Defence minister one of several MPs who received severance pay after election

The jury is out on MPs accepting severance pay from public employers: some refused it, some donated the money, others just cashed the cheque.

Marie-Danielle Smith

Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan received severance pay from the military after winning his seat in the Oct. 19 election, disclosures to Canada’s ethics commissioner show.

An entry dated March 1 states Mr. Sajjan received severance pay from the Canadian Armed Forces. Reports from last fall say he quit the reserve force Oct. 21, two days after the federal election. When he was named minister Nov. 4, his departure still hadn’t been formalized.

“Even though the minister released from the Canadian Forces voluntarily, he—like all other members of the CAF—received this taxable, deferred part of his compensation upon release,” press secretary Jordan Owens said.

“He has provided all necessary information to the Ethics Commissioner, and his personal finances are a private matter,” she said. Ms. Owens would not disclose the amount that Mr. Sajjan received.

Based on publicly-available information about how severance is calculated, it appears Mr. Sajjan was eligible to receive an amount in the tens of thousands—likely between $30,000 and $40,000 or more, according to his rank and years of service. His office did not respond after repeated requests to confirm the accuracy of this estimate.

Continued on Page 2

Tories rejected departmental, diplomatic advice to join UN Vietnam program

Paradis told bureaucrats to hunt for ’technical assistance’ options instead.

Carl Meyer

The minister in charge of Canada’s international aid in 2013 rejected a joint UN program with Vietnam that his own department and diplomats had recommended, documents show.

An August 2013 memo to then-development minister Christian Paradis proposed a grant arrangement with the UN Development Program to contribute $14 million over three years to a major socioeconomic development plan in Vietnam.

The memo was obtained by Embassy under access to information law.

Called the One Plan, the UN launched the project with Vietnam in 2012 and set out several focus areas, such as gender-equitable growth.

Donors were asked to give $134.5 million in direct contributions, and had raised $45.6 million at the time the memo was written. Canada’s foreign affairs department proposed chipping in $14 million to that, under a Canadian initiative called Strengthening Institutions for a Modern Economy.

The 11-page memo, endorsed by the top foreign aid bureaucrat at the time, Paul Rochon, extensively lays out the rationale behind the proposal. It notes that the proposal might be seen as “a controversial Saudi arms deal with Canada.

Continued on Page 2

Guess who’s coming to dinner?
A night in the Saudi embassy

The dinner was officially co-hosted by the six member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council: Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain. The Saudi embassy and residence compound on Sussex Drive was the venue, and the small group of reporters who were invited to make about Syrian refugees, the reporters were told. None of those reporters had seen the inside of the Saudi embassy before.

The press had been brought in to pass along a message to the Canadian people, said Mr. AlSudairy: a “thank you” to the Canadian government for its work resettling Syrian refugees.

Continued on Page 8
Defence minister one of several MPs who received severance pay after election

Continued from Page 1

Military members get severance 'almost regardless' of how they leave

Complicated rules dictate how officials calculate severance, making it nearly impossible to determine an average amount that members are paid.

For eligible reservists, as a basic premise, severance is calculated at seven days of pay per year of service—but there are a bunch of complicating factors, such as the member’s rank, total years of service and how much time the member actually spent performing duties.

Several current MPs confirmed to Embassy that they benefitted from military severance pay in the past. 

For example, Karen McCrimmon, the parliamentary secretary for the minister of veterans affairs, received severance after she left the forces in 2006. But she quit for family reasons, her office said, and didn’t get her job in the House of Commons until last October. They declined to provide an amount.

Another new MP, former Lt.-Gen. Andrew Leslie, also accepted severance pay after he retired from the forces in 2011. His parliamentary assistant, Shawn Kalbhen, told Embassy: “all military members, almost regardless of how they leave the forces, receive severance pay when they leave.”

Mr. Leslie had come under criticism in 2014 when it came out that he had billed DND $72,000 in “relocation expenses” for a move within Ottawa, shortly after retiring. That’s another type of benefit the military doles out for about 300 of its own every year, the Ottawa Citizen reported.

Another ex-military MP and former Conservative veterans affairs minister, Erin O’Toole, told Embassy that he was in the military for 12 years before working for a decade as a lawyer then seeking elected office. Because he left the forces after the end of a contract, Mr. O’Toole got his own contributions to a pension fund back, but didn’t receive severance pay, he said.

‘It is not supposed to be a free gift’

“We always find it curious when there are jobs where there is severance offered for voluntarily leaving,” Aaron Wudrick, the president of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, told Embassy.

“These are public dollars. Severance is supposed to be for situations where an individual faces a sudden loss of employment—you know, against their own will. It is not supposed to be a free gift to people who choose to leave their jobs.”

Some changes have been made to the system in the past few years. The Reserve Force Retirement Gratuity has been phased out in favour of the less-generous Canadian Forces Severance Pay program.

And in 2012, accumulation of severance pay for resignation and retirement reasons stopped. But many members are still eligible to redeem what they had accrued before then.

“Severance benefits for the purpose of resignation and retirement are infrequent amongst other employers,” the defence department acknowledges on a Frequently Asked Questions web page.

“The ending of the severance entitlement for retirement and resignation will provide financial predictability for the government in these times of fiscal restraint,” it says.

In the face of a federal deficit this year, people like Mr. Wudrick believe elected officials should tighten the public purse strings and refuse severance packages, even if they are legally entitled to them.

“Especially given the circumstance we’re in, where we’re sort of tight for money, it would certainly be showing leadership to say ‘OK, I’m going to forgo this,’” he said. “I think that shows some leadership and that shows respect for tax dollars.”

He added, “if the minister did actually take this money, he should follow the example of some of his colleagues.”

