

Table of Contents

<u>Coming home to EI.....</u>	1
<u>National Journal.....</u>	2
<u>N.L. ponders law that protects reservists' jobs.....</u>	4
<u>Province to protect jobs of reservists; Department of Labour will introduce legislation to hold positions for soldiers.....</u>	6
<u>N.L. gov't says it will introduce legislation to protect jobs of reservists.....</u>	8
<u>INDEX:Business, Defence, Labour, Politics.....</u>	10

Coming home to EI

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Major Wallace Noseworthy, a Canadian army reservist and soon-to-be father, has just returned from a six-month tour of duty in Afghanistan. Though he's thankful not to have been killed or injured in Afghanistan, he isn't thrilled about things on the home front.

In addition to being an army reservist, Maj. Noseworthy was also the manager at Humber Motors Ford in Stephenville, Nfld. That was until he went to Afghanistan and Humber Ford refused him a leave of absence to serve his country. Maj. Noseworthy was dismissed, meaning that one of his first tasks now that he's back will be to apply for Employment Insurance.

Federally regulated industries offer no formal job protection for reservists who volunteer to serve overseas. And most provinces allow employers under their jurisdiction to dismiss employees who need a leave of absence to serve in the military. Only three of Canada's provinces have passed legislation making such action illegal — Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has made a special effort to raise this issue with provincial governments, most recently asking P.E.I. Premier Robert Ghiz to pass legislation in his province.

The Prime Minister should not have to ask. There is no reason why the small number of reservists who serve Canada abroad (in Afghanistan, there are roughly 300) should have to come home to the unemployment line. Why they do is a question that our federal Parliament and the premiers of seven Canadian provinces should be made to answer the next time they voice their appreciation for the sacrifices being made by our soldiers.

KEYWORDS: EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

National Journal

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Arctic

PM announces park expansion

FORT SIMPSON, N.W.T. – Prime Minister Stephen Harper kicked off a three-day Arctic sovereignty tour Wednesday by announcing the expansion of one of the country's most rugged and beautiful national parks. Harper said the government will add 5,400 square kilometres of land to the Nahanni National Park Reserve – a world heritage site – barring it from further development. The announcement brings the total area under protection to 28,000 square kilometres. That's five times the size of Prince Edward Island. The northern trip, which will also include military announcements, is meant to bolster Canada's sovereignty over the North.

Labour

N.L. to protect jobs of reservists

ST. JOHN'S, N.L. – Legislation will be introduced in Newfoundland and Labrador to protect the jobs of military reservists while they're serving overseas, the province's labour minister said Wednesday. The move comes after a Newfoundland man returned to the province this week after serving in Afghanistan but is now looking for employment. Maj. Wallace Noseworthy, a reservist with the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, chose to leave his job after his employer, Humber Motors Ford Ltd. in Stephenville, refused to grant him a leave of absence to serve overseas. Similar legislation is already in effect in Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan.

Environment

Clean car drivers to get green plates

TORONTO – Ontario motorists who drive an environmentally friendly, low-emission vehicle will soon get a green-hued licence plate and access to perks like free parking or access to car-pool lanes under a new provincial program unveiled Wednesday. The so-called "eco-licence" plate is one of three green transportation policies Ontario's Liberal government hopes will encourage commuters and businesses alike to factor the environment into their spending decisions. The government plans to consult with vehicle manufacturers and environmental groups to develop a rating system that identifies the cleanest cars, light trucks and commercial vehicles. The program is expected to be launched by spring 2008.

Crime

Volunteers help in search for girl

TROIS-RIVIERES, Que. – Several volunteers fanned out Wednesday to help in the search for Cedrika Provencher, the nine-year-old Quebec girl who has been missing since July 31. Family and friends combed a wooded area to look for Cedrika in a search that is separate from the work being done by Quebec provincial police. Police continued their search along the banks of the St. Maurice River and were checking out any worthwhile tips received from motorists who were stopped at checkpoints on Tuesday night. Police believe Cedrika disappeared shortly after she told two people she was helping a man find his lost dog.

Tribute

Slain Ont. police officer laid to rest

NEWMARKET, Ont. – A solitary rose sat atop a flag-draped casket along with Const. Rob Plunkett's cap Wednesday as family, friends, dignitaries and police officers from across North America gathered to say farewell to a beloved and respected comrade. Plunkett, 43, an officer with York Regional Police, was killed in the line of duty last week when he was struck by a car while attempting to make an arrest. The funeral comes one day after a charge against a suspect in Plunkett's death, Nadeem Jiwa, 19, was upgraded from manslaughter to first-degree murder. Baseer Yousafzai, 23, faces at least four lesser charges.

