesday's throne speech.

The speech also declares that Canada cannot meet its greenhouse gas reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol - which will surely inflame environmentalists and the opposition.

If the speech is defeated in a confidence vote, Prime Minister Stephen Harper will hit the campaign trail in pursuit of a majority and use the document as the backbone of his election platform.

If it survives, Harper has already declared that he expects a freer rein in imposing his agenda on Parliament and is prepared to use the threat of confidence votes to make it happen.

The NDP and the Bloc Québécois immediately announced that they will vote against the speech, while Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion said he will consult his MPs and senators before deciding what to do.

The centrepiece of the 16-page speech, which Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean read in a formal ceremony in the Senate, includes the announcement of a new Tackling Violent Crime bill.

The omnibus legislation will include measures on impaired driving, age of sexual consent, stricter bail conditions, and mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.

Harper has made it clear that his new law-and-order legislation will be a confidence matter, meaning an opposition defeat of the bill will trigger an election.

The government also plans to announce a toughening of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, as well as multiyear tax cuts for individuals and businesses, and a one-percentage-point cut in the GST.

The Tories say the crime legislation will simultaneously reintroduce a number of bills that had been blocked last spring by the three opposition parties.

"Unfortunately, much of this legislation did not pass," says the speech. "That is not good enough to maintain the confidence of Canadians."

Dion must now decide where he would rather spend the fall: on the hustings, trying to halt Harper's quest for a majority government, or in Parliament, trying to stop him from governing like he already has one.

It's not all smooth sailing for Harper - he is still well short of majority territory in public opinion polls and he trails the Liberals in vote-rich Ontario.

But the bleakness of Dion's immediate prospects was underscored as his party found itself once again mired in noisy disarray Tuesday.

Dion's Quebec lieutenant Marcel Proulx suddenly announced his resignation and when Dion offered the job to MPs Denis Coderre and Pablo Rodriguez, he was rebuffed.

Allowing Parliament to survive also carries considerable risk for the Liberals.

Harper appears intent on spending the coming weeks seeking to demolish the Liberals' credibility on the issues they hope to use in an election campaign.

The throne speech provided one clear example with the repudiation of Kyoto: "Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol within the compliance period, which begins on January 1, 2008, just 77 days from now," it says.

Dion has called climate change the greatest threat facing the planet and has emphatically insisted that he has an industrial-emissions plan that would help Canada meet its Kyoto targets.

If Dion lets the throne speech pass while other opposition leaders vote against it, the NDP and Bloc will certainly accuse him of rolling over on the greatest issue threatening humanity.

NDP Leader Jack Layton has already urged the Liberals to stand up for their principles and vote against the government.

The awkwardness won't end there for Dion.

On crime bills and on anti-terror legislation, Dion had expected to steal votes from the NDP on the left by standing up for civil liberties and a more compassionate justice system.

Since Harper has made it clear that he will make law-and-order votes confidence matters, Dion might have to consistently throw in the towel to avoid an election.

The Liberals had also hoped to campaign on Afghanistan because, like other opposition parties, they want Canada to pull out of its combat mission in Kandahar by 2009.

But Harper has named a panel that will spend the next few months examining what Canada should do beyond 2009 - and he put a Liberal, ex-deputy prime minister John Manley, in charge.

The government also used the throne speech to promise a Commons vote on the Afghan mission. At the same time, the Tories hinted strongly that they would prefer to stay the course beyond 2009.

The speech says Canada should build on its accomplishments and shift to accelerate the training of the Afghan army and police so that the Afghan government can defend its own sovereignty.

"This will not be completed by February 2009," says the speech, "but our government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011."

The government sets out five broad priorities for the next session of Parliament: strengthening Canada's sovereignty and place in the world, building a stronger federation, providing economic leadership, tackling crime and improving the environment.- On the environment, the Tories promise to continue fighting climate change, invest in public transit, introduce a clean-water strategy and protect sensitive wildlife.

- As for promoting Canada's image, the Tories are proposing to build a world-class research station in the Arctic to help assert Canada's sovereignty over the territory. They are also proposing to grant honorary citizenship to Burmese dissident Aung San Suu Kyi.

- In a move aimed at Quebec, the Tories are promising legislation that would place formal limits on the federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas controlled by the provinces.

Harper made the decision to put his government on the line after a raucous spring in Parliament.

Tory ministers struggled to provide answers to simple questions about their files and, in a scandal over the treatment of Afghan detainees, they consistently contradicted each other.

Harper decided to hit the reset button on Parliament after a spring in which his government lost control of the political agenda and dipped in the polls.

Most polls still show them well short of a majority, but many Conservatives see this as an ideal time to seek re-election, given their lead over the opposition and the disarray in Liberal ranks in the wake of three byelection losses in Quebec.

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PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.10.17

SECTION: Front

PAGE: A1

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Alexander Panetta

DATELINE: Ottawa

ILLUSTRATION: Prime Minister Stephen Harper listens to Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean read the speech from the throne to begin the second session of the 39th Parliament in the Senate Chamber Tuesday in Ottawa. The Canadian Press

WORD COUNT: 531

Major tax cuts coming, Tories promise; Throne speech includes sweeping crime bill

The Conservatives have laid out a roadmap they hope will bring them closer to a coveted majority government, promising major tax cuts and sweeping anti-crime legislation in Tuesday's throne speech.

But the speech also declares that Canada cannot meet its greenhouse-gas reduction targets under the Kyoto protocol, drawing fire from opposition parties and environmentalists.

If the speech is defeated in a confidence vote, Prime Minister Stephen Harper will hit the campaign trail in pursuit of a majority and use the document as the backbone of his election platform.

If it survives, Harper has already declared that he expects a freer rein in imposing his agenda on Parliament and is prepared to use the threat of confidence votes to make it happen.

The NDP and the Bloc Quebecois immediately announced that they will vote against the speech, while Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion said he will consult his MPs and senators before deciding what to do.

The centrepiece of the 16-page speech, which Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean read in a formal ceremony in the Senate, includes the announcement of a new Tackling Violent Crime bill.

The omnibus legislation will include measures on impaired driving, age of sexual consent, stricter bail conditions, and mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.

Harper has made it clear that his new law-and-order legislation will be a confidence matter - meaning an opposition defeat of the bill will trigger an election.

The government also plans to announce a toughening of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, as well as multiyear tax cuts for individuals and businesses, and a one percentage point cut in the GST.

The Tories say the crime legislation will simultaneously reintroduce a number of bills that had been blocked last spring by the three opposition parties.

"Unfortunately much of this legislation did not pass," says the speech. "That is not good enough to maintain

the confidence of Canadians."

Dion must now decide where he would rather spend the fall: on the hustings, trying to halt Harper's quest for a majority government, or in Parliament, trying to stop him from governing like he already has one.

Dion ripped into the speech for its abandonment of Kyoto, its ambiguity on Afghanistan, and its failure to address poverty.

But he quickly added that he will consult his party before announcing his intentions on Wednesday, and cautioned that Canadians wouldn't want a third election in three years.

The bleakness of Dion's immediate prospects was underscored as his party found itself once again mired in noisy disarray Tuesday.

Dion's Quebec lieutenant Marcel Proulx suddenly announced his resignation and when Dion offered the job to MPs Denis Coderre and Pablo Rodriguez, he was rebuffed.

Most Liberals are expected to advise Dion to take a dive in the throne speech vote to avoid an election. Allowing Parliament to survive also carries considerable risk for the Liberals.

Harper appears intent on spending the coming weeks seeking to demolish the Liberals' credibility on the issues they hope to use in an election campaign.

The throne speech provided one clear example with the repudiation of Kyoto: "Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol within the compliance period, which begins on January 1, 2008, just 77 days from now," it says.

Dion has called climate change the greatest threat facing the planet and has emphatically insisted that he has an industrial-emissions plan that would help Canada meet its Kyoto targets.

What's next

OTTAWA - The speech from the throne will be followed by several days of debate and confidence votes in the House of Commons. Here's the likely timetable:

Thursday: Vote on a sub-amendment by the Bloc Quebecois.

Monday: Vote on an amendment by the Liberals.

Oct. 24: Vote on the throne speech - a confidence motion which must pass for the minority Conservative government to survive.

Note: The dates and times of votes could vary.

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PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.10.17

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: A8

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Murray Brewster

DATELINE: Ottawa

ILLUSTRATION: Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Defence Chief of Staff Rick Hillier (left) chat prior to the reading of the speech from the throne to begin the second session of the 39th Parliament in the Senate Chamber Tuesday. - Photo by The Canadian Press

WORD COUNT: 420

Canada should stay in Afghanistan longer, throne speech says

Canada should stay directly involved in Afghanistan until at least 2011, the minority Conservative government declared Tuesday in its latest throne speech.

The new proposed deadline is two years beyond the current mandate approved by Parliament and repeats Prime Minister Stephen Harper's promise to put the future of the mission to a vote in the House of Commons.

"Our government does not believe that Canada should simply abandon the people of Afghanistan after February 2009," said Gov.-Gen. Michaëlle Jean.

The speech tied Canada's eventual exit strategy to the training of Afghan security forces, including the army and police, and their ability to stand on their own two feet in order to face threats from Taliban insurgents.

"This will not be completed by February 2009, but our government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011."

Former defence minister Gordon O'Connor caused a firestorm of controversy last spring by suggesting that the army would be needed in Afghanistan until at least 2011. That is also the same year that an international agreement - the Afghanistan Compact - expires.

Just before he was shuffled out of the portfolio last summer O'Connor suggested the Afghans might be able to carry out the bulk of the fighting by next spring - an assertion that was later contradicted by Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier, who said he doesn't expect a handover until roughly 2011.

To Canadians already weary of war following the deaths of 71 soldiers and one diplomat, the Conservatives tried to steel public opinion to the road ahead.

"Progress will be slow, but our efforts are bearing fruit."

The throne speech declaration will likely push the Liberals, who've called for an end to the combat mission on schedule, into a political corner.

Selling another two-year extension of the mission to a skeptical public might not be as difficult as long as there is more emphasis on reconstruction and less on combat, said defence analyst Alex Morrison.

He sees the speech as more of a political challenge.

"Prime Minister Harper has thrown the gauntlet to the opposition and shown the courage of his convictions on this issue," said Morrison, president of the Toronto-based Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies.

But Liberal Leader Stephane Dion dismissed the speech's references to Afghanistan as "ambiguous."

Harper last week appointed a five-person panel, headed by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley, to examine options for the future of the mission.

The NDP have called for an immediate withdrawal of troops and plan to vote against the throne speech in any event. Ending the combat mission on schedule in February 2009 is a demand of the Bloc Quebecois. The Bloc's leader, Gilles Duceppe, indicated his party would vote against the throne speech.

The Liberals also want the mission wrapped up in sixteen months - something they said last summer would be a condition of their support.

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PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.10.17

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: A7

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Alexander Panetta

DATELINE: Ottawa

ILLUSTRATION: Prime Minister Stephen Harper looks up at the Senate ceiling as Governor General Michaëlle Jean waits to read the speech from the throne next to her husband Jean-Daniel Lafond Tuesday. - Photo by The Canadian Press

WORD COUNT: 566

Tories promise tax cuts; Sweeping crime bill in throne speech;; Kyoto declared dead

The Conservatives have laid out a roadmap they hope will bring them closer to a coveted majority government, promising major tax cuts and sweeping anti-crime legislation in Tuesday's throne speech.

But the speech also declares Canada cannot meet its greenhouse-gas reduction targets under the Kyoto protocol, drawing fire from opposition parties and environmentalists.

If the speech is defeated in a confidence vote, Prime Minister Stephen Harper will hit the campaign trail in pursuit of a majority and use the document as the backbone of his election platform.

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Dion ripped into the speech for its abandonment of Kyoto, its ambiguity on Afghanistan, and its "shocking indifference" to poverty.

"The worst of it ... is of course the weakness of everything they are proposing for the environment and climate change."

But he quickly added that he will consult his party before announcing his intentions today, and cautioned that Canadians don't want a third election in three years.

The bleakness of Dion's immediate prospects was underscored as his party found itself once again mired in noisy disarray Tuesday.

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NDP Leader Jack Layton has urged the Liberals to stand up for their principles and vote against the government.

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IDNUMBER 200710170061
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.10.17
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Cityplus
PAGE: B1 / FRONT
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Combat Camera / Cpl. Jordan Anderson;
KEYWORDS: !@DATELINE=EDMONTON
BYLINE: Jamie Hall
SOURCE: The Edmonton Journal
WORD COUNT: 351

Posthumous degree for soldier; Cpl. Jordan Anderson close to graduating from University of Manitoba when he was killed in Kandahar

EDMONTON - Cpl. Jordan Anderson's home office in Edmonton has remained largely untouched since he was killed in July by a roadside bomb near Kandahar.

The papers he wrote for his university degree are still piled neatly on the desk.

"I go in that room a lot," says Anderson's widow, Amanda. "It gives me comfort."

Education, she says, was paramount to her husband, whose goal was to eventually earn a master's degree in strategic studies and become an intelligence officer in the military.

When he was killed, he was working toward that goal and was close to completing his bachelor of arts degree through the university's military support program at the University of Manitoba.

So close, in fact, the university will award the degree posthumously during Thursday's fall convocation in Winnipeg.

It's the first time since the Korean War a Canadian university has given a posthumous degree to a member of the forces killed in action.

"It's just wonderful," said Amanda, who will accept the degree on her husband's behalf.

"Jordan worked so hard for this degree. So many times he would come home after being in the field for weeks and sit down and write a paper late into the night on some obscure topic.

"He was determined to get it, no matter what else was going on in his life," she said.

George MacLean, the acting head of the university's political studies department, never met Anderson. But he happened to be reviewing Anderson's academic file the day he and five of his fellow soldiers were killed when their armoured vehicle struck a massive roadside bomb near Kandahar.

MacLean noticed that Anderson, 25, was an exceptional student and was close to completing his degree.

"He had completed all of his major degree requirements," said MacLean. "So when we were approached about awarding the degree posthumously, there was certainly a good case to be made for it."

Anderson's military family was keenly aware of his devotion to education and, through an online military forum called army.ca, raised enough money to start two scholarships in his name at the university.

One will be for students entering the political studies program and the second for a student in the middle of the program.

Amanda said news of the degree, and the scholarships, has helped with her struggle to find something positive in the aftermath of the tragedy.

"That's what Jordan was about," she said.

"He always said to me, 'We have to focus on the positive; you can't focus on the casualties, you have to focus on the good we're doing over there (in Afghanistan.)'

"He's getting his degree, and there are going to be two scholarships in his name. That's positive."

jhall@thejournal.canwest.com

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PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.10.17
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SECTION: Ideas
PAGE: A19
COLUMN: David Ignatius
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Mowatt-Larssen;
KEYWORDS: 0
DATeline: WASHINGTON
BYLINE: David Ignatius
SOURCE: Washington Post Writers Group
WORD COUNT: 771

Al-Qaida has nuclear ambitions, U.S. official says; Department of Energy's director of intelligence sounds alarm now, rather than waiting until it may be too late

WASHINGTON - Rolf Mowatt-Larssen is paid to think about the unthinkable. As the U.S. Energy Department's director of intelligence, he's responsible for gathering information about the threat that a terrorist group will attack America with a nuclear weapon.

With his shock of white hair and piercing eyes, Mowatt-Larssen looks like a man who has seen a ghost. And when you listen to a version of the briefing he has been giving recently to President George W. Bush and other top officials, you begin to understand why.

He is convinced that al-Qaida is trying to acquire a nuclear bomb that will leave the ultimate terrorist signature -- a mushroom cloud.

We've all had enough fearmongering to last a lifetime. Indeed, we have become so frightened of terrorism since Sept. 11, 2001, that we have begun doing the terrorists' job for them by undermining the legal framework of our democracy. And truly, I wish I could dismiss Mowatt-Larssen's analysis as the work of an overwrought former CIA officer with too many years in the trenches.

But it's worth listening to his warnings -- not because they induce more numbing paralysis, but because they might stir sensible people to take actions that could detect and stop an attack. That's why his boss, Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman, is encouraging him to speak out. They don't want to anguish later that they didn't sound the alarm in time.

Mowatt-Larssen has been gathering this evidence since a few weeks after 9/11, when then-CIA director George Tenet asked him to create a new WMD branch in the agency's counterterrorism centre. He helped Tenet prepare a chapter on al-Qaida's nuclear efforts that appears in his memoir, *At the Center of the Storm*. Now that the uproar over Tenet's mistaken "slam dunk" assessment of the Iraqi threat has died down, it's worth rereading this account. It provides a chilling, public record of al-Qaida's nuclear ambitions.

Mowatt-Larssen argues that for nearly a decade before 9/11, al-Qaida was seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction. As early as 1993, Osama bin Laden offered \$1.5 million to buy uranium for a nuclear device, according to testimony presented in federal court in February 2001.

When the al-Qaida leader was asked in 1998 if he had nuclear or chemical weapons, he responded: "Acquiring weapons for the defence of Muslims is a religious duty. If I have indeed acquired these weapons, then I thank God for enabling me to do so."

Even as al-Qaida was preparing to fly its airplane bombs into buildings, the group was also trying to acquire nuclear and biological capability. In August 2001, bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, met around a campfire with Pakistani scientists from a group called Umma Tameer-E-Nau to discuss how al-Qaida could build a nuclear device. Al-Qaida also had an aggressive anthrax program that was discovered in December 2001 after bin Laden was driven from his safe haven in Afghanistan.

Al-Qaida proclaimed a religious rationale to justify the WMD attacks it was planning.

In June 2002, Kuwaiti-born cleric Suleiman Abu Ghaith, posted a statement on the web that "al-Qaida has the right to kill four million Americans" in retaliation for U.S. attacks against Muslims. And in May 2003, at the same time Saudi operatives of al-Qaida were trying to buy three Russian nuclear bombs, cleric Nasir al-Fahd issued a fatwa titled, "A treatise on the legal status of using weapons of mass destruction against infidels." Interrogations of al-Qaida operatives confirmed the planning was serious. Al-Qaida didn't yet have the materials for a WMD attack, but it wanted them.

Most chilling of all was al-Zawahiri's decision in March 2003 to cancel a cyanide attack in the New York subway system. He told the plotters to stand down because "we have something better in mind." What did that mean? More than four years later, we still don't know.

After 2004, the WMD trail went cold, according to Mowatt-Larssen. And many intelligence analysts have concluded that al-Qaida today doesn't have nuclear capability.

Mowatt-Larssen argues that a more honest answer is: We don't know.

So what to do about this spectral danger? The first requirement, says Mowatt-Larssen, is to try to visualize it. What would it take for al-Qaida to build a bomb? How would it assemble the pieces? How would the United States and its allies deploy their intelligence assets so that they could detect a plot before it happened? How would we reinvent intelligence itself to avert this ultimate catastrophe?

A terrorist nuclear attack, as Tenet wrote in his book, would change history. If we can see how this story might end, perhaps we can deflect the arrow before it hits its target.

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WORD COUNT: 575

Speech no hill to die on

Historically, Canadian minority government throne speeches offer both direction and a dare.

Tuesday, the Harper government hewed to that tradition by unveiling an ambitious, far-ranging agenda that could take parliament through many months of deliberation -- or prompt an election call within days.

Of the myriad proposals served up in the 39-minute address, five areas offer an insight into what Canada's not-so-new-anymore government has in mind.

If there is a single issue that animates the opposition parties, especially the NDP and Bloc Quebecois, it's Canada's mission in Afghanistan. To its credit, the government is refusing to back down on our solemn commitment. Indeed, it signalled a desire to remain in the troubled country beyond February 2009, when the current mission is scheduled to expire, gradually moving from combat status to training and policing.

Surely, given the ultimate sacrifices made to date, arbitrary timelines shouldn't interfere with Job One -- buoying the Afghan government in its noble endeavour to resist the Taliban and begin building a civil society.

Nor, at home, does taking the pressure off the most violent among us make sense. Questions surrounding the murder of RCMP Const. Christopher John Worden are on the minds of many Edmontonians this week, as we ponder what might have been done to prevent it.

But the Harper government will have to provide further proof that its muscular rhetoric on crime and punishment is backed by facts, as well as emotional boilerplate. Announced plans to toughen the Youth Criminal Justice Act and set mandatory sentences for gun crimes, among other gambits, have a familiar red-meat electioneering quality that should give pause.

Stephen Harper's determination to lay a marker down on Canadian Arctic sovereignty was an early surprise of his government, and a welcome one. And while some might quibble with the particulars of already announced northern initiatives, the prime minister appears quite serious. Choosing a throne speech to indicate construction of an Arctic research station and an Arctic mapping expedition is laudable as well. Let's see if it comes to pass.

As for tax cuts, well, everyone likes them in theory. But cutting the GST by another point smacks of yet another election goodie that the vast majority of economists deride. Forgive the wild notion that a government truly pledged to fiscal conservatism might instead consider using at least some of its excess bounty to lower

our still considerable national debt.

It will be astonishing to most Albertans that the Conservatives felt the need to formally remind us that meeting Kyoto targets is impossible. Even Green Party Leader Elizabeth May recognizes that sorry fact. As she understated Tuesday, it's all about doing the best we can and then pledging further action.

But although the government has finally come around to rhetorically recognizing the need to address climate change in a comprehensive way, specificity is still lacking. There's just something hollow about its sincerity, not helped by the selection of either of its environment ministers so far. On this brief, the PM has a real opportunity to prove the skeptics wrong.

With the two smaller opposition parties set on voting down the government for their own electoral reasons, it's up to the Liberals to decide whether this parliament continues. Presented with an essentially centrist agenda without a poison pill that would have forced Stephane Dion into a corner, taking these proposed measures piece by piece seems reasonable.

Too bad reason doesn't always attend the throne of the people in this part of the world.

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EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A6
KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: David Pugliese
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 306

Afghan officers learned how to say 'refugee status'; Gov't ends program teaching English

OTTAWA - A key Defence Department training program for Afghan officers has been shut down after several students left the course and requested refugee status.

The program was designed to bring Afghan officers for English-language training to facilities in Ottawa and St-Jean, Que. But the Defence Department put a stop to that training after some of the students disappeared, only to later surface and ask for refugee status.

The department is reviewing the situation and it is unclear if and when the language training for Afghan officers will resume. Defence officials said they could not immediately provide comment on the issue.

The review was sparked by the disappearance on Dec. 17, 2006, of three Afghan officers from the English-language training program offered by the department's military training assistance program.

The men had been scheduled to return to Afghanistan that day. The three weren't seen until they turned themselves in to authorities. But it is not known whether they returned to Afghanistan or claimed refugee status.

Similar incidents also occurred in 2004 and 2005 when Afghan officers left the language training program to claim refugee status.

At least 50 personnel from Afghanistan have come to Canada for such language training.

The Canadian military, as well as NATO, is investing a large amount of resources into training Afghan security forces. Such personnel are seen as key to Canada's eventual withdrawal of troops from the south Asian nation, with the plan aimed at having Afghans take on more responsibility for their own security.

But NATO officials have complained a lack of English-language skills among Afghan personnel has hurt the development of that country's security forces. The aim of providing language training to the Afghans is so they can better communicate and work with NATO forces. English is the predominant language used at NATO headquarters and commands throughout Afghanistan.

An official with Citizenship and Immigration Canada said because of federal privacy rules the department cannot release the number of individuals from the training course who asked for refugee status.

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DATE: 2007.10.17
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
COLUMN: World Digest
KEYWORDS: CRIME; INCEST; ASSAULT; THE NETHERLANDS; AFGHANISTAN; CANADA
DATELINE: THE HAGUE
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 106

Canadian soldiers jailed for assault

THE HAGUE - A Dutch court on Tuesday jailed two Canadian soldiers due to be posted to Afghanistan for an assault on a gay man in Amsterdam. Eric Wright was sentenced to five months in jail and ordered to pay \$8,300 Cdn in damages and Ryan Dowie was given 45 days in jail, a court spokesman said.

The two men, both aged 22 at the time of the incident, were arrested following a brawl in May in which a 28-year-old gay man was hospitalized with serious injuries.

The soldiers were passing through the Netherlands at the time before heading to Afghanistan as part of Canada's 2,500-strong contingent.

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KEYWORDS: POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield
SOURCE: Ottawa Citizen; CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 369

Gov't signals Afghanistan mission to go beyond 2009; Says training Afghan army will take longer

OTTAWA - Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan will likely continue to 2011, two years past the current commitment, the government's throne speech declared Tuesday.

The Conservative speech laid out the clearest timeline for the controversial mission and affirmed that while the House of Commons will be asked to vote on Canada's future military involvement in the war-torn country in the coming session of Parliament, the ultimate decision "should ensure that progress in Afghanistan is not lost and that our international commitments and reputation are upheld."

The speech sends a clear signal that the Conservatives do not intend to end Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan in February 2009, despite the clamouring by the three opposition parties to bring the troops home by then, if not sooner.

"Our government does not believe that Canada should simply abandon the people of Afghanistan after February 2009," says an advance copy of the 16-page speech.

Although Canada should shift its emphasis to training the Afghan army and police to defend their own people, the speech added: "This will not be completed by February 2009, but our government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011, the end of the period covered by the Afghanistan Compact."

The compact is the international agreement that spells out the how the world's reconstruction efforts should be carried out in Afghanistan. Canada has pledged \$1.2 billion in aid to Afghanistan to 2011.

Harper appeared to have diffused the Afghanistan issue last week when he appointed a blue ribbon panel, headed by former Liberal foreign affairs minister John Manley, to advise the government on options for Afghanistan after the current February 2009 commitment expires.

NDP Leader Jack Layton, whose party wants Canadian troops called home immediately, said the speech was a failure because it contained "no new direction" on Afghanistan.

Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe, whose party has called for an end to combat operations by February

2009, also derided the speech.

"We're talking about staying there until 2011, and they are putting more money into the military," Duceppe told a television interviewer.

The speech pledged to uphold Canada's values on the international stage, saying that the protection of Arctic sovereignty was "at the heart" of the Canadian Forces mission and seeks to confer honorary citizenship on the imprisoned Burmese Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

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PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
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SECTION: News
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ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Reuters / Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean inspects the guard on Parliament Hill before delivering the speech from the throne on Tuesday. ; Photo: The Ottawa Citizen ; CanWest News Services / Governor General Michaëlle Jean delivers the throne speech as Prime Minister Stephen Harper listens on Tuesday. ;
KEYWORDS: POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA
DATeline: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Norma Greenaway, Andrew Mayeda and Juliet O'Neill
SOURCE: Ottawa Citizen; CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 1058

it's up to Dion; Election prospect hinges on Liberals' reaction to agenda that pledges tax cuts, kills Kyoto

OTTAWA - The minority Conservative government has promised broad tax cuts and challenged the opposition parties to pass a massive anti-crime bill and accept its non-Kyoto approach to climate change in a throne speech that could become the opening volley in an election campaign.

NDP Leader Jack Layton and Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe immediately vowed to oppose the speech, leaving it up to the Liberals to either throw the government a lifeline or vote to bring it down and force an election.

However, Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion refused to immediately declare one way or the other. He criticized the speech, especially the "weakness" of the plans for tackling climate change, and predicted the caucus would have a "very lively" meeting today over what it wants to do.

"We know that Canadians want, as a priority, this Parliament to work. They don't want a third election in 31/2 years," he told reporters.

The speech, which outlined the government's legislative plans for the coming months, also pledged federal action to assert Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic, including construction of a "world-class Arctic research station that will be on the cutting edge of Arctic issues."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, long a critic of federal interference in areas of provincial jurisdiction, moved on a subject near and dear to the hearts of many Canadians -- especially Quebecers.

His government vowed it would introduce legislation to limit the use of federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

On the hot-button issue of Canada's military mission in Afghanistan, the government renewed an old promise

to allow a vote on the future of the mission after its current term expires in February 2009.

On the environment, the government said it would take action to combat climate change and cut greenhouse gases, but in contrast to the opposition parties, it reiterated its view that "Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol."

It also reiterated its election campaign promise to cut one more percentage point from the GST during its mandate.

The throne speech was delivered Tuesday night by Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean in the Senate chamber, which was packed with MPs, senators and members of the media. Among the special guests was Jodie Lamers Worden, the widow of an RCMP officer killed last week in Hay

River, N.W.T. It was the first time the speech was delivered during prime-time viewing hours on television.

The government said it was committed to demonstrating Canada's international leadership through action, rather than rhetoric, and to supporting those who share the values of democracy and freedom.

In that spirit, it announced it would ask Parliament to confer honorary citizenship on Burmese dissident Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize winner who has been under house arrest for years.

The law-and-order package would combine at least five pieces of legislation that have already been studied to varying degrees by MPs and senators, but which died on the order paper when the government opted to prorogue Parliament and begin a new session.

By combining all the bills into one omnibus bill, the government hopes to put more pressure on opposition parties to go along with the government rather than risk losing all the measures because they don't like one or two items.

"Canadians expect prompt passage of this crucial legislation," it said.

The most controversial proposal would amend the Criminal Code so that offenders found guilty of three violent or sexual crimes would have to convince a judge why they shouldn't be branded dangerous offenders. The Liberals had opposed that in the past.

The other measures would stiffen penalties for impaired driving, raise the age of sexual consent to 16 from 14, require people accused of gun crimes to demonstrate why they should be granted bail, and also impose mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.

The speech is considered a confidence matter, meaning the government could fall, and the country would be plunged into an election, if all three opposition parties voted against it.

It was the second throne speech by the Harper-led Conservatives since they won power almost 21 months ago.

Layton objected strongly to the government's plans to ignore the Kyoto targets, and what he said was its failure to address poverty in Canada. "We have a mandate to oppose the direction Mr. Harper is taking. It's wrong," he told reporters.

Duceppe, who rushed to speak to reporters before Jean had finished reading the speech, said the speech missed the mark on the environment, the economy, protecting provincial rights, and Afghanistan.

"On Afghanistan, not only are they not proposing to put an end on that mission by February 2009 -- we're talking about staying there until 2011," he told reporters. "And they are putting more money into the military.

Kyoto? They are abandoning Kyoto. They are following (U.S. President George W.) Bush -- we can't support them on that."

Harper moved last week to address the future of Canada's combat mission in Afghanistan. He appointed a five-member panel, led by John Manley, a former Liberal cabinet minister, to make recommendations by the end of January.

The government, which has 126 of the 308 seats in the Commons, would fall only if the opposition parties united to bring it down. The Liberals have 96 seats, the Bloc Quebecois has 49, and the NDP has 30. There are three independents and four vacancies.

Recent polls have put the Conservatives ahead of the Liberals by five to 12 points. A poll conducted last week for CanWest News Service said Harper was inching towards majority government territory with 40 per cent of the popular vote. It was the first time the Conservatives, leading the Liberals by 12 points, had hit the magic number since last April, when the government unveiled what was seen as a popular budget.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Harper government's leading priorities for the new session of Parliament, which opened with a throne speech Tuesday, include:

- A shift in Canada's emphasis in Afghanistan toward the training of the Afghan army and police by 2011.
- A single comprehensive bill to tackle violent crime, which would include aspects of legislation that failed to pass in the last session.
- Changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act to "ensure that young offenders who commit serious crimes are held accountable."
- A long-term tax-relief plan for people, businesses and families.
- A national strategy to reduce Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions by 60 to 70 per cent by 2050.
- Formal limits on the use of the federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.
- Legislation to allow for the direct election of senators and limits on their tenure.

CanWest News Service

CRUCIAL VOTES

There will be as many as three votes of confidence in the government by the middle of next week as MPs proceed with a six-day debate on Tuesday's throne speech.

Thursday: A Bloc Quebecois sub-amendment on the Liberal motion amending the government motion on the speech from the throne.

Monday: Liberal amendment to the throne speech.

Oct. 24: Conservative government motion on the throne speech.

CanWest News Service

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BYLINE: David Ramsay
SOURCE: Special to The Leader-Post
WORD COUNT: 743

Why we should stay

KABUL -- Hekmat Karzai wrapped up a recent wide-ranging discussion with six Canadian journalists with a joke about Afghanistan.

The joke involved an academic who spent a mere three days visiting Afghanistan before going home to write what he proudly billed as an in-depth analysis of the country.

It's title: "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow".

The point the cousin of President Hamid Karzai was making -- perhaps at our expense -- is there are too many instant Afghan experts in the world. The views westerners have of his homeland, he argued, are often based on the observations of those with only a superficial understanding of Afghanistan.

We met Karzai, the Georgetown-educated director of the Centre for Conflict and Peace, on the first day of a four-day tour of Afghanistan. Such a short stay cannot turn one into an expert, but we did gain valuable insight into the country, especially Canada's role in rebuilding Afghanistan. The Canadian "experts" I do meet are the Canadian soldiers, aid workers, business people and civil servants who are helping to rebuild the country.