Because he left the forces after the end of a contract, Mr. O’Toole got his own contributions to a pension fund back, but didn’t receive severance pay, he said.

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Other ministers, MPs took severance pay after election

Indeed, other MPs declined severance from public sector positions as they headed to the Hill last fall.

Liberal MPs Anthony Housefather and Ramez Ayoub and NDP MP Jenny Kwan declined substantial packages, with Mr. Housefather telling Global News that “I’d rather leave it with the taxpayers.”

Several other MPs—Liberals Jean-Claude Poissant and Pierre Breton and Conservative Alain Rayes—decided to donate severance packages to charities or non-profit organizations.

Still, Mr. Sajjan isn’t alone. Others, including cabinet ministers, accepted severance pay from their previous jobs.

Jody Wilson-Raybould, the justice minister, disclosed with the ethics commissioner Feb. 23 that she had received severance pay from the Assembly of First Nations. Embassy contacted her office to ask for more information, but staff had not responded before press time.

The only other severance disclosure on the ethics commissioner’s website is from Jennifer O’Connell, a Liberal MP who received severance pay from Pickering, Ont.’s municipal government after quitting her job as a city councillor.

But Global News reported Feb. 18 that she and six other MPs had received a combined total of nearly $780,000.

That included $132,518 for Veterans Affairs Minister Kent Hehr after he left the Alberta legislature and $46,150 for Infrastructure Minister Amarjeet Sohi after he left the Edmonton city council.

On their ethics disclosures, those ministers list income from the Alberta and Edmonton governments, respective-ly, but don’t specifically mention severance pay.

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- Gwynne Dyer: Obama in Havana
- Canadians react to terror in Brussels
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The budget Easter bunny should make rounds in Asia

Finance Minister Bill Morneau tables the 2016 budget in the House of Commons March 22. PMO photo: Adam Scotti

Gwynne Dyer: Obama in Havana

Easter bunny

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Tories rejected departmental, diplomatic advice to join UN Vietnam program

Continued from Page 1

gram aligns with the department’s country strategy for Vietnam and that it would present an opportunity to showcase Canadian support for disadvantaged and vulnerable women and for transparent public institutions.

As a donor, Canada would have been given a seat at the steering committee that would have influenced funding priorities, the memo states.

The memo adds that, in addition to Mr. Rochon, “relevant officials within the foreign affairs and trade sections of the department, including Canada’s ambassador to Vietnam, have been consulted and are supportive of this initiative.”

But it appears Mr. Paradis rejected the proposal.

On the memo’s last page, he checked a box next to “I do not agree with the recommendation.” He then wrote in the comments section below, “please see my office for instructions.” He signed and dated it Nov. 19, 2013.

Vietnam says it was unaware

Embassy asked Development Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau’s office and Global Affairs Canada if they were aware of why Mr. Paradis rejected the program.

“The department was asked to explore whether a similar initiative could be pursued through Canadian technical assistance,” wrote Louis Belanger, director of communications for Ms. Bibeau, in an email March 24 responding to both lines of inquiry.

Technical assistance can involve providing officials with expertise on international best practices, something that Canada engages in with Vietnam through other programs. The memo about the proposed UN program said it would allow for the sharing of technical expertise, as well as other services.

The government still hasn’t established any similar programs with UNDP and Vietnam, Mr. Belanger said, although Canada continues to provide support to several other projects within the country.

Reached for comment, Vietnamese Ambassador To Anh Dung said that staff at the Vietnamese embassy didn’t know about the proposal.

Future potential

Ms. Bibeau’s office did not rule out joining the UNDP program in the future.

“As the government will be reviewing aid policy and the funding framework, country programs will be reviewing a wide range of possible ideas and partners for future projects,” wrote Mr. Belanger.

The memo says civil society and the private sector identified the “comparative advantages and role of the United Nations in Vietnam.”

As a rapidly-developing country, important regional player and fast-growing market for Canadian exports, Vietnam’s economic and social progress are worth protecting and furthering, the memo suggests.

That can come through such actions as strengthening the environment for business, improving unskilled labour practices, making public investments more efficient, enhancing legal standards and improving advocacy for civil society. The One Plan set out to channel all the UN’s power into achieving these ends.

Vietnam has only become more relevant to Canada in the years since the memo.

The Southeast Asian country is now a Trans-Pacific Partnership signatory, along with Canada, and is part of the Harper-era International Education Strategy. It’s also a so-called country of focus for international aid priorities, although the House of Commons foreign affairs committee is currently reviewing which countries should be included on that list.

The Liberal government has promised to become more engaged with the UN, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently hosted UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in Canada.

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Let’s get our kids moving!

Lots of good things happen when our kids move more.

Being active doesn’t have to mean planned, structured exercise. All you have to do is encourage that natural urge to ‘Run. Jump. Play. Every day.’

Girls from a local hill tribe laugh in Sapa, Vietnam in 2011. Gender-equitable growth was a focus area for a program the Conservative government rejected in 2013. UN photo. Kibae Park
Military police recorded one incident for every eight CAF members in 2015

National Defence employs five people, full time, to manually compile statistics from a clunky records system.

Marie-Danielle Smith

Military police say they recorded about one incident for every eight Canadian Armed Forces members in 2015—and that’s fewer than usual, historical data show.

They are not necessarily crimes but could also involve such things as damaged equipment or faulty alarm systems, according to the military police.

In the 2015 military police created 11,671 "general occurrences", 25,611 "computer-aided dispatches", said Jean-Marc Mercier, a public affairs officer with the military police.

Those numbers are drawn from SAMPIS, which stands for Security and Military Police Information System. It’s a system that hasn’t been updated in seven years and has been the target of numerous recommendations for improvement and complaints—let alone the problem of manually entered statistics without the manual aid of several full-time analysts.