Littering

Montreal hands out pocket ashtrays

MONTREAL – Smokers who toss their cigarette butts onto the street because they don't have an ashtray have had a little crimp put in that excuse thanks to the City of Montreal. The city started distributing pocket-sized portable ashtrays Wednesday and is making them available free to keep city sidewalks clean. About 100,000 are ready to be given away. The portable ashtrays, which cost the city about 40 cents each, are washable and reusable. Smokers just tuck their butts in them and empty them the next time they get near a garbage container.

N.L. ponders law that protects reservists' jobs

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Chronicle–Herald
DATE: 2007.08.09
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BYLINE: Tara Brautigam
WORD COUNT: 420

ST. JOHN'S, N.L. – Legislation will be introduced in Newfoundland and Labrador to protect the jobs of military reservists while they're serving overseas, the province's labour minister said Wednesday.

The move comes after a Newfoundland man returned to the province this week after serving in Afghanistan, but is now looking for employment after he lost his job at a car dealership.

Labour Minister Shawn Skinner said legislation requiring employers to hold the jobs of reservists is no different from laws that ensure maternity leave for mothers who give birth, or compassionate care for those tending to the terminally ill.

"I believe it's not an unreasonable request to make of an employer that when somebody wants to go and serve their country, that you hold their job until such time that they come back," Skinner said in an interview.

Maj. Wallace Noseworthy, a reservist with the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, returned Tuesday to the province. He could not be reached Wednesday, but he told CBC News that he chose to leave his job after his employer, Humber Motors Ford Ltd. in Stephenville, refused to grant him a leave of absence to serve overseas.

Calls to the car dealership were referred to its general manager in Corner Brook, but he could not be reached for comment.

Marilyn Tucker, president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Employers' Council, said it's not easy for some employers, especially small businesses, to hold a position for reservists while they're away.

"How do you replace a key employee or senior employee or a highly skilled employee in a labour market that is exceptionally tight anyway, and you're trying to replace someone for a six-month period?" Tucker said.

"Businesses may not be able to survive if they lose key employees and are unable to replace them."

But she added that the majority of employers are able to hold jobs for workers who decide to serve overseas.

Skinner said the legislation, which is already in effect in Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan, could come as early as the fall.

The issue of job protection for reservists struck a chord earlier this year in New Brunswick after the provincial government said a reservist would be offered employment on his return from Afghanistan after he quit his job at NB Power.

Maj. Sean Courty stepped down last year as a security official at a nuclear generating station when the Crown corporation denied his request for a leave of absence before he departed for Afghanistan.

The Department of National Defence currently has no position on the issue, Lt.-Cmdr. Margaret Morris said.

About 30 per cent of the 2,500 Canadian Forces personnel stationed in Afghanistan are reservists, Morris said.

'I believe it's not an unreasonable request to make of an employer that when somebody wants to go and serve their country, that you hold their job until such time that they come back'

Province to protect jobs of reservists; Department of Labour will introduce legislation to hold positions for soldiers

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DATE: 2007.08.09

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SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Tara Brautigam

ILLUSTRATION: Shawn Skinner

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N.L. gov't says it will introduce legislation to protect jobs of reservists

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WORD COUNT: 401

ST. JOHN'S, N.L. (CP) _ Legislation will be introduced in Newfoundland and Labrador to protect the jobs of military reservists while they're serving overseas, the province's labour minister said Wednesday.

The move comes after a Newfoundland man returned to the province this week after serving in Afghanistan, but is now looking for employment after he lost his job at a car dealership.

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INDEX:Business, Defence, Labour, Politics

DATE: 2007.08.08
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POLITICS
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ST. JOHN'S, N.L. – The Newfoundland and Labrador government says it plans to introduce legislation that would protect the jobs of military reservists while they're serving overseas.

Provincial Labour Minister Shawn Skinner says such protection is no different from laws that ensure maternity leave for mothers who give birth, or compassionate care for those tending to the terminally ill.

Skinner says it's not unreasonable to request an employer hold the job of a reservist until he or she returns home after serving.

The issue of job protection for reservists came to light after a Newfoundland man returned to the province Tuesday from Afghanistan, only to find himself looking for new work after losing his job.

Maj. Wallace Noseworthy worked at a car dealership in Stephenville, N.L.

Skinner says the legislation, which is already in effect in Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan, could come as early as the fall.

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