The question most on our minds during the trip was whether or not Canada -- especially the 2,500 Canadian soldiers now stationed there -- should remain in Afghanistan longer than February 2009, when the current federal mandate ends.

Last weekend's formation of a five-member non-partisan panel, charged with reviewing Canada's military role in Afghanistan, should help provide some answers for the federal government.

Certainly, from the Canadians we talked to during our trip, there is no question that Canada should stay.

I did not meet a single soldier who did not stand behind the mission. To a person, they felt the Canadian Forces should stay beyond 2009. These conversations took place in cafeterias, in walks around military bases and in fortified SUVs. They spoke proudly of their efforts and bristled at any suggestion they might have to leave before the job is done. To do so, they argued, would dishonour the sacrifices made by Canadian troops, especially the 71 soldiers who have died here.

They spoke their minds freely and honestly and I had no reason to believe that they were reciting

government-scripted lines. We heard enough of that on the trip from bureaucrats to easily distinguish between the two.

The aid workers we met in Kabul and Kandahar province expressed similar sentiments. They argued that peace and security go hand-in-hand with aid and development efforts.

Back home, however, there is no unanimity about the presence of Canadian troops in Afghanistan. In general, the public supports our humanitarian aid efforts, but not at the expense of the lives of Canadian soldiers.

The problem is, Afghanistan cannot be rebuilt if it is not secure. And Canadian soldiers are needed to provide at least part of that security.

Canadians cannot build roads and schools or train police officers or help advance the legal and justice systems unless they can do so with a measure of safety. Just as we required a heavy military escort to simply visit a school near Kandahar City, so do aid workers need protection to carry out the valuable work they are doing.

The departure of Canadian troops from Kandahar province would leave a huge vacuum that will either be filled by another country's army or, failing that, by returning insurgents.

Leaving Canadian troops in place, but keeping them out of harm's way has been suggested as an alternative to a troop pullout. It is an approach other countries pursue, but one that is not effective in rebuilding the country. Simply put, one cannot provide security from inside a tent.

The solution we hear most often -- if there is to be a change in how our soldiers are to be deployed -- is to substantially increase our role in training soldiers for the Afghan National Army. At present, Canadians provide a finishing school of sorts for Afghan troops, giving them their final two weeks of training, before they join up with regular Afghan army units.

Canadian soldiers we talked to described the Afghans as being good soldiers and said they would fight next to them in the battlefield. And most of the actual fighting in Kandahar province now has the Afghan army at the front, with Canadian troops in reserve if they are needed. So far, 35,000 Afghan soldiers have been trained, about half the total needed to secure the country. Similar, but belated, efforts are now taking place to train police officers, so that law and order can be maintained once the shooting stops.

No one wants our troops to remain in Afghanistan forever.

But it would be wrong to have them leave before the job is done.

- Ramsay, deputy editor (nights) at The Leader-Post, has just returned from a Department of National Defence-sponsored tour of Afghanistan.

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SECTION: News
PAGE: B5
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: David Pugliese
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 386

Training program ends

OTTAWA -- A key Defence department training program for Afghan officers has been shut down after several students left the course and requested refugee status.

The program was designed to bring Afghan officers for English-language training to facilities in Ottawa and St-Jean, Que. But the Defence department put a stop to that training after some of the students disappeared, only later to surface and ask for refugee status.

The department is reviewing the situation and it is unclear if and when the language training for Afghan officers will resume.

Defence officials said they could not immediately provide comment on the issue.

The review was sparked by the disappearance on Dec. 17, 2006, of three Afghan officers from the English-language training program offered by the department's military training assistance program.

The men had been scheduled to return to Afghanistan that day. The three were later found after they turned themselves in to authorities. but it is not known whether they returned to Afghanistan or claimed refugee status.

Similar incidents also occurred in 2004 and 2005 when Afghan officers left the language training program to claim refugee status.

At least 50 personnel from Afghanistan have come to Canada for such language training.

The Canadian military, as well as NATO, is investing a large amount of resources into training Afghan security forces. Such personnel are seen as key to Canada's eventual withdrawal of troops from the south Asian nation, with the plan aimed at having Afghans take on more responsibility for their own security.

But NATO officials have complained a lack of English-language skills among Afghan personnel has hurt the development of that country's security forces. The aim of providing language training to the Afghans is so they can better communicate and work with NATO forces. English is the predominant language used at NATO headquarters and commands throughout Afghanistan.

On Sept. 17, a NATO official, Polish Brig.-Gen. Ryszard Wisniewski, pointed out the most urgent priority for the Afghan National Army in his view is English-language training. In a conference call with journalists, Wisniewski noted language problems are hindering some efforts, including a plan to have Afghan personnel working in NATO headquarters in Kabul and in regional commands around the country.

The Defence department's decision to stop the 19-week language training for the Afghans does not affect officers from other nations who are involved in the training assistance program.

When the language training for Afghan personnel started in 2004, the Defence department highlighted it as an important part of Canada's Afghan strategy.

Ottawa Citizen

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DATE: 2007.10.17
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SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Norma Greenaway, Andrew Mayeda and Juliet O'Neill
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 1134

Tax cuts, crime measures top Tory agenda

OTTAWA -- The minority Conservative government has promised broad tax cuts and challenged the opposition parties to pass a massive anti-crime bill and accept his non-Kyoto approach to climate change in a throne speech that could become the opening volley in an election campaign.

NDP Leader Jack Layton and Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe immediately vowed to oppose the speech, leaving it up to the Liberals to either throw the government a life line or vote to bring it down and force an election.

However, Liberal Leader Stephane Dion refused to immediately declare one way or the other. Under pressure from within his party, he criticized the speech, especially the "weakness" of the plans for tackling climate change, and predicted the caucus would have a "very lively" meeting today over what it wants to do.

"We know that Canadians want, as a priority, this Parliament to work. They don't want a third election in 31/2 years," he told reporters.

The speech, which outlined the government's legislative plans for the coming months, also pledged federal action to assert Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic, including construction of a "world-class Arctic research station that will be on the cutting edge of Arctic issues."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, long a critic of federal interference in areas of provincial jurisdiction, moved on a subject near and dear to the hearts of many Canadians, but Quebecers in particular.

His government vowed it would introduce legislation to limit the use of federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

On the hot-button issue of Canada's military mission in Afghanistan, the government renewed an old promise to allow a vote on the future of the mission after its current term expires in February 2009.

On the environment, the government said it would take action to combat climate change and cut greenhouse gases, but in a direct contradiction of the position taken by the opposition parties, it reiterated its view that "Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol."

It also reiterated its election campaign promise to cut one more percentage point from the GST during its

mandate.

The throne speech was delivered Tuesday night by Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean in the Senate chamber, an ornate, wood-panelled room that was packed with MPs, senators and members of the media. Among the special guests was Jodie Lamers Worden, the widow of an RCMP officer killed last week in Hay River, N.W.T.

It marked the first time the speech was delivered during prime-time viewing hours on television.

The government said it was committed to demonstrating Canada's international leadership through concrete action, rather than rhetoric, and to supporting those who share the values of democracy and freedom.

In that spirit, it announced it would ask Parliament to confer honorary citizenship on Burmese dissident Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize winner who has been under house arrest for years.

The law-and-order package would combine at least five pieces of legislation that have already been studied to varying degrees by MPs and senators, but which died on the order paper when the government opted to prorogue Parliament and begin a new session.

By putting all the bills into one giant omnibus bill, the government hopes to put more pressure on opposition parties to go along with the government rather than risk losing all the measures because they don't like one or two items.

"Canadians expect prompt passage of this crucial legislation," it said.

The most controversial proposal would amend the Criminal Code so that those found guilty of three violent or sexual offences would have to convince a judge why they shouldn't be branded a dangerous offender. The Liberals had opposed that in the past.

The other measures would stiffen penalties for impaired driving, raise the age of sexual consent to 16 from 14, impose stricter bail conditions for those who commit crimes with guns, and also impose mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.

The speech is considered a confidence matter, meaning the government could fall, and the country would be plunged into an election if all three opposition parties voted against it. There are three possible confidence votes stemming from the speech over the next week or so.

It was the second throne speech by the Harper-led Conservatives since they won power almost 21 months ago.

Layton took strong exception to the government's plans to ignore the Kyoto targets, and what he said was its failure to address poverty in this country. "We have a mandate to oppose the direction Mr. Harper is taking. It's wrong," he told reporters.

Duceppe, who rushed to speak to reporters before Jean had finished reading the speech, said the speech missed the mark on the environment, the economy, protecting provincial rights, and Afghanistan.

"On Afghanistan, not only are they not proposing to put an end on that mission by February 2009 -- we're talking about staying there until 2011," he told reporters. "And they are putting more money into the military. Kyoto? They are abandoning Kyoto. They are following (U.S. President George W.) Bush -- we can't support them on that."

Harper moved last week to address one of the hottest issues hanging over Parliament, namely the future of Canada's combat mission in Afghanistan beyond its scheduled expiry in February 2009. He appointed a

five-person panel, led by John Manley, a former Liberal cabinet minister, to come forward with recommendations by the end of January.

The government, which has 126 of the 308 seats in the Commons, would fall only if the opposition parties united to bring it down. The Liberals have 96 seats, the Bloc Quebecois has 49, and the NDP has 30. There are three independents and four vacancies.

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Serge Maril, the director general of the Grits' Quebec wing, also tendered his resignation Tuesday just before the throne speech.

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The party's strength, however, has hovered mostly in the mid-30s since it won the 2006 election with 36 per cent of the vote.

The government also said it plans to introduce legislation designed to reinstate the secretive security certificate system, which allowed the government to detain foreign-born terrorist suspects, but which got struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada.

There will be as many as three votes of confidence in the government on Thursday, Monday and Oct. 24 as MPs proceed with a six-day debate on Tuesday's throne speech.

Ottawa Citizen

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IDNUMBER 200710170042
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.10.17
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Letters
PAGE: A15
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly, Reuters / A Canadian soldier from the Quebec-based Van Doos regiment flashes a victory sign as his armoured vehicle leaves a base in Kandahar province this week. A letter-writer says the vehicles are suitable only for peacekeeping and make soldiers vulnerable to attack. ;
BYLINE: Nick Fenger
SOURCE: Times Colonist
WORD COUNT: 213

Soldiers ill-equipped for combat

Canadians have some of the very best trained and motivated soldiers. Unfortunately, we are sending them into battle poorly equipped. The body armour that is issued to them is good but not the best, and some of the soldiers tell me that they are personally paying \$500 for better armour. Is that fair?

They drive vehicles that are OK for peacekeeping but not adequate for war situations. A roadside bomb killed three of our soldiers, while driving.

We send them obsolete tanks that are not usable in the summer and now that winter is approaching the politicians make a big deal about sending newer Leopard tanks, leased from Germany. Our latest casualty was due to a thrown track on one of these second-hand tanks.

Our leaders are always reacting after the loss of our brave men and women. They should have provided our forces with the equipment to do the job before they put them into a combat role. I am proud of our soldiers on the ground and what they are accomplishing, but disgusted with their leaders and politicians, especially the Conservatives, who wish to continue the current assignment in Afghanistan without our forces having the best tools available to do the job.

Nick Fenger,

Victoria.

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IDNUMBER 200710170020
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.10.17
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A8
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: David Pugliese
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 267

Refugee claims put end to Afghan officer training; Students vanish, later seek asylum in Canada

OTTAWA -- A key Defence Department training program for Afghan officers has been shut down after several students left the course and requested refugee status.

The program was designed to bring Afghan officers for English-language training to facilities in Ottawa and St-Jean, Que. But the Defence Department put a stop to that training after some of the students disappeared, only later to surface and ask for refugee status.

The department is reviewing the situation and it is unclear if and when the language training for Afghan officers will resume.

Defence officials said they could not immediately provide comment on the issue.

The review was sparked by the disappearance on Dec. 17, 2006, of three Afghan officers from the English-language training program offered by the department's military training assistance program.

The men had been scheduled to return to Afghanistan that day. The three were later found after they turned themselves in to authorities. But it is not known whether they returned to Afghanistan or claimed refugee status.

Similar incidents also occurred in 2004 and 2005 when Afghan officers left the language training program to claim refugee status.

At least 50 personnel from Afghanistan have come to Canada for such language training.

The Canadian military, as well as NATO, is investing a large amount of resources into training Afghan security forces. Such personnel are seen as key to Canada's eventual withdrawal of troops from the South Asian nation, with the plan aimed at having Afghans take on more responsibility for their own security.

But NATO officials have complained a lack of English-language skills among Afghan personnel has hurt the development of that country's security forces.

The aim of providing language training to the Afghans is so they can better communicate and work with

NATO forces. English is the predominant language used at NATO headquarters and commands throughout Afghanistan.

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IDNUMBER 200710170014
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.10.17
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Chris Wattie, Reuters / Prime Minister Stephen Harperwaits yesterday as Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean prepares to deliver the throne speech in the Senate chamber on Parliament Hill. ;
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Norma Greenaway, Andrew Mayeda and Juliet O'Neill
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 1250

Tories pledge tax cuts, crackdown on crime; Government challenges opposition to trigger election

OTTAWA -- The minority Conservative government has promised broad tax cuts and challenged the opposition parties to pass a massive anti-crime bill and accept his non-Kyoto approach to climate change in a throne speech that could become the opening volley in an election campaign.

NDP Leader Jack Layton and Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe immediately vowed to oppose the speech, leaving it up to the Liberals to either throw the government a life line or vote to bring it down and force an election.

However, Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion refused to immediately declare one way or the other. Under pressure from within his party, he criticized the speech, especially the "weakness" of the plans for tackling climate change, and predicted the caucus would have a "very lively" meeting today over what it wants to do.

"We know that Canadians want, as a priority, this Parliament to work. They don't want a third election in 31/2 years," he told reporters.

The speech, which outlined the government's legislative plans for the coming months, also pledged federal action to assert Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic, including construction of a "world-class Arctic research station that will be on the cutting edge of arctic issues."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, long a critic of federal interference in areas of provincial jurisdiction, moved on a subject near and dear to the hearts of many Canadians, but Quebecers in particular.

His government vowed it would introduce legislation to limit the use of federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

On the hot-button issue of Canada's military mission in Afghanistan, the government renewed an old promise to allow a vote on the future of the mission after its current term expires in February 2009.

On the environment, the government said it would take action to combat climate change and cut greenhouse gases, but in a direct contradiction of the position taken by the opposition parties, it reiterated its view that "Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol."

It also reiterated its election campaign promise to cut one more percentage point from the GST during its mandate.

The throne speech was delivered yesterday by Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean in the Senate chamber, an ornate, wood-panelled room that was packed with MPs, senators and members of the media. Among the special guests was Jodie Lamers Worden, the widow of an RCMP officer killed last week in Hay River, N.W.T.

It marked the first time the speech was delivered on television in the evening -- 7 p.m. in Ottawa.

The government said it was committed to demonstrating Canada's international leadership through concrete action, rather than rhetoric, and to supporting those who share the values of democracy and freedom.

In that spirit, it announced it would ask Parliament to confer honorary citizenship on Myanmar dissident Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize winner who has been under house arrest for years.

The law-and-order package would combine at least five pieces of legislation that have already been studied to varying degrees by MPs and senators, but which died on the order paper when the government opted to prorogue Parliament and begin a new session.

By putting all the bills into one giant omnibus bill, the government hopes to put more pressure on opposition parties to go along with the government rather than risk losing all the measures because they don't like one or two items.

"Canadians expect prompt passage of this crucial legislation," it said.

The most controversial proposal would amend the Criminal Code so that those found guilty of three violent or sexual offences would have to convince a judge why they shouldn't be branded a dangerous offender. The Liberals had opposed that in the past. The other measures would stiffen penalties for impaired driving, raise the age of sexual consent to 16 from 14, impose stricter bail conditions for those who commit crimes with guns, and also impose mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.

The speech is considered a confidence matter, meaning the government could fall, and the country would be plunged into an election, if all three opposition parties voted against it. There are three possible confidence votes stemming from the speech over the next week or so.

It was the second throne speech by the Harper-led Conservatives since they won power almost 21 months ago.

Layton took strong exception to the government's plans to ignore the Kyoto targets, and what he said was its failure to address poverty in this country. "We have a mandate to oppose the direction Mr. Harper is taking. It's wrong," he told reporters.

Duceppe, who rushed to speak to reporters before Jean had finished reading the speech, said the speech missed the mark on the environment, the economy, protecting provincial rights and Afghanistan.

"On Afghanistan, not only are they not proposing to put an end on that mission by February 2009 -- we're talking about staying there until 2011," he told reporters. "And they are putting more money into the military. Kyoto? They are abandoning Kyoto. They are following [U.S. President George W.] Bush -- we can't support them on that."

Harper moved last week to address one of the hottest issues hanging over Parliament, namely the future of Canada's combat mission in Afghanistan beyond its scheduled expiry in February 2009. He appointed a five-person panel, led by John Manley, a former Liberal cabinet minister, to come forward with recommendations by the end of January.

The Conservative government, which has 126 of the 308 seats in the Commons, would fall only if the opposition parties united to bring it down. The Liberals have 96 seats, the Bloc Quebecois has 49, and the NDP has 30. There are three independents and four vacancies.

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The party's strength, however, has hovered mostly in the mid-30s since it won the 2006 election with 36 per cent of the vote.

Earlier yesterday, the government made clear it was keen to get cracking on its "tough-on-crime" agenda. It served official notice it would introduce bills to amend the Criminal Code and other unnamed acts. A likely priority is passage of the Repeat Offender Bill, which would amend the Criminal Code to ensure that those found guilty of three violent crimes would have to convince a judge why they shouldn't be branded a dangerous offender. Others would require those accused of firearms offences to demonstrate why bail should be granted, and would raise the age of sexual consent to 16 from 14.

It also said it plans to introduce legislation designed to reinstate the secretive security certificate system, which allowed the government to detain foreign-born terrorist suspects, but which got struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada.

There will be as many as three votes of confidence in the government by the middle of next week as MPs proceed with a six-day debate on yesterday's throne speech.

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DATE: 2007.10.16
KEYWORDS: POLITICS SOCIAL
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 510

Harper's puts sovereignty on priority list as Tories stoke nationalism

OTTAWA _ The very first of five priorities listed in the Conservative government's new throne speech is ``strengthening Canadian sovereignty and place in the world."

It's a motherhood statement crafted as part of a wider Conservative strategy to replace the Liberals as Canada's default party of Maple Leaf flag wavers.

It's also likely to be overlooked in the deluge of news reports over crime legislation, tax cuts, environmental policy and other potentially contentious political elements that flow from the governing blueprint of Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

But as Harper, a student of political history, cast about for policies that would strip the Liberals of their ``natural governing party" moniker in the 21st century, he came back to a theme that's been tried before by Conservative leaders: Canadian nationalism.

``The Arctic is an essential part of Canada's history . . ." Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean said in Tuesday's throne speech.

``Canadians see in our North an expression of our deepest aspirations, our sense of exploration, the beauty and the bounty of our land, and our limitless potential."

The same segment of the speech refers to rebuilding Canada's military.

``Rebuilding our capabilities and standing up for our sovereignty have sent a clear message to the world: Canada is back as a credible player on the international stage," says the speech.

It might have been penned by former Conservative John Diefenbaker in the late 1950s.

Diefenbaker was a great champion of the North and a strong and independent Canadian military.

He told Time magazine in 1962 that he modeled himself after U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt.

``He was a remarkable man, and did more than anyone else to express the true concept of Americanism," said Diefenbaker. ``My concept of Canadianism is modeled after that."

A new sense of national pride is Harper's way of encroaching on Liberal turf, the patriotic domain that's been part of Liberal federal success stories for the past three decades _ if not the last century.

``He knows a great deal of Canadian history and he knows that the Liberals previously could claim to be the most strong defenders of Canadian economic and cultural nationalism," said Paul Thomas, a political scientist at the University of Manitoba.

Liberals, said Thomas, could always talk about the dangers of Canada being swallowed by the North American continental pull while simultaneously claiming to represent Quebecers and thus Canadian unity.

``Those were their trump cards."

It was potent political mix.

Liberals formed the federal government in 76 of the last 107 years since 1900, and Conservatives complained the party had co-opted the meaning of what it is to be Canadian.

Now, with the Liberal party in disarray, Harper believes nationalism and patriotism have too long been dominated by the left in Canada and that they represent solid Conservative values.

So while he espouses some of the same policies as George W. Bush on the environment, Harper is only too happy to take on the Republican administration over Arctic sovereignty.

And while he is cognizant of the political risk of a combat mission in Afghanistan, he sees it as a way to stoke pride in the Canadian Forces while projecting a more robust Maple Leaf abroad. And he is sure there are votes in it.

Nationalism, says historian Desmond Morton, is ``a popular cause in Conservative ranks _ remember Deifenbaker, the great nationalist? _ providing you don't upset trade with the U.S."

The McGill university professor doesn't think much of nationalism, whether it be the tried and true Liberal brand or something new fashioned by Harper.

``The real symbolic delivery of this policy is in the form of elegantly costumed hot air," he said.

But no one, least of all Harper, underestimates its electoral importance.

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DATE: 2007.10.16
KEYWORDS: ENTERTAINMENT INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MUSIC POLITICS
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 428

Buffy Sainte-Marie wows CUPE delegates with peace message, poetry and song

TORONTO _ Legendary folk singer and poet Buffy Sainte-Marie brought 2,000 union delegates to their feet Tuesday with an anti-war message punctuated by poetry and a trademark anti-capitalist protest song that showcased the power and depths of her artistry.

At 66, Sainte-Marie exuded strength and serenity as she urged her rapt audience to remember that no single group of people, no nation, has a lock on wisdom or culture.

“For those of us educated in North America, it's as though European thought is the only option, and it's not,” Sainte-Marie told delegates at a convention of the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

“There's a whole treasure trove of other cultures. This world of ours is just a treasure trove of good stuff.”

Sainte-Marie, who was born on the Piapot Cree reserve in Saskatchewan's Qu'Appelle Valley, spoke of the education she has received through her extensive travels.

“I had the privilege of going to the remote parts of the world that Madonna and Michael Jackson never get to visit,” she said to laughter.

Over an artistic career that has spanned three decades, she has won an Oscar, been inducted into the Juno Hall of Fame, and received a star on Canada's Walk of Fame.

Sainte-Marie, who has also made a name defending and promoting aboriginal cultures in Canada and abroad, spoke bluntly of how indigenous North Americans had the misfortune to run up against Europeans “discovering” the New World.

“We were slaughtered by gangs of alcoholics, under the pressure of the Inquisition,” she said.

The CUPE delegates rose to their feet on several occasions as Sainte-Marie spoke.

At one point, she spontaneously began drumming on the lectern and broke into a powerful song on the excesses of capitalism and what she called the “mindless greed” of modern politics. The crowd roared its approval.

People have forgotten or failed to learn that our primary purpose is to “make community,” Sainte-Marie said.

“When one has a billion, and a billion have nothing, there's something wrong,” she told the delegates, who are holding an anti-poverty rally in Toronto on Wednesday.

Sainte-Marie was especially scathing in her assessment of the conflicts raging in Iraq and Afghanistan.

She said those wars are nothing more than ``money laundering" that loots local economies _ the kind of outspoken position that saw her blacklisted in the U.S. during the Vietnam War era.

``It's got nothing to do with any of the ideals for which young people will enlist to protect their country, to preserve their traditions," she said. ``It's a big fat lie."

She recited the lyrics from ``Universal Soldier," the powerful anti-war song she wrote decades ago and which has been covered by such big-name artists as Donovan.

Yet despite her pointed criticism of capitalism, greed and how aboriginal peoples have been mistreated both in Canada and abroad, Sainte-Marie's message was an inspirational one of peace, forgiveness and redemption.

``Every single person has something to give," she said. ``We have to have faith that we can teach each other and learn from each other."

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DATE: 2007.10.16
KEYWORDS: JUSTICE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 173

Accused terrorist asks Quebec court to let him go because of trial delay

SHAWINIGAN, Que. _ The lawyer for a man who police allege participated in terrorist plots in Germany and Austria argued Tuesday his client should be released from jail.

Lawyer Rene Duval told Quebec court that Said Namouh should be freed because he wasn't brought before the court on break-and-enter charges within the three-day delay set out in the law.

Namouh, who is of Moroccan origin, is being held on a charge of break-and-enter and mischief at his former spouse's residence in addition to terrorism charges. He wasn't represented by a lawyer before this appearance.

Duval's motion will be heard next week.

Namouh, 35, is also to return to court in Montreal on Thursday on charges he conspired to bomb unspecified targets in Vienna.

He was arrested in the small Quebec town of Maskinonge last month as authorities in Austria and Canada swept down and arrested four people in a suspected international bomb plot.

The RCMP alleges he has connections with al-Qaida and believe he was involved in a plot to make threats in a video to be broadcast on the Internet, warning that Germany and Austria would be attacked if they didn't pull their troops out of Afghanistan.

(Trois-Rivieres, Que. Le Nouvelliste)

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DATE: 2007.10.16
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 332

Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan to receive posthumous degree

WINNIPEG _ The University of Manitoba will award a posthumous bachelor of arts degree to an Edmonton-based soldier who was killed in Afghanistan earlier this year.

Cpl. Jordan Anderson, 25, a member of the 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, had been pursuing his degree through the university's military support office.

He had completed nearly all program requirements when he and five other soldiers, along with an Afghan interpreter, were killed by a roadside bomb west of Kandahar city July 4.

"He did very well in his courses," said George MacLean, the acting head of the U of M's political studies department, who noted that Anderson had intended to pursue an advanced degree in political science and international relations.

He said the decision to award the degree was made after Anderson's friends and family members contacted the university.

He said Anderson died the same day he spoke to the university about expanding his education program.

"I know in many cases it was very emotional for people because you couldn't help but think about the overwhelming nature of this individual, who, like the 70 other soldiers who have been killed over there were killed in the prime of life," he said.

MacLean also said the granting of the degree is a first for the institution.

"We have granted degrees posthumously in the past, but never one of this nature to a member of the Canadian Forces."

Anderson's widow, Amanda Anderson, will receive the degree on behalf of her husband at a convocation ceremony in Winnipeg on Thursday. It's expected that members of the military will also be in attendance.

Maj. Erik Liebert of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in Edmonton says events like this are significant.

"Canadians pay attention to what's going on overseas and watch as soldiers return home in better or worse circumstances. What doesn't get a lot of acknowledgment is the work done by individuals to better themselves and better others. This is certainly a case where Cpl. Anderson put a lot of time and effort into improving himself."

Liebert said he hopes the ceremony will make more soldiers aware of university support programs available under the Canadian Forces.

“A long-serving soldier can receive up to \$20,000 of subsidized education,” he said.

Anderson, who was born in Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut, spent most of his childhood in Inuvik, N.W.T.

He is believed to be the first northerner to die in Afghanistan.

Two scholarships have also been established in his name.

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DATE: 2007.10.16
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 650

Canada should stay in Afghanistan until 2011: throne speech

OTTAWA _ Canada should stay directly involved in Afghanistan until at least 2011, the minority Conservative government declared Tuesday in its latest throne speech.

The new proposed deadline is two years beyond the current mandate approved by Parliament and repeats Prime Minister Stephen Harper's promise to put the future of the mission to a vote in the House of Commons.

"Our government does not believe that Canada should simply abandon the people of Afghanistan after February 2009," said Gov.-Gen. Michaëlle Jean.

The speech tied Canada's eventual exit strategy to the training of Afghan security forces, including the army and police, and their ability to stand on their own two feet in order to face threats from Taliban insurgents.

"This will not be completed by February 2009, but our government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011."

Former defence minister Gordon O'Connor caused a firestorm of controversy last spring by suggesting that the army would be needed in Afghanistan until at least 2011. That is also the same year that an international agreement _ the Afghanistan Compact _ expires.

Just before he was shuffled out of the portfolio last summer O'Connor suggested the Afghans might be able to carry out the bulk of the fighting by next spring _ an assertion that was later contradicted by Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier, who said he doesn't expect a handover until roughly 2011.

To Canadians already weary of war following the deaths of 71 soldiers and one diplomat, the Conservatives tried to steel public opinion to the road ahead.

"Progress will be slow, but our efforts are bearing fruit."

The throne speech declaration will likely push the Liberals, who've called for an end to the combat mission on schedule, into a political corner.

The throne speech argues that staying the course in Afghanistan would ensure that progress made to date "is not lost and our international commitments and reputation are upheld."

Selling another two-year extension of the mission to a skeptical public might not be as difficult as long as there is more emphasis on reconstruction and less on combat, said defence analyst Alex Morrison.

He sees the speech as more of a political challenge.

"Prime Minister Harper has thrown the gauntlet to the opposition and shown the courage of his convictions on this issue," said Morrison, president of the Toronto-based Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies.

But Liberal Leader Stephane Dion dismissed the speech's references to Afghanistan as ``ambiguous."

Harper last week appointed a five-person panel, headed by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley, to examine options for the future of the mission.

The panel is expected to consider four options. Among them is continued Canadian training of the Afghan army and police. The other proposals include moving towards a reconstruction mission, shifting the army away from volatile southern Afghanistan to a quieter sector or withdrawing altogether.

The NDP have called for an immediate withdrawal of troops and plan to vote against the throne speech in any event. Ending the combat mission on schedule in February 2009 is a demand of the Bloc Quebecois. The Bloc's leader, Gilles Duceppe, indicated his party would vote against the throne speech.

The Liberals also want the mission wrapped up in sixteen months _ something they said last summer would be a condition of their support.

Steve Staples, of the Rideau Institute, an Ottawa-based think-tank, said the Conservative's ``brinksmanship strategy" is now crystal clear.

``They've been emboldened by both the byelection victories in Quebec and the disarray in the Liberals," said Staples, a vocal opponent of the war.

``They'll try to repeat the coup of last time by getting enough Liberals to vote with the Conservatives in order to extend the mission by two years."

In the spring of 2006, a handful of Grits broke ranks and voted to extend the country's Afghan deployment.

The speech commits the Conservatives to further modernize the Canadian Forces beyond last year's multibillion-dollar purchase of support ships, battlefield helicopters as well as medium and high-lift transport planes.

Aside from equipment it also says it will work with the provinces to address the thorny issue of ``reservist reinstatement policies." Many provinces have been under public pressure to enact laws to protect the civilian jobs of reservists who volunteer for active duty.

In addition, the speech says the Arctic Rangers, a volunteer force that patrols the country's far north, will be expanded in ``size and capability."

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DATE: 2007.10.16
KEYWORDS: ENTERTAINMENT FILM SOCIAL INTERNATIONAL
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 253

Author applauds delayed release of `Kite Runner' over safety of child actors

SAN FRANCISCO _ ``The Kite Runner" author Khaled Hosseini is commending the delayed release of the film adaptation of his novel over fears for the actors' safety.

Movie distributor Paramount Vantage delayed the debut for six weeks, until Dec. 14, after three of its adolescent male stars said they could be targeted for their participation in a homosexual rape scene. The studio _ the art-house label of Viacom Inc.'s Paramount Pictures _ is moving the boys and their families from socially conservative Afghanistan, possibly until next spring.

``I applaud the studio for delaying the release of the film even though it goes against whatever commercial wisdom there is," the 43-year-old San Jose resident said Monday at a media event in San Francisco.

``Afghanistan has become a pretty violent place within the last year," said the Kabul native, who immigrated to San Jose in 1980. ``If the boys and their families think there is a reasonable risk of threat to them, then you have to take all of the steps that you can to make sure they are OK."

The scene in which the 12-year-old protagonist witnesses the brutalization of his friend _ but does nothing to stop it _ is one minute of a two-hour film and two pages of a 380-page novel. It plays on ethnic tensions that pervade the book, pitting an upper-class Pashtun bully against a lower-class ethnic Hazara boy.

Hosseini defended keeping the scene in the film as a pivotal moment of character development.

``Without that moment, the tower of cards really falls apart," he said.

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DATE: 2007.10.16
KEYWORDS: POLITICS
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 386

Historic prime-time throne speech plays to indifferent Senate audience

OTTAWA _ It was the political event of the season, 40-plus minutes live in prime time on the network news channels, charting the future course of the country and setting up a potentially historic electoral showdown!

That's one perspective.

Another, from the Senate press row a scant couple of metres above and behind Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean's red plush seat in the Senate chamber, provided a rather different view.

Empty seats dotted the rows of stolid, white, middle-aged faces in the two galleries of invited guests. At least 17 Senate desks sat empty. A murmur of subdued conversation rose and fell.

Outside, under a cool autumn sky on Parliament Hill, a group of crisp cadets received last minute instructions before the Governor General's arrival.

"When the 21-gun salute starts, it goes BANG!" shouted the commanding officer. "I want you to stay still!