Mr. Mercier said computer-aided dispatches are automatically created for all calls to the military police. These are "not easily searchable," he said.

General occurrences, on the other hand, are the main event records that the police themselves use as a way to enter the initial basic information about an offence, said Maj. Mercier. "It represents the written record of a reported offence as required by law and, in all likelihood, by police agency policy."

Examples of general occurrences, he said, are homicides, assaults, motor vehicle accidents, impaired driving, breaking and entering and theft. They are sometimes related to theft, robbery, sexual assaults and drug and weapon offences.

But it’s important to recognize, he noted, that about 57 per cent of the offences, or six,700 for 2015, are aggression-specific. Although these can include things such as security or alarm problems—a door left unlocked, for instance—they also include thefts or equipment losses or compared on bases, he said. Embassy recently reported substantial thefts, losses and damage to CAF equipment in the 2014-15 financial year.

Michel Drapeau, a military lawyer in Ottawa, said that the numbers seem high. But, "it could be anything from somebody reporting smoke to somebody reporting anonymously an assault," he said.

Still: "you don’t expect the military police to be so active," he said.

According to Statistics Canada, the general crime rate in 2013 sat at about five per cent, or one criminal incident for every 20 people.

System hasn’t been updated in seven years

Data from the provost marshal’s most recent annual report cover 15 months, from Jan. 1, 2012 until March 31, 2013.

During that time, 39,751 calls and 18,913 general occurrences were recorded—suggesting that 2015 was in fact a slower-than-average year. Of the general occurrences, 87 are categorized as "violent crime." More than 3,000 are property crimes—that’s the most frequent entry. But well over 12,000 of the occurrences aren’t categorized in the report.

Previous years show similar numbers. The provost marshal’s annual report for 2014, according to the 2011 report, was 16,928 general occurrences and 34,863 calls per year. However, it isn’t possible to obtain such a breakdown for 2015, or to quickly get information about the thousands of "occur- rence-based" reports, he said. "All actions on the system by operators are recorded," Maj. Mercier said.

Five full-time operators are employed to manually extract data from the system for annual reporting purposes, he said. "Because it’s a management tool, not a police-tracking system."

TheProvost Marshal’s most recent report for 2014 is still sitting on the minister’s desk for approval, an access-to-information officer said in a recent report. The lack of any new and up-to-date information about the general occurrences led to a report to the Chief of Defence Staff and not to Parliament, which means those data aren’t mandate to publish reports by certain dates.

The SAMPIS system, which Maj. Mercier said is also used by many other police agencies in Canada, has been in use since 2000. The software was last updated in 2009, he said.

According to the Judge Advocate General’s 2014-15 annual report, 1,182 charges were laid within the military justice system. Almost 46 per cent of these were charged received guilty verdicts.

There’s no legislative mandate to publish reports by certain dates. The SAMPIS system, which Maj. Mercier said is also used by many other police agencies in Canada, has been in use since 2000. The software was last updated in 2009.

The Union of Parliamentarians for a New Military Police Act said it needs a new and up-to-date system for annual reporting purposes, he said. "Because it’s a management tool, not a police-tracking system."

"I can have appreciation for what soldiers experience earlier in their careers. But I don’t fully understand the intricacies of the military police as a body—through no fault of its officers—it’s an incubator that can provide for the wealth of experience that metropolitans police forces do."

He sees problems with the military police service as the youth and relative inexperience of officers handling major investigations, their closeness to the military chain of command. But some military police officers see things differently.

In addition to patrolling a base and serving on the national service, MCpl. Coughlin did aircraft security on a deployment to Afghanistan in 2007 and protected mission personnel in Tokyo in 2010.

This range of experiences made him better prepared for his work, MCpl. Coughlin argued, as did the fact that he had completed the same basic training as other military members.

"I can have appreciation for what soldiers go through," he said. He added that he inherited understands the intricacies of the military better than civilian police can, despite undergoing the same kinds of police training.

"With a few years of experience, a military police officer is an investigator, when on the civilian side it would probably take much more, the person would do patrol much longer," Maj. Mercier said, arguing that young military police gain more significant experience earlier in their careers.

"Add to this the variety of locations and situations where they are involved—it makes them a well-rounded specialist."
Le Pen’s presence spiked Bombardier meeting: EU legislator

Aerospace giant lacked ‘capacity’ to meet entire delegation, says spokesperson.

Peter Mazereeuw

A meeting between Bombardier executives and visiting European parliamentarians was cancelled at the last minute, and one member of the European Union delegation is pointing to the controversy caused by French politician Marine Le Pen as the cause.

A delegation of EU parliamentarians had a scheduled visit to Bombardier’s Montreal office cancelled, after officials from the Canadian aerospace company requested to meet only with two high-ranking members of the delegation, wrote Jude Kirton-Darling, a British Member of European Parliament and member of the delegation, in a text-based interview over Twitter.

“Doing so would have divided the members of the delegation, something the Europeans weren’t prepared to do, she wrote.

Ms. Kirton-Darling wrote that she believed Bombardier wanted to avoid meeting with Ms. Le Pen, who was technically a part of the visiting delegation.

“I think it was directly due to her that our programme was changed,” she wrote, later adding that she had not spoken with anyone at Bombardier on the subject.

A spokesperson for the aerospace company had a different story, saying the right people weren’t available to host the full delegation from Europe.

The cancellation was relayed to the members of the EU delegation by the European Parliament’s secretariat, which was responsible for co-ordinating the visit, wrote Ms. Kirton-Darling. Embassy could not confirm whether the decision to cancel the visit was made by Bombardier or the secretariat.

‘It didn’t work out’

Ms. Le Pen was not available to be interviewed, according to spokesperson Richard Malvais, and was not able to respond to emailed questions by press time.

