

## THE AFGHAN MISSION

**Ottawa proposing Manley as UN boss in Kabul**

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The federal government is floating the name of former Liberal deputy prime minister John Manley as the United Nations' new "super envoy" to co-ordinate aid and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Sources have told The Globe and Mail that Mr. Manley is being suggested as a replacement for former British politician Paddy Ashdown, who was originally nominated for the job. Mr. Manley is the recent chair of a panel that recommended Canadian troops remain in Afghanistan, but only if NATO is able to come up with 1,000 more troops, as well as helicopters and unmanned aircraft.

Such a move, if successful, would make it doubly difficult for the Canadian government to withdraw from the combat mission, because a pullout would be seen as a humiliation for a country that has one of its own as the special representative. Having a Canadian in such an influential role would also help to sell the mission in Canada, where voters are divided over it.

Sources said that other candidates are in the running, including one from a Scandinavian country.

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Mr. Ashdown withdrew from the post last month after opposition from Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who was reportedly concerned that the former British politician would have too much influence in the country. Some Afghan officials have difficulty with the idea of a special representative, saying there is a "negative atmosphere" in the country created around the notion.

Installing Mr. Manley in such a role would also make life difficult for the Liberals, who would be hard-pressed to oppose the mission if one of their own was acting in such an influential role.

Sources said it would be unheard of for the government to have suggested Mr. Manley without the former deputy prime minister's

approval.

It was unclear whether the government has broached the idea with the UN. Mr. Manley was unavailable for comment yesterday.

"He would have to give his nod to have his name floated," said a source.

Typically, an appointment of this type would be forwarded to the Canadian ambassador and staff at the United Nations, who would then attempt to get the ear of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The UN Security Council would also be asked to weigh in.

If the UN is looking for someone with clout, Mr. Manley would be a strong candidate, given that Canada has troops in Kandahar, the country's most dangerous province. But Mr. Manley would also have to be careful to not wield too much influence, lest it appear that Mr. Karzai was being dictated to by foreign powers.

"This isn't like sending a special representative where you're not sure who the sovereign authority is," a source said.

While the envoy would be stationed in Kabul, a good portion of the job would be flying to various world capitals to get countries to fulfill commitments to the rebuilding process. The envoy would also have to work with the military presence in Afghanistan, which is operated by NATO.

An official with Canada's Foreign Affairs Department said yesterday that the individual who ultimately gets the job would have to enjoy the strong support of the Afghan government and the international community.

"There is an urgent need for stronger UN leadership and better co-ordination of the international community in support of the Afghan government," Lisa Monette said in a statement.

"The countries that are carrying the heaviest loads, Canada among them, are obviously eager to see this appointment occur as soon as possible."

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Stephen Harper spoke with Mr. Karzai yesterday to express his sympathies for the recent loss of Afghan lives in a suicide bombing, while Mr. Karzai did the same for injuries sustained by Canadian soldiers in an IED attack Monday.

Mr. Harper also reviewed the Manley panel recommendations with Mr. Karzai.

"The Prime Minister confirmed that he is in contact with NATO allies regarding additional troops and expressed his hope that Parliament will support a motion that would see an extension of Canada's mission to Afghanistan," Sandra Buckler, the Prime Minister's director of communications, said in a statement. "President Karzai reconfirmed his support for the Canadian mission, a message he will carry to NATO in the coming weeks."

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