"I don't want to see 100 people do this," and he ducked his head.

Had his audience been the Senate crowd, he needn't have worried.

The speech from the throne, written by Prime Minister Stephen Harper's minority Conservative government, was in many respects a remarkable document _ a detailed policy blueprint loaded with partisan policy markers that will define either parliament's legislative agenda over the next year or the Conservative election platform in a potential fall campaign.

Jean read the 40-minute speech in somewhat halting fashion, never appearing totally at ease with the material.

Harper, seated to her right, listened intently, his hands on his knees.

The throne speech delivery switched from English to French, depending on the Conservative message point, with pitch-perfect pollster's precision.

A reference to extending the military mission in Afghanistan was read in English; a promise to limit the federal spending power in French; a vow to break down provincial trade barriers in English; a promise to force voters to visually identify themselves in French.

The speech plumbed a host of Conservative themes, from the supremacy of "ordinary Canadians" to Northern sovereignty, from getting tough on crime to "clean" government, from a robust military to a reformed upper chamber.

Only this last drew the faintest murmur of response and a few grins from the appointed Senators.

``Canada's New Government," the ubiquitous Conservative branding exercise that has so annoyed parliamentary traditionalists, was mercifully absent from the text.

None of it whatsoever appeared to animate the galleries.

When Jean read that the government would respond to the Supreme Court of Canada's decision on terrorist security certificates, a keen observer might have observed a noticeable lifting of the eyebrows of Justice Louis LeBel, seated among his fellow ermine-robed high court judges in front of the dais.

As political theatre, not even the pomp and ceremony of one the Canadian parliamentary system's great events could energize this bunch.

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DATE: 2007.10.16
KEYWORDS: POLITICS
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 4258

INDEX:Politics

OTTAWA _ Text of Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean's speech from the throne Tuesday:

Honourable senators,

Members of the House of Commons,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to address the first words in this chamber to the members of the Canadian Forces, some of whom are present here today. Their commitment and courage in the name of justice, equality and freedom _ whose benefits are not accorded to all peoples in the world _ are worthy of our utmost respect.

The speech from the throne is an important moment in our country's democratic life. Through the speech from the throne, the government shares its vision with Canadians. And it is thus that we open the second session of the 39th Parliament today.

Fifty years ago, on Oct. 14, 1957, during her first visit to Canada as its sovereign, and for the first time in Canadian history, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II opened the First Session of the 23rd Parliament.

This room is filled with history, and we mark history again this year as we celebrate a number of anniversaries. I think, in particular, of the bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in the British Empire. I also think of the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Citizenship Act on Jan. 1, 1947. And I think of the 40th anniversary of the Order of Canada, whose 100th investiture ceremony we will soon be celebrating at Rideau Hall.

And although Canada is a young country, its history is marked by our unwavering willingness _ which I was touched to see all across Canada _ to be and to continue to be a generous society. A society that is concerned about the well being of others. A society that is protective of the spirit of this bountiful land, a deep respect learned from Aboriginal peoples. A society that is committed to finding solutions to today's challenges. A society that is open to creation and quick to innovate. A society that is filled with young people who have an unprecedented openness to the world.

Strong Leadership. A Better Canada.

Canada is the greatest country in the world, a nation of enormous potential built through the imagination and dedication of ordinary Canadians. Canadians who have worked hard to build a better life for their families. Canadians who have joined with their neighbours to create a society founded on peace and prosperity.

Canada is their legacy to us.

Canadians expect their government to help them build on this legacy. They want a government that sets clear

goals and delivers concrete results. A government that is accountable. A government that puts Canadians and their families first.

Our government has worked hard to meet these expectations. Canadians now have more money in their pockets because taxes have been cut. Families now have real choice in child care through the Universal Child Care Benefit. Canadians now have a government committed to helping them get the medical care they need more quickly. A government that is tackling crime and making neighbourhoods safer.

The results are clear: the economy is strong, the government is clean and the country is united.

Now is the time to continue building a better Canada. In the next session, our government will focus on five clear priorities: strengthening Canada's sovereignty and place in the world; building a stronger federation; providing effective economic leadership; continuing to tackle crime; and improving our environment.

Strengthening Canada's Sovereignty and Place in the World

Canada is built on a common heritage of values, which Canadians have fought and died to defend. It is a country that continues to attract newcomers seeking refuge and opportunity, who see Canada as a place where they can work hard, raise families and live in freedom. Our government is resolved to uphold this heritage by protecting our sovereignty at home and living by our values abroad.

The Arctic is an essential part of Canada's history. One of our Fathers of Confederation, D'Arcy McGee, spoke of Canada as a northern nation, bounded by the blue rim of the ocean. Canadians see in our North an expression of our deepest aspirations: our sense of exploration, the beauty and the bounty of our land, and our limitless potential.

But the North needs new attention. New opportunities are emerging across the Arctic, and new challenges from other shores. Our government will bring forward an integrated northern strategy focused on strengthening Canada's sovereignty, protecting our environmental heritage, promoting economic and social development, and improving and devolving governance, so that northerners have greater control over their destinies.

To take advantage of the North's vast opportunities, northerners must be able to meet their basic needs. Our government will work to continue to improve living conditions in the North for First Nations and Inuit through better housing.

Our government will build a world-class arctic research station that will be on the cutting edge of arctic issues, including environmental science and resource development. This station will be built by Canadians, in Canada's Arctic, and it will be there to serve the world.

As part of asserting sovereignty in the Arctic, our government will complete comprehensive mapping of Canada's Arctic seabed. Never before has this part of Canada's ocean floor been fully mapped.

Defending our sovereignty in the North also demands that we maintain the capacity to act. New arctic patrol ships and expanded aerial surveillance will guard Canada's Far North and the Northwest Passage. As well, the size and capabilities of the Arctic Rangers will be expanded to better patrol our vast Arctic territory.

Ensuring our capacity to defend Canada's sovereignty is at the heart of the government's efforts to rebuild the Canadian Forces. Canada's men and women in uniform risk their lives for their country, and deserve the equipment and training required for a first-class, modern military. Our government will modernize Canada's military to provide effective surveillance and protection for all of our country, co-operate in the defence of North America, and meet our responsibilities abroad to the United Nations and our allies. Further, recognizing

the important role that the Reserves play in this modernization, our government will work with the provinces and territories to bring forward a comprehensive plan to modernize reservist reinstatement policies.

At the same time as our government rebuilds to meet our future needs, it will continue to improve support for our veterans who have contributed so much to defending Canada in the past.

Rebuilding our capabilities and standing up for our sovereignty have sent a clear message to the world: Canada is back as a credible player on the international stage. Our Government believes that focus and action, rather than rhetoric and posturing, are restoring our influence in global affairs. Guided by our shared values of democracy, freedom, human rights and the rule of law, our government will continue Canada's international leadership through concrete actions that bring results.

A commitment to action means that Canada must make common cause with those fighting for the values we uphold. Our government will immediately call upon Parliament to confer honorary citizenship on Aung San Suu Kyi. Her long struggle to bring freedom and democracy to the people of Burma has made her the embodiment of these ideals and an inspiration to all of us.

Nowhere is Canada making a difference more clearly than in Afghanistan. Canada has joined the United Nations-sanctioned mission in Afghanistan because it is noble and necessary. Canadians understand that development and security go hand in hand. Without security, there can be no humanitarian aid, no reconstruction and no democratic development. Progress will be slow, but our efforts are bearing fruit. There is no better measure of this progress than the four million Afghan boys and two million girls who can dream of a better future because they now go to school.

The Canadian Forces mission has been approved by Parliament until February 2009, and our government has made clear to Canadians and our allies that any future military deployments must also be supported by a majority of parliamentarians. In the coming session, members will be asked to vote on the future of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan. This decision should honour the dedication and sacrifice of Canada's development workers, diplomats and men and women in uniform. It should ensure that progress in Afghanistan is not lost and that our international commitments and reputation are upheld.

Our government does not believe that Canada should simply abandon the people of Afghanistan after February 2009. Canada should build on its accomplishments and shift to accelerate the training of the Afghan army and police so that the Afghan government can defend its own sovereignty. This will not be completed by February 2009, but our government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011, the end of the period covered by the Afghanistan Compact. Our government has appointed an independent panel to advise Canadians on how best to proceed given these considerations.

In our own neighbourhood, the Americas, Canada is back playing an active role. The Canadian model of constitutional democracy and economic openness combined with social safety nets, equitable wealth creation and sharing across regions has much to offer those countries struggling to build a better future.

Canada's efforts in Haiti are a compelling example of how we can work with our neighbours to ensure security and development. Canadians understand that our country has a responsibility to help countries struggling to make a better life for their people _ particularly in promoting democratic governance in fragile states. In Haiti and elsewhere, our government will bring greater focus and effectiveness to Canada's international assistance to ensure that Canadians' money is well spent.

The best hope for fostering development and our common security in the hemisphere and beyond is through bolstering international trade. Through renewed focus on trade and investment arrangements, Canada has already secured a deal with the European Free Trade Association, the first new agreement in more than half a decade. Our government will keep advancing Canada's trade interests in the Americas and around the world to

open up new markets for Canada's innovators.

Strengthening the Federation and our Democratic Institutions

Next year we mark important anniversaries spanning our country and its history. We will celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of Quebec City. Canada was born in French, reflected in the presence of francophones throughout Canada, and in Parliament's recognition that the Quebecois form a nation within our united country. We will also celebrate the 250th anniversary of the establishment of Nova Scotia's representative assembly, which marks the birth of Canadian parliamentary democracy, and the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Crown Colony of British Columbia.

John A. Macdonald, George-Etienne Cartier and the other Fathers of Confederation brought many peoples and regions together to create a federation that has served Canadians well for 140 years. Our government is committed to strengthening that union: it has concentrated on its national role by reinvesting in neglected federal responsibilities, such as trade, defence, public safety and security. It has put fiscal relations with provinces and territories on a principled basis and increased the level of transfers to support quality health care and social services.

Our government believes that the constitutional jurisdiction of each order of government should be respected. To this end, guided by our federalism of openness, our Government will introduce legislation to place formal limits on the use of the federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. This legislation will allow provinces and territories to opt out with reasonable compensation if they offer compatible programs.

Our government will also pursue the federal government's rightful leadership in strengthening Canada's economic union. Despite the globalization of markets, Canada still has a long way to go to establish free trade among our provinces. It is often harder to move goods and services across provincial boundaries than across our international borders. This hurts our competitive position but, more importantly, it is just not the way a country should work. Our government will consider how to use the federal trade and commerce power to make our economic union work better for Canadians.

Canadians understand that the federation is only as strong as the democratic institutions that underpin it. Our government believes that Canada is not well served by the Senate in its current form. To ensure that our institutions reflect our shared commitment to democracy, our government will continue its agenda of democratic reform by reintroducing important pieces of legislation from the last session, including direct consultations with voters on the selection of senators and limitations on their tenure. In addition, the integrity of our federal voting system will be further strengthened through measures to confirm the visual identification of voters.

Our government supports Canada's linguistic duality. It will renew its commitment to official languages in Canada by developing a strategy for the next phase of the Action Plan for Official Languages.

Our government remains committed to improving the lives of Canada's Aboriginal people. The government will reintroduce legislation to guarantee to people living on reserve the same protections other Canadians enjoy under the Canadian Human Rights Act. Our government will also present legislation on specific claims, which will finally bring fairness and timely resolution to the claims process.

Our government recently concluded a final settlement on Indian Residential Schools and will launch a commission for truth and reconciliation. The prime minister, on behalf of our government, will use this occasion to make a statement of apology to close this sad chapter in our history.

Providing Effective Economic Leadership for a Prosperous Future

This is a time of economic uncertainty and volatility in the wider world. While the economic fundamentals of our country are strong, Canada is not immune from this turbulence. Canadians understand these challenges and want a government that is a competent and effective manager of the economy.

With Advantage Canada, our government has laid out a sensible economic plan to secure better-paying jobs and solid growth for Canadians. The minister of finance will soon provide a Fall Economic and Fiscal Update, which will outline the next steps in that plan to ensure that Canada has a modern infrastructure, an innovative and entrepreneurial business environment, and a tax system that rewards hard work _ all based on a foundation of sound fiscal management.

As part of ensuring economic security for Canadians, our government will bring forward a long-term plan of broad-based tax relief for individuals, businesses and families _ including following through on its commitment to a further cut to the GST. To complement this, our government will support Canadian researchers and innovators in developing new ideas and bringing them to the marketplace through Canada's Science and Technology Strategy. Our government will improve the protection of cultural and intellectual property rights in Canada, including copyright reform. Our government will also take measures to improve the governance and management of the Employment Insurance Account.

The bedrock of our workforce is middle-class Canadians and their families. These families worry about the rising costs of higher education and the expense of caring for elderly parents. They worry about affordable housing and the number of homeless people on our streets. Our government is committed to helping Canadian families meet their needs. The Working Income Tax Benefit will help Canadians get back into the workforce, and the registered disability savings plan will help families care for children with severe disabilities. Our government will continue to invest in our families and our future, and will help those seeking to break free from the cycles of homelessness and poverty.

Our government will announce an infrastructure program, the Building Canada Plan, to support our long-term growth. By investing in our transport and trade hubs, including the WindsorDetroit corridor and the Atlantic and Pacific gateways, our government will help rebuild our fundamentals for continued growth.

The result will be safer roads and bridges, shorter commutes, more competitive business, improved cultural infrastructure and a better quality of life for all Canadians.

Our government will stand up for Canada's traditional industries. Key sectors including forestry, fisheries, manufacturing and tourism are facing challenges. Our government has taken action to support workers as these industries adjust to global conditions and will continue to do so in the next session.

The agricultural sector will benefit from our government's promotion of biofuels and the new Growing Forward agricultural framework. Our government will recognize the views of farmers, as expressed in the recent plebiscite on barley, by enacting marketing choice. Together with our government's strong support for Canada's supply-managed system, these approaches will deliver stable, predictable and bankable support for farm families.

Our mining and resource sectors present extraordinary opportunities across Canada, and our government will help move forward by providing a single window for major project approvals. With these increased opportunities for employment, our government will continue to foster partnerships that help Aboriginal people get the skills and training to take advantage of these job prospects in the North and across Canada.

Tackling Crime and Strengthening the Security of Canadians

Canada was founded on the principles of peace, order and good government. This is the birthright of all Canadians; yet Canadians feel less safe today and rightly worry about the security of their neighbourhoods and

the country. There is no greater responsibility for a government than to protect this right to safety and security.

In the last session, our government introduced important and timely legislation to tackle violent crime. Unfortunately much of this legislation did not pass. That is not good enough to maintain the confidence of Canadians. Our government will immediately reintroduce these measures with a single, comprehensive Tackling Violent Crime bill to protect Canadians and their communities from violent criminals and predators. This will include measures on the age of protection, impaired driving, dangerous offenders and stricter bail and mandatory prison sentences for those who commit gun crimes. Canadians expect prompt passage of this crucial legislation.

Our government will go further with a Safer Communities strategy to deal with the critical intersection of drug, youth and property crime. Our government will strengthen the Youth Criminal Justice Act to ensure that young offenders who commit serious crimes are held accountable to victims and their communities. Our government will introduce tough new laws to tackle property crime, including the serious problem of auto theft. New measures to address elder abuse and to curb identity theft will also be introduced. Our government will implement the National Anti-Drug Strategy giving law enforcement agencies powers to take on those who produce and push drugs on our streets.

In addition to tougher laws, our government will provide targeted support to communities and victims. It will help families and local communities in steering vulnerable youth away from a life of drugs and crime, and the Anti-Drug Strategy will help to treat those suffering from drug addiction. It will again ask Parliament to repeal the wasteful long-gun registry. Our government will also ensure effective law enforcement _ starting with resources to recruit 2,500 more officers to police our streets.

The concern of Canadians in protecting our communities extends naturally to protecting our country against threats to our national security: those who would attack the peaceful pluralism of our society through acts of terrorism. Canada has experienced the tragedy of terrorism before. The report from the public inquiry into the Air India bombing will be an important contribution to safeguarding the lives of Canadians in the future.

Our government will address Canadians directly on the challenge of protecting our free and open society with a statement on national security. The government will introduce legislation to make sure that Canada has the tools it needs to stop those who would threaten our cities, communities and families, including measures to strengthen the Anti-Terrorism Act and to respond to the Supreme Court decision on security certificates.

Improving the Environment and Health of Canadians

Threats to our environment are a clear and present danger that now confronts governments around the world. This is nowhere more evident than in the growing challenge of climate change.

Our government believes that action is needed now to ensure our quality of life, particularly for those most vulnerable to health threats from the environment _ our children and seniors.

Climate change is a global issue and requires a global solution. Our government believes strongly that an effective global approach to greenhouse gas emissions must have binding targets that apply to all major emitters, including Canada. Canada has already engaged the international community at APEC, the G8 and the United Nations and will continue to press for a new international agreement that cuts global emissions in half by 2050.

As we pursue a global consensus, Canada is acting even more aggressively at home. Our government will implement our national strategy to reduce Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions 60 to 70 per cent by 2050. There will be a 20 per cent reduction by 2020. Our government will bring forward the elements from Canada's

Clean Air Act, which had all-party consensus, for parliamentary consideration.

This strategy will institute binding national regulations on greenhouse gas emissions across all major industrial sectors _ with requirements for emissions reductions starting this year. Our government will also bring forward the first ever national air pollution regulations. In so doing, our government will put Canada at the forefront of clean technologies to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Our government will also establish a carbon emissions trading market that will give business the incentive to run cleaner, greener operations.

At the end of 2005, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions were 33 per cent above the Kyoto commitment. It is now widely understood that, because of inaction on greenhouse gases over the last decade, Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol within the compliance period, which begins on Jan. 1, 2008, just 77 days from now.

The world is moving on to address climate change and the environment, and Canada intends to help lead the effort at home and abroad.

Beyond regulating greenhouse gases and air pollution, our government has also acted to protect sensitive areas, including a massive expansion of Nahanni National Park, and preserving the Great Bear Rainforest, Point Pleasant Park and Stanley Park. Through our new infrastructure plan, our government will promote a cleaner environment by investing in public transport and water treatment, and by cleaning up contaminated sites. A new water strategy will be implemented to help clean up our major lakes and oceans and to improve access to safe drinking water for First Nations.

In the past, environmental legislation and regulation have had little impact because they have lacked an effective enforcement regime. In the coming session, our government will bolster the protection of our water and land through tougher environmental enforcement that will make polluters accountable.

Environmental protection is not just about protecting nature. It is about the health of Canadians. Recent events have called into question the safety of basic products such as food for our families and toys for our children.

Our government shares the concern of parents about the safety of consumer products and food. Canadians should expect the same standards of quality from imported goods as they do from products made at home. The government will introduce measures on food and product safety to ensure that families have confidence in the quality and safety of what they buy.

Conclusion: The North Star

Canadians can be proud of their country and its achievements. Working together we have built a nation that is prosperous and safe; a land where merit trumps privilege; a place where people from around the world live in harmony; a federation that is united at home and respected abroad.

Like the North Star, Canada has been a guide to other nations; through difficult times, Canada has shone as an example of what a people joined in common purpose can achieve. Yet Canada's greatest strength lies in its energy and determination to move forward and build a better future.

Our government is committed to strong leadership to realize that future. A Canada proud of its leadership in the world and confident in its economic future. A Canada built on a strong federation and a robust democracy. A Canada that is safe for our families and healthy for our children.

Canadians, standing on a proud history, look onto a horizon as limitless as the promise of our country. It is up to us to build on the legacy we have inherited, to seize the opportunities of the future, and to bring about an even better Canada for our children.

May your deliberations be guided by Divine Providence, may your wisdom and patriotism enlarge the prosperity of the country and promote in every way the well-being of its people.

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Liberals atomizing in noisy disarray as Dion prepares for special caucus

OTTAWA _ Roiling disarray in the Liberal party is making Stephane Dion's decision about whether to bring down the Harper government even more complicated.

There was mounting evidence Tuesday that his Liberal team _ particularly in Quebec _ is not ready to fight an election.

The Liberal leader lost both his Quebec lieutenant and the director general of the party's Quebec wing just hours before Prime Minister Stephen Harper unveiled the government's blueprint for the new session of Parliament.

Dion dipped into Liberal ranks in the Senate to fill one vacancy but was still scrambling late Tuesday to find a replacement for the other.

During a morning caucus meeting to discuss how they should respond to the throne speech, sources said only six of 30 speakers said Liberals should vote against the speech and topple the government.

But insiders say that Dion himself, despite receiving virtually unanimous advice to the contrary, is hawkish about forcing an election. He fears his reputation as a champion of the environment and progress he's made wooing Green and other left-wing voters will be seriously hurt if Liberals don't vote against Harper's anti-Kyoto message.

Given the disarray in the party, one senior Grit said Dion's preference for an election is ``suicidal" while others questioned whether he'd be able to persuade his MPs to follow his lead. Dion will not make a final decision about how Liberals will vote until he's met again with his caucus on Wednesday.

Following release of the speech, Dion indicated that he has numerous concerns about Harper's agenda, including the lack of a cohesive economic plan, the ``ambiguity" over the Afghanistan combat mission, ``complete and shocking indifference" towards poverty and, ``most worrisome," the weakness of its environmental and climate change plans.

Still, Dion said Liberals must take into account that Canadians ``don't want a third election in three years and a half." He predicted ``a very lively" caucus meeting Wednesday when Liberals finally decide how to respond to the speech.

Deputy Leader Michael Ignatieff appeared much less hawkish than his leader.

``I think it's a question of whether we think it's in the interests of Canadians to plunge Canada into another election over this speech. That's a tough call," he said.

“What I get across the country is people don't want an election now, they're electioned out. And any responsible party has to listen to that view very carefully.”

For most Liberal MPs, the issue comes down to how to avoid an election in which the Grits are likely to be clobbered.

Insiders say internal party polls paint a much more dismal picture for the Liberals than public opinion polls, including the prospect of being reduced to as little as two seats in Quebec. Also, the latest quarterly fundraising figures are expected to be released shortly, showing the Liberals falling even further behind the Tories in building their campaign war chests.

While Dion was grappling with the throne speech Tuesday, Hull MP Marcel Proulx confirmed that he resigned over the weekend as the leader's Quebec lieutenant.

While Proulx said he's a team player and has no problem with being replaced, sources said he quit after learning that Dion had offered the lieutenant's post to Montreal MP Denis Coderre.

However, Coderre declined. Dion then tried to persuade Pablo Rodriguez, another Montreal MP, to take the post. Late Tuesday, he finally announced that Senator Celine Hervieux-Payette will take the job.

Hervieux-Payette, the Liberal Senate leader, is a veteran Liberal with an extensive network and experience as an organizer. She once served as national campaign co-chair for Jean Chretien. Insiders acknowledge that Hervieux-Payette has one big luxury in taking on the challenge: unlike Coderre or Rodriguez, she doesn't have to worry about fighting to hold onto her own seat in an election.

Adding to the perception of disarray, the party's director general in Quebec, Serge Marcil, tendered his resignation Tuesday. Robert Fragasso, president of the Quebec wing, said Marcil will stay on the job until the end of the week but has lined up a new job in the private sector.

The Liberal party has been without a national director since last week when Jamie Carroll resigned amid controversy over his allegedly dismissive response to demands to include more Quebecers in Dion's inner circle.

The disarray comes in the wake of the Liberals' humiliating defeat in three Quebec byelections last month, including the loss of the party's longtime Montreal fortress of Outremont.

Since then, insiders close to Dion have been saying the leader intends to shake up his Quebec team, too many of whom were deemed to have been apologetic about the leader. Dion, whose uncompromising stand against separatism has left him unpopular in his home province, was expected to install people who could be relied upon to promote and defend him.

However, Proulx and Marcil jumped the gun and quit before replacements had been found. That news of their departures should leak out only hours before the throne speech was particularly bad timing for Dion.

“In the circumstances, we can't hide the fact that we're going through difficult times,” Fragasso said.

Still, he maintained there are high-calibre people waiting in the wings to fill Marcil's post.

Sources said the mood in caucus was tense. In an attempt to play down dissension over the throne speech, MPs were ordered not to speak to the media until after Dion decides Wednesday how the party will vote.

At one point, Senator David Smith, recently named a co-chair of the national campaign team, tried to rally some team spirit, urging fellow caucus members to stop leaks out of their private meetings and asking: “Are

we a family?"

His appeal was met with stony silence, one caucus member later reported.

As well, some MPs later reported a number of their colleagues were annoyed with Coderre and Rodriguez, who were standing at the back of the room chatting and apparently mocking some of the interventions. Some Liberals resent the role Coderre and Rodriguez played in turning the Carroll affair into a public test of Dion's leadership.

On their way into the meeting, before being muzzled, MPs overwhelmingly expressed a preference for letting the throne speech pass and avoiding an election.

``If you ask me, do you want to go into an election or not, I would prefer not to go right away," said Manitoba MP Raymond Simard.

Toronto-area MP John McCallum noted that Canadians have been subjected to two federal elections in two years and don't want another one soon.

Halton MP Garth Turner was the only one to publicly call for an election. He said many other Liberal MPs ``are completely fed up with Mr. Harper" as well but the party must make a strategic decision on the throne speech.

``There's no point having an election you're not going to win," Turner conceded.

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INDEX:Defence, Environment, Finance, International, Politics

OTTAWA _ Highlights of the Conservative government's throne speech:

_ A fall economic update will outline plans to cut taxes across the board, including a further one-percentage-point cut to the GST.

_ A Tackling Violent Crime bill will include measures on impaired driving, age of sexual consent, stricter bail conditions, and mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.

_ Canada cannot meet its commitments to cut greenhouse gases under the Kyoto protocol, but will ``help lead the effort" to address climate-change worldwide.

_ There will be a parliamentary vote on the military mission in Afghanistan beyond February 2009. Canada should accelerate Afghan army and police training _ a job it says should be done by 2011.

_ Legislation is coming to limit federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

_ The government will build a ``world-class" Arctic research station to study environmental science and resource development, and to map the Arctic seabed in an effort to bolster Canada's claim to the Arctic.

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Japan's ruling party OKs naval mission to back U.S.-led Afghan operations

TOKYO _ Japan's ruling party approved Wednesday a new anti-terrorism bill that would extend a refuelling mission in the Indian Ocean, but curtail Tokyo's support for combat operations in Afghanistan by U.S.-led forces.

The new bill would limit Japanese ships to refuelling and supplying water to ships on anti-terrorism patrols, but does not allow them to refuel vessels involved in military operations, such as attacks, rescue operations or humanitarian relief.

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's government made the changes in the mission, which started in 2001, in hopes of mollifying critics in the opposition who said it involved Japan too deeply in military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The opposition Democratic Party of Japan, or DPJ, controls the upper house of parliament, giving it the power to slow _ but not definitively kill _ the ruling bloc's legislative agenda. Top ally the United States, meanwhile, has clamoured for extension of the mission.

The government has argued strenuously for the extension, saying that pulling out would leave Japan _ which depends on the Middle East for almost all of its oil imports _ sidelined in the fight against global terrorism.

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Turkey says approval for Iraq incursion won't mean quick attack on rebel Kurds

ISTANBUL, Turkey _ Turkey's prime minister indicated Tuesday that an offensive against Kurdish rebels based in northern Iraq would not immediately follow the expected go-ahead from parliament, as oil prices soared amid international calls for restraint.

The Iraqi government urged Turkey not to send troops across the border to pursue separatist Kurds in mountain hideouts, calling for "a diplomatic solution" to tensions that have raised fears of a new front in the Iraq war.

Tareq al-Hashemi, one of Iraq's two vice-presidents, flew to Ankara and met with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other Turkish officials before a parliamentary vote Wednesday that is widely expected to authorize cross-border attacks during the next year.

"The passage of the motion in parliament does not mean that an operation will be carried out at once," Erdogan said. "Turkey would act with common sense and determination when necessary and when the time is ripe."

Public anger over attacks by Kurdish guerrillas is running high, but government leaders know that two dozen military campaigns into Iraq since the 1980s failed to eradicate the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. And a cross-border attack could strain ties with the United States, a NATO ally that opposes any disruption of its efforts to stabilize Iraq.

Light, sweet crude for November delivery rose US\$1.94 a barrel to \$87.07 Tuesday on the New York Mercantile Exchange after hitting a record \$88.20. Traders attributed the surge partly to concerns that Turkish military action might disrupt Mideast crude oil supplies.

"Whenever there is any escalation in political tensions in the Middle East, oil markets become concerned," said David Moore, a commodity strategist at Commonwealth Bank of Australia in Sydney. "There is production and there are pipelines that people worry may be affected if there are any issues in Iraq."

The potential harm to Turkey's economy, which has recovered strongly from an economic crisis in 2001, is probably another factor in the government's deliberations on whether to send troops into Iraq.

Gazi Ercel, a former central bank governor, said an offensive could trigger falls in the Turkish stock market and currency and cause uneasiness among foreign investors about whether Turkey is a "risky place" to do business.

The head of the United Nation's refugee agency warned that a Turkish incursion into Iraq could exacerbate what is already the Middle's East's worst refugee crisis since the 1940s.

“I can only express our very deep concern about any development that might lead to meaningful displacements of populations in that sensitive area,” said Antonio Guterres, the UN high commissioner for refugees.

Guterres said violence in Iraq has forced four million Iraqis to flee their homes and an offensive into the Kurdish-controlled north would upset one of Iraq's few relatively stable areas.

There has been speculation Turkey's government sought approval for an offensive as a way to pressure U.S. and Iraqi authorities to move against Turkish Kurd rebels operating from northern Iraq.

On Tuesday, Erdogan repeated his calls for a crackdown, saying the Kurdish regional administration in northern Iraq should “build a thick wall between itself and terrorist organizations.”

Ali al-Dabbagh, spokesman for Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, said Iraq's government would not tolerate violence from the separatist rebels, but he urged Turkey to “seek a diplomatic solution and not a military one in dealing with the terrorist threats that target it.” Al-Maliki's office said a high-level political and security team would go to Turkey for talks later this week.

A Turkish soldier was killed Tuesday when he stepped on a landmine believed to have been planted by Kurdish rebels near the southeastern Turkish city of Bingol, local authorities said.

PKK rebels have been fighting for autonomy in Turkey's Kurdish-dominated southeast since 1984 in a conflict that has killed thousands of people.

Turkey has complained about what it considers a lack of U.S. support against the PKK, which has been labelled a terrorist group by Washington.

Turkish frustration with the United States has intensified because of another dispute: a congressional move toward declaring as a genocide the killing of up to 1.5 million Armenians by Turks during the First World War. Turkey denies there was a systematic campaign to eliminate Armenians, saying the deaths came during the civil unrest that accompanied the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

U.S. President George W. Bush is strongly urging Congress not to pass the resolution amid worries Turkey might retaliate by cutting off key supply routes used by U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Egemen Bagis, a foreign policy adviser to Erdogan, said Tuesday that Turkey should not punish the Bush administration if the resolution passes. He said it should react against those in Congress backing the measure as well as impose sanctions against Armenia for supporting it.

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Tories promise tax cuts, sweeping crime bill; declare Kyoto dead

OTTAWA _ The Conservatives have laid out a roadmap they hope will bring them closer to a coveted majority government, promising major tax cuts and sweeping anti-crime legislation in Tuesday's throne speech.

But the speech also declares that Canada cannot meet its greenhouse-gas reduction targets under the Kyoto protocol, drawing fire from opposition parties and environmentalists.

If the speech is defeated in a confidence vote, Prime Minister Stephen Harper will hit the campaign trail in pursuit of a majority and use the document as the backbone of his election platform.

If it survives, Harper has already declared that he expects a freer rein in imposing his agenda on Parliament and is prepared to use the threat of confidence votes to make it happen.

The NDP and the Bloc Quebecois immediately announced that they will vote against the speech, while Liberal Leader Stephane Dion said he will consult his MPs and senators before deciding what to do.

The centrepiece of the 16-page speech, which Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean read in a formal ceremony in the Senate, includes the announcement of a new Tackling Violent Crime bill.

The omnibus legislation will include measures on impaired driving, age of sexual consent, stricter bail conditions, and mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.

Harper has made it clear that his new law-and-order legislation will be a confidence matter _ meaning an opposition defeat of the bill would trigger an election.

The government also plans to announce a toughening of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, as well as multiyear tax cuts for individuals and businesses, and a one percentage point cut in the GST.

The Tories say the crime legislation will simultaneously reintroduce a number of bills that had been blocked last spring by the three opposition parties.

``Unfortunately much of this legislation did not pass," says the speech. ``That is not good enough to maintain the confidence of Canadians."

Dion must now decide where he would rather spend the fall: on the hustings, trying to halt Harper's quest for a majority government, or in Parliament, trying to stop him from governing like he already has one.