Bombardier has been in the spotlight for months over its request for federal money to go toward its C Series plane program, and a recent report by the Globe and Mail that, even while the company awaits a federal decision, it plans to send 200 jobs overseas.

The EU delegation, minus Ms. Le Pen, met with Trade Minister Chrystia Freeland, the Canadian House trade committee, civil society groups and others during its time in Ottawa, and toured the Port of Montreal while in that city. Ms. Le Pen did join the delegation for a meeting with Pierre Marc Johnson, Quebec’s negotiator for the CETA.

Mr. Johnson said he did not consider cancelling the meeting, despite the refusal of most of Quebec’s top politicians to meet with Ms. Le Pen. He had been in communication with Quebec government officials about Ms. Le Pen’s activities in the province before the meeting, he said.

“We were welcoming a European delegation. It so happened one of its members, Mme. Le Pen, was active in the media when she was in Montreal, [and] made a few declarations which were surprising coming from a foreigner, criticizing Canadian and Quebec immigration policy and passing judgment on the character of ministers. I guess it created a situation which was not usual for these kinds of visits,” he said.

Mr. Johnson said Ms. Le Pen was “totally against any trade deal, and she said so,” arguing that the investor-state dispute settlement mechanism—commonly referred to as ISDS— included in the deal would compromise France’s sovereignty.

The meeting was otherwise “excellent,” said Mr. Johnson, adding that Quebec government is satisfied with the CETA text “on every aspect including ISDS.”

The EU delegation’s visit was also productive and positive on the whole, wrote Ms. Kirton-Darling.

“There will be a lot of discussion in the parliament about CETA [and] it was useful to understand some of the concerns in Canada in more detail (e.g. On social programmes/public services, pharmaceuticals, meat industry, etc). Building the connections with our parliamentary counterparts was really important too,” she wrote.

hilltimes.com/events/TNSP-forum.html
Terrorists a lethal nuisance, not an existential threat

Amid a Western media frenzy after attacks in Brussels, we must cut the problem down to size.

Belgium may be a boring country, but it still seems extreme for a Belgian politician to say that the country is now living through its darkest days since the end of the Second World War. Can any country really be so lucky that the worst thing that has happened to it in the past 70 years is a couple of bombs that killed 34 people? That may sound a bit uncharitable, but respect for the innocent people killed by terrorists does not require us to take leave of our senses. What is happening now is the media feeding frenzy that has become almost a statutory requirement after every terrorist attack in the West.

And people do let themselves get wound up by the media-generated panic. Last week at dinner a young man, staying with us overnight in London before taking a morning flight to the United States, openly debated with himself about whether he should cancel his (non-refundable) ticket or not. It was a ticket from London to Chicago that went nowhere near mainland Europe at all.

The airlines are just as prone to panic, cancelling flights into Belgium as if the country had suddenly become a seriously dangerous place. This story will dominate the Belgian media for weeks, as it did the rest of the Western media last week. Even non-Western media played it for a day or two. After almost nothing new or useful is said, the frenzy will die down—until next time.

This is a very stupid way of behaving, but you will notice that I am a part of it. No matter what I say about the bombs in Brussels, the fact that I am writing at length about them in a column that appears over the world contributes to the delusion that they are not only a nasty event but also an important one.

The recent terrorist attacks in Europe have been largely confined to French-speaking countries. Muslim immigrants in France and Belgium mostly come from Arab countries, and especially from North Africa, where French is the second language. Radical Islamism is much weaker in the rest of the Muslim world, so Germany (whose Muslims are mostly Turkish) and Britain (where they are mostly of South Asian origin) generate fewer Islamist extremists than the francophone countries, and face fewer terrorist attacks.

France’s and Belgium’s Muslim citizens are also less integrated into the wider community. French housing policy has dumped most of the immigrants in high-rise, low-income developments at the edge of the cities, often beyond the end of the metro lines. Unemployed, poorly educated and culturally isolated, their young men are more easily recruited into extremist groups.

The point of this sort of analysis is to cut the problem down to size. There is no terrorist army in Belgium, just a bunch of young men making it up as they go along. The Brussels attacks happened four days after the arrest of Salah Abdeslam, the sole survivor of the gang who carried out the attacks on the Batcalan arena and the Stade de France in Paris last November.

—Foreign Minister Stéphane Dion defends his government’s decision to allow a government-brokered sale of armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia, in the prepared text of a speech at the University of Ottawa March 29.

The Belgian flag next to a stone angel at Martyrs’ Square in Brussels, Belgium, pictured here in 2009. (Flickr photo: Lisa Sachi)

Back in Brussels after failing to use his suicide vest in the Paris attack, Abdeslam was a psychological wreck, and his Islamist colleagues undoubtedly expected that once in police custody he would sing like a canary. So they decided to launch another attack and go to glory before the police kicked in their doors.

Prime Minister Charles Michel issued the usual ritual incantation about Belgians being “determined to defend our freedom,” but Belgium’s freedom is not at risk. Terrorists are not an existential threat. They are a lethal nuisance, but no more than a nuisance.

Gayonne Dyer is a United Kingdom-based independent journalist who writes a column for Embassy. editor@embassynews.ca
Ludicrous to think bombing in Iraq, Syria keeps Europe safe

Doesn’t impact actions of fanatics launching attacks in Brussels, Paris.

Scott Taylor
Inside Defence

Last Tuesday’s terror attacks in Brussels set off another round of concerns throughout Europe and around the world. Once it was confirmed that no Canadian citizen was among the victims, Canadian media outlets cast a wider net to find something—anything—to connect the horrific attacks to Canada. For instance, a taekwondo team from Winnipeg was fortunately late arriving at the Brussels airport, so only witnessed the aftermath, not the blast; an Air Canada flight to Montreal was cancelled; and several school trips planned for Belgium were diverted following the bombings.