Dion ripped into the speech for its abandonment of Kyoto, its ambiguity on Afghanistan, and its ``shocking indifference" to poverty.

``The worst of it . . . is of course the weakness of everything they are proposing for the environment and climate change."

But he quickly added that he will consult his party before announcing his intentions on Wednesday, and cautioned that Canadians don't want a third election in three years.

The bleakness of Dion's immediate prospects was underscored as his party found itself once again mired in noisy disarray Tuesday.

Dion's Quebec lieutenant Marcel Proulx suddenly announced his resignation and when Dion offered the job to MPs Denis Coderre and Pablo Rodriguez, he was rebuffed.

Most Liberals are expected to advise Dion to take a dive in the throne speech vote to avoid an election. Allowing Parliament to survive also carries considerable risk for the Liberals.

Harper appears intent on spending the coming weeks seeking to demolish the Liberals' credibility on the issues they hope to use in an election campaign.

The throne speech provided one clear example with the repudiation of Kyoto: "Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol within the compliance period, which begins on January 1, 2008."

Dion has called climate change the greatest threat facing the planet and has emphatically insisted that he has an industrial-emissions plan that would help Canada meet its Kyoto targets.

If he lets the throne speech pass while other opposition leaders vote against it, the NDP and Bloc will certainly accuse him of rolling over on the greatest issue threatening humanity.

But it's not all smooth sailing for Harper, either. He is still well short of majority territory in public opinion polls and he trails the Liberals in vote-rich Ontario.

NDP Leader Jack Layton has urged the Liberals to stand up for their principles and vote against the government.

"Why would Mr. Dion and the Liberals prop up the Conservative government when its agenda and direction are so clearly wrong for Canada?" Layton said.

"He's going to have some explaining to do. Because he will have given Mr. Harper a mandate to govern. Mr. Dion and the Liberals, I hope, are going to at least show up and not play hooky in the vote."

The Green party also weighed in, with leader Elizabeth May saying Harper should be stripped of power because he has fraudulently played down the dangers of climate change.

She said the Tories are using the throne speech "in an attempt to sound like they're committed to climate change, which we know they're not."

The awkwardness for Dion will not stop at Kyoto.

On crime bills and on anti-terror legislation, Dion had expected to steal votes from the NDP on the left by standing up for civil liberties and a more compassionate justice system.

Since Harper has made it clear that he will make law-and-order votes confidence matters, Dion might have to consistently throw in the towel to avoid an election.

The Liberals had also hoped to campaign on Afghanistan because, like other opposition parties, they want Canada to pull out of its combat mission in Kandahar by 2009.

But Harper threw Dion a curveball by naming a panel that will spend the next few months examining what Canada should do beyond 2009 _ and he put a Liberal in charge, ex-deputy prime minister John Manley.

The government also used the throne speech to promise a Commons vote on the Afghan mission. At the same time, the Tories hinted strongly that they would prefer to stay the course beyond 2009.

The speech says Canada should build on its accomplishments and shift to accelerate the training of the Afghan army and police so that the Afghan government can defend its own sovereignty.

``This will not be completed by February 2009," says the speech, ``but our government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011."

The government sets out five broad priorities for the next session of Parliament: strengthening Canada's sovereignty and place in the world, building a stronger federation, providing economic leadership, tackling crime, and improving the environment.

_ On the environment, the Tories promise to continue fighting climate change, invest in public transit, introduce a clean-water strategy, and protect sensitive wildlife.

_ As for promoting Canada's image, the Tories are proposing to build a world-class research station in the Arctic to help assert Canada's sovereignty over the territory. They are also proposing to grant honorary citizenship on Burmese dissident Aung San Suu Kyi.

_ In a move aimed at Quebec, the Tories are promising legislation that would place formal limits on the federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas controlled by the provinces.

_ The throne speech also promises an election law aimed at veiled Muslim women, and says voters will be required to show their faces before casting a ballot.

_ The speech appeared to herald the end of ``Canada's New Government." It did not include a single reference to the marketing slogan the Tories have used since taking office.

Harper made the decision to put his 20-month-old government on the line after a raucous spring in Parliament.

Tory ministers struggled to provide answers to simple questions about their files and, in a scandal over the treatment of Afghan detainees, they consistently contradicted each other.

Harper decided to hit the reset button on Parliament after a spring in which his government lost control of the political agenda and dipped in the polls.

Most polls still show them well short of a majority, but many Conservatives see this as an ideal time to seek re-election, given their lead over the opposition and the chaos in Liberal ranks in the wake of three byelection losses in Quebec.

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DATE: 2007.10.16
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 965

AP-News Agenda

LAS VEGAS (AP) -- The search for Chester Stiles ended with a routine traffic stop.

Stiles has been the focus of a U-S-wide manhunt since police identified him as the man who videotaped himself while raping a three-year-old girl. The tape surfaced last month in the rural Nevada town of Pahrump.

Police in Henderson, Nevada, just outside Las Vegas, say Stiles was stopped last night for driving a car with no license plates. He also offered an expired California drivers license with a photo the arresting officer says looked ``suspicious."

Officer Mike Dye says Stiles told him who he was and that he was ``tired of running."

The girl, who is now seven, was located in Las Vegas, with her mother.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) -- Despite arguments that the law may be unconstitutional, California's Supreme Court will let the state continue to arrest recently paroled sex offenders living near schools and parks.

The year-old Jessica's Law sets strict residency requirements for sex offenders.

The court had blocked the state from arresting four parolees who claimed the law is too vague and unfairly punishes offenders after they are released from prison.

But in yesterday's ruling, the court refused to apply that protection to hundreds of other paroled sex offenders, saying they need to look to lower courts to get their own injunctions.

The state has notified 18-hundred parolees that they are in violation of the residency portion of the law, and has given them 45 days to move.

The state says that as of Thursday, roughly 850 parolees were still in violation.

DENVER (AP) -- The Colorado Rockies don't seem satisfied winning their first National League pennant after sweeping the Arizona Diamondbacks with a 6-4 win.

Rockies first baseman Todd Helton says, ``This has been a great ride. We're not done yet."

Matt Holliday, who hit a three-run home run in the Rockies' six-run fourth inning, was named M-V-P of the N-L Championship Series. Holliday says the Rockies have had ``great focus" during their late-season surge and it's ``pretty incredible."

The Rockies have won seven straight games in the postseason and 21 of their last 22 overall. Colorado has lost only once since September 16th.

Manager Clint Hurdle says of his team, ``These guys know how to play the game."

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) -- Russian President Vladimir Putin has arrived in Tehran to hold talks on Iran's nuclear program and attend a Caspian sea summit.

This is the first visit to Iran by a Kremlin leader since World War II, and comes despite warnings of a possible assassination plot.

It's hoped that a round of personal diplomacy by Putin could help offer a solution to the international standoff over Iran's nuclear program.

Putin insists peaceful dialogue is the only way to deal with Tehran's defiance of a U-N Security Council demand that it suspend uranium enrichment.

Last week, the Russian president said he saw no "objective data" to prove claims by the U-S and other western countries that Iran is trying to build nuclear bombs.

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Defense Secretary Robert Gates says the U.S. alone can't force Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions.

In remarks prepared for delivery at the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, Gates calls Iran "an ambitious and fanatical theocracy," and says he has yet to find "the elusive Iranian moderate."

Gates says it will take "a united front of nations" to pressure Iran to give up its nuclear aspirations.

Gates also says "all options" must be kept on the table." The term "all options" is a veiled reference to possible military action.

Iran says its nuclear program is only for civilian energy production.

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Three big telecom companies won't tell Congress whether they gave intelligence agencies access to Americans' phone and computer records without court orders.

A-T-and-T, Qwest and Verizon all say the government has prohibited them from providing the information. The refusal comes as the House of Representatives is about to consider a new eavesdropping bill.

The White House threatens a veto unless the bill includes retroactive legal immunity for telecoms that assisted government investigations without court orders.

The Bush administration has said companies cooperated in the wake of the 9-11 attacks out of a sense of patriotism.

But newly unsealed court documents show former Qwest CEO Joseph Nacchio maintains the National Security Agency asked Qwest to allow warrantless electronic surveillance six months before the attacks.

WHITE HOUSE (AP) -- U-S President George W. Bush is promising action to improve care for wounded troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Bush is looking to move on some of the 35 recommendations given to him by a presidential panel in July. The committee was formed after news reports revealed substandard care at Walter Reed Army hospital in Washington.

The panel, headed by former Senator Bob Dole and former Health Secretary Donna Shalala (shuh-LAY'-luh), suggested shaking up the caregiving bureaucracy, with better record keeping, faster processing and better disability benefits.

Most of the steps are administrative, but some require action by Congress.

Bush says he feels a ``special obligation" to ensure that veterans get the absolute best care.

He told an audience in Arkansas yesterday one thing he hopes to do is revamp the disability claims process so it's less ``adversarial."

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton, who trailed Barack Obama in fundraising and in money in the bank at the end of June, has edged past him with an aggressive third quarter of fundraising.

Clinton ended September holding 35 (m) million dollars cash on hand for the presidential primary contests to Obama's 32 (m) million.

Both are far ahead of Republican money leader Rudy Giuliani, underscoring the financial disparity between the parties. Giuliani reports 11.6 (m) million dollars in the bank for the primaries.

NEW YORK (AP) -- The head of the Federal Reserve sees clouds on the economic horizon.

Ben Bernanke is warning that a deepening housing slump probably will be a ``significant drag" on economic growth into next year.

And Bernanke told the New York Economic Club that it will take time for Wall Street to fully recover from a painful credit crisis.

Bernanke said that the fed will ``act as needed" to help financial markets function smoothly and to keep the economy and inflation on an even keel.

The speech was Bernanke's most extensive assessment of the country's current economic situation since the August turmoil unhinged Wall Street.

TACOMA, Wash. (AP) -- A woman accused of placing an online ad leading to the ransacking of her aunt's vacant house has been sentenced to three months of home detention.

Prosecutors say Nichole Blackwell maliciously posted an ad on Craigslist that invited the public to ``come and take whatever you want" from the house in Tacoma, Washington.

People did just that, taking nearly everything in the home, including the kitchen sink and the front picture window.

Blackwell's attorney calls it a ``simple little mistake." He says the ad was for items that were outside the house. But investigators say Blackwell told them she placed the ad to get back at her aunt, who was feuding with Blackwell's mother.

The woman entered modified guilty pleas to burglary and malicious mischief charges.

Craigslist says the ad was on its site for less than two hours before it was taken down.

(The Associated Press)

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DATE: 2007.10.16
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INDEX:Defence, Education

WINNIPEG _ The University of Manitoba will award a posthumous degree to an Edmonton-based soldier who was killed in Afghanistan.

Corporal Jordan Anderson, who died in July, had been taking a bachelor of arts degree through the university's military support office.

A university official says Anderson was almost finished his B-A and intended to pursue an advanced degree in political science and international relations.

George MacLean, the acting head of the university's political studies department, says on the day the Anderson died, he had been in touch with the university about expanding his program.

MacLean says the decision to award the degree was made after Anderson's friends and family members contacted the university.

The soldier's posthumous degree -- the first for the university -- will be awarded at convocation ceremonies this week.

His widow, Amanda Anderson, is expected to receive it on his behalf.

(CBC)

SHM

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DATE: 2007.10.16
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PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 330

TOR OUT YYY

Thai police say a suspected pedophile wanted by police around the world has been identified as a 32-year-old Canadian.

And they believe Christopher Paul Neil is still in Thailand.

Interpol is collecting information from Vietnam and Cambodia, where Neil is alleged to have committed pedophilia so they can issue an arrest warrant for him.

Police began the manhunt after a man was shown in hundreds of photos posted on the Internet sexually abusing young boys. (1)

(Live-Child-Porn)

Another child-pornography case that drew international attention has ended with an Ontario man pleading guilty to seven charges.

Caught a year ago by an undercover Toronto police officer while abusing his daughter live on the Internet, a 39-year-old St. Thomas man admitted his involvement in court yesterday.

He pleaded guilty to two sexual assaults on the girl, who was three and four years old at the time.

He'll be sentenced December 19th. (1)

(Throne-Speech)

The future of Prime Minister Harper's minority government is on the line, as the Conservatives prepare to deliver their new throne speech today.

The N-D-P and Bloc Quebecois have already indicated they'll vote against it.

And Liberal Leader Stephane Dion has hinted his party could do the same if the speech is too right wing and lacks a conciliatory tone.

Rejection of the throne speech would topple the government and force an election.

It's expected to outline promises of major tax cuts, and how Canada's role in Afghanistan beyond 2009 will be debated in Parliament. (1)

(Tories-Minorities)

There's word the federal Tories are targeting select ethnic and religious groups across the country, in a bid to win multicultural ridings whenever the next election is held.

The Globe and Mail has obtained the operation's strategic blueprint.

It states the previously unknown ``ethnic research team" is largely overseen by the Prime Minister's Office.

The strategy involves one-on-one meetings at ``major ethnic events," and large databases of immigrants and new Canadians. (1)

(BC-Plane-Crash)

German consular officials are helping Mounties in Port Alberni, B-C to determine the identity of two of three people killed in a plane crash on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

The dead include a 28-year-old Victoria resident, as well as a man and a woman from Germany.

The three died Saturday when their small floatplane crashed east of Bamfield.

The cause of the crash isn't known. (1)

(Dino-Skeleton)

Scientists in Argentina have unearthed the skeleton of what they believe to be a new dinosaur species.

The 32 meter plant-eater is among the largest dinosaurs ever found.

The Patagonian dinosaur appears to represent a previously unknown species of Titanosaur, because of the unique structure of its neck.

The species walked the Earth some 88-(m) million years ago. (1)

(NewsWatch by Karen Rebot)

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DATE: 2007.10.16
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE ENVIRONMENT FINANCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 143

Throne-Speech-Highlights

OTTAWA -- Highlights of the Conservative government's throne speech:

- A fall economic update will outline plans to cut taxes across the board, including a further one-percentage-point cut to the GST.
- A Tackling Violent Crime bill will include measures on impaired driving, age of sexual consent, stricter bail conditions, and mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.
- Canada cannot meet its commitments to cut greenhouse gases under the Kyoto protocol, but will "help lead the effort" to address climate-change worldwide.
- There will be a parliamentary vote on the military mission in Afghanistan beyond February 2009. Canada should accelerate Afghan army and police training -- a job it says should be done by 2011.
- Legislation is coming to limit federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.
- The government will build a "world-class" Arctic research station to study environmental science and resource development, and to map the Arctic seabed in an effort to bolster Canada's claim to the Arctic.

(The Canadian Press)

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DATE: 2007.10.16
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PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 339

TOR OUT YYY

After his face was digitally ``un-swirled," it didn't take long for police to identify an alleged pedophile -- and that suspect is Canadian.

The manhunt is centred on Thailand, where authorities say 32-year-old Christopher Paul Neil is believed to be at large.

Interpol authorities describe him as a teacher in South Korea.

It's alleged he is the man whose digitally blurred image had appeared in Internet photos showing sexual abuse of boys. (7)

(Interest-Rates)

The Bank of Canada is keeping interest rates unchanged even though it says the Canadian economy is stronger than expected.

The central bank has left its key overnight rate at 4.5 per cent because it forecasts the economy will start slowing next year.

It also says inflation -- running above its target of two per cent for more than a year -- will return to that target by the second half of next year. (7)

(Throne-Speech) (Audio:04)

Government insiders suggest today's throne speech by the Conservatives is designed to embarrass and neutralize the Liberals on some key issues.

Those include the Kyoto accord and the ongoing military mission in Afghanistan.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion has said he will oppose the speech if it's too extreme but has also said he wants to hear it before making any decisions.

If all the opposition parties decide to vote against the speech, it would bring down the minority government. (7)

(Tories-Minorities)

In an effort to win multicultural ridings in the next federal election, the Conservatives are reported to be targeting select ethnic and religious groups across the country.

The Globe and Mail says the ``ethnic research team" is largely overseen by the Prime Minister's Office and Jason Kenney, the junior minister for multiculturalism.

Speaking at a private training conference in March, Kenney said the strategy was to ``replace the Liberals as the primary voice of new Canadians and ethnic minorities." (7)

(Iran-US)

A warning has been made by Russia's leader that seems to be aimed at the United States.

Vladimir Putin said at a summit in Iran today that outside countries shouldn't use territory around the Caspian Sea to launch military action.

That is a reference to rumours the U-S might try to stage an Iran raid from Azerbaijan (ah-zur-by-JAHN'). (7)

(ENT-Spears-Hit and Run)

Police in Los Angeles say Britney Spears was cooperative when she turned herself in to authorities last night.

Wearing large sunglasses, the pop star went into a police station to be booked on charges of hit and run and driving without a valid California driver's license.

The charges stem from an August incident where Spears struck another car while trying to park her own vehicle.

She told a local T-V station that police at the booking were ``nice." (7)

(NewsWatch by Chris Mayberry)

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DATE: 2007.10.16
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PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 128

Throne-Speech-Update (reaction)

OTTAWA -- The N-D-P and Bloc Quebecois are making it clear -- they will vote against the Conservative government's throne speech.

But it will be up to Liberal Leader Stephane Dion to decide whether he'll bring down the Harper government over the speech.

Dion says he will make his decision know tomorrow afternoon (3:15 p.m. ET) after what he expects will be a "lively" debate within his Liberal caucus.

N-D-P Leader Jack Layton says the speech -- a roadmap for how the Tories want to govern the country -- takes Canada in the wrong direction.

Bloc Leader Gilles Duceppe says his party will reject the speech as well, accusing the Tories of abandoning the environment while refusing to pull Canada's troops out of southern Afghanistan.

The speech outlined the Conservative government's plans for major tax cuts and sweeping anti-crime legislation.

As well, it declares Canada cannot meet its greenhouse-gas reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol.

(The Canadian Press)

TAP

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DATE: 2007.10.16
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PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 192

Throne-Speech-Update (more details)

OTTAWA -- The Harper Conservatives are promising a sweeping anti-crime bill and major tax cuts in the coming session of Parliament.

A leaked copy of the government's 16-page throne speech says a new omnibus bill will be introduced called Tackling Violent Crime.

It will include measures on impaired driving, age of sexual consent, stricter bail conditions, and mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.

The prime minister has said law and order will be a confidence issue, and he's prepared to fight an election over the legislation.

The throne speech includes one element sure to rile the opposition -- a statement that Canada cannot meet its climate-change targets under the Kyoto accord.

That blunt assessment will put pressure on Liberal Leader Stephane Dion, who has been an ardent defender of Kyoto.

The N-D-P and Bloc Quebecois already appear to oppose the throne speech in a confidence vote.

If the Liberals also vote it down, that would trigger a fall election.

But with the Liberals slumping in the polls and struggling to raise money, most Liberals want Dion to avoid going to the polls.

The government also plans to announce:

- a toughening of the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

- multiyear tax cuts for individuals and businesses.

- another one percentage point cut in the G-S-T.

- a vote on the military mission in Afghanistan.

- investments in public transit.

- a clean-water strategy.

- plans to build a world-class research station in the Arctic to help assert Canada's sovereignty over the territory.

In a move aimed at Quebec, the Tories are also promising legislation to place formal limits on federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas controlled by the provinces.

(The Canadian Press)

TAP

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DATE: 2007.10.16
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 131

INDEX:Defence, International, Politics

OTTAWA - A copy of the Conservative government's throne speech, leaked to The Canadian Press, says Canada should stay directly involved in Afghanistan until at least 2011.

The new proposed deadline is two years beyond the current mandate approved by Parliament and the notion of not abandoning the Afghan people will be put to a vote in the House of Commons during the coming session.

The speech, to be delivered by the Governor General, ties Canada's exit strategy to the training of Afghan security forces, including the army and police.

The Tory government says it believes those elements should be able to stand on their own two feet by 2011.

The statement will likely push the Opposition Liberals into a political corner, giving them further reason to vote against the speech and trigger an election.

The Liberals have called for the combat mission to end on schedule.

(The Canadian Press)

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DATE: 2007.10.16
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WORD COUNT: 358

TOR OUT YYY

Thai police say a suspected pedophile the world has been hunting for the past three years is a Canadian.

The suspect is identified as 32-year-old Christopher Paul Neil -- and while his hometown isn't known, it's believed he'd been recently teaching English in South Korea.

Interpol's Michael Moran told reporters in Bangkok today they're taking this case -- and any case of pedophilia -- extremely seriously.

Investigators are now collecting information from Vietnam and Cambodia, where Neil is alleged to have sexually abused dozens of young boys. (4)

(Throne-Speech) (Audio: 04)

The speech from the throne will reopen Parliament later today and lay out the Harper government's updated priorities.

Government insiders say the speech is designed to embarrass and neutralize the Liberals on key issues they hope to eventually campaign on, such as the Kyoto protocol and Afghanistan.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion has said he'll oppose the speech if it's too extreme -- a move that would bring down the minority Conservative government, given that the N-D-P and the Bloc have already suggested they'll vote against it. (4)

(Giant-Mine-Widow)

Families of nine miners killed in a gold-mine bombing in the Northwest Territories 15 years ago say no one wants to take responsibility for what happened.

Several groups, including the territorial government and the miners' union, are appealing a court ruling that found them at least partially responsible for the labour dispute that led up to the 1992 bombing.

Widow Doreen Hourie says the appeals process means none of the families have been able to touch a 10-(m) million-dollar court-awarded compensation package.

Miner Roger Warren is serving a life sentence for setting off the deadly bomb. (4)

(Lafleur-Son)

Hockey legend Guy Lafleur admits he helped his son break his court-imposed bail conditions.

The former Montreal Canadiens star told a Quebec court yesterday that he drove his son, Mark, to Montreal-area hotels to spend time with his girlfriend on several occasions.

He thought it was important for his 22-year-old son to have intimate time with his 16-year-old girlfriend.

Mark Lafleur is charged with sexually assaulting a minor, armed assault, uttering threats and forcible confinement relating to incidents since 2004. (4)

(BIZ-Conrad-Black-LongPen)

A relaxed and smiling Conrad Black appeared before fans at a book signing in Toronto last night.

It was a ``virtual" book signing from his Florida home.

The former press baron isn't allowed to leave the U-S as he awaits sentencing next month on his fraud conviction. (4)

(HEALTH-Cancer-Trial)

Jurors have awarded 99 (m) million dollars in damages to three Nevada women who claimed two hormone-replacement drugs (Premarin (PREM'-uh-rin) and Prempro) caused their breast cancer.

Wyeth Pharmaceuticals says it will appeal.

The company faces 53-hundred similar lawsuits across the U-S. (4)

(NewsWatch by Karen Rebot)

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DATE: 2007.10.16
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PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 123

US-Cda-Khadr

WASHINGTON -- The trial of Canadian detainee Omar Khadr is to go ahead as planned next month in Guantanamo Bay, even though Khadr's lawyers have taken the case to the U-S Court of Appeals.

Military Judge Colonel Peter Brownback says he has a duty to proceed with the case when the appeals court has not issued a stay of proceedings.

His lawyers say they may seek just such a stay of proceedings.

The 21-year-old Khadr is facing murder and terrorism charges for allegedly throwing a grenade that killed a U-S medic in a firefight in Afghanistan in 2002, when he was 15.

It was Brownback himself who dismissed the case in June, saying he lacked jurisdiction to try Khadr because the accused hadn't been declared an ``unlawful" enemy combatant.

But a military review panel later decided Brownback has the authority after all to try Khadr.

(The Canadian Press)

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DATE: 2007.10.16
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 331

TOR OUT YYY

Thai police say a suspected pedophile the world has been hunting for the past three years is a Canadian.

The suspect is identified as 32-year-old Christopher Paul Neil.

His hometown was not revealed.

Neil is said to be an English teacher at a school in Seoul, South Korea.

Police say security cameras documented the man's arrival at Thai immigration last week, and they believe he's still in Thailand.

Investigators are now collecting information from Vietnam and Cambodia, where he allegedly committed crimes of pedophilia so they can issue an arrest warrant. (2)

(Throne-Speech) (Audio: 03)

The Conservatives will make public today their new throne speech -- a speech that could topple Prime Minister Harper's minority government.

The N-D-P and Bloc have already said they'll vote against it, while the Liberal leader has hinted his party could do the same if the speech is too ideologically right wing.

Rejection of the throne speech would topple the government and force an election.

Along with promises of big tax cuts, the speech is also expected to outline how the Parliamentary debate over extending the Afghanistan mission would go. (2)

(Veteran-Ombudsman) (Audio: 07)

A seasoned soldier will be Canada's first ombudsman to oversee complaints and concerns of veterans both past and present.

Colonel Pat Stogran served as a commander in Afghanistan in 2002.

He'll be retiring from the military and will take up his new post on Remembrance Day.

And he'll be busy dealing with elderly veterans fighting for benefits, and newly discharged soldiers who face the possibility of being unemployed and without medical benefits for months because of a bureaucratic gap. (2)

(Cda-Afghan-Civilians)

They won't be able to carry guns like their American counterparts in Iraq.

But more civilian contractors from Canada could soon be working at the Kandahar military base in Afghanistan.

The military wants to replace some of its uniformed personnel, such as medical workers and technicians, to ease the pressure on its own resources.

Currently, there are about 200 civilians working on the base. (2)

(US-Iran)

U-S Defence Secretary Robert Gates calls Iran ``an ambitious and fanatical theocracy."

Gates says the U-S alone can't force Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions, and adds ``all options" must be kept on the table -- a veiled reference to possible military action.

Iran insists its nuclear program is only for civilian energy production. (2)

(MUSIC-Spears-Booked)

Britney Spears has been booked on charges of hit-and-run, and driving without a valid California license.

Authorities say the pop star turned herself in at an L-A police station last night, was booked, and left shortly afterward.

The charges stem from a parking-lot accident in August, when paparazzi caught Spears steering her car into another, and then walking away after only checking the damage to her own car. (2)

(NewsWatch by Karen Rebot)

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DATE: 2007.10.16
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PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 129

Veterans-Ombudsman

OTTAWA -- A seasoned soldier will be Canada's first ombudsman to oversee the litany of complaints and concerns of veterans both past and present.

Colonel Pat Stogran served as commander of the 3rd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in Afghanistan in 2002.

He'll be retiring from the military and will officially take up his new post -- which he described as a labour of love -- on Remembrance Day.

Stogran will have his work cut for him dealing with elderly veterans as they fight for benefits.

There are also younger, freshly discharged soldiers who face the possibility of being unemployed and without medical benefits for months -- because of a gap in the bureaucracy between the army and Veterans Affairs Canada.

The ceremony in Ottawa announcing his appointment was barely over before grey-haired veterans were shaking his hand and button-holing him about their concerns.

(The Canadian Press)

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Helping soldiers cope with war

After World War II, medical professionals and others began to understand fully, for the first time, the toll that combat takes on soldiers, sailors and airmen.

Comprehensive statistics and a better understanding of mental-health issues brought out, in the post-war years, a reality that had been only poorly understood after World War I: Prolonged exposure to the risks and realities of organized bloodshed can cause psychological problems that can linger for a lifetime, just like the loss of a limb.

Many Canadians never came home from World War II, and some came home injured. But many others strode off the troopships healthy in body but damaged or vulnerable psychologically. Post-war, a disproportionate number of veterans - and their families - suffered from alcoholism, depression and the like, or committed suicide.

Now we are reminded that while much has changed in our society since then, the stress of warfare has not. New Canadian Forces statistics suggest that many of our Afghanistan veterans say they are enduring depression, the package of symptoms known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other problems.

The survey was conducted among some 4,700 Canadian Forces personnel who have served in the Kandahar area, polled between three and six months after coming home.

The findings were distressing: Of the 2,500 who responded, 15 per cent indicated they had to deal with one or more problems such as PTSD and depression; some reported panic attacks and suicidal tendencies.

The government has a responsibility to make sure that veterans can get the medical help they need to cope with their invisible wounds.

Fortunately, that does seem to be happening. The defence department boasts of "robust measures" to help veterans, including pre-deployment preparation, in-theatre access to chaplains, psychiatrists and social workers, and attentive monitoring once vets get home.

That's all good. The costs of war are more than deaths and wounds and money; war is hard on all those who fight it.

As long as there are worse things than war, however, we must sometimes be prepared as a country to pay the price. But where money and attentive care can reduce the human toll, we owe it to our soldiers to do all we can.

This is an edited version of an editorial in The Gazette, Montreal, yesterday.

worth repeating

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PAGE: A01
ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS WATTIE reuters Governor General Michaëlle Jean yesterday delivers the Speech from the Throne, the Conservative government's agenda for Parliament. ;
BYLINE: bruce campion-smith and allan woods
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 854

D-Day for Stéphane Dion; Liberal leader in position to force an election or accept Tory agenda. He gives his verdict today

Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion carries the weight of an election campaign on his shoulders when he delivers his verdict today on a Conservative throne speech that proposes a two-year extension to Canada's divisive Afghanistan mission and declares the country's Kyoto ambitions dead.

Dion will speak to his caucus this morning and then likely announce whether he will support the speech - already opposed by NDP leader Jack Layton and Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe.

The Liberal leader offered only one comment last night: "We know that Canadians want as a priority that this Parliament work. They don't want a third election in three years and a half."

Stephen Harper won a minority government on Jan. 23, 2006 for the Conservatives after a Paul Martin win for the Liberals in June 2004.

The Conservative government's agenda brings back a number of thorny policies that died in the last parliament, including an omnibus law-and-order bill and elements of a contentious environmental plan.

It also promises a number of new tax reductions, including a one percentage point cut to the GST, a northern strategy to enforce Canada's claim to the Arctic territory and formal limits on Ottawa's ability to spend in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

Dion has said he wanted the speech to outline a strategy to combat poverty, an issue that received only passing reference yesterday with the promise of a working income-tax benefit to help Canadians get back into the workforce.

It was an evening televised speech deliberately scheduled to reach more Canadian households than throne speeches in the past, which had been traditionally held in the afternoon.

Dignitaries and politicians crowded the Senate chamber to listen as Governor General Michaëlle Jean read the government's blueprint for the second session of Parliament.

While the atmosphere in Ottawa is politically charged with election speculation, the speech itself was even-handed, even workman-like, as Tories set out new priorities and pledged renewed action on promises unfulfilled from their first throne speech last year.

Despite the repeated pleas of big city mayors, like Toronto's David Miller, the document is silent on any solutions for meeting the cash crisis facing municipalities. The speech does promise a new infrastructure program but says nothing about the specific needs facing cities.

The speech contained gentle jabs at the opposition on issues like the environment, Afghanistan, crime and Senate reform but contained no deliberate provocations to bait opposition politicians into forcing an election.

Both the Bloc and NDP were quick to voice their opposition to the speech, leaving it to Liberals to decide whether they would oppose it as well and send voters back to the polls for the third time in just over three years.

Deputy Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff called the speech "disappointing and vague" but wouldn't say how his party would vote on the agenda-setting document.

"We're going to have to think about that overnight. The leader is not going to keep people waiting," Ignatieff said. "Canadians will see us behave like a responsible opposition."

Dion plans to discuss the speech with his caucus this morning and comment afterwards.

The 16-page throne speech lays out five new priorities for the party:

Canada's sovereignty and place in the world

A stronger federation

Economic leadership

Tackling crime

Improving the environment.

One contentious element is the government's suggestion that Canada's divisive mission in southern Afghanistan should be extended by two years to 2011.

The government admits that Canada's efforts to train Afghan security forces to take over responsibility for the country's security won't be complete by 2009, when the current military commitment is set to expire.

"Our government does not believe that Canada should simply abandon the people of Afghanistan after February 2009," the speech says.

The speech pledged a parliamentary debate - and vote - on the future of the mission once a blue-ribbon panel headed by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley gives its own recommendations early next year.

"This decision should honour workers, diplomats and men and women in uniform. It should ensure that progress in Afghanistan is not lost," the speech said.

On the key Liberal priority of the environment the throne speech is both obstinate - asserting that Canada can't meet its Kyoto targets - and conciliatory, promising to revive elements of the Clean Air Act that had all-party consensus in the last session of Parliament.

Bill C-30 was a piece of government legislation that was heavily amended by opposition parties to include measures to allow international emissions trading, a "carbon budget" championed by the Liberals, strict emissions standards and an adherence to the Kyoto accord. The Tories opposed the bill in a special committee before letting it die when Parliament was prorogued.

The Tories are also promising new air pollution regulations, a national water strategy to clean up the country's lakes and oceans and improve drinking water quality for aboriginals, and measures to protect food and product safety.

If there is one battleground on which the Tories feel bullish, it is their criminal justice platform - an area they say will be a matter of confidence whenever legislation is voted on in the Commons.

A new omnibus crime bill will include Criminal Code reforms to bring in new impaired driving restrictions, an increase in the age of sexual consent, new bail conditions that put the onus on those charged with serious crimes, and mandatory prison time for gun crimes.

The Tories will also re-introduce a bill to scrap the long-gun registry and give money to hire 2,500 new police officers.

The Conservatives will launch a "truth and reconciliation" commission to look into the abuse that occurred in Indian residential schools. As well, Harper intends to deliver a formal apology on behalf of the government "to close this sad chapter in our history."

With files from Les Whittington

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BYLINE: Richard Brennan g and Tonda MacCharles
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 414

Bloc, NDP MPs plan to vote no; Two parties' decisions leave Liberals with role of propping up Tories

The oppositionThe New Democratic Party and the Bloc Quebecois say they will vote to bring down Stephen Harper's Conservative government.

"We can't support this speech," NDP Leader Jack Layton said. "It doesn't change the direction of the government and we felt the government should change the direction on the war, on the climate change crisis and on the growing prosperity gap."

While the New Democrats and the Bloc MPs say they are prepared to pull the plug and hit the election trail, it really depends on the beleaguered Liberals to decide whether they have had enough of Conservative rule.

The Bloc, having supported the Tories through two budgets, threw down a challenge, mainly to the floundering Liberals.

"We will vote against that (speech), certainly," said Bloc Leader Gilles Duceppe, adding only one of his party's five demands had been met in the throne speech.

Duceppe's conditions for continuing support of the Conservatives included eliminating all federal spending powers in provincial jurisdictions, respecting the Kyoto protocol on reducing greenhouse gases and clearly stating Canadian soldiers will leave Afghanistan when the current mission ends in February 2009.

Two of the biggest problems for the Bloc, Duceppe said, were the government's 2011 date to withdraw from Afghanistan and its lack of action on Kyoto.

"They don't pursue Kyoto," Duceppe said. "They go with (U.S. President George W.) Bush and the Asian nations. ... No absolute targets."

Layton said the government should be pursuing a "comprehensive peace process" instead of trying to prolong Canada's role in the war in Afghanistan.

The Bloc and NDP decisions have set the stage for a vote that could bring down the government as early as tomorrow evening.

That shifts the burden of supporting the minority Conservatives onto Stephane Dion's Liberals, who are in organizational chaos.

"It remains to be seen whether the Liberals and Mr. Dion are going to show up for work to stand up to Mr. Harper," Layton said. "We will."

The Bloc still holds a lead over the Conservatives in opinion polls in Quebec, but that lead is narrowing.

After losing one of its seats to the Conservatives in last month's by-elections, the separatist party shifted its sights to the Conservatives as its main rival now in francophone ridings, where the Liberals are polling in single digits with little hope of gaining seats.

The New Democrats are still riding high from their recent by-election win in the Montreal riding of Outremont, where Thomas Mulcair upset Liberal Jocelyn Coulon - the NDP's first win in Quebec since a 1990 by-election victory in Chambly, south of Montreal.

Green Party Leader Elizabeth May pointed out that governments aren't brought down on throne speeches.

"It has never happened and for all Mr. Harper's theatrics, this was pretty bland stuff in most categories," May said, adding the emphasis on terrorism "was overblown and paranoid and basically pandering to George Bush."

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ILLUSTRATION: FRED CHARTRAND the canadian press Liberal Leader Stephane Dion takespart in an anti-poverty demonstration on Parliament Hill yesterday. ;
BYLINE: Les Whittington
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 497

Canadians not eager for election: Dion; 'We know that Canadians want as a priority that this Parliament work'

Hamstrung by a divided and restive party, Liberal leader Stephane Dion appears to be leaning against using his 96 MPs to defeat the Conservative throne speech and force an election.

"We know that Canadians want as a priority that this Parliament work," Dion said in his initial response to the Conservatives' agenda-setting address last night.

"They don't want a third election in three years and a half."

However, he hammered the speech for its abandonment of the Kyoto protocol on climate change, its lack of clarity on the future of the military mission in Afghanistan and what Dion said was Prime Minister Stephen Harper's weak economic strategy. He also slammed the Tories' game plan for its "complete and shocking indifference to poverty in this country."

With other opposition parties expected to try to vote down Harper's minority government in the confidence vote on the throne speech, the Liberals hold the key to the future of the current Parliament.

Dion will announce his strategy this afternoon following a meeting with the Liberal caucus.

"I don't see poison pills here," Liberal deputy leader Michael Ignatieff told CBC-TV in a reference to the kind of throne speech policies that would have been completely unacceptable to the Liberals and forced them to topple the government.

"People don't want an election now. They're elected out," Ignatieff added.

The Liberals' strategic response to the Tory throne speech was obscured in a widening uproar within the party over Dion's leadership.

Facing a revolt within the Liberal organization in Quebec, a frustrated Dion has been tempted to dump the Harper government and clear up questions about his leadership by winning or losing at the polls right away, sources disclosed.

But to do so, he would have to defy his closest advisers and most of the Liberal caucus, insiders said. In yesterday's closed-door Liberal meeting, those who argued in favour of an election were decisively outnumbered by MPs who said the party is nowhere near ready for an election, MPs reported.

One of the main problems is that Dion himself has almost completely failed to build up a strong, effective team at the head of the party. And MPs are worried that the Liberal leader has been unable to connect with the public or show Canadians what he stands for. Liberals believe Dion needs some months to try to overcome these shortcomings before triggering an election.

The sense of disarray exploded yesterday in Quebec when Dion's Quebec lieutenant, MP Marcel Proulx, quit in anticipation of a shake-up in the provincial wing of the federal party. After Montreal MPs Denis Coderre and Pablo Rodriguez turned down the job, it went to veteran Liberal organizer Senator Celine Hervieux-Payette.

Serge Marcil, the party's director general in Quebec, also resigned yesterday. This comes after Jamie Carroll resigned recently as Liberal national director in a controversy over comments he made about whether to hire more Quebecers in Dion's office.

But even if Liberals are dismayed by Dion's performance since last December's leadership convention, they are going to have to stick with him for now and hope he improves.

"He's going to have to sink or swim over the next few months," said one Liberal organizer, who noted that the party has no mechanism to change leaders at this point.

Decision day

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Harper's agenda lacks bold vision

After offering her own personal praise for the commitment and courage of members of the Canadian Forces, many of whom are fighting in Afghanistan, Governor General Michaëlle Jean got down to the real business of yesterday's Speech from the Throne, as prepared by Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Conservative government.

"Now is the time to continue building a better Canada," she said in reading the speech, which marks the opening of the second session of the 39th Parliament, and which in effect will become Harper's campaign platform in a federal election that may start within days.

Although it is true everyone wants to build a better Canada, the agenda set out yesterday in the throne speech falls far short of providing the bold vision and progressive policies needed to make this country a world leader in the 21st century.

Instead, it is an agenda that panders to short-term political expediency while failing to outline a sensible set of priorities for the country.

The people of Canada look to their federal government to establish this country's place in the world, provide economic leadership, foster a justice system that builds respect for law and order, protect the environment and ensure all Canadians have the means for a decent life.

While Harper raised most of those priorities in the speech, he devoted just a single sentence to the last one and the curse of poverty that afflicts so many Canadians. Instead of setting a socially progressive course for this nation, Harper focused primarily on tax cuts and a renewed attack on crime - the core touchstones of the political right.

Absent were any meaningful programs to reduce poverty, provide financial help for cash-strapped cities or tackle global warming.

In contrast to the comprehensive commitment to tax cuts, all the speech said about poverty was that the government "will help those seeking to break free from the cycles of homelessness and poverty."

On crime, the government promises to reintroduce legislation that did not survive the last session in an omnibus "Tackling Violent Crime bill" dealing with "age of protection, impaired driving, dangerous offenders and stricter bail and mandatory prison sentences for those who commit gun crimes." As well, Harper wants to toughen laws dealing with property crime, identity theft, elder abuse and drug dealers.

The throne speech repeated Harper's pledge to let Parliament decide on Canada's involvement in Afghanistan after the current mission ends in 2009, while declaring his preference to keep our troops there in a training role until 2011.

While Harper has established a compelling and worthy goal for strengthening Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic, it was disconcerting that the speech did not once mention the needs of Canada's cities, in which nearly 80 per cent of Canadians work and live.

On the environment, the throne speech was a major disappointment. Despite its lofty language, the real message was unmistakable. The government said it "would bring forward the elements from Canada's Clean Air Act," which didn't do nearly enough to combat global warming when it was introduced in the last parliamentary session.

Taken together, Harper is offering Canadians tax breaks, but no broad vision of what this country could be or how it could attain that goal. And Harper was almost silent on social policy issues, indicating he is prepared to live with the current high levels of poverty that exist in many parts of this country.

Following the speech, the New Democrats and Bloc Quebecois indicated they would oppose the throne speech. In the next several days, Liberal Leader Stephane Dion must decide whether his party should vote against the speech and force a winter election.

If they do so, the Liberals should offer Canadians a bold agenda that contains meaningful policies on poverty, cities, the environment and Afghanistan. That would provide a real road map for building a better Canada - and a stark alternative to Harper's opportunistic platform.

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Chretien's war tales: Historical fiction

In case anyone was still unsure, Jean Chretien - in his own words - has proven that he is every inch the thug.

This matters less in personal memoir than in public practice, except the printed word lasts forever, unlike even the prolonged chokehold of the Liberal party.

His most ardent sycophants are having a hard time dissembling and palliating on Chretien's behalf, after advance peeks at the brawler from Shawinigan's remembrance of things past, *My Years as Prime Minister*, with its grenade lobbs at successor Paul Martin.

I will leave it for more astute political observers to dissect the bulk of self-idolizing material thus far revealed and concentrate on two combustible subjects: Canada's military role in Afghanistan and refusal to join in the invasion of Iraq.

On the latter: If Chretien was right, it was only by default. Not his finest hour, as many have claimed, in resisting arm-twisting from Washington, thereby asserting Canada's more noble qualities. Before it went disastrously wrong - because Americans are dreadful at the complicated task of occupation and nation-building - deposing Saddam Hussein was entirely justifiable on humanitarian grounds, never mind the weapons of mass destruction that never existed.

What the United Nations had failed to do in Rwanda, what NATO did only belatedly in Kosovo, and what the UN is now attempting, sluggishly, to do in Darfur, is what, to their eternal disgrace, world powers failed to do in Iraq, which was bring a despot to heel through 24 years of barbaric rule.

What Chretien says now is that he looked at the situation and deduced that Baghdad had nothing to do with the 9/11 terrorist bombings so why go after Saddam Hussein? That's a justifiable position, certainly more so in 2007 than 2003, when the world knew a lot less but was persuaded to believe a lot more. Chretien says the evidence he was provided of apocalyptic weapons in Iran was woefully worthless.

But what he said, then, was: "If you start changing regimes, where do you stop? Who is next?"

In Saddam, Chretien saw a bully who could and should be tolerated, hold-your-nose business as usual, indeed the view of Iraq as long promoted by Washington, before it changed its mind for a fusillade of reasons, some compelling and some not.

Chretien is being a revisionist and basking in accolades to which he's little entitled.

On Afghanistan, his redaction of events is even more self-serving, piling blame on a bumbling Martin for dragging Canadian troops into the hot zone of Kandahar when they might have nicely sat out the war in the relative security of Kabul. Martin, Chretien argues, dithered Canada into a corner, failing to scoop a soft deployment in Afghanistan back when there were plenty of options for the taking.

This is precisely what Canadian politicians are now assailing other NATO nations for doing, or failing to do. We heap scorn, rightly, on the likes of France and Germany and Italy for keeping their troop contributions in generally unthreatening redoubts when there's a vigorous insurgency in the south. Yet, gosh darn, if only Chretien had been on the bridge of our ship of state, Canada, too, could have ducked and covered, fended off combat duties in Kandahar.

The recasting of narrative has been plumped by commentators who persist in advancing breathtaking inaccuracies: It was an international effort to which Canada - Chretien - signed on in Afghanistan, and the UN resolution authorizing deployment of an international security force, not submission to Washington, nor to appease America for declining the Iraq coalition.

Six warships were part of Operation Apollo in 2001, 850 combat troops deployed to Kandahar in early 2002 - nearly two years before Martin became PM and a year before the U.S. invaded Iraq.

But don't let facts get in the way of first person hagiography.

Rosie DiManno usually appears Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

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COLUMN: Andrew Coyne
BYLINE: Andrew Coyne
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Stephane Dion, tax cutter

Last Friday, while the Tories were busy putting the finishing touches on the Speech from the Throne, the Liberal leader, Stephane Dion, was delivering a Throne Speech of his own. Okay, it was only a speech to the Economic Club of Toronto, and it only had one real bit of news in it, and it didn't get nearly the press that last night's prime-time extravaganza did ("tonight, on a very special Speech from the Throne ..."), but as an indicator of what's on the party's mind, it was every bit as intriguing.

It began with the ritual ticking off of Liberal "priorities" the party would like to see the government address -- "clarity" on Afghanistan, action on global warming, "a plan" to fight poverty and, um, something on the economy. Only instead of the usual warmed-over hash about encouraging excellence and "investing" in this or that, the Liberal leader put forward a serious, substantive proposal, of a kind not historically associated with Liberals in general or Mr. Dion in particular. Indeed, he came perilously close to being specific.

In brief, he promised to cut taxes -- but not just any taxes. He promised to cut corporate tax rates, and to cut them deeply. How deeply? Here's what he said: "The previous Liberal government reduced the federal corporate tax rate from 28% to 19%. The Conservatives took the "bold step" of going further ... to 18.5% in 2011. I would go deeper than that."

Okay, a little on the vague side, granted. But baby steps: This is a Liberal leader, making an unadorned and unambiguous commitment to cut corporate tax rates. No hedging about, no rider about cutting rates first for "the forgotten middle class."

As important were the reasons he offered:

"A lower corporate tax rate is a powerful weapon in the federal government's arsenal to generate more investment, higher living standards and better jobs." How? Three ways. One, "if you lower the corporate tax rate, you lower the cost of capital for Canadian companies. Therefore, these companies are induced to spend more on capital equipment."

Two, "to create a new Canadian advantage," in the competition for footloose investment capital-- specifically, "a much lower corporate tax than in the United States." And three, "to strengthen Canadian companies against foreign takeover." In case anyone missed his meaning, that's "to strengthen our companies by taxing them less" (emphasis added). I think we can say point three marks the end of the Liberal flirtation with the economic nationalists.

Well. Much will depend on precisely (or even vaguely) how deep Mr. Dion's proposed tax cuts turn out to be. He would go further than the Tories have. Would he go further than they would? Is this part of a Liberal strategy, as some have mooted, to outflank the Conservatives on taxes?

If so, then federal politics is about to get very interesting. A radical tax-cutting agenda would not merely offer some much needed balance to the Liberal program, after a spring and summer spent chasing the NDP and the Greens further and further out to the left. It would turn the political spectrum inside out. It would be unclear just what "left" and "right" meant any more. As Mr. Dion put it, if corporate tax cuts are a right wing policy, then "Sweden, with its low corporate tax rate, is the hotbed of neo-conservatism while the United States, with its very high corporate tax rate, is a socialist paradise."

But it has to be radical. Conservatives are all about "incrementalism" these days, to allay fears of a hidden agenda. Liberals have to be radicals, just to convince people they have an agenda.

Fortunately, there is ample room for radicalism on the tax front. Liberals have a historic opening to propose deep cuts in tax rates, corporate and personal, without cutting a dime out of current (vastly profligate) levels of spending. Three factors combine to make this possible.

The first is the surplus. The long fight against the deficit, years of raising taxes and cutting spending, have given federal finances a virtually unstoppable momentum toward surplus. The Tories will likely draw down much of this to pay for tax cuts of their own, but Liberals could go further, if they also make use of factors #2 and #3.

Tax reform is factor #2. The tax code has long been cluttered with all sorts of useless, distortionary tax preferences, encouraging people to make decisions for tax purposes, rather than for productive purposes. Strike these out, broaden the base, and you can cut rates even more.

And factor #3? Whisper it, Liberals, if you dare: a carbon tax. Conspicuously missing from both parties' global warming plans, it is universally regarded as political poison. But what if the revenues from a carbon tax were used to slash -- and I mean slash -- income taxes? Then what you have is a cleaner environment, a more productive economy -- and maybe a winning political strategy.

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KEYWORDS: POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA

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Running from their own war

Let's pause for a moment to consider the bizarre situation that John Manley finds himself in today. He is one of the last influential Liberals left who is willing to defend the Liberal conduct of the war in Afghanistan. And because he is willing to stand behind that record, he stands accused of being ... a tool of the Conservative government.

Certainly no one can deny that in accepting leadership of the nonpartisan panel that will examine options for Canada in Afghanistan after February, 2009, Mr. Manley has helped make life more difficult for Liberal leader Stephane Dion. Given the solid credentials of the panel-lists and his own lack of foreign policy heft, Mr. Dion was in danger of marginalizing himself if he challenged the Prime Minister's appointments. So the Liberal leader has had no choice but to stand mute as Mr. Harper moves the Afghanistan file to the back burner, removing from play one of the few high-profile issues that the Liberals can use to chisel off votes from the Conservatives.

The options include the total withdrawal of Canadian personnel in February, 2009, which, in theory, would create the greatest problems for the Prime Minister, whose partisan base largely favours staying the course. But

it's a funny thing: When you talk to liberals who aren't Liberals, it seems as though quite a lot of them also want Canada to stay put, and in a fully loaded fighting capacity. Then again, why wouldn't they? If being "liberal" means standing up for human rights, female emancipation, due process, democracy and the rest of the Western laundry bag, why would any self-respecting "liberal" want to sign on to Jack Layton's plan to hightail it back to Canada?

Just yesterday, the top UN official in Afghanistan told NATO members that "Now is not the time to wobble" on the military commitment to securing an orderly, decent Afghan government. The NGOs in the region would like to see more focus on neglected priorities in Afghan development, and are concerned with civilian casualties, but on the whole they want (and need) Canadian soldiers to stay. Human Rights Watch has argued that, if anything, there aren't enough ground troops in the country -- that, in fact, less dependence on aerial weaponry would reduce civilian combat deaths. The Senlis Council, with its provocative ideas for legitimizing Afghan opium production, certainly wants us to stay and fight. Aren't these the kind of people the Liberal party usually tries very hard to side with?

And another question: Isn't Afghanistan the Liberals' war anyway? In fact, it is -- though you'd never know it from the way the old lions Jean Chretien and Paul Martin are behaving.

In his new memoir, Mr. Chretien blames Mr. Martin for putting Canadian lives in jeopardy through indecision: "When my successor took too long to make up his mind about whether Canada should extend our term with the International Security Assistance Force, our soldiers were moved out of Kabul and sent south again to battle the Taliban in the killing fields around Kandahar."

Mr. Chretien is unapologetic about his own stance: He thought he had secured a "good" deal for Canada by cynically creating the appearance of full participation in the NATO mission without the risk of actually putting boots on contested ground, but Mr. Dithers messed it all up by actually anteing up our fighting men in the fight against Taliban terror.

There's just one problem: No one else who has studied the decision seems to see it that way. Whatever one thinks about the Kandahar move, bureaucrats and scholars say, prime minister Martin actually acted quickly on the data and scenarios presented by defence minister Bill Graham and the Chief of Defence Staff, General Rick Hillier. At least one former bureaucrat, defence assistant deputy minister Kenneth Calder, has argued (admittedly self-servingly) that no one -- not NATO, not the prime minister, not Gen. Hillier -- could then have foreseen how hot the war in the neighbourhood of Kandahar would become.

Yet on the whole, the Martin camp now seems content to let anti-war commentators promote a "swindle" theory. Gen. Hillier, goes the story, promised with honeyed words that the fighting in Kandahar would go smoothly, while reminding the prime minister that frontline involvement in Afghanistan would help mend U.S.-Canada relations damaged by Mr. Martin's stubbornness over continental missile defence.

It would be nice if Mr. Martin would step forward now and remind everyone that the final decision belonged to him, and no one else. And it would be nice if Mr. Chretien refrained from criticizing his successor's conduct of a war in which he embroiled Canada way back in 2001 -- especially given that our participation on the front line in Afghanistan should be a point of pride, not buck-passing shame.

But these two men are out of public life and can afford to play at sculpting their "legacies" with selfish, exculpatory stories founded on blurry hindsight. They don't have to step up and do -- dare we say it? -- the Manley thing.

KEYWORDS: POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA

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Liberal leader Stephane Dion, left, and Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe, right, have said their support for the Throne Speech would depend on the Prime Minister satisfying a list of demands. Here are the demands and whether Stephen Harper met them, missed them or waffled

THE LIBERAL DEMANDS ...

Canada must notify NATO it will end its combat mission in Afghanistan in 2009.

Harper must promise to reintroduce

Bill C-30, to protect the environment and fight

climate change. The Conservative government must address

threats to manufacturing. The Conservatives must prepare

a plan to

combat poverty.

... AND THE TORY RESPONSE

KEYWORDS: PRIME MINISTERS; POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES;
GOVERNMENT; CANADA

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IDNUMBER 200710170062
PUBLICATION: National Post
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EDITION: National
SECTION: News
PAGE: A1CP
ILLUSTRATION: Black & White Photo: / TAX CUTS: Pledged to cut personal and corporate rates, plus one point from GST ; Color Photo: / ; Black & White Photo: / CLIMATE: Reiterated that Kyoto targets can't be met, but promised additional measures JUSTICE: Vowed to introduce omnibus bill with strict tough-on-crime measures ; Black & White Photo: Chris Wattie, Reuters / Prime Minister Stephen Harper speaks with Governor-General Michaëlle Jean before she delivers the Speech from the Throne in Ottawa yesterday. ; Black & White Photo: / (Environment) ; Black & White Photo: / (Spending) ; Black & White Photo: / (Afghanistan) ; Black & White Photo: / (Justice) ;
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Norma Greenaway
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 2420

Tough Choices For Dion; Expects 'lively' caucus debate over Throne Speech

OTTAWA - The minority Conservative government of Stephen Harper has challenged the opposition parties to pass a massive anti-crime bill and accept his non-Kyoto approach to climate change in a Throne Speech that could ultimately bring a fall election campaign.

The speech, which outlined the government's legislative plans for the coming months, also pledged personal and business tax cuts, as well as federal action to fight climate change and assert Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic.

NDP leader Jack Layton and Bloc Quebecois leader Gilles Duceppe immediately vowed to oppose the speech, leaving it up to the Liberals to either give the government a lifeline or vote to bring it down and force an election.

However, Liberal leader Stéphane Dion refused to immediately declare one way or the other. Under pressure from within his party, he criticized the speech, especially the "weakness" of the plans for tackling climate change, and predicted the caucus would have a "very lively" meeting today over what it wants to do.

"We know that Canadians want, as a priority, this Parliament to work. They don't want a third election in 3½ years," he told reporters.

The Prime Minister, long opposed to federal interference in areas of provincial jurisdiction, also vowed his government would not introduce any new national programs without the consent of the provinces.

On Canada's military mission in Afghanistan, the government renewed a promise to allow a vote on the future

of the mission after it is slated to end in February, 2009.

The government also said it would take action to combat climate change and cut greenhouse gases. But in direct contradiction of the position taken by the opposition parties, it reiterated its view that "Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol."

It also reiterated its election campaign promise to cut one more percentage point from the GST during its mandate. The Throne Speech was delivered last night by Governor-General Michaëlle Jean in the Senate chamber, an ornate, wood-panelled room that was packed with MPs, senators and members of the media.

Among the guests was Jodie Lamers Worden, the widow of an RCMP officer killed last week in Hay River, N.W.T. It marked the first time the speech was delivered during prime-time viewing hours on television.

The law-and-order package would combine at least five pieces of legislation that have already been studied to varying degrees by MPs and senators, but which died on the order paper when the government opted to prorogue Parliament and begin a new session. By putting all the bills into one omnibus bill, the government hopes to put more pressure on opposition parties to go along with the government rather than risk losing all the measures because they don't like one or two items.

"Canadians expect prompt passage of this crucial legislation," it said.

The most controversial proposal would amend the Criminal Code so that those found guilty of three violent or sexual offences would have to convince a judge why they should not be branded a dangerous offender. The others would stiffen penalties for impaired driving, raise the age of sexual consent to 16 from 14, impose stricter bail conditions for those who commit crimes with guns, and impose mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.

The speech is considered a confidence matter, meaning the government could fall and the country would be plunged into an election if all three opposition parties voted against it. There are three possible confidence votes stemming from the speech over the next week or so. It was the second Throne Speech by the Harper-led Conservatives since they won power almost 21 months ago.

The words were being watched closely for signs of whether one or more initiatives would provoke all three parties to vote against the speech, thereby defeating the government and forcing an election.

Mr. Harper moved last week to address one of the hottest issues hanging over Parliament -- the future of Canada's combat mission in Afghanistan beyond its scheduled expiry in February, 2009. He appointed a five-person panel, led by John Manley, a former Liberal Cabinet minister, to come forward with recommendations by the end of January.

The government, which has 126 of the 308 seats in the Commons, would fall only if the opposition parties united to bring it down. The Liberals have 96 seats, the Bloc Quebecois have 49, and the NDP have 30. There are three independents and four vacancies. The Bloc and NDP had signalled before the speech that they would likely vote against it. Most of the suspense, therefore, revolved around how far the government would push the Liberals and leader Stéphane Dion.

Mr. Dion's troubles continued this week. He was scrambling yesterday to find a new Quebec lieutenant after MP Marcel Proulx quit the post as part of the continuing fallout over the Liberals' three byelection losses in the province last month. The expected replacement is Senator Celine Hervieux-Payette. Serge Marcil, the director-general of the party's Quebec wing, also tendered his resignation yesterday

THE ISSUES

ENVIRONMENT

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government promised to get tough with polluters, while confirming again that targets under the international Kyoto protocol on climate change cannot be met.

"Threats to our environment are a clear and present danger that now confronts governments around the world," said Governor-General Michaëlle Jean.

"This is nowhere more evident than in the growing challenge of climate change.

"Our government believes that action is needed now to ensure our quality of life, particularly for those most vulnerable to health threats from the environment --our children and seniors."

One year after abolishing the position of an ambassador for Arctic issues, the government also announced in its Throne Speech that it would build a new Arctic research centre to focus on environmental science and resource development.

The government stood the course with a framework of environmental protection policies introduced over the past year.

It said its plan would correct the failures of the previous Liberal government by placing binding caps on pollution that would make industries account for their environmental footprint on Canada's water and the atmosphere.

The government repeated its goal to slash greenhouse gas emissions by up to 70% by 2050.

"At the end of 2005, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions were 33% above the Kyoto commitment," said the speech.

"It is now widely understood that, because of inaction on greenhouse gases over the last decade, Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto protocol within the compliance period, which begins on Jan. 1, 2008, just 77 days from now."

Mike De Souza, CanWest News Service

SPENDING

As Prime Minister Stephen Harper promised during the 2006 election campaign in a now-famous speech in Quebec City, the Conservatives pledged in the Throne Speech to limit spending tax dollars in areas of provincial jurisdiction, a move that Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and some poorer provinces have lobbied against in the past.

"To this end, guided by our federalism of openness, our government will introduce legislation to place formal limits on the use of federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction," said the Throne Speech.

"This legislation will allow provinces and territories to opt out with reasonable compensation if they offer compatible programs."

A popular idea among Quebec nationalists, restricting federal spending is viewed as a key issue for the Tories in the province where it recently won a byelection.

Some Liberal strategists have already suggested that restricting federal spending powers could be a winning

wedge issue for the Liberals, allowing them to advocate a strong centralist vision for Canada.

In a recent opinion piece, Liberal candidate Bob Rae said the Harper government is the first in the history of the country to talk openly "about giving up the game for the federal government." But Bloc Quebecois leader Gilles Duceppe has already complained the move does not go far enough, demanding the government eliminate all federal spending powers that infringe on the "freedom of the Quebec nation."

Since taking office in January, 2006, the Harper government has acted on major Quebec demands, giving more money to the province to address the so-called fiscal imbalance, recognizing Quebecers as a nation within Canada and giving the province a voice at UNESCO.

Jack Aubry, CanWest News Service

AFGHANISTAN

Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan will likely continue to 2011, two years past the current commitment, the government's Throne Speech declared yesterday.

The Conservative speech laid out the clearest timeline for the controversial mission. It also affirmed that while the Commons will be asked to vote on Canada's future military involvement in the upcoming session of Parliament, the ultimate decision "should ensure that progress in Afghanistan is not lost and that our international commitments and reputation are upheld."

The speech sends a clear signal that the Conservatives do not intend to end Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan when the current commitment is scheduled to expire in February, 2009, despite the clamouring by the three opposition parties to bring the troops home by then, if not sooner.

"Our government does not believe that Canada should simply abandon the people of Afghanistan after February, 2009," said the 16-page speech, read by Governor-General Michaëlle Jean in the ornate Senate chamber.

Although Canada should shift its emphasis to training the Afghan army and police to defend their own people, the speech added: "This will not be completed by February, 2009, but our government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011, the end of the period covered by the Afghanistan Compact."

The compact is the international agreement that spells out how the world's reconstruction efforts should be carried out in Afghanistan. Canada has pledged \$1.2-billion in aid to Afghanistan to 2011.

The speech also promised to uphold Canada's values on the international stage, saying that the protection of Arctic sovereignty is "at the heart" of the Canadian Forces mission.

Mike Blanchfield, CanWest News Service

JUSTICE

New legislation to fight crime and terrorism will dominate the government's agenda in the coming session of Parliament, and could precipitate an election if the Conservatives' hard-nosed justice strategy proves unpalatable to the opposition parties.

Before the Throne Speech was even read yesterday evening, the Conservative government had already served notice on the Commons order paper of its intent to reintroduce security certificates, a controversial anti-terrorism measure that allows the government to easily detain non-citizens suspected of terrorist links.

The provision was introduced as a temporary measure by the Liberals after the 9/11 attacks, but expired last year. It was later ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada and became the subject of a stormy political debate in the Commons.

The government has vowed ever since to bring security certificates back, and in the Throne Speech, it said it would do so in a way that satisfies the concerns of the country's highest court. The speech also said the government will bring back many of the anticrime bills that failed to pass in the previous session of Parliament.

Legislation to raise the age of sexual consent, increase penalties for impaired drivers, bring in stricter bail provisions and mandatory prison sentences for gun crimes would all be rolled into a single comprehensive bill, to be called "Tackling Violent Crime." It would be "immediately" introduced in Parliament, the speech promised.

As part of what it calls a "safer communities strategy," the government also plans to strengthen the Youth Criminal Justice Act, although few details were provided. Also mentioned were new initiatives on curbing elder abuse and identity theft, as well awarding police new powers to deal with drug dealers. There would also be funds for the recruitment of 2,500 new police officers, the speech pledged.

Richard Foot, CanWest News Service

It also reiterated its election campaign promise to cut one more percentage point from the GST during its mandate. The Throne Speech was delivered last night by Governor-General Michaëlle Jean in the Senate chamber, an ornate, wood-panelled room that was packed with MPs, senators and members of the media.

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Mr. Dion's troubles continued this week. He was scrambling yesterday to find a new Quebec lieutenant after MP Marcel Proulx quit the post as part of the continuing fallout over the Liberals' three byelection losses in the province last month. The expected replacement is Senator Celine Hervieux-Payette. Serge Marcil, the director-general of the party's Quebec wing, also tendered his resignation yesterday

KEYWORDS: POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA

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EDITION: National
SECTION: News
PAGE: A1
COLUMN: John Ivison
ILLUSTRATION: Black & White Photo: /; Black & White Photo: Chris Wattie, Reuters /
Governor-General Michaëlle Jean delivers the Speech from the Throne last night. ;
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: John Ivison
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 932

Ready to govern? Tories say yes; New priorities reflect party's long-term goals

So farewell, then, Canada's "new government" -- ladies and gentlemen, please welcome a more seasoned, mature ministry, which will focus on the long-term interests of all Canadians, not just the future electoral prospects of the Conservative party.

That seemed to be the subtext of the Throne Speech, beamed direct to Canadians in prime time by Governor-General Michaëlle Jean from the Senate chamber, in which the "new government" moniker was consigned to the shredder.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper signalled last night that a government that has been in constant campaign mode since being elected 20 months ago is now intent on governing, rather than provoking confrontation with the Liberals by using the Throne Speech as a poison-pill-laden campaign platform.

The impression being sought is of an assured, established government looking after the long-term interests of the country, not a party that is in a constant state of anxiety about being thrown back into opposition.

The speech was divided into five key themes -- sovereignty at home and abroad, the economy, national unity, the environment and tackling crime -- just as the last campaign had five key election pledges. But the new five priorities are on a different scale of ambition than the very targeted campaign promises like the GST cut.