Canadian authorities did not heighten security measures at domestic airports indicating that, despite the media’s best efforts to frighten us, a connection between the Belgium attack and Canada. Of course, as soon as Daesh claimed responsibility for the attacks in Brussels, the usual fear-mongers took to their soapboxes to deride the Liberal government for being soft on terrorists. The militant Islamic group is also known as the Islamic State, ISIL, and ISIS. Jason Kenney—Conservative MP, former defence minister and self-appointed lead tub-thumper in the Colonel Blimp Brigade—rose in the House of Commons to ask, “Is Canada...at war with [Daesh]?” And if so, why did we end our combat operations against that terrorist organization?” The implication from Kenney’s query is that our contribution of six old CF-18 fighter jets bombing Daesh targets in Iraq and Syria was somehow keeping Europe safe.

Kenney’s ludicrous equation falls apart when you factor in the connections between the perpetrators of the March 22 Brussels attacks and the Nov. 13, 2015 Paris attacks that left 130 dead. Last November our airforce pilots were still regularly targeting and blasting Daesh positions in Iraq and Syria, yet the streets of the French capital were still vulnerable to fanatical Daesh extremists.

Kenney can perhaps be somewhat forgiven for failing to see the pro-war propaganda of Stephen Harper’s former government. In fact, Kenney was one of the loudest voices in the Harper choir touting to convince Canadians that by bombing Daesh in the Middle East, we were keeping the terrorists off the streets in Canada. The problem stems from the blurred definition of the words “terror” and “terrorism.” Following the 9/11 attacks against America, United States President George W. Bush first used the term “War on Terror.” This was of course as ridiculous as declaring “War on Fear” or “War on Violence,” but in those frightening days immediately after 9/11, no world leader was about to point that out to the US president. Instead, countries pledged their allegiance to the US on the “War on Terror.” Bush’s successor in the White House, Barack Obama, announced that America was no longer at war with a tactic but would instead focus on specific enemies. Nevertheless, for several years, the world’s only superpower led a coalition of allies, including Canada, on a war against a tactic. In simple terms, this meant that anyone opposed to the US could be branded a terrorist.

This line got totally blurred in the spring of 2014, when Daesh fighters swept out of Syria and captured a vast swath of Iraq.

Let them eat cash

Instead of providing food, more and more aid agencies give people money.

Mark Fried

Radical change in disaster response is underway. Long gone are the days when hunger relief meant shipping Canadian grain overseas. For 10 years, charities have been sourcing food locally. Now, instead of providing food, more and more agencies give people money.

The move to cash is shaking up relief agencies and government alike, demanding new skills and safeguards and posing a raft of new questions.

The last time I worked in an emergency, after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Oxfam was already giving people cash instead of food, either as a wage for community work or as a cash transfer so that people could buy what they need. Oxfam had pioneered in southern Africa in 2005. The motivation: farmers and storekeepers had plenty of food to sell, and there is dignity in having money in your pocket.

Fears that people might spend their allotment on alcohol or tobacco proved false, and the infusion of cash did not cause inflation. The biggest concern turned out to be safety. How does an agency or family handle large amounts of cash without being robbed? Since then, technology has come to the rescue.

Today, more than a million Syrian refugees in Lebanon and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank have ten local cash economy at a moment of vulnerability.

Mark Fried, formerly of Oxfam Canada, is a literary translator and editor based in Ottawa. markfried.ca
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Opinion
Defence & Development

While Daesh combatants certainly committed terrifying atrocities (such as mass beheadings) following their victories, the problem was that they were not acting as terrorists. Instead, they were functioning as uniformed conventional forces, capturing and holding territory.

For the past two years, Daesh has been administered an anthropomorphized caliphate, which includes the Iraqi city of Mosul with its nearly two million inhabitants. Terrorists blow up airports and shoot mass transit passengers like in the Brussels and Paris attacks; they don’t manage garbage collection well. “Daesh-inspired” terror attacks in Canada in October 2014, homegrown crazies can pop anywhere, anytime.

Bombing Syrian villages does not make Canadian streets safe, and it is impossible to wage war against a tactic.

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Syrian refugee Ali Ahmad Farhat chooses what he wants to buy with a World Food Programme e-card at a supermarket in Nabatiyeh, Lebanon. Mastercard Photo: Dalia Farhat

EMBASSY, Wednesday, March 30, 2016—7
Guess who’s coming to dinner?
A night in the Saudi embassy

Continued from Page 1

The thanks came in the form of a cheque for $31,000 to United Way Ottawa from the GCC countries. The cheque was presented just after 5 p.m. in one of the embassy’s stone and glass-walled reception rooms after Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson arrived to take part in the ceremony. The ambassadors stood together against a photo backdrop, chatting while they waited for more guests to arrive as the menagerie of staff, press and press handlers milled about quietly.

Public relations for the event were handled by Navigator Ltd., a communications firm with offices in several Canadian cities that brands itself the slogan, “When you can’t afford to lose.” The firm has earned a reputation for crisis management, working for former Ontario attorney general Michael Bryant after he was involved in a collision that killed a cyclist, and more recently former CBC host Jian Ghomeshi.

However, Navigator had only been hired to help the Saudi embassy with the evening’s event, not any sort of crisis management, said Darryl Konyenbelt, a senior consultant with the firm.

The Gulf states have, fairly or unfairly, been criticized in some corners for their response to the Syrian refugee crisis. It’s difficult to measure resettlement by those countries, since none signed onto the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees. A recent UNHCR report did not list any GCC members as having resettled refugees, but a press release from last week’s event says the Gulf countries have accepted more than two million Syrians over the past five years.