"This lays out the groundwork for what the government will be doing in the long term over the course of this mandate, and perhaps even into a second mandate," said one Conservative.

There was little new in the speech -- the Governor-General confirmed that MPs will vote on the future of the Afghan mission; that the government will follow through on its commitment to further cut the GST; that the Conservatives will limit federal spending in areas of provincial jurisdiction, while at the same time

strengthening the federal government's leadership of the economic union by lowering inter-provincial trade barriers; and that the government will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60-70% by 2050.

The most contentious issue may be the omnibus Tackling Violent Crime bill that packages a number of the justice items left from last session (including, most controversially, the dangerous offenders bill that puts the onus on criminals convicted of three violent offences to prove they should not be designated as dangerous offenders). In addition, the pledge to strengthen the Anti-Terrorism Act is likely to cause the opposition parties to balk. Both will probably be deemed measures of confidence by the Prime Minister and it is unlikely they will be acceptable to any of the opposition parties when they eventually come to a vote.

The more immediate question, though, is whether Liberal leader Stephane Dion can live with the contents and thus avert a fall election. Since there was no commitment by Mr. Harper to deliberately befoul the air and water in a ceaseless quest for profit, logic suggests Mr. Dion should be able to hold his nose and allow the speech to pass.

There is no consistency in the public polls regarding whether the Conservatives would win a majority but all have the Tories well ahead and some suggest that Mr. Harper is preferred to Mr. Dion by a margin of two to one.

Yet, those around him say Mr. Dion is in a "combative" mood and determined not to back down from any perceived provocation from the Prime Minister.

"If there is anything in there that smacks of a white glove in the face of the leader, he is very resolute he will pick a fight," said one advisor, prior to the speech being delivered.

We will find out today whether Mr. Dion considers his honour has been besmirched when he gives his response in the House of Commons. On balance, it is hard to see what would provoke the Liberal leader into making any rash moves. Yes, the speech stated that Canada will not meet its Kyoto targets but Mr. Dion has already acknowledged this in a letter to Prime Minister over the summer.

The speech also suggested that the government will bring forward "elements" of Bill C-30, the Clean Air Act that was gutted beyond recognition in committee during the last parliament. Mr. Dion made full re-introduction of the bill one of his five key demands but Liberal sources now suggest this is not a deal-breaker, as long as the government lives up to its Throne Speech commitment to make absolute reductions in emissions. "Let's not get caught up in C-30 as the be-all and end-all," said one Liberal.

The only other obvious potential poison pill is Afghanistan, where Mr. Dion had called for unequivocal assurances that Canada will notify its allies that it will end its combat role in Kandahar in February, 2009. As the Throne Speech made clear, the government will wait for the newly struck Manley Panel, under chair John Manley, to report back on future options before making any further commitments.

All signs point to the Liberals backing away from the bellicose noises they were making in the last few weeks. It would be as well for Mr. Dion if they do because he is currently being assailed daily by new disasters -- the latest being the resignation of his Quebec lieutenant and the refusal by two other Quebec MPs to take up that particular challenge. There have even been questions raised about whether Mr. Dion could carry his caucus with him, if he decides to bring down the government. It would be the ultimate indignity for Mr. Dion if he charged into the valley of electoral death, only to turn round and find out he's on his own.

KEYWORDS: POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA

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PAGE: A20

BYLINE:

SECTION: Editorial

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 491

WORD COUNT: 524

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE Nothing here is worth an election

Last night's Speech from the Throne did not contain the so-called poison pill that would have compelled the Liberals to vote against it and force a federal election. In fact, by the standards of Ottawa's contentious minority Parliament, the document is relatively conciliatory.

This was a speech that led with a commitment to strengthening Canada's Arctic sovereignty - an obvious goal. True, there were other promises the opposition parties will find harder to swallow. But it mostly put forward a workable and realistic agenda - a welcome sign that Prime Minister Stephen Harper is more interested in governing than in sending Canadians back to the polls.

On the two hottest topics of Parliament's last sitting, the Conservatives have shown some measure of compromise. The Throne Speech made the case for Canada to stay in Afghanistan until 2011, a far more sensible plan than abandoning the country in 2009. But having last week appointed former Liberal minister John Manley to helm a panel on Afghanistan, the government promised to put the mission's future to a vote - something Liberal Leader Stephane Dion has demanded. And while explicitly stating that Canada will not meet its Kyoto commitments (a statement of the obvious by this point), the speech explicitly pledged to help lead the fight against climate change "at home and abroad," backed up with more practical pledges than the ones made in the international protocol.

Among new promises, the biggest is tax relief. This includes, unfortunately, an acceleration of the next cut of the GST - an exercise with little economic benefit. But the Tories are also promising broad-based cuts to corporate and personal taxes. Not only is this a worthy aim at a time when the federal government is consistently running massive annual surpluses, but it is one apparently shared by Mr. Dion, who last week said corporate tax cuts are needed to keep Canada competitive.

Another centrepiece, a "Tackling Violent Crime" bill, introduces little that was not debated in the previous parliamentary session; instead, it mostly compiles several pieces of abandoned legislation in a single place. Some of these, such as the raising of the age of consent, are difficult to object to. Others, such as the imposition of mandatory sentencing, are more questionable. But this is not the sort of thing on which a government should fall.

Of potentially greater concern were proposed new limits on federal spending powers, which could tie the hands of future governments.

But what the speech promised - legislation to limit Ottawa's ability to spend in provincial areas of jurisdiction, with compensation for provinces that wish to opt out of shared commitments if they offer compatible programs - is not revolutionary.

The Conservatives have put forward a moderate agenda. For the Liberals, whose internal problems continued yesterday, it would be folly to vote against it. If they do, it will reflect more poorly on them than on the government they bring down.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada

SUBJECT TERM: government; political; statements; throne speech

PERSONAL NAME: Stephen Harper

ORGANIZATION NAME: Conservative Party of Canada; Liberal Party

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PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL**IDN:** 072900139**DATE:** 2007.10.17**PAGE:** A13**BYLINE:****SECTION:** National News**SOURCE:** CP**EDITION:** Metro**DATELINE:** Winnipeg MB**WORDS:** 104**WORD COUNT:** 104

IN BRIEF Afghan casualty to receive posthumous BA degree

The Canadian Press Winnipeg The University of Manitoba will award a posthumous bachelor of arts degree to an Edmonton-based soldier who was killed in Afghanistan this year.

Corporal Jordan Anderson, 25, a member of the 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, had been pursuing his degree through the university's military support office.

He had completed nearly all program requirements when he and five other soldiers, along with an Afghan interpreter, were killed by a roadside bomb west of Kandahar city July 4.

"He did very well in his courses," said George MacLean, the acting head of the U of M's political studies department.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Canada

SUBJECT TERM: defence; deaths; universities

PERSONAL NAME: Jordan Anderson

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces; University of Manitoba

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DATE: 2007.10.17

PAGE: A6 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: CAMPBELL CLARK

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Ottawa ONT

WORDS: 737

WORD COUNT: 686

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE: THE OPPOSITION Canadians want this Parliament to work, Dion says

CAMPBELL CLARK With reports from Daniel Leblanc and Bill Curry OTTAWA Liberal Leader Stephane Dion said last night that Canadians do not want another election right now, suggesting that his staffers had succeeded in talking him out of his inclination to defeat the government and trigger an election.

Mr. Dion refused to take a firm stand until after he meets with caucus today, but his first words suggested he is leaning toward accepting the view of many of his MPs and advisers: that Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Throne Speech was not enough of a reason to force an election while the Liberals are ailing.

"The most troubling of this is the weakness of what they are proposing on climate change," Mr. Dion told reporters last night.

"But at the same time, Canadians want, as a priority, this Parliament to work. They don't want a third election in three years and a half." Long before the content of the speech was known, the Bloc Quebecois and the NDP had set minimum conditions that they knew Mr. Harper would not accept - leaving it up to Mr. Dion to decide whether he would bend, or trigger an election.

But on most key issues last night, Liberal MPs suggested they did not see a clear reason to defeat the government now.

"I don't see poison pills here. I see studied ambiguity," said Deputy Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff.

Although Mr. Harper's government signalled it wants to keep some Canadian presence in Afghanistan until 2011 to train Afghan soldiers and police, Liberal foreign affairs critic Bob Rae called the statements "ambiguous." His associate critic, Bryon Wilfert, said that is not necessarily far from his own proposal that Canadians train Afghan police after 2009.

Another Conservative proposal that some Liberals had worried would force them to object - limiting the federal government's power to spend money in areas of provincial jurisdiction - appeared similar to the federal-provincial social union agreement that Mr. Dion negotiated in 1999.

Many expect that the Liberals will find a tactic to avoid defeating the government on the Throne Speech, while expressing disapproval - like having senior MPs vote against it while others abstain.

Before the speech was delivered, most of the Liberal MPs gathered for a caucus meeting yesterday morning were inclined to let the Throne Speech pass, although not at all costs.

Some MPs said they understood that Mr. Dion himself is torn. He wants to respond to Mr. Harper by taking on an election fight, but also knows that he must respond with a cooler, tactical calculation.

"He's torn between the passion and the responsibility," one MP said.

Mr. Dion told MPs that their poll standings should not be a factor.

"He said, 'What should be part of our calculation is, is there something that can justify to Canadians why we're going to an election, is there something that can expose Harper and how we can defeat him?'" Most MPs felt that they should not defeat the government on the Throne Speech unless it contained something clearly offensive that could be easily explained to the public.

Mr. Harper may still try to force the Liberals' hand by declaring a number of bills to be matters of confidence, but some Liberals believe that would at least give them some time, and a chance to pick the issue that triggers an election.

The other opposition parties, the Bloc and NDP, had spent recent days taunting the Liberals as "wimps." As expected, the Throne Speech did not live up to the five non-negotiable demands laid out by the Bloc Quebecois, which wanted a 2009 exit from Afghanistan and a complete elimination of Ottawa's spending power in areas of provincial jurisdiction, among others.

"This doesn't meet the conditions that we had presented," Bloc Leader Gilles Duceppe said.

He blasted the environmental proposal as designed to please the Bush administration in the United States, and said there is a consensus in Quebec for an unconditional opting-out option for provinces in shared programs with Ottawa.

NDP leader Jack Layton slammed the government's speech, saying it shows no sign of the change in direction called for by the NDP in areas such as climate change and Afghanistan.

He had said New Democrats would vote against the speech unless the government announced an immediate withdrawal from Kandahar - and last night called on all Liberal MPs to show up for the vote.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada

SUBJECT TERM: government; political; throne speech; statements

PERSONAL NAME: Stephane Dion; Stephen Harper

ORGANIZATION NAME: Conservative Party of Canada; Liberal Party

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DATE: 2007.10.17

PAGE: A6

BYLINE: ALAN FREEMAN

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Ottawa ONT

WORDS: 707

WORD COUNT: 713

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE: THE MAIN THEMES Tories look to extend Afghan mission until 2011 As with the five priorities outlined in the speech, the government returned to familiar themes but tweaked them with voters in mind

ALAN FREEMAN OTTAWA The Harper government has proposed an extension of Canada's military mission in Afghanistan until 2011, with an emphasis on training Afghan security forces, but wouldn't say whether the mission would continue to include a combat component.

"Our government does not believe that Canada should simply abandon the people of Afghanistan after February, 2009," it said in last night's Speech from the Throne, referring to the current deadline for the Kandahar-based NATO mission.

As with the five priorities outlined in the speech, from tackling crime to building a stronger federation, the Harper government returned to familiar themes in the speech but expanded on them and tweaked their content with voters clearly in mind.

The government said that the Afghan mission should "build on its accomplishments and shift" to speeding up the training of Afghan army and police. However, it insisted this cannot be accomplished within the current time frame.

"But our government believes this objective should be achievable by the 2011, the end of the period covered by the Afghanistan Compact." The compact was signed in early 2006 by the Afghan government and the international community. It commits the NATO-led forces to remain in the country until March 20, 2011, by which time a professional Afghan army and police are to be in operation.

The Harper government has been known to favour extending the Afghan mission, but this is the first time a specific new time limit has been given. Mr. Harper made no mention of 2011 in his appointment last week of a task force led by former foreign affairs minister John Manley to mull the alternatives for the mission.

The speech, read by Governor-General Michaëlle Jean, restated the government's plan to ask Parliament to vote on the future of the mission, stating that "any future military deployments must also be supported by a majority of parliamentarians." The speech also set the Tory government's view of how to increase Canada's

presence on the world stage, stating that "focus and action, rather than rhetoric and posturing, are restoring our influence in global affairs." On human rights, the government said it will ask Parliament to confer honorary citizenship on opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar, also known as Burma, to honour her struggle to bring freedom and democracy to her country.

Under the theme of "strengthening Canada's sovereignty and place in the world," the Harper government also announced new measures to assert sovereignty in the Arctic by building "a world-class Arctic research station" and completing the comprehensive mapping of Canada's Arctic seabed. It also said it would expand the capabilities of the Arctic Rangers.

On crime, the speech said the government will reintroduce measures aimed at tackling violent crime, including dangerous offenders, impaired driving and bring in stricter bail and mandatory jail sentences for those who commit gun crimes.

Other measures will tighten up the law on young offenders, address the problem of auto theft and repeal the long-gun registry.

Measures will also be introduced to strengthen the Anti-Terrorism Act and respond to a recent Supreme Court of Canada decision on security certificates.

Turning to the theme of "strengthening the federation," the government, in a clear pitch at Quebec voters, promised legislation that places limits on new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. The legislation will also allow provinces and territories to opt out of such federal plans "with reasonable compensation" if they set up compatible programs.

The speech said the government would reintroduce bills on the election of senators and term limits. It also said it would strengthen measures aimed at confirming "the visual identification of voters," a response to the controversy over whether veiled women would have to show their faces before voting.

On the economy, the government said it will continue to institute broad-based tax cuts including a further reduction of the 6-per-cent goods and services tax.

On the environment and health, the government said it plans to introduce national air pollution rules and set up a carbon emissions trading market. But it said that Canada's emissions cannot be reduced to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol by Jan. 1, 2008.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: government; political; throne speech; foreign policy; defence

PERSONAL NAME: Stephen Harper

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces; Conservative Party of Canada

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DATE: 2007.10.17

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BYLINE: JANE TABER

SECTION: Column

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 531

WORD COUNT: 472

IMAGERY AND SYMBOLISM Faces in PM's gallery help illustrate Tory agenda

JANE TABER Last night an RCMP officer's grieving widow sat alongside the Prime Minister's wife in the Senate chamber and listened to a speech that could be the prelude to an election.

The image of this young woman, Jodie Worden, in the Prime Minister's gallery above the Senate floor was a powerful one. She had buried her husband, Chris, the day before in a funeral broadcast on national television.

And yesterday, on a day filled with so much imagery and symbolism, Mrs. Worden's presence was aimed at showing Canadians the Harper government is serious about tackling crime.

With an election possible, nothing was left to chance - from the prime-time delivery of the 4,000-word speech, to Laureen Harper's special guests, to the 12 military men and women who had served in Afghanistan sitting shoulder to shoulder with Supreme Court justices and senators on the floor of the chamber.

"Strong Leadership. A Better Canada" is what the Tories were calling their speech, which was attended by more than 500 people.

Inviting special guests is an American innovation, first introduced by Republican President Ronald Reagan for his State of the Union addresses. Last year, Mr. Harper became the first Prime Minister to send out invitations to a Throne Speech.

Sitting beside Mrs. Worden was Patrick Brazeau, head of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, and next to him was Alan Baker, the Israeli ambassador to Canada. Fifteen new Canadians, members of the Salvation Army and a youth group also sat in the Prime Minister's gallery.

These people helped paint the pictures that the Harper government intended with the speech: a commitment to law and order, support for the Canadian troops, help for aboriginal Canadians and an acknowledgment of the support from Jewish Canadians to the Conservative government.

Even Governor-General Michaëlle Jean was conscious of the statement she would make as she read.

Ms. Jean, who arrived by car and not landau because of the cool nighttime temperature, chose to wear a classic black skirt suit with a silk shawl collar designed by Montrealer Michel Desjardins.

The Prime Minister wore a conservative dark suit and red tie and not the dove-grey formal suit that prime ministers usually wear to the occasion.

Yesterday he chose, as he did for his first Throne Speech, a smaller opening of Parliament, over the larger one, where the Senate is cleared of desks to accommodate many more people.

What was different from his first Throne Speech, however, was his decision to break with tradition and schedule the speech for prime time. It had always been delivered in the afternoon.

Communications experts called this a savvy strategy.

"He's created a buzz just by changing the rules," said Bernie Gauthier, a communications consultant with Ottawa's Delta Media.

"I think we can expect a lot of people to watch. It's a very nice strategic move. I don't see a lot of downsides." The traditional afternoon speech means that few people would have the chance to watch it live. By the time the public notices it, it has been sliced and diced and dissected by the national news media and stakeholders.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada

SUBJECT TERM: government; political

PERSONAL NAME: Jodie Worden; Michaelle Jean; Christopher Worden; Patrick Brazeau; Alan Baker

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SECTION: National News
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CONSERVATIVE OUTREACH STRATEGY: REACTION

Responses to tactics range from outrage to shrugs A Liberal MP calls the Tory outreach plan 'sinister,' but members of some ethnic and religious groups regard it as merely archaic

DANIEL LEBLANC With a report from Caroline Alphonso OTTAWA The Conservative Party's "ethnic outreach" strategy is antiquated and sinister with its emphasis on creating lists of Canadians based on their ethnic or religious backgrounds, cultural groups and opposition MPs said yesterday.

"For them, the end justifies the means, and they want to win. They're using disappointing, crass tactics to achieve that goal," Liberal MP Susan Kadis said.

Ms. Kadis is concerned about Rosh Hashanah letters sent out last month by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to constituents in her largely Jewish riding of Thornhill, near Toronto. She said she wants to know how the names were obtained and compiled.

"I would say this is a sinister and disturbing type of activity and approach by the Conservatives," Ms. Kadis said.

The Globe and Mail revealed yesterday that the Conservative Party has established an "ethnic outreach team" to increase party links with religious and ethnic minority groups. The comprehensive strategy is based on targeted mailings, one-on-one meetings at "major ethnic events" and the creation of large databases of immigrants and new Canadians.

But the internal documents suggested the Conservatives ruled out winning over all ethnic groups - asserting, for example, that one-fifth of them are not "accessible" to the Conservative Party in Thornhill.

Conservative sources explained the party determined a few years ago that attaining majority status in the House of Commons entailed winning seats in urban, multicultural ridings.

"It's something that the Conservatives have actually not been very good at in the past, whereas the Liberals have become taskmasters and have, in fact, historically claimed and manipulated that so-called multicultural vote," said Peter Kent, the Conservative candidate in Thornhill.

Regarding the mailing list, a Conservative source said that the list of Jewish Canadians for Mr. Harper's mail-out was compiled with public sources.

But Mohamed Elmasry, president of the Canadian Islamic Congress, said the Conservative approach is 20 years behind the times with its emphasis on photo-ops and symbolic gestures.

"Since the Harper government took office, they have tried to court Canadian Muslims with very rudimentary tactics," Mr. Elmasry said.

"Unfortunately, they are not addressing the core issues, like our mission in Afghanistan, immigration and integration policy and being too militant in foreign policy." Susan Eng, who has successfully lobbied the Conservatives to obtain a federal apology and redress for the Chinese head tax, said political parties always think they can win votes by wearing religious garb.

She said the Conservatives have approached the head-tax issue with sincerity, but that all parties must constantly be forced to deal with precise issues.

"The caution I have for them, and everybody else who wants to do that, is to not try the song-and-dance stuff, not to try the superficial stuff. Address the issues that actually affect our lives as Canadians," Ms. Eng said.

Bernie Farber, CEO of the Canadian Jewish Congress, said all parties engage in tactics to win over cultural communities, and that is normal in a democracy.

"I see both a positive outreach to communities and I see politics at play, which is not a bad thing," Mr. Farber said.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Thornhill; Ontario

SUBJECT TERM: government; political; ethnic groups; religion; elections

PERSONAL NAME: Stephen Harper

ORGANIZATION NAME: Conservative Party of Canada

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SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

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WORDS: 818

WORD COUNT: 796

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE Blueprint for an election The plan: Broad tax cuts// Strengthen Arctic sovereignty// Kill off Kyoto//Extend Afghan mission to 2011

BRIAN LAGHI OTTAWA BUREAU CHIEF With reports from Daniel Leblanc, Bill Curry, Gloria Galloway and Campbell Clark Broad tax cuts, tough-on-crime legislation and the desire for a two-year extension of the Afghanistan military mission form the core of Stephen Harper's new governing agenda, which could double as a fall campaign blueprint.

In a Speech from the Throne richer in policy content than expected, the Tory government also promised yesterday to unveil new measures to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, apologize for residential school abuses, find money for infrastructure and require people who wear veils to uncover their faces to vote.

But the speech also tried to navigate clear of controversial issues in an apparent effort to assuage concerns that Mr. Harper has a hidden agenda.

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion, in whose hands the future of the government rests, said he had difficulty with much of the speech - particularly its "shocking indifference" to poverty and a lack of commitment to the environment.

However, he said Canadians are tired of elections and pledged to give his final verdict today. The Throne Speech is a confidence matter that could kill the minority government.

"Canadians want this Parliament to work. They don't want a third election in three years and a half, so we'll have a real lively caucus tomorrow," he said.

The NDP and the Bloc Quebecois immediately signalled that they would oppose the bill to implement the speech.

"This sends Canada in the wrong direction," NDP Leader Jack Layton said while the speech was still being read in the Senate.

BQ Leader Gilles Duceppe also blasted the speech, saying the environmental program is designed to please the United States. "This doesn't meet the conditions that we had presented." The speech was a plan to launch a

second phase for the Tory government, which has exhausted its original five priorities.

"Now is the time to continue building a better Canada," said the text, which Governor-General Michaëlle Jean read over the supper hour.

"Our government will focus on five clear priorities: strengthening Canada's sovereignty and place in the world; building a stronger federation; providing effective economic leadership; continuing to tackle crime and improving our environment." If the government survives, a future flashpoint will probably be a new omnibus bill covering crime. That legislation will include measures on stricter bail, dangerous offenders and strengthening the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

"In the last session, our government introduced important and timely legislation to tackle violent crime. Unfortunately much of this legislation did not pass," the speech said. "That is not good enough to maintain the confidence of Canadians." On Afghanistan, the speech says Canada should shift its emphasis in the Kandahar region to a training role so that the Afghan government can defend its own sovereignty.

The government, which has struck a blue-ribbon advisory committee on the matter, also believes that the objective is achievable by 2011, an extra two years.

"Our government does not believe that Canada should simply abandon the people of Afghanistan after February, 2009." Mr. Dion called the idea vague.

On the environment, the government committed to following through with requirements for carbon emission reductions and the establishment of a carbon emissions trading market.

"Our government believes strongly that an effective global approach to greenhouse-gas emissions must have binding targets that apply to all major emitters, including Canada." Green Party Leader Elizabeth May said the environmental proposals are too vague to defeat the government on.

Other key portions of the speech include efforts to woo Quebec votes, such as a promise for legislation that would restrict the government's power to spend in areas of provincial legislation.

The government has also pledged to strengthen measures to confirm the visual identification of voters.

The commitment comes after Canada's chief electoral officer refused to put into place laws that would have compelled the removal of veils during the recent Quebec by-elections.

The government also promised to follow through with a campaign plank to cut the GST by another percentage point.

The speech earned plaudits from native leaders for a pledge to apologize for residential schools abuses and will use the final settlement with victims to "make a statement of apology to close this sad chapter in our history." One academic said the Throne Speech needs to carry the party toward the next election.

"What this Throne Speech really signals, I think, is the second dimension to the Tory mandate," said David Mitchell, a political historian at Queen's University in Kingston. "This has got to be the equivalent of their election manifesto." At a caucus meeting yesterday, most Liberal MPs said they were inclined to let the Throne Speech pass, as long as it did not contain a blatant poison pill.

While a few MPs were spoiling for a fight, most thought that the Liberals should vote against it only if it contained very objectionable provisions that could be easily explained to voters.

SPEECH5

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada

SUBJECT TERM: government; political; throne speech; taxation; sovereignty; environment; foreign policy; statements

PERSONAL NAME: Stephen Harper; Stephane Dion; Jack Layton; Gilles Duceppe; Michaelle Jean

ORGANIZATION NAME: Bloc Quebecois

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WORDS: 826
WORD COUNT: 867

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE: THE TORY AGENDA

Conservative platform a blueprint with a centrist touch

GLORIA GALLOWAY Daniel LeBlanc OTTAWA The Throne Speech re-establishes Prime Minister Stephen Harper's control over the political agenda and provides what the Conservatives describe as a moderate platform that could be used to launch an election campaign.

But party officials also say there is no need to push for a quick trip to the ballot box and there may be some benefit - and even a certain amount of pleasure - in delaying the dropping of the election writ.

Last night's speech spelled out new policies such as sovereignty and the environment that were not among the five priorities topping the government's list when it came to office in February, 2006.

It's a big-C Conservative platform. But it's also a blueprint with a centrist touch, including popular tax-cut promises, that does not force Liberal Leader Stephane Dion to bring down Mr. Harper's minority government immediately.

The speech was aimed at an election, said one Conservative who asked not to be identified. "But, whether it is immediate or down the road - it's like a bottle of fine wine, it's only going to get better." The ultimate goal is a majority government, he said. "And the Prime Minister has decided that the best way to get there is this incremental Conservatism . . . to hug the moderate middle, or at least to portray himself as principled, but in a moderate way." Mr. Harper will eventually pounce on Mr. Dion and force the vote that, for the time being, he says he does not want. He can do that at the moment of his choosing by introducing legislation that the Liberals would have to reject.

"It's sort of like when a cat catches a mouse. You can only play with him so long before he either dies or runs away," the Conservative said.

"And you don't want Dion to do either. You don't want him to run away and gather strength and come back with all of his buddies, or you don't want him to die and be replaced by someone who can actually defeat you." There is a widespread belief within Conservative ranks that even though a new Strategic Counsel poll suggests they are short of the numbers they need for a majority, they can make dramatic improvements on the campaign trail.

And there is a danger in allowing Parliament to sit, providing the opposition with a platform to attack the

government during Question Period. The Conservatives have supplied some recent ammunition, including an alleged attempt to circumvent election financing limits.

But there is also a belief among Conservatives that Canadians are warming to the more middle-of-the-road policies introduced by the government.

Michael Behiels, a professor of political science at the University of Ottawa, said the ultimate objective of Mr. Harper is the annihilation of the Liberal Party.

"This is a long-term plan," Dr. Behiels said. "The right would be reorganized as the centre-right, which displaces the Liberals.

And the NDP, if the Liberals are weak enough, can move slightly more to the centre-left." In the meantime, he said, the Bloc and the New Democrats have made it clear that Mr. Dion and the Liberals will be alone in propping up the government - something he will have to do time and again if Mr. Harper makes good on his promise to turn routine bills into matters of confidence.

The Conservatives are banking on the repeated indignity to reinforce doubts about Mr. Dion's leadership abilities. And leadership will undoubtedly be the key focus of any election campaign.

A summary of the speech The Throne Speech is filled with big and small promises that will please some and disappoint others. The Harper government vows to: * Finalize a settlement and apologize to natives who were abused in Indian residential schools; * Prolong the military presence in Afghanistan until 2011, with an emphasis on training Afghan troops; * Build a research station in the North that will be "on the cutting edge of Arctic issues"; * Give honorary Canadian citizenship to Myanmar democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who will join the ranks of Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama and Raoul Wallenberg; * Limit the use of the federal spending power by allowing provinces to opt out of shared-cost programs if they offer "compatible" initiatives; * Reform the Senate, including limiting the terms of senators and allowing Canadians to choose them; * Cut the GST and bring down taxes for families; * Introduce a bill called Tackling Violent Crime to toughen the sentences for impaired driving, dangerous offenders and gun crimes, among others; * Prevent voters from casting ballots wearing veils or facial coverings; * Bring back elements of the Clean Air Act that had all-party support, create a carbon-emissions trading market, and continue to push for a 50-per-cent reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050; and * Bring in new measures to improve the quality of imported food and products.

Daniel LeBlanc

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada

SUBJECT TERM: government; political; throne speech

PERSONAL NAME: Stephen Harper

ORGANIZATION NAME: Conservative Party of Canada

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COLUMN: Susan Riley
BYLINE: Susan Riley
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
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Shut down the buses

Someone clearly ran Prime Minister Stephen Harper's much-anticipated throne speech through a pebble-polisher until all the sharp edges were filed down. No snags, no shocks, no red flags -- not much for the opposition to grouse about, although that won't stop them. Not enough, surely, to prompt Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion to plunge the country into an election when he delivers his official response today.

Stranger things have happened but, if Dion decides to pull the plug, it will be to spare himself and his disintegrating party a lingering death in favour of a quick leap into oblivion. While Liberal deputy leader Michael Ignatieff pronounced the speech "vague and disappointing" last night, he conceded it contained some "positive" elements (he clearly hasn't been in politics long.) Overall, he didn't sound eager to defeat the government.

What would the Liberals attack, especially from their present, perilous perch, in a speech that could have easily been delivered by Paul Martin or Jean Chrétien? That is how centre-right it sounded, how cautious and imprecise. Gone was talk of defending Canadian family values, our great friendship with the United States, the appalling corruption of previous governments, never mind thundering denunciations of big government and gold-plated public service pensions. Critics will search in vain for evidence of the "radical right-wing agenda" that Dion says lurks behind Harper's newly-moderate tone. (If it is still there, it certainly isn't obvious.)

Instead of a bold attempt to devolve federal power to the provinces, for instance, Harper promised what sounds like an idea first promoted by the Liberals: provinces can opt out of future cost-shared national social programs if they provide a similar program themselves. Gilles Duceppe deplores this idea, as expected. This is not unalloyed bad news for the prime minister.

Instead of an expensive and excessive militarization of the north, Harper plans to assert our sovereignty there with a world-class Arctic environmental research and resource development station (along with some increased military surveillance.) He is proceeding with a politically showy, but economically irresponsible promise to knock another point off the GST, but is also offering broad-based tax cuts for individuals, businesses and middle-class families. Who is going to campaign against that?

He is even joining legions of previous prime ministers of all stripes and promising to use federal power to remove barriers to inter-provincial trade. He will no doubt have as much success as they have had, too -- especially when Duceppe highlights this latest attack on Quebec's sovereignty.

On Afghanistan, the prime minister is particularly crafty. Only last week, he established a five-member panel, led by former Liberal deputy prime minister John Manley, that is supposed to make recommendations on what Canada should do after our formal role ends in February 2009. Then, last night, he said he wants Canadian troops to continue training Afghans to take over their own security until 2011 -- a two-year extension of the existing mission. Over that period, there would presumably be a gradual withdrawal of Canadian troops.

This won't satisfy the NDP, which wants troops home now, or the Liberals, who insist on an end to our combat role in Kandahar by February 2009. But, on his side, Harper is no longer marketing an open-ended commitment to what many Canadians see as a noble, but losing cause. Extending the mission may still be a hard sell -- particularly if Canadian casualties continue -- but Harper has recast the debate by moving the goalposts. And if the Afghan mission does trigger an election, it won't likely come until after the Manley panel reports, and may only be triggered by a marked deterioration in an unpredictable war.

On the environment, the throne speech merely parroted the familiar Harper pretense -- that Canada is taking tough, but fair, steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and is poised to become a world leader in the global fight against climate change. This is abject nonsense, but it is not new and may not be enough, in itself, to provoke the Liberals to vote against the throne speech. They will likely want to wait and choose their moment, convinced that Harper is firmly entrenched on the wrong side of this key issue.

As a kind of archival nod to his party's Reform roots, Harper did promise to revise legislation promising modest reforms to the Senate and a package of anti-crime measures, some familiar, some new, all guaranteed to be ineffective when it comes to fighting violent crime. But what brave opposition party is going to go to bat for serial offenders, suspected terrorists and juvenile delinquents? Exactly.

Stand down, everyone. The election is off for the foreseeable future.

Susan Riley's column runs Monday, Wednesday and Friday. E-mail: sriley@thecitizen.canwest.com

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COLUMN: David Warren
BYLINE: David Warren
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Pointless shouting about world problems accomplishes little

Theodore Roosevelt's excellent foreign policy advice for superpowers -- "Speak softly and carry a big stick" -- was uttered a few days before the assassination of President McKinley in 1901 thrust Roosevelt himself into the presidency. He was quoting, incidentally -- an old West African proverb. And out of that quote came the phrase, "big-stick diplomacy."