The Saudi government has also fallen under renewed criticism in the Canadian press over its human rights record since the previous Conservative government brokered a deal to send armoured made-in-Canada military vehicles, that could be equipped with guns, to the Saudi national guard, and the new Liberal government upheld that decision. National news sources have run a flurry of news stories and opinion pieces, almost daily at times, tearing into the Gulf kingdom for its treatment of women, dissidents and prisoners.

The Gulfs are more generous. Some embassies are more generous. Some embassies are more generous. Some embassies are more generous.

The national newspaper reported the Saudi Embassy responded this month after months of silence, criticizing what it called “sensation-alized and politicized” coverage of the $15 billion deal and outside attempts to interfere with internal affairs.

The Saudi government is typically “very, very shy in terms of public diplomacy” in Canada, said Thomas Juneau, a professor of Middle East policy at the University of Ottawa and former Middle East analyst for the Department of National Defence.

The unexpected press event may or may not have been connected to the negative portrayal of the country in connection with the vehicle sale, he said, noting that the Saudi government does support Syrian refugees “on many levels.”

The ambassador said the event was an attempt to show the importance of the Syrian refugee issue given the large number of Syrians in his country.

The ambassador said the embassy has held such events from time to time. Mr. Juneau said public diplomacy events are held more often by the Saudi embassy in the United States and elsewhere.

Mr. Dion defended the Liberals’ decision to follow through on the arms deal in a speech at the University of Ottawa Tuesday, according to speaking notes for the event. Jobs in Ontario and the “credibility of the government of Canada’s signature” were on the line, he said, and “Riyadh does not care if the equipment comes from a factory in Lima, Ohio, or Sterling Heights, Michigan, rather than one in London, Ontario.”

Mr. Dion and chief of staff Julian Owens arrived at the Saudi embassy shortly after the cheque presentation, and were received warmly by the ever-smiling Mr. Al Sudairy. Mr. Dion’s attendance was a surprise to the press, who were only told the minister would attend after arriving at the embassy themselves. With the guests of honour accounted for—also including Senate Speaker George Furey—Mr. Watson and Mr. Al Sudairy led the way to dinner.

Guests fumbled slowly into a large, square room with a high ceiling. Eight tables adorned in white linen surrounded a swimming pool, with a pair of VIP tables sitting at the back of the room in a two-storey glass alcove. Members of the press were seated at the far side of the room. Diners were treated to a buffet of lamb and rice, salmon, salad, humus, breaded shrimp and a variety of vegetarian dishes.

Some embassies ‘more generous than others’
Mr. Watson was the first of the political class to leave, around six o’clock, and also held the longest scrum, fielding as many questions as reporters could think to ask. It was his first visit to the Saudi embassy as well, he said.

Mr. Watson said he didn’t know if that evening’s events and the donation would change the way Canadians perceived the government of Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states.

“My hope is that it acts as a catalyst for other embassies in Ottawa—we have over 95 heads of mission here—to continue to be generous. Some embassies are more generous than others in terms of their reaching out and helping,” he said.

Mr. Watson was next to go, but he did not take any questions from the press. The ambassadors eventually followed, making an effort to personally see off each of their VIP guests, while the Navigator crew herded the press into a sitting room for their long-awaited chance to sit down with the Mr. Al Sudairy and his GCC counterparts.

Their guests departed, the ambassadors joined the press in the sitting room, standing together in front of a small fireplace. The ensuing Q&A lasted for about two and a half minutes. Mr. Al Sudairy deflected questions about human rights and the arms deal, promising to address those issues on another day.

With that, the ambassadors dispersed. A family of Syrian refugees was offered up to the press, if they were interested. Mohamad and Shooq—their last name was withheld at the request of their sponsor for the protection of relatives back home—and their four young children had arrived in Ottawa just five weeks ago via Lebanon, their sponsor and interpreter said. Mohamad had a fond impression of the Saudi government thanks to the clothing and food aid he received in Lebanon bearing the stamp of the Saudi government.
RCMP protective work scrutinized after shooting

Researcher points to ‘substantial day-to-day organizational pressure.’  

Carl Meyer

Providing protection to diplomats, politicians and other dignitaries in Ottawa is a high-stress gig due in part to unrealistic expectations and the potential for tedious work, say a former RCMP member and a police researcher.

RCMP Const. Jean-Pascal Nolin, a 10-year veteran, shot himself inside an RCMP Parliament Hill detachment the morning of March 17, media outlets reported. The detachment is at 90 Sparks St., just around the corner from Canada’s Parliament buildings and the prime minister’s office.

Const. Nolin was a member of the National Capital Region General Duty Protection Policing team and on duty at the time of the shooting, though his death was not directly related to his duties, according to a source cited by the Ottawa Citizen.

General Duty Protection Policing provides security for the prime minister, governor general and other Canadian officials, as well as ‘international dignitaries and their residences and embassies,’ according to the RCMP’s website.

It’s part of the RCMP’s National Division Protective Operations, which also provides security for diplomats, ministers, supreme court justices and others, the website says.

Those familiar with the Ottawa diplomatic corps will recognize the RCMP presence at events, or even just patrolling different clusters of foreign missions around town.

Valarie Findlay, a research fellow for the Washington-based Police Foundation, said she couldn’t comment directly on Const. Nolin, but that some of the stress associated with policing now stems from a new “militarized” policing model.

“Police are becoming more and more physically and psychologically isolated from the communities they serve and are part of what is seen as the police-industrial complex,” she wrote in an email. “This model recruits and trains officers as though they are soldiers.”

Yet officers are expected to act as warriors, counselors, psychologists and public servants all at once, she said. These “lofty and ministerial expectations” are restricted by legal and organizational obstacles, leading to an “imbalance.”

Combined with public, political and media scrutiny, said Ms. Findlay, this has led to “substantial day-to-day organizational pressure and workplace stress felt by every officer.”

The Oct. 22, 2014 shooting of Cpl. Nathan Cirillo by Michael Zehaf-Bibeau at the National War Memorial and the struggle inside Parliament that day ratcheted up the intensity associated with providing protection to political and diplomatic officials in Ottawa.

But a former RCMP member, who would not go on the record in order to speak freely, said some of the most difficult aspects of the job come from how different it is than other positions on the force.

When officers may have been investigating homicides or doing other high-intensity police work elsewhere in the country transfer to Ottawa, they are often expected to do Parliament Hill and embassy patrols for many years, the former member said.

While important work, it’s sometimes seen as disruptive to careers, and the downtime associated with driving from embassy to embassy can become mind-numbing.

An internal email cited by the Citizen quotes RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson stating that Const. Nolin was alone at the time of the shooting.

Ottawa Police are leading an investigation into the death, working closely with the RCMP. Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale indicated in a statement March 17.

“The behald of all Canadians, I would like to express my deepest condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of the RCMP Officer who tragically passed away this morning in Ottawa,” the statement read.

Canada’s suicide rate was 11.3 per 100,000 people for all ages in 2012, the most recent year available in Statistics Canada data.

First responders are twice as likely to be diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, the Ontario government has stated.

Reached March 24, Brigitte Mineault, communications manager with RCMP National Division, said the RCMP would not be commenting on this story.

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Beyond the deficit fixation: Morneau reaffirms federal role in Canada

But whether his approach is enough to get the economy rolling is an open question.

Les Whittington

Somewhere on the campaign trail last fall, after a chat with Justin Trudeau, former Mississauga mayor Hazel McCallion was asked about the Liberals’ plan to run budget deficits in hopes of invigorating the economy.

‘People talk about balancing the budget,’ she observed. ‘An unemployed person is not interested in whether the budget is balanced.’

Bill Morneau’s economic blueprint marked the first time in decades that a federal finance minister had the nerve to brush aside the country’s long-held deficit fixation and state that Ottawa was going to purposefully and unapologetically spend more money than it collected in tax revenues for several years.

It was key to the Trudeau government’s move to reverse the direction of the country after a decade under Stephen Harper— an attempt to reassert the federal government’s leadership role in the country’s economic and social life and infuse a renewed sense of generosity and sharing into the national debate.

Many would say that despite the 10 years of Conservative government, these values never dimmed among Canadians. They just seemed to be obscured for a long time by the Revolutionary spirit that is looking more and more favourable by Harper and company. That’s certain one way to read the stunning results of the October election. Canada is in the end an end of civilization as we know it, the unexpectedly large budget shortfall was seen as something close to that by conservative-minded critics.

The Harper Conservatives of course recorded budget deficits for most of their years in power. So it becomes an argument about whether your reason for running a deficit is better than the other guy’s reason for running a deficit.

Some also said it’s not up to Ottawa to try to steer the economy, that the federal government should just get out of the way and let business drive economic growth. But former finance minister Jim Flaherty proved conclusively that this is not as easy as it might seem.

Enabling business to strengthen the economy by investing more in machinery and equipment was one of Flaherty’s central missions in federal politics. He cut billions of dollars in corporate income taxes, trimmed regulations and provided a highly valuable taxpayer for capital investments. Yet less-than-expected business investment by corporations sitting on billions of dollars in cash has been an enduring weakness in Canada’s economic picture since the recession seven years ago.

Coupled with lower-than-forecast exports, this has left consumers to carry the load when it comes to fueling the economy. And it is reasonable to think Canadians will continue to spend a larger share of their extra cash being provided by Morneau through new programs and middle-class tax reductions, which will help.

This budget signalled an end to Canada’s long and unsuccessful embrace of the trickle-down economic fervour proclaimed by the likes of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

But whether Morneau’s approach, including impressive but less-than-promised early spending on infrastructure, is enough to get the economy rolling is an open question. Much will depend on whether the longer-term “innovation” strategy expected later this year from the Trudeau government will finally provide some effective ideas and incentives to prompt a much-needed overhaul of Canada’s economic competitiveness.

The federal government obviously can’t fix the problem of unproductive, inefficient industry; only business can do that. But Ottawa can try to provide some urgent, carefully-thought-out leadership in hopes of improving this crucial problem, and it’s high time for that to happen.

carljonathanmeyer@gmail.com  ottawacarl

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Finance Minister Bill Morneau show off the Liberal government’s first federal budget, March 22. embassynews.ca

This budget signalled an end to Canada’s long and unsuccessful embrace of the trickle-down economy fervor proclaimed by the likes of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

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Canadians overseas need help

The government can pick and choose which Canadians it will and won’t help. That should change.

GAR PARDY

Yesterday, the Rideau Institute and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives jointly released my report, Canadians Abroad: A Policy and Legislative Agenda, detailing the myriad problems faced by Canadians overseas and the need for numerous changes to the policies affecting the provision of consular services, that is, of assistance to Canadians in difficulty in foreign countries. The report also makes recommendations to improve the assistance Canada provides to such Canadians and the international legal environment for consular services.

Millions of Canadians are outside Canada at any one time. As daily news reports show, they encounter various and frequent difficulties and dangers as they visit and reside abroad. Hundreds languish in foreign prisons on specious charges, while others need urgent medical attention or evacuation from the world’s trouble spots.

The study charts the development over the past decade of an inadvisable doctrine, limiting the responsibility of the Canadian government and forcing many affected Canadians to seek redress through the courts. The historical Canadian approach of the universality of consular services for all Canadians has been undermined. The result has been inequity, unfairness and inconsistency in the provision of these vital services.