It was a moment when the United States was coming of age as a world power, and asserting herself in new ways. Yet the phrase developed the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, in which an earlier American president had served notice to the European powers, that while the U.S. would be neutral in rivalries elsewhere in the world, she would not abide any further European imperial adventures in the Western Hemisphere. As late as 1962, this secular doctrine was being invoked by President Kennedy, to warn the Soviet Union off an imperial adventure in Cuba. Yet like most constructions in words, it had borne a variety of interpretations in the intervening time, including Teddy Roosevelt's use of it to justify the United States' own imperial adventures in Panama, Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

Not that I'm always opposed to imperial adventures; nor opposed to making dogmatic statements about world affairs. There is a time and season for everything, including "big-stick diplomacy" in its broadest sense. This is what the Bush administration is doing today, or trying to do, in confronting Iran. It is a task in which some days their only ally appears to be Hillary Clinton -- who, trying for her own purposes to sound presidential, seems no less willing to contemplate the use of force than the current U.S. defence secretary. And just yesterday she repeated Mr. Bush's exact words in Washington: "All options must remain on the table."

Well, not quite the only ally in pressuring Iran, for the new French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, has also uttered the words "all options," and already we see some prospect that the "Bush Doctrine" will outlive George W. Bush. It must: or there will soon be no West.

Meanwhile, Vladimir Putin, visiting Iran after a little game he played with the Russian media (in which his security services leaked an implausible assassination threat against him in Tehran, so that he could swagger and shrug it off), has been enunciating something like the Monroe Doctrine in Russian.

Russia and China together have been Iran's chief diplomatic protectors, sheltering the vicious regime of the ayatollahs against sanctions proposals at the UN. Russia has been the principal public source of aid and technology for Iran's vast nuclear complex at Bushehr.

In Tehran yesterday, speaking directly of a common interest in the resources of the Caspian Sea, at a conference with all the states of the Caspian littoral, Mr. Putin was nevertheless able to insinuate indirectly that the affairs of nations in that region "ain't nobody's business but their own." The general impression in the West, and my own impression, is that he is seeing how far he can get with words alone, since the Russians themselves have been using every available pretext for withdrawing their workforce from Bushehr.

Likewise with Mr Putin's recent threat to respond very negatively to the new U.S. missile shield, and the advanced bases the U.S. requires for it, on what the Russians call their doorsteps. But Russia is already behaving as if the Cold War never ended. What more can they do?

We now have another profoundly complicating factor, consisting of words, and in the very same region. The Democrat-controlled U.S. Congress, under what passes for the direction of Nancy Pelosi -- a great enthusiast for empty gestures -- recently proposed a declaration condemning the massacre of well over a million Christian Armenians in the twilight moments of the Muslim Ottoman Empire, 1915-17.

One might say that this remains a sensitive issue in Turkey. And one might add, that the Turkish threat to withdraw American access to NATO bases in Turkey (through which a considerable proportion of supplies are directed to Iraq and Afghanistan), is real. Similarly, the Turkish threat to begin armed incursions into northern, Kurdish, Iraq, to settle scores with Kurdish ethnic incendiaries in Turkey itself. Or the Turkish threat to settle scores with neighbouring Armenia, directly. One might even understand why the Bush administration, from Mr. Bush down, has gone apoplectic in resisting this exceptionally stupid Congressional move.

Which is not to say the Armenian massacre didn't happen, or that it does not merit the remembrance and condemnation of every sentient being.

My point is rather Theodore Roosevelt's: that it behooves the U.S. and the West not to waste words in shouting, or in pointless historical scab-picking that will yield unintended present results. It behooves us rather to carry a big stick, and to be ready to use it. That, and that alone, is how peace is maintained, in this grimly real world: by powerfully discouraging potential aggressors.

David Warren writes Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday.

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A mother's heroism

Among the most depressing images of militant Islam are those celebrating the cult of suicide bombing.

We have come to expect, after a successful operation, the appearance of videotapes in which the martyr holds a gun in one hand and a Koran in the other, while the narration tells of a longing for paradise.

More depressing are images of the bomber's kin, often his mother, praising the young man's deed. News reports have even shown neighbours dropping by to offer congratulations to the family. The West sees these images and concludes, with horror, that suicide bombing has become normalized in some dysfunctional corners of the Muslim world.

A story out of Afghanistan this week is a poignant reminder that it doesn't have to be that way. According to police in the southern province of Uruzgan, a 22-year-old man had just put on a suicide vest and was en route to stage an attack when his mother intervened. His mother actually grabbed the explosive vest, telling the man that "We don't want you to go to Paradise this way."

The police believe her son was trained in Pakistan, where his handlers gave him the equivalent of \$5,000, which he was to give to his family after successfully carrying out the attack. As his mother was grabbing at the vest, she reportedly said, "We don't need your money."

This Afghan mother is a hero. Her maternal instinct -- her natural humanity -- triumphed over hatred and fanaticism. Sadly, as she tried to pull the explosives off her boy, the vest went off. She, her son and several other family members died.

She was killed trying to save her child's life, and that is a sacrifice so natural, and awesome, that it transcends geography and culture.

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BYLINE: M. Husain Sadar
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
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U.S. should give more respect to Turkish ally

Re: Trouble's brewing in Turkey, Oct. 12.

In his opinion article, Harry Sterling provided a very insightful analysis of the growing terrorist activities of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and resultant deaths and destruction in Turkish cities and villages.

It seems ironic that the Bush administration which has made the fight against global terrorism its No. 1 priority, should be pressuring one of its most faithful allies to show more restraint and patience in dealing with PKK thugs and criminals.

The Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has rightly pointed out that the U.S. has been sending its military forces thousands of kilometres away to fight terrorists in other countries including Iraq and Afghanistan. Why then is the Bush administration asking Turkey not to take necessary measures to eradicate terrorism along and across the Iraqi border?

To add more fuel to the fire, the U.S. Congress is to consider a resolution to judge the 1915 mass killings of Armenians by Ottoman Turks as genocide. If the people of the United States are ready to give this new role to its elected representatives, then would it be acceptable if the democratically elected Turkish parliament and indeed elected officials in other countries, start engaging in similar activities?

For instance, will the Turkish parliament be justified in describing the U.S. actions in the Second World War especially dropping atomic bombs on Japan as "genocide?" I think not because elected officials should concentrate on addressing vital issues facing their own country instead of meddling in affairs of others.

It was truly sickening to listen to U.S. Democratic Senator Tom Lantos during a CNN interview when he boasted shamelessly that "I know for sure that the Turks need the U.S. more than we need them." Unfortunately, such needless arrogance, stupidity and disregard for others has left the wonderful people of the United States with less friends around the world than they truly deserve.

One must wonder where was the U.S. Congress when Iran bombed Kurdish terrorist bases in northern Iraq as pointed out by Mr. Sterling? It seems amazing that the Bush administration which has labelled Iran part of an axis of evil can accept the Iranian military action against these terrorists but does not want one of its close allies, Turkey, to do the same.

Does the Bush administration realize that its interference in foreign policy can provide more encouragement to

these terrorists which will further accelerate PKK terrorists activity in Turkey?

It is high time that the U.S. government and its political leaders should treat allies like Turkey with greater consideration, care and respect. Failing that, the U.S. will face further isolation and increased hostility towards its justified fight against international terrorism.

M. Husain Sadar,

Kanata

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ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Chris Wattie, Reuters / Prime Minister Stephen Harper, right, chats with Gen. Rick Hillier, the chief of defence staff, before yesterday's throne speech. The government, in its 16-page speech, indicated it wants to stay in Afghanistan until 2011. 'Our government does not believe that Canada should simply abandon the people of Afghanistan after February 2009.' ;

BYLINE: Mike Blanchfield

SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen

WORD COUNT: 371

Tories want troops to stay 2 more years; Government seeks to extend Afghan mission until 2011

Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan will likely continue to 2011, two years past the current commitment, the government's throne speech declared yesterday.

The Conservative speech laid out the clearest timeline for the controversial mission and affirmed that while the House of Commons will be asked to vote on Canada's future military involvement in the war-torn country in the coming session of Parliament, the ultimate decision "should ensure that progress in Afghanistan is not lost and that our international commitments and reputation are upheld."

The speech sends a clear signal that the Conservatives do not intend to end Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan in February 2009, despite the clamouring by the three opposition parties to bring the troops home by then, if not sooner.

"Our government does not believe that Canada should simply abandon the people of Afghanistan after February 2009," the government said in its 16-page speech.

Although Canada should shift its emphasis to training the Afghan army and police to defend their own people, the speech added: "This will not be completed by February 2009, but our government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011, the end of the period covered by the Afghanistan Compact."

The compact is the international agreement that spells out the how the world's reconstruction efforts should be carried out in Afghanistan. Canada has pledged \$1.2 billion in aid to Afghanistan to 2011.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper appeared to have diffused the Afghanistan issue last week when he appointed a blue ribbon panel, headed by former Liberal foreign affairs minister John Manley, to advise the government on options for Afghanistan after the current February 2009 commitment expires.

NDP leader Jack Layton, whose party wants Canadian troops called home immediately, said the speech was a failure because it contained "no new direction" on Afghanistan.

Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe, whose party has called for an end to combat operations by February 2009, also derided the speech.

"We're talking about staying there until 2011, and they are putting more money into the military," Mr. Duceppe told a television interviewer.

The speech pledges to uphold Canada's values on the international stage, saying that the protection of Arctic sovereignty was "at the heart" of the Canadian Forces mission and seeks to confer honorary citizenship on the imprisoned Burmese Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

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BYLINE: David Pugliese
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 601

DND cancels training for Afghan officers after some disappear, seek refugee status; Soldiers were brought to centres in Ottawa, St-Jean to learn English

A key Defence Department training program for Afghan officers in Canada has been shut down after several students left the course and requested refugee status.

The program was designed to give Afghan officers English-language training at facilities in Ottawa and St-Jean, Que. But the department put a stop to the training after some students disappeared, only to surface later and ask for refugee status.

The department is reviewing the situation and it is unclear if the training will resume. Defence officials said they could not immediately comment on the issue.

The review was sparked after three Afghan officers from the program offered by the department's Military Training Assistance Program disappeared on Dec. 17, 2006, the day they had been scheduled to return to Afghanistan. They later turned themselves in to authorities, but it is not known whether they returned to Afghanistan or claimed refugee status.

Similar incidents occurred in 2004 and 2005 when Afghan officers left the language training program to claim refugee status.

At least 50 personnel from Afghanistan have come to Canada to learn English.

The Canadian military, as well as NATO, is putting a large amount of resources into training Afghan security forces who are seen as key to Canada's eventual withdrawal from Afghanistan.

But NATO officials have complained that the poor English of Afghan personnel has hurt the development of that country's security forces.

The training is designed to help Afghans better communicate and work with NATO forces -- and English is the predominant language used at NATO headquarters and commands throughout Afghanistan.

On Sept. 17, a NATO official, Polish Brig.-Gen. Ryszard Wisniewski, said that the most urgent priority for the Afghan National Army is English-language training. In a conference call with journalists, Brig.-Gen. Wisniewski noted that language problems are hindering some efforts, including a plan to have Afghan

personnel working in NATO headquarters in Kabul and in regional commands around the country.

The Defence Department's decision to stop the 19-week training program for Afghan officers does not affect officers from other nations who are taking the training.

There are no restrictions on the movements of the officers who come to Canada. No statistics are available about how many Afghan officers have either disappeared from the course or applied for refugee status.

When the training for Afghan personnel started in 2004, the Defence Department highlighted it as an important part of Canada's Afghan strategy. Andrew Rasiulis, the military training assistance program's director, said it directly supported the objectives of the Canadian Forces.

"I am particularly proud of the fact that MTAP was able to obtain the approval of senior management to participate, along with the CF, in a key strategic mission of building peace and stability in Afghanistan," he said at the time.

In a May interview with the Citizen in Kabul, U.S. Maj.-Gen. Robert Durbin, who was then in charge of overseeing Afghan military training, said English-language proficiency was particularly important for Afghanistan's air force since the language is common for aviation commands and flight controls.

He noted that language and literacy courses, as well as computer instruction, are popular among Afghan army personnel. "The problem is getting enough instructors to keep up with growth, which is a good problem to have," Maj.-Gen. Durbin said.

At the Kabul military training centre, Afghan recruits first receive their instructions in English, which is then translated to Dari and Pashto, the two main languages spoken in Afghanistan.

An official with Citizenship and Immigration Canada said because of federal privacy rules, the department cannot release the number of individuals from the training course who asked for refugee status.

In 2006, there were 2,190 refugees in Canada from Afghanistan, according to department figures.

Since 2004, Canada has suspended deportations of individuals to Afghanistan, according to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. However, that does not include those who have committed crimes, pose a security risk or have committed human rights violations, the committee noted.

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ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Jean Levac, The Ottawa Citizen / PrimeMinister Stephen Harper and Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean share a laugh in the Senate last night before Ms. Jean delivered the throne speech. The statement outlined the Tories' legislative plans, including tax cuts, an extended Afghan mission and tough-on-crime measures. ; Photo: Christopher Pike, Reuters / Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean inspects a guard of honour before entering the Senate chamber to deliver the Harper government's speech from the throne. ;

BYLINE: Norma Greenaway, Andrew Mayeda and Juliet O'Neill

SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen

WORD COUNT: 1178

Harper's hard line ...

The minority Conservative government last night promised broad tax cuts and challenged the opposition parties to pass a massive anti-crime bill and accept its approach to climate change, which ignores Kyoto, in a throne speech that could become the opening volley in an election campaign.

As expected, NDP leader Jack Layton and Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe immediately vowed to oppose the speech, leaving it up to the Liberals to either throw the government a lifeline or vote to bring it down and force an election.

However, Liberal leader Stéphane Dion refused to immediately say how the party will respond. Under pressure from within the Liberal ranks, he criticized the speech, especially the "weakness" of the plans for tackling climate change, and predicted the caucus would have a "very lively" meeting today over what it wants to do.

"We know that Canadians want, as a priority, this Parliament to work. They don't want a third election in 31/2 years," he told reporters.

The speech, which outlined the government's legislative plans for the coming months, also pledged action to assert Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic, including construction of a "world-class Arctic research station that will be on the cutting edge of Arctic issues."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, long a critic of federal interference in areas of provincial jurisdiction, also moved on a subject near and dear to the hearts of many Canadians, but Quebecers in particular.

His government vowed it would introduce legislation to limit the use of federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

On the hot-button issue of Canada's military mission in Afghanistan, the government renewed an old promise

to allow a vote on the mission.

On the environment, the government said it would take action to combat climate change and cut greenhouse gases, but contrary to the position taken by the opposition parties, it reiterated its view that "Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol."

It also reiterated an election campaign promise to cut one more percentage point from the GST during its mandate.

The throne speech was delivered last night by Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean in the Senate chamber, an ornate, wood-panelled room that was packed with MPs, senators and members of the media. Among the special guests was Jodie Lamers Worden, the widow RCMP officer Christopher Worden, who was killed last week in Hay River, N.W.T.

It marked the first time the speech was delivered during prime-time viewing hours on television.

The government said it was committed to demonstrating Canada's international leadership through concrete action, rather than rhetoric, and to supporting those who share the values of democracy and freedom.

In that spirit, it announced it would ask Parliament to confer honorary citizenship on Burmese dissident Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize winner who has been under house arrest for years.

The law-and-order package would combine at least five pieces of legislation that have been studied to varying degrees by MPs and senators, but died on the order paper when the government opted to prorogue Parliament and begin a new session.

By putting all the bills into one giant omnibus bill, the government hopes to put more pressure on opposition parties to go along with the government rather than risk losing all the measures because they don't like one or two items.

"Canadians expect prompt passage of this crucial legislation," it said.

The most controversial proposal would amend the Criminal Code so that those found guilty of three violent or sexual offences would have to convince a judge that they shouldn't be branded a dangerous offender. The Liberals had opposed that in the past.

The other measures would stiffen penalties for impaired driving, raise the age of sexual consent to 16 from 14, impose stricter bail conditions for those who commit crimes with guns, and also impose mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.

The speech is considered a confidence matter, meaning the government could fall, and the country would be plunged into an election, if all three opposition parties voted against it. There are three possible confidence votes stemming from the speech over the next week or so.

It was the second throne speech by the Harper-led Conservatives since they won power almost 21 months ago.

Mr. Layton took strong exception to the government's plans to ignore the Kyoto targets, and what he said was the government's failure to address poverty in this country. "We have a mandate to oppose the direction Mr. Harper is taking. It's wrong," he told reporters.

Mr. Duceppe, who rushed to speak to reporters before Ms. Jean had finished reading the speech, said the speech missed the mark on the environment, the economy, protecting provincial rights, and Afghanistan.

"On Afghanistan, not only are they not proposing to put an end on that mission by February 2009 -- we're talking about staying there until 2011," he told reporters. "And they are putting more money into the military. Kyoto? They are abandoning Kyoto. They are following (U.S. President George W.) Bush -- we can't support them on that."

The government, which has 126 of the 308 seats in the Commons, would fall only if the opposition parties united to bring it down. The Liberals have 96 seats, the Bloc has 49, and the NDP has 30. There are three independents and four vacancies.

Mr. Dion has said the party does not want a fall election and, if there is one, it will be because Mr. Harper wants one.

The embattled Liberal leader's troubles continued this week -- he was scrambling yesterday to find a new Quebec lieutenant after MP Marcel Proulx quit the post as part of the continuing fallout over the Liberals' three byelection losses in the province last month. The expected replacement is Senator Céline Hervieux-Payette.

Serge Marcil, the director general of the Grits' Quebec wing, also tendered his resignation yesterday just before the throne speech.

Recent polls have put the Conservatives ahead of the Liberals by five to 12 points. A poll conducted last week for CanWest News Service by Ipsos Reid said Mr. Harper was inching towards majority government territory with 40 per cent of the popular vote. It was the first time the Conservatives, leading the Liberals by 12 points, had hit the magic number since last April when it unveiled what was seen as a popular budget.

The party's strength, however, has hovered mostly in the mid-30s since it won the 2006 election with 36 per cent of the vote.

Earlier yesterday, the government made clear it was keen to get cracking on its 'tough-on-crime' agenda. It served official notice it would introduce bills to amend the Criminal Code and other unnamed acts.

It also said it plans to introduce legislation designed to reinstate the secretive security certificate system, which allowed the government to detain foreign-born terrorist suspects, but which got struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada.

There will be as many as three votes of confidence in the government by the middle of next week as MPs proceed with a six-day debate on the throne speech.

- Tomorrow: A Bloc Québécois sub-amendment on the Liberal motion amending the government motion on the speech from the throne.
- Monday: Liberal amendment to the throne speech.
- Oct. 24: Conservative government motion on the throne speech.

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On Afghanistan: 'Our government does not believe that Canada should simply abandon the people of Afghanistan after February 2009'

On Kyoto: 'Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol within the compliance period'

On Crime: Introduce immediately an omnibus crime bill that will contain tough measures that have failed to pass before

ON SPENDING: 'Place formal limits on the use of federal spending power for ... programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction'

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BYLINE: LICIA CORBELL
WORD COUNT: 512

Words haunt Dion Liberal leader's flip-flops make him easy pickings for Tories

For some time now Liberal Leader Stephane Dion has been pretending he might bring down the Conservative's minority government over its stand on Canada's mission in Afghanistan and to a lesser extent, the environment.

Obviously, with his dismal leadership numbers, the Liberal Party's empty bank account and the internal bickering and breakdown within the big red machine, there isn't a chance Dion will allow his party to vote against last night's throne speech for obvious political reasons, unless he wants to put himself out of his own misery.

But what does he really think or believe about Afghanistan? What has he said about it and more importantly, what did he do throughout Prime Minister Jean Chretien's government and then Paul Martin's?

On Afghanistan and the environment, Dion can be pilloried for his positions on both, using his own words and actions.

And, the federal Tories are ready and waiting to do so. Just like they did in the past election, the big blue machine keeps sending journalists e-mails called "Just the Facts" filled with their target's own words.

On Afghanistan, for instance, in 2003 Dion was in Chretien's cabinet when Canadian troops were sent to Kabul and he was back in cabinet with then PM Martin when the Liberals decided to move our troops to the more dangerous Kandahar area.

FACTS ARE FACTS

As Just the Facts states: "March 2006 -- Dion For Mission: 'It's a very important mission and we want to be there,' Dion told a Canadian Press reporter. 'We will succeed in Afghanistan if we show a lot of determination,' he said on CTV a few days later. 'We need to be resolute and to succeed.' (Toronto Star, Dec. 6, 2006)."

But just two months after most of the above comments Dion then voted against extending the mission -- the very same mission -- he had been defending and had supported as part of Martin's cabinet.

According to excerpts from Chretien's just-published memoirs, My Years as Prime Minister, the reason our troops are in southern Afghanistan is because his despised Liberal rival, Paul Martin dithered for so long, Canada's military got stuck with the last choice of assignments there.

"Later, unfortunately, when my successor took too long to make up his mind about whether Canada should extend our term with ISAF, our soldiers were moved out of Kabul and south again to battle the Taliban in the killing fields around Kandahar," writes Chretien.

Dion simply won't be able to defend his position on Afghanistan because whatever he says now he is on the record as saying the exact opposite many times.

What's more, by striking a non-partisan panel last week led by former Liberal deputy prime minister John Manley to explore the future of Canada's military mission in Afghanistan, Dion was not only given a face-saving way out from voting against the speech, but no option either.

So, that leaves the environment.

As Prime Minister Stephen Harper said in an exclusive interview last week, "Mr. Dion says our environment plan didn't go far enough when his didn't go anywhere. Saying, 'I won't vote for you unless you meet Kyoto,' is an absurd position.

"The Kyoto compliance period begins in less than three months," said Harper. "How is Mr. Dion going to cut greenhouse gas emissions by more than one-third in the next 80 days? These are absurd and irresponsible positions."

Clearly, the Tories won't be able to meet Dion's demands on Kyoto compliance. But neither could Dion. He's just pretending.

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BYLINE: GREG WESTON
WORD COUNT: 504

Throne to the wolves Liberals forced to navigate political minefield as PM threatens early election

In case there was any doubt how the Conservatives plan to fight the next federal election, their strategy was right there for all to see in the title of last night's throne speech: "Strong leadership. A better Canada."

If Stephen Harper and his strategists have their way, the next election will not be fought on Afghanistan, the economy, getting tough on crime or saving the planet from hot air.

As long as Stephane Dion is heading the Liberal party, the Conservatives will try to make the campaign all about leadership.

The way things are going, it shouldn't be hard to do.

Even as the prime minister was firing up his well-oiled Conservative election machine with last night's throne speech, the Liberals were once again skidding from disunity and disarray straight toward the political ditch.

Two of Dion's key Quebec organizers quit their positions in a huff yesterday, and no one is stepping up to replace them.

Another day, another humiliation for the Liberal leader. And if Harper gets his way, the fun is just beginning for Dion.

While the hapless Grit boss will almost certainly back down from defeating the government and forcing an election race over a throne speech, Canadian politics is now officially a revolving game of chicken between Liberals and Conservatives.

Harper and his team will do what they can to provoke an election. Dion and his crew will have to swallow themselves whole to avoid one.

In keeping with tradition, last night's 16-page drone from the throne was long on platitudes and short on specifics.

Officially billed as the government's agenda for the coming months, the speech was also a cleverly crafted road map into a political minefield for the Liberals.

For instance, the Grits and other opposition parties stalled a number of the Conservative crime-and-punishment bills during the last session, in some cases on a matter of both sound principle and good

reason.

Now the Conservatives are making the crime bills an all-or-nothing exercise in brinksmanship, introducing a single piece of legislation that includes all the formerly unpassed draft measures on impaired driving, the age of consent, dangerous offenders, bail reform, and mandatory sentences for gun crimes.

The Liberals will have one vote to either pass all of the proposed new laws at once, or go to the polls having defeated them all. Good luck with that.

Ditto on Afghanistan. The throne speech effectively commits the Conservative government to extending Canada's military mission there to 2011 to train the Afghan army and police.

Aside from making a farce of Harper's recently appointed panel studying the issue, the move also puts a gun to Dion's head.

PAIN, NO GAIN

Despite public opinion moving toward a withdrawal of Canadian troops in 2009, Dion will either have to meekly back the Conservatives in extending the mission or face an early election.

Aside from providing a glimpse of Liberal pain for Conservative gain in the months to come -- if the current Parliament lasts more than weeks -- the throne speech also offers a blueprint of the Harper election platform. For example, the Conservatives are promising to woo taxpayers with billions of our own cash with "broad-based tax relief for individuals, businesses and families -- including following through on its commitment to a further cut to the GST."

As for the environment, threats such as climate change are now nothing less than "a clear and present danger."

And, of course, the Harper government is promising to come to the aid of children, parents, the elderly and aboriginals, the disabled, the sick, the poor and the not-so-poor.

All in all, the landmines aside, most of the throne speech could have been written by the Liberals, but for one thing: "Our government is committed to strong leadership."

So far, that's something the Liberals can't say. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

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ILLUSTRATION: photo by Tony Caldwell Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean delivers the speech from the throne in the Senate chamber yesterday. The speech promised tax breaks, a stronger presence in the North and Criminal Code reform.

BYLINE: KATHLEEN HARRIS, NATIONAL BUREAU

COLUMN: National Affairs

WORD COUNT: 733

GG's cutting remarks Speech calls for tax breaks, Afghan extension

The Conservative government will shower Canadians with tax breaks, wave the flag in the North and get tough on young thugs, according to a flurry of promises that could become the launch pad for a fall election.

Amid much pomp and ceremony, Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean delivered a five-pronged federal blueprint that aims to extend Canada's mission in Afghanistan by two years and pass a hefty omnibus package of anti-crime measures. In addition to new plans to overhaul the youth justice system and tackle elder abuse, the feds will immediately revive measures on impaired driving, dangerous offenders, bail reform and mandatory prison terms in a single sweeping 'Tackling Violent Crime' bill.

"Canadians expect prompt passage of this crucial legislation," said Jean, reading the speech on behalf of the Conservative government.

STALLED PASSAGE

Frustrated with the stalled passage of justice bills in the past, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has warned this legislation will be a matter of confidence, which means the government will stand or fall on the crime bills. With that ultimatum, the fate of the federal government hung in doubt last night as the Bloc Quebecois and NDP gave the speech thumbs down but the Liberal strategy remained unclear.

The speech also revealed the Conservatives want a new 2011 deadline for the military mission in Afghanistan -- two years past the current mandate approved by Parliament. But the proposed extension will be put to a vote in the House of Commons after a blue-ribbon panel reports back with recommendations by February 2008.

"Canada should build on its accomplishments and shift to accelerate the training of the Afghan army and police so that the Afghan government can defend its own sovereignty," Jean read. "This will not be completed by Feb. 2009, but our government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011."

The speech also foreshadowed a series of measures to boost the economy and deliver long-term, broad-based tax relief for individuals, businesses and families. Knocking off another percentage point from the GST is also in the works.

The speech from the throne also pledged to strengthen Canada's Arctic sovereignty by promoting an economic and social development plan and building a "world-class" Arctic research station to foster environmental science and resource development.

"Defending our sovereignty in the North also demands that we maintain the capacity to act," the speech read. "New Arctic patrol ships and expanded aerial surveillance will guard Canada's Far North and the Northwest Passage. As well, the size and capabilities of the Arctic Rangers will be expanded to better patrol our vast Arctic territory."

The Conservatives also pledged strong steps to green the environment and slash greenhouse gases, but made clear that Canada will not meet its Kyoto targets on emissions.

"It is now widely understood that because of inaction on greenhouse gases over the last decade, Canada's emissions can not be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol within the compliance period," Jean read.

INTERNAL TURMOIL

The speech from the throne was delivered just hours after news of more internal turmoil in the Opposition Liberal ranks. Leader Stephane Dion was on the prowl for a new Quebec lieutenant after losing Gatineau MP Marcel Proulx, who quit as Dion's captain in the province after learning his job had been offered behind his back to Montreal MP Denis Coderre. Coderre rejected the offer, leaving Dion scrambling for a replacement and the party in further disarray.

The party leaders will begin debate on the throne speech in the House of Commons today.

If the speech is defeated in a confidence vote, Prime Minister Stephen Harper will hit the campaign trail in pursuit of a majority and use the document as the backbone of his election platform.

If it survives, Harper has already declared that he expects a freer rein in imposing his agenda on Parliament and is prepared to use the threat of confidence votes to make it happen.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A fall economic update will outline plans to cut taxes across the board, including a further one-percentage-point cut to the GST.
- A Tackling Violent Crime bill will include measures on impaired driving, age of sexual consent, stricter bail conditions, and mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.
- Canada cannot meet its commitments to cut greenhouse gases under the Kyoto Protocol, but will "help lead the effort" to address climate change worldwide.
- There will be a parliamentary vote on the military mission in Afghanistan beyond February 2009. Canada should accelerate Afghan army and police training -- a job it says should be done by 2011.
- Legislation is coming to limit federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.
- The government will build a "world-class" Arctic research station to study environmental science and resource development, and to map the Arctic seabed in an effort to bolster Canada's claim to the Arctic.

KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

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ILLUSTRATION: 1. photo of STEPHANE DION No standoff 2. photo of GILLES DUCEPPE Vote against
BYLINE: ALAN FINDLAY, NATIONAL BUREAU
WORD COUNT: 174

Liberals criticize speech, but steer clear of vote call

No election -- for now.

With the fate of this fall's parliamentary session on his shoulders, Opposition Liberal Leader Stephane Dion signalled that his party will work to avoid a legislative standoff that could trigger a nationwide trip to the polls in the coming weeks.

"Canadians want, as a priority for this Parliament, to work," Dion told reporters in a brief statement last night. "They don't want a third election in three years and a half."

Dion said his party anticipated it would have criticisms with the speech, such as a "complete and shocking indifference about poverty," a weak environment plan and a perceived ambiguity on Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

Both the NDP and Bloc Quebecois leaders were announcing their opposition to the speech even before the Governor General had finished reading it.

"This speech from the throne is so far off track that we fail to see how it can possibly be salvaged with any tweaking here and there," said New Democrat Leader Jack Layton.

Bloc Leader Gilles Duceppe said the speech fails to address all but one of five items his party had demanded to be addressed last night.

"We'll vote against that, certainly," he said.

He cited the Afghanistan mission's proposed extension to 2011 and the rejection of Canada's climate change commitments under the Kyoto accord as unsupportable. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

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BYLINE: LICIA CORBELL
WORD COUNT: 512

Words haunt Dion Liberal leader's flip-flops make him easy pickings for Tories

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Obviously, with his dismal leadership numbers, the Liberal Party's empty bank account and the internal bickering and breakdown within the big red machine, there isn't a chance Dion will allow his party to vote against last night's throne speech for obvious political reasons, unless he wants to put himself out of his own misery.

But what does he really think or believe about Afghanistan? What has he said about it and more importantly, what did he do throughout Prime Minister Jean Chretien's government and then Paul Martin's?

On Afghanistan and the environment, Dion can be pilloried for his positions on both, using his own words and actions.

And, the federal Tories are ready and waiting to do so. Just like they did in the past election, the big blue machine keeps sending journalists e-mails called "Just the Facts" filled with their target's own words.

On Afghanistan, for instance, in 2003 Dion was in Chretien's cabinet when Canadian troops were sent to Kabul and he was back in cabinet with then PM Martin when the Liberals decided to move our troops to the more dangerous Kandahar area.

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But just two months after most of the above comments Dion then voted against extending the mission -- the very same mission -- he had been defending and had supported as part of Martin's cabinet.

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"Later, unfortunately, when my successor took too long to make up his mind about whether Canada should extend our term with ISAF, our soldiers were moved out of Kabul and south again to battle the Taliban in the killing fields around Kandahar," writes Chretien.

Dion simply won't be able to defend his position on Afghanistan because whatever he says now he is on the record as saying the exact opposite many times.

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So, that leaves the environment.

As Prime Minister Stephen Harper said in an exclusive interview last week, "Mr. Dion says our environment plan didn't go far enough when his didn't go anywhere. Saying, 'I won't vote for you unless you meet Kyoto,' is an absurd position.

"The Kyoto compliance period begins in less than three months," said Harper. "How is Mr. Dion going to cut greenhouse gas emissions by more than one-third in the next 80 days? These are absurd and irresponsible positions."

Clearly, the Tories won't be able to meet Dion's demands on Kyoto compliance. But neither could Dion. He's just pretending.

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BYLINE: LORRIE GOLDSTEIN
COLUMN: Editorial
WORD COUNT: 270

Chretien's living in a glass house

Jean Chretien's attempt in his memoirs to blame Paul Martin for the deaths of Canadian soldiers in Kandahar says more about him than his successor.

First, it's an unseemly invoking of the memory of our fallen soldiers in a self-serving attack on another politician.

Second, the allegation has understandably infuriated the families of many fallen soldiers because Chretien is essentially saying their loved ones died in vain.

Third, that Chretien would suggest such a thing when he committed Canada to fighting in Afghanistan in the first place, is bizarre.

Is he now claiming our soldiers who died in Kabul under his watch didn't die in vain, but when the mission moved to Kandahar, they did?

Is Chretien's only measure of the "success" of a military mission inversely proportional to the number of soldiers killed trying to achieve it?

Let's leave it to the still-warring Chretien and Martin Liberals to fight it out over Chretien's allegation Martin's dithering in choosing Canada's post-Kabul assignment led to us being stuck with Kandahar, because other NATO countries had taken the safer assignments.

What's more revealing is that Chretien's cheap shot speaks to his apparent belief, evident throughout his career as Liberal leader, that the military should never actually fight.

Remember Chretien's infamous first speech in Parliament as leader in 1991, when he said at the start of the first Gulf War that our troops should participate unless anyone shot at them, in which case they should be brought home?

After he became PM, Chretien absurdly compared our armed forces to "Boy Scouts," even as he underfunded the military and dithered over the purchase of needed new equipment.

As military historian Jack Granatstein writes in *Who Killed the Canadian Military?*: "The Chretien government ... has been the worst since the Second World War in its shameful treatment of the country's military ... Who finished off the Canadian Forces? There can be no doubt about my answer: Jean Chretien did." Exactly.

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BYLINE: GREG WESTON
WORD COUNT: 504

Throne to the wolves Liberals forced to navigate political minefield as PM threatens early election

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Now the Conservatives are making the crime bills an all-or-nothing exercise in brinksmanship, introducing a single piece of legislation that includes all the formerly unpassed draft measures on impaired driving, the age of consent, dangerous offenders, bail reform, and mandatory sentences for gun crimes.

The Liberals will have one vote to either pass all of the proposed new laws at once, or go to the polls having defeated them all. Good luck with that.

Ditto on Afghanistan. The throne speech effectively commits the Conservative government to extending Canada's military mission there to 2011 to train the Afghan army and police.

Aside from making a farce of Harper's recently appointed panel studying the issue, the move also puts a gun to Dion's head.

PAIN, NO GAIN

Despite public opinion moving toward a withdrawal of Canadian troops in 2009, Dion will either have to meekly back the Conservatives in extending the mission or face an early election.

Aside from providing a glimpse of Liberal pain for Conservative gain in the months to come -- if the current Parliament lasts more than weeks -- the throne speech also offers a blueprint of the Harper election platform. For example, the Conservatives are promising to woo taxpayers with billions of our own cash with "broad-based tax relief for individuals, businesses and families -- including following through on its commitment to a further cut to the GST."

As for the environment, threats such as climate change are now nothing less than "a clear and present danger."

And, of course, the Harper government is promising to come to the aid of children, parents, the elderly and aboriginals, the disabled, the sick, the poor and the not-so-poor.

All in all, the landmines aside, most of the throne speech could have been written by the Liberals, but for one thing: "Our government is committed to strong leadership."

So far, that's something the Liberals can't say. KEYWORDS=CANADA

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SOURCETAG 0710170476
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun
DATE: 2007.10.17
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 5
BYLINE: KATHLEEN HARRIS AND ALAN FINDLAY, NATIONAL BUREAU
WORD COUNT: 222

Push to extend Afghan mission

MPs must honour the sacrifice of soldiers who died on duty in Afghanistan as they ponder the fate of the military mission, Conservatives urged as they set the stage for two more years in the bloody war zone.

In last night's throne speech, the federal government revealed it will seek Parliament's approval to extend the mission for two more years past the current February 2009 deadline.

"The government does not believe that Canada should simply abandon the people of Afghanistan after February 2009," Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean read in a speech that laid out the Conservatives' fall agenda priorities.

The Liberals and Bloc Québécois have called for the combat mission to end on schedule in 2009, while the NDP has called for an immediate withdrawal of troops.

Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion called the Conservative plan for Afghanistan "ambiguous," while NDP Leader Jack Layton insisted Prime Minister Stephen Harper is leading Canada further down the wrong path in Afghanistan.

"We said that Mr. Harper and the Conservatives had to change direction on the war in Afghanistan. They didn't," he said.

Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe agreed Harper is ignoring the wishes of the Opposition parties by pressing for an extension.

"He's not talking about putting an end to that mission by 2009, they're even talking about 2011, and they're talking about spending more on the military also," he said.

Industry Minister Jim Prentice said the 2011 date marks the expiry of the Afghanistan Compact, and that it should not be taken as the date the government wants to end its role in the country. KEYWORDS=CANADA

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SOURCETAG 0710170474

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun

DATE: 2007.10.17

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 4

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Tony Caldwell Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean delivers the speech from the throne in the Senate chamber yesterday. The speech promised tax breaks, a stronger presence in the North and Criminal Code reform.

BYLINE: KATHLEEN HARRIS, NATIONAL BUREAU

WORD COUNT: 733

GG's cutting remarks Speech calls for tax breaks, Afghan extension

The Conservative government will shower Canadians with tax breaks, wave the flag in the North and get tough on young thugs, according to a flurry of promises that could become the launch pad for a fall election.

Amid much pomp and ceremony, Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean delivered a five-pronged federal blueprint that aims to extend Canada's mission in Afghanistan by two years and pass a hefty omnibus package of anti-crime measures. In addition to new plans to overhaul the youth justice system and tackle elder abuse, the feds will immediately revive measures on impaired driving, dangerous offenders, bail reform and mandatory prison terms in a single sweeping 'Tackling Violent Crime' bill.

"Canadians expect prompt passage of this crucial legislation," said Jean, reading the speech on behalf of the Conservative government.

STALLED PASSAGE

Frustrated with the stalled passage of justice bills in the past, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has warned this legislation will be a matter of confidence, which means the government will stand or fall on the crime bills. With that ultimatum, the fate of the federal government hung in doubt last night as the Bloc Quebecois and NDP gave the speech thumbs down but the Liberal strategy remained unclear.

The speech also revealed the Conservatives want a new 2011 deadline for the military mission in Afghanistan -- two years past the current mandate approved by Parliament. But the proposed extension will be put to a vote in the House of Commons after a blue-ribbon panel reports back with recommendations by February 2008.

"Canada should build on its accomplishments and shift to accelerate the training of the Afghan army and police so that the Afghan government can defend its own sovereignty," Jean read. "This will not be completed by Feb. 2009, but our government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011."

The speech also foreshadowed a series of measures to boost the economy and deliver long-term, broad-based tax relief for individuals, businesses and families. Knocking off another percentage point from the GST is also in the works.

The speech from the throne also pledged to strengthen Canada's Arctic sovereignty by promoting an economic and social development plan and building a "world-class" Arctic research station to foster environmental science and resource development.

"Defending our sovereignty in the North also demands that we maintain the capacity to act," the speech read. "New Arctic patrol ships and expanded aerial surveillance will guard Canada's Far North and the Northwest Passage. As well, the size and capabilities of the Arctic Rangers will be expanded to better patrol our vast Arctic territory."

The Conservatives also pledged strong steps to green the environment and slash greenhouse gases, but made clear that Canada will not meet its Kyoto targets on emissions.

"It is now widely understood that because of inaction on greenhouse gases over the last decade, Canada's emissions can not be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol within the compliance period," Jean read.

INTERNAL TURMOIL

The speech from the throne was delivered just hours after news of more internal turmoil in the Opposition Liberal ranks. Leader Stephane Dion was on the prowl for a new Quebec lieutenant after losing Gatineau MP Marcel Proulx, who quit as Dion's captain in the province after learning his job had been offered behind his back to Montreal MP Denis Coderre. Coderre rejected the offer, leaving Dion scrambling for a replacement and the party in further disarray.

The party leaders will begin debate on the throne speech in the House of Commons today.

If the speech is defeated in a confidence vote, Prime Minister Stephen Harper will hit the campaign trail in pursuit of a majority and use the document as the backbone of his election platform.

If it survives, Harper has already declared that he expects a freer rein in imposing his agenda on Parliament and is prepared to use the threat of confidence votes to make it happen.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A fall economic update will outline plans to cut taxes across the board, including a further one-percentage-point cut to the GST.
- A Tackling Violent Crime bill will include measures on impaired driving, age of sexual consent, stricter bail conditions, and mandatory prison terms for gun crimes.
- Canada cannot meet its commitments to cut greenhouse gases under the Kyoto Protocol, but will "help lead the effort" to address climate change worldwide.
- There will be a parliamentary vote on the military mission in Afghanistan beyond February 2009. Canada should accelerate Afghan army and police training -- a job it says should be done by 2011.
- Legislation is coming to limit federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.
- The government will build a "world-class" Arctic research station to study environmental science and resource development, and to map the Arctic seabed in an effort to bolster Canada's claim to the Arctic.

KEYWORDS=CANADA

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SOURCETAG 0710170473
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun
DATE: 2007.10.17
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 4
ILLUSTRATION: 1. photo of STEPHANE DION No standoff 2. photo of GILLES DUCEPPE Vote against
BYLINE: ALAN FINDLAY, NATIONAL BUREAU
WORD COUNT: 174

Liberals criticize speech, but steer clear of vote call

No election -- for now.

With the fate of this fall's parliamentary session on his shoulders, Opposition Liberal Leader Stephane Dion signalled that his party will work to avoid a legislative standoff that could trigger a nationwide trip to the polls in the coming weeks.

"Canadians want, as a priority for this Parliament, to work," Dion told reporters in a brief statement last night. "They don't want a third election in three years and a half."

Dion said his party anticipated it would have criticisms with the speech, such as a "complete and shocking indifference about poverty," a weak environment plan and a perceived ambiguity on Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

Both the NDP and Bloc Quebecois leaders were announcing their opposition to the speech even before the Governor General had finished reading it.

"This speech from the throne is so far off track that we fail to see how it can possibly be salvaged with any tweaking here and there," said New Democrat Leader Jack Layton.

Bloc Leader Gilles Duceppe said the speech fails to address all but one of five items his party had demanded to be addressed last night.

"We'll vote against that, certainly," he said.

He cited the Afghanistan mission's proposed extension to 2011 and the rejection of Canada's climate change commitments under the Kyoto accord as unsupportable. KEYWORDS=CANADA

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SOURCETAG 0710170321
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun
DATE: 2007.10.17
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: 15
BYLINE: LICIA CORBELL
WORD COUNT: 512

Words haunt Dion Liberal leader's flip-flops make him easy pickings for Tories

For some time now Liberal Leader Stephane Dion has been pretending he might bring down the Conservative's minority government over its stand on Canada's mission in Afghanistan and to a lesser extent, the environment.

Obviously, with his dismal leadership numbers, the Liberal Party's empty bank account and the internal bickering and breakdown within the big red machine, there isn't a chance Dion will allow his party to vote against last night's throne speech for obvious political reasons, unless he wants to put himself out of his own misery.

But what does he really think or believe about Afghanistan? What has he said about it and more importantly, what did he do throughout Prime Minister Jean Chretien's government and then Paul Martin's?

On Afghanistan and the environment, Dion can be pilloried for his positions on both, using his own words and actions.

And, the federal Tories are ready and waiting to do so. Just like they did in the past election, the big blue machine keeps sending journalists e-mails called "Just the Facts" filled with their target's own words.

On Afghanistan, for instance, in 2003 Dion was in Chretien's cabinet when Canadian troops were sent to Kabul and he was back in cabinet with then PM Martin when the Liberals decided to move our troops to the more dangerous Kandahar area.

FACTS ARE FACTS

As Just the Facts states: "March 2006 -- Dion For Mission: 'It's a very important mission and we want to be there,' Dion told a Canadian Press reporter. 'We will succeed in Afghanistan if we show a lot of determination,' he said on CTV a few days later. 'We need to be resolute and to succeed.'" (Toronto Star, Dec. 6, 2006)."

But just two months after most of the above comments Dion then voted against extending the mission -- the very same mission -- he had been defending and had supported as part of Martin's cabinet.

According to excerpts from Chretien's just-published memoirs, My Years as Prime Minister, the reason our troops are in southern Afghanistan is because his despised Liberal rival, Paul Martin dithered for so long, Canada's military got stuck with the last choice of assignments there.

"Later, unfortunately, when my successor took too long to make up his mind about whether Canada should extend our term with ISAF, our soldiers were moved out of Kabul and south again to battle the Taliban in the killing fields around Kandahar," writes Chretien.

Dion simply won't be able to defend his position on Afghanistan because whatever he says now he is on the record as saying the exact opposite many times.

What's more, by striking a non-partisan panel last week led by former Liberal deputy prime minister John Manley to explore the future of Canada's military mission in Afghanistan, Dion was not only given a face-saving way out from voting against the speech, but no option either.

So, that leaves the environment.

As Prime Minister Stephen Harper said in an exclusive interview last week, "Mr. Dion says our environment plan didn't go far enough when his didn't go anywhere. Saying, 'I won't vote for you unless you meet Kyoto,' is an absurd position.

"The Kyoto compliance period begins in less than three months," said Harper. "How is Mr. Dion going to cut greenhouse gas emissions by more than one-third in the next 80 days? These are absurd and irresponsible positions."

Clearly, the Tories won't be able to meet Dion's demands on Kyoto compliance. But neither could Dion. He's just pretending.

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SOURCETAG 0710170309
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun
DATE: 2007.10.17
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 5
BYLINE: KATHLEEN HARRIS AND ALAN FINDLAY, NATIONAL BUREAU
WORD COUNT: 222

Push to extend Afghan mission

MPs must honour the sacrifice of soldiers who died on duty in Afghanistan as they ponder the fate of the military mission, Conservatives urged as they set the stage for two more years in the bloody war zone.

In last night's throne speech, the federal government revealed it will seek Parliament's approval to extend the mission for two more years past the current February 2009 deadline.

"The government does not believe that Canada should simply abandon the people of Afghanistan after February 2009," Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean read in a speech that laid out the Conservatives' fall agenda priorities.

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"We said that Mr. Harper and the Conservatives had to change direction on the war in Afghanistan. They didn't," he said.

Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe agreed Harper is ignoring the wishes of the Opposition parties by pressing for an extension.

"He's not talking about putting an end to that mission by 2009, they're even talking about 2011, and they're talking about spending more on the military also," he said.

Industry Minister Jim Prentice said the 2011 date marks the expiry of the Afghanistan Compact, and that it should not be taken as the date the government wants to end its role in the country.

KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

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SOURCETAG: 0710170654
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2007.10.17
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Entertainment
PAGE: C3
ILLUSTRATION: photo by Derek Ruttan, Sun Media CROAKY: Battling bronchitis, Matthew Good delivered an entertaining show and lengthy encore last night at Centennial Hall.
BYLINE: JAMES REANEY, FREE PRESS ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT COLUMNIST
COLUMN: Review
WORD COUNT: 468

Giving it a Good go

Maybe it was too much of a good thing at Centennial Hall last night.

Canadian rocker Matthew Good was definitely in solo, naked form with 1,050 fans cheering his intense songs from his hit CD Hospital Music, laughing with his rants and rambles -- and even applauding when he talked about battling bronchitis.

"I shouldn't be drinking right now -- I got the bronchitis," Good confessed early in the 90-minute plus set, while toying with a glass of wine. The combination of red wine -- pinot noir, apparently -- and whatever medication the bronchitis called for would leave him feeling a little tilted by night's end, Good speculated.

Hospital Music, anyone? The CD's songs cover a bleak period in Good's life when his marriage broke up and an accidental overdose of medication sent the bipolar performer to the emergency ward.

Hearing song after song including Born Losers, Black Helicopter, I'm a Window and She's in It for the Money with just Good's voice -- a bit croaky, nobly croaky -- and acoustic guitar was pretty bleak, too.

"Matthew, you rock," a fan shouted. Cough, cough, cough, went Good -- as a joke. One song was interrupted several times by his coughs. No joke.

Good said the illness would stop him from talking too much. Nope.

As might be expected, Good's chat was all over the place. The Throne Speech -- maybe one or two fans knew about it.

"I'm conducting polls myself," the socially conscious blogger and rocker said at one point. Cue the Good polling machine. Canada's troops should be brought home from Afghanistan before 2009, according to an informal poll of shouts from the audience. The other choice, keeping the troops there "until the Second Coming," was rejected in a chorus of boos.

Television is not good to Good.

"I won't see a penny -- typical," Good joked with mock bitterness after one of his most inspired bits of stage

talk, a long digression about the stupid nature of TV these days, with too many CSI shows and how Good wouldn't mind seeing The A-Team get all forensic in a low-budget CSI type show.

It would be a hit, he said. "If people will watch Corner Gas, people will watch that," he joked.

Still, Good wound up the main set with True Love Will Find You in the End, one of the optimistic moments on Hospital Music, when it looks as if the pain will actually end sometime. Good also used Apparitions from back in the day with the Matthew Good Band late in the set.

The encore made room for Pledge of Allegiance and Suburbia, tougher and more vengeful Good songs.

When Good plays London, something happens. Once, they pulled the plug on him at the Western Fair when he wouldn't stop on time. He came back and played the fair again and lay down on the stage so he could gaze up at the stars. He played late into the night as a headliner at a rock show at Delaware Speedway.

Last night, Good risked monotony -- and sometimes, good as he is and brave as he was to battle bronchitis alone on stage, he succumbed.

Dala, a duo of Toronto singer-songwriters opened. The two women and their guitars just keep getting better and their finale -- just their voices, no guitars -- of Fever and Hit the Road, Jack is a keeper.

KEYWORDS=MUSIC

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SOURCETAG 0710170625

PUBLICATION: The London Free Press

DATE: 2007.10.17

EDITION: Final

SECTION: Editorial/Opinion

PAGE: A9

BYLINE: ERIKA SIMPSON AND CRIS DE CLERCY, FREELANCE WRITER issues. Cris de Clercy and Erika Simpson are associate professors of political science in the department of political science at the University of Western Ontario.; Contact Cris de Clercy: 519-661-2111, ext 85163 Erika Simpson: 519-661-2111, ext 85162

COLUMN: Vox Pop

WORD COUNT: 480

Is Afghanistan panel just crass bid to deflect critics?

Liberal Leader Stephane Dion praised the prime minister for his conciliatory tone in announcing last week former Liberal deputy prime minister John Manley would chair the panel to review Canada's mission and future in Afghanistan.

But some important questions should be asked about the panel's mandate and purpose. (The discussion group will report directly to the prime minister by the end of January 2008.)

First, we are entering a federal election period -- the writ may come down this week.

The panel's establishment could be interpreted as a crass political attempt to deflect media and public criticism during an election campaign.

When the Minister of National Defence, Peter MacKay, inevitably faces a barrage of tough criticisms from the public and the media about the government's record in Afghanistan, will he simply shrug his shoulders and say the government has set up a review panel?

In other words, is this panel a crass political attempt to deflect criticism?

Second, what is the panel's mandate? If its budget is small, then the inquiry is presumably meant to be kept on a short leash.

Apart from a visit to Afghanistan, more information about the panel's proposed budget should give us a good idea about whether it plans to consult and hold hearings across the country.

Perhaps the panel should travel across Canada to listen to the views of ordinary Canadians of every political stripe, not merely consult among its five members.

One member, former U.S. ambassador Derek Burney, has been a longtime defender of Canada's commitments to NATO and pro-American on all types of issues ranging from NAFTA to NORAD.

He traditionally favours the status quo, so the question is whether he will be open to alternative views .

Will the panel travel across Canada and hear from peace groups, New Democrats, and Green party representatives?

The panel should consult with a broad umbrella of interest groups to gauge Canadian opinions.

After all, 71 soldiers and one diplomat have already died and more deaths and injuries are to be expected.

Questions should also be asked about whether an appointed five-person panel is the appropriate instrument of foreign policy.

Different Canadian governments have traditionally used a wide range of policy-making instruments to forge foreign policy.

The government could have established a parliamentary commission, which obviously would have been very expensive and time-consuming, taking months if not years to report back (remember the Somalia commission).

A joint committee of the Parliament and the Senate might have been preferable because politicians from all parties and every constituency in Canada could have been involved.

There are many experienced MPs and some non-partisan senators -- with free time on their hands -- who might contribute to a broader parliamentary discussion about Canada's future role in Afghanistan.

Finally, there is simply insufficient time to properly answer the prime minister's very substantive questions.

Harper is asking the panel to consider four options in its four-month study.

Should the Canadian Forces continue training the Afghan army and police with the goal of creating a self-sufficient security force?

Even experienced military and police officers who have taught at Canada's Lester B. Pearson Peacekeeping Training Centre would probably take months to answer this question properly.

The other three questions -- such as whether the government should withdraw Canadian forces altogether after February 2009 -- are also difficult issues that need long discussion and input from a wide range of officials to be considered properly.

NATO headquarters is full of diplomats and officers mandated to deal with Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is now NATO's primary mission, almost its *raison d'etre*.

It seems impossible to believe that a five-member panel, with relatively less military or diplomatic experience, could adequately answer Harper's difficult questions by the end of January.

This will no doubt lead pundits to ask whether the panel's establishment is primarily for domestic purposes in the lead-up to an election period that will focus on the Canadian mission in Afghanistan.

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DATE: 2007.10.17
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: A8
BYLINE: LICIA CORBELL
WORD COUNT: 460

Words haunt Dion Liberal leader's flip-flops make him easy pickings for Tories.

For some time now Liberal Leader Stephane Dion has been pretending he might bring down the Conservative's minority government over its stand on Canada's mission in Afghanistan and to a lesser extent, the environment.

Obviously, with his dismal leadership numbers, the Liberal Party's empty bank account and the internal bickering and breakdown within the big red machine, there isn't a chance Dion will allow his party to vote against last night's throne speech for obvious political reasons, unless he wants to put himself out of his own misery.

But what does he really think or believe about Afghanistan?

What has he said about it and more importantly, what did he do throughout Prime Minister Jean Chretien's government and then Paul Martin's?

On Afghanistan and the environment, Dion can be pilloried for his positions on both, using his own words and actions.

And, the federal Tories are ready and waiting to do so.

Just like they did in the past election, the big blue machine keeps sending journalists e-mails called "Just the Facts" filled with their target's own words.

On Afghanistan, for instance, in 2003 Dion was in Chretien's cabinet when Canadian troops were sent to Kabul and he was back in cabinet with then PM Martin when the Liberals decided to move our troops to the more dangerous Kandahar area.

As Just the Facts states: "March 2006 -- Dion For Mission: 'It's a very important mission and we want to be there,' Dion told a CP reporter.

'We will succeed in Afghanistan if we show a lot of determination,' he said on CTV a few days later. 'We need to be resolute and to succeed.' (Toronto Star, Dec. 6, 2006)."

But just two months after most of the above comments Dion then voted against extending the mission -- the very same mission -- he had been defending and had supported as part of Martin's cabinet.

According to excerpts from Chretien's just-published memoirs, *My Years as Prime Minister*, the reason our

troops are in southern Afghanistan is because his despised Liberal rival, Paul Martin dithered for so long, Canada's military got stuck with the last choice of assignments there.

"Later, unfortunately, when my successor took too long to make up his mind about whether Canada should extend our term with ISAF, our soldiers were moved out of Kabul and south again to battle the Taliban in the killing fields around Kandahar," writes Chretien.

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What's more, by striking a non-partisan panel last week led by former Liberal deputy prime minister John Manley to explore the future of Canada's military mission in Afghanistan, Dion was not only given a face-saving way out from voting against the speech, but no option either.

So, that leaves the environment.

As Prime Minister Stephen Harper said in an exclusive interview last week, "Mr. Dion says our environment plan didn't go far enough when his didn't go anywhere. Saying, 'I won't vote for you unless you meet Kyoto,' is an absurd position.

"The Kyoto compliance period begins in less than three months," said Harper.

"How is Mr. Dion going to cut greenhouse gas emissions by more than one-third in the next 80 days? These are absurd and irresponsible positions."

Clearly, the Tories won't be able to meet Dion's demands on Kyoto compliance.

But neither could Dion. He's just pretending.

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SOURCETAG: 0710170599
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2007.10.17
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A3
ILLUSTRATION: photo by Sean Kilpatrick, CP PAGEENTRY: Governor General Michaëlle Jean inspects the guard as she arrives on Parliament Hill yesterday to deliver the speech from the throne.
BYLINE: ALAN FINDLAY, NATIONAL BUREAU
DATELINE: OTTAWA
COLUMN: THE THRONE SPEECH
WORD COUNT: 392

Dion aims to avoid standoff

No election -- for now.

With the fate of this fall's parliamentary session on his shoulders, Opposition Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion signalled his party will work to avoid a legislative standoff that could trigger a nationwide trip to the polls in the coming weeks.

"Canadians want, as a priority for this parliament, to work," Dion said last night. "They don't want a third election in three years and a half."

Dion said his party anticipated it would have criticisms with the speech, such as a "complete and shocking indifference about poverty," a weak environment plan and a perceived ambiguity on Canada's combat mission in Afghanistan.

"We knew it would not be a Liberal throne speech, we accept that," he said. "It is a Conservative one with all the weaknesses we anticipated."

But party officials were quick to suggest the government didn't plant a poison pill in the speech that would force the Liberals into voting it down. The potential standoff over an omnibus law and order bill announced last night was also downplayed. The Grits supported many of those government initiatives in their original, or an amended, form in the last session of Parliament, they said.

Dion is expected to announce a detailed response and potential amendments to the Speech from the Throne in the House of Commons this afternoon.

The NDP and Bloc Québécois leaders were announcing their opposition to the speech even before the Governor General had finished reading it in the Senate Chamber.

"This Speech from the Throne is so far off track that we fail to see how it can possibly be salvaged with any tweaking here and there," said New Democrat Leader Jack Layton. "The NDP will not be able to give Mr. Harper a mandate to govern as he is seeking."

Bloc Leader Gilles Duceppe said the speech fails to address all but one of five items his party had demanded. "We'll vote against that, certainly."

He cited the Afghanistan mission's proposed extension to 2011 and the rejection of Canada's climate change commitments under the Kyoto Accord as unsupportable positions by the government.

Green party Leader Elizabeth May doubted the speech's remarks on climate change will cause the government to fall because she agrees with the Conservatives Canada can't meet its Kyoto Accord commitments over the next four years. But it also shouldn't let the Conservatives off the hook to do what they can, she said.

"The fact we cannot get to those 2012 targets does not negate the imperative that we get as close as we can," May said.

WHAT'S NEXT

The speech from the throne will be followed by several days of debate and confidence votes in the House of Commons. Here's the likely timetable:

Thursday: Vote on a sub-amendment by the Bloc Quebecois.

Monday: Vote on an amendment by the Liberals.

Oct. 24: Vote on the throne speech -- a confidence motion which must pass for the minority Conservative government to survive. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

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EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A1
BYLINE: GREG WESTON
COLUMN: National Affairs
WORD COUNT: 426

Harper's strategy obvious

In case there was any doubt how the Conservatives plan to fight the next federal election, their strategy was right there for all to see in the title of last night's throne speech: "Strong leadership. A better Canada."

If Stephen Harper and his strategists have their way, the next election will not be fought on Afghanistan, the economy, getting tough on crime or saving the planet from hot air.

As long as Stephane Dion is heading the Liberals, the Conservatives will try to make the campaign all about leadership.

The way things are going, it shouldn't be hard to do.

Even as the prime minister was firing up his well-oiled Conservative election machine with last night's throne speech, the Liberals were once again skidding from disunity and disarray straight toward the political ditch.

Two of Dion's key Quebec organizers quit their positions in a huff yesterday and no one is stepping up to replace them.

Another day, another humiliation for the Liberal leader. And if Harper gets his way, the fun is just beginning for Dion.

While the hapless Grit boss will almost certainly back down from defeating the government and forcing an election race over a throne speech, Canadian politics is now officially a revolving game of chicken between Liberals and Conservatives.

Harper and his team will do what they can to provoke an election. Dion and his crew will have to swallow themselves whole to avoid one.

In keeping with tradition, last night's 16-page drone from the throne was long on platitudes and short on specifics.

Officially billed as the government's agenda for the coming months, the speech was also a cleverly crafted road map into a political minefield for the Liberals.

For instance, the Grits and other opposition parties stalled a number of the Conservative crime-and-punishment bills during the last session, in some cases on a matter of both sound principle and good

reason.

Now the Conservatives are making the crime bills an all-or-nothing exercise in brinksmanship, introducing a single piece of legislation that includes all the formerly unpassed draft measures on impaired driving, the age of consent, dangerous offenders, bail reform, and mandatory sentences for gun crimes.

The Liberals will have one vote to either pass all of the proposed new laws at once, or go to the polls having defeated them all. Good luck with that.

Ditto on Afghanistan. The throne speech effectively commits the Conservative government to extending Canada's military mission there to 2011 to train the Afghan army and police.

Aside from making a farce of Harper's new panel studying the issue, the move also puts a gun to Dion's head.

Despite public opinion moving towards a withdrawal of Canadian troops in 2009, Dion will either have to meekly back the Conservatives in extending the mission, or face an early election.

Aside from providing a glimpse of Liberal pain for Conservative gain in the months to come -- if the current parliament lasts more than weeks -- the throne speech also offers a useful blueprint of the Harper election platform.

All in all, the landmines aside, most of the throne speech could have been written by the Liberals, but for one thing: "Our government is committed to strong leadership."

So far, that's something the Liberals can't say. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

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SOURCETAG 0710170589

PUBLICATION: The London Free Press

DATE: 2007.10.17

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A1

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Fred Chartrand CP PROMISES: Prime Minister Stephen Harper listens to Governor General Michaëlle Jean read the speech from the throne to start the second session of the 39th Parliament in the Senate yesterday.

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PM attacks on five fronts The Tories advance an Afghanistan vote, tax breaks, the Arctic and crime bill, but retreat on Kyoto.

The Conservative government will shower Canadians with tax breaks, wave the flag in the North and get tough on young thugs in a flurry of promises that could launch a fall election.

Amid much pomp and ceremony, Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean delivered a five-pronged federal blueprint that aims to extend Canada's mission in Afghanistan by two years and pass a hefty omnibus package of anti-crime measures. In addition to new plans to overhaul the youth justice system and tackle elder abuse, the feds will immediately revive measures on impaired driving, dangerous offenders, bail reform and mandatory prison terms in a single sweeping Tackling Violent Crime bill.

"Canadians expect prompt passage of this crucial legislation," Jean said, reading the speech on behalf of the Conservative government.

Frustrated with the stalled passage of justice bills, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has warned this legislation will be a matter of confidence, which means the government will stand or fall on the crime bills.

With that ultimatum, the fate of the federal government hung in doubt last night as the Bloc Quebecois and NDP gave the speech thumbs down but the Liberal strategy remained unclear.

The speech also revealed the Conservatives want a 2011 deadline for the military mission in Afghanistan -- two years past the current mandate approved by Parliament. But the proposed extension will be put to a vote in the House of Commons after a blue-ribbon panel reports back with recommendations by February 2008.

"Canada should build on its accomplishments and shift to accelerate the training of the Afghan army and police so the Afghan government can defend its own sovereignty," Jean read. "This will not be completed by Feb. 2009, but our government believes this objective should be achievable by 2011."

The speech also foreshadowed a series of measures to boost the economy and deliver long-term, broad-based tax relief for individuals, businesses and families. Knocking off another percentage point from the GST is also

in the works.

"The Minister of Finance will soon provide a fall economic and fiscal update, which will outline the next steps in that plan to ensure that Canada has a modern infrastructure, an innovative and entrepreneurial business environment and a tax system that rewards hard work -- all based on a foundation of sound fiscal management," Jean read.

Tapping in to national pride, the speech from the throne also pledged to strengthen Canada's Arctic sovereignty by promoting an economic and social development plan and building a "world-class" Arctic research station to foster environmental science and resource development.

"Defending our sovereignty in the North also demands that we maintain the capacity to act," the speech read. "New Arctic patrol ships and expanded aerial surveillance will guard Canada's Far North and the Northwest Passage. As well, the size and capabilities of the Arctic Rangers will be expanded to better patrol our vast Arctic territory."

The Conservatives also pledged strong steps to green the environment and slash greenhouse gases, but made clear that Canada will not meet its Kyoto targets on emissions.

"It is now widely understood that because of inaction on greenhouse gases over the last decade, Canada's emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol within the compliance period," Jean read.

The speech from the throne was delivered just hours after news of more internal turmoil in the Opposition Liberal ranks. Leader Stephane Dion was on the prowl for a new Quebec lieutenant after losing Gatineau MP Marcel Proulx, who quit as Dion's captain in the province after learning his job had been offered behind his back to Montreal MP Denis Coderre. Coderre rejected the offer, leaving Dion scrambling for a replacement and the party in further disarray.

The party leaders will begin debate on the throne speech in the House of Commons today.
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