The previous government’s emphasis on the discretionary nature of consular services to Canadians was based on the application of the Crown prerogative, a constitutional convention that they argued overrode the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The government relied on the convention to justify its refusal to seek the return of Omar Khadr from the American gulag at Guantanamo Bay. It was similarly raised in the cases of Abousfian Abdelrazik and Saaed Mohamed when they sought help to return to Canada from the Sudan and Kenya.

The Canadian government was unique in the West in not seeking the return of a citizen from Guantanamo. The Khadr case went to the Supreme Court in early 2010. Lower courts ruled that Mr. Khadr’s Charter rights had been violated by CSIS and that the government had an obligation to have him returned to Canada. The government argued that it was within its discretion under the application of the Crown prerogative to abstain from seeking his return.

The Supreme Court of Canada on the one hand agreed that Mr. Khadr’s Charter rights had been violated but, on the other hand, agreed with the government’s assertion that consular services were discretionary under the doctrine of Crown prerogative. As a result, as matters now stand, the government can pick and choose which Canadians it will and will not assist when they are in difficulty overseas.

Dual citizenship woes

The report also deals with dual citizenship, which has emerged as a significant problem for many Canadians when they travel abroad. In an increasingly migratory world, there are no meaningful norms for the treatment of persons with more than one citizenship. As a result, there are often serious impediments to Canada providing consular assistance for Canadians who are in their country of second citizenship.

Given the dearth of international law on the issue, the report recommends that the Canadian government start talking to other governments to seek bilateral and/or multilateral agreement enabling consular services for such Canadians.

Canadians directly pay for consular services when they apply for a passport. A Consular Service Fee of $25 is added to the cost of the passport and, by law, must be used to finance consular services. The auditor general in 2008 wrote that Foreign Affairs collected more “in consular fees than is needed by diplomatic missions in Canada; changes to the Elections Canada Act that would permit all Canadians outside of Canada to vote in Canadian elections; agreement to and support for a recent international agreement on improvements in the treatment of prisoners around the world; Canadian legal representation for Canadians imprisoned abroad; implementation of the recommendations of the O’Connor and Iacobucci commissions of inquiry into the role of Canada in the torture of Canadians abroad; the need to give pre-eminence to consular services in cases involving national security; and the release of personal information gathered through the consular process.

The report includes a plea for more political and administrative oversight of consular policy and actions. Many Canadians have made known their disappointment and unhappiness with consular assistance and, apart from going to the media or to the courts, there are no redress mechanisms.

The report recommends that the House of Commons foreign affairs committee or a designated subcommittee dedicate time each year to address these issues.

In the longer term, the report calls for the appointment of an independent ombudsperson, reporting to Parliament, to receive and investigate complaints from Canadians on consular services. The report also emphasizes the deficiencies and out-of-date international law and practices for consular services. Next year will mark the 50th anniversary of the primary international treaty governing these issues, the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. The convention provides only minimal standards for the exercise of consular relations. The report recommends Canada, in 2017, host an international conference to negotiate additional and improved standards so that persons needing consular services can be assured of appropriate assistance.

While the report was written, the government took action on two important issues. In late February, the government introduced changes to the Citizenship Act that would eliminate the revocation of citizenship for Canadians with a second citizenship should they be convicted of terrorism-related offences. Earlier, Foreign Minister Stéphane Dion announced he was ending the policy of the previous government of not seeking clemency for some Canadians sentenced to death in foreign countries. Henceforth, the government will undertake clemency-based interventions for all Canadians facing execution abroad.

Millions of Canadians travel internationally and reside in other countries. The report notes that about seven per cent of the Canadian population is outside of Canada at any one time. The new government has an opportunity early in its mandate to address consular services in a comprehensive and forward-looking manner. This is the spirit in which this report is offered.

Before retirement from the Canadian foreign service, Gar Pardy was head of consular services for more than 10 years. Recently he published Afterwords From a Foreign Service Odyssey, available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble and, in Ottawa, Books on Beechwood.

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Clockwise from top left, Canadians Omar Khadr, Abousfian Abdelrazik and Saaed Mohamed were all once caught up in consular battles with the Canadian government.
How many more must die in Honduras?

Environmentalists’ deaths should be wake-up call to investor countries like Canada.

ALEX NEVE

There is a deadly crisis in Honduras, the tiny but resource-rich Central American country with which Canada is linked via a free trade agreement negotiated in the violence-splattered aftermath of a coup d’état. It’s a crisis that’s been steadily building, while investor countries like Canada turned a blind eye. But ignoring inconvenient realities is no longer possible with the assassination of celebrated indigenous leader Berta Cáceres.

Berta was a remarkable woman of tremendous courage. Amidst discrimination and aggression, she co-founded the Council of Popular and Indigenous Peoples Organizations of Honduras, known by its acronym COPINH, to defend the lands and livelihoods of downtrodden indigenous peoples. Most recently, she led efforts to stop construction of the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam on the Gualcarque River, a project with powerful economic backers that was steamrolling ahead without meaningful consultation or the consent of the Lenca people, in violation of international indigenous rights standards.

Berta's efforts to protect the river, considered both sacred to the Lenca and essential to their survival, won her the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize. It also put her life in danger. On repeated occasions she reported the death threats made against her. She sent her children outside of Honduras because they too were threatened. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights warned Berta’s life was in danger and called on Honduran authorities to protect her from harm. Yet Berta was gunned down on March 3 in her home in La Esperanza, ironically Spanish for “hope.”

The shock waves were palpable. If someone as celebrated and well-connected as Berta could be murdered at will, then what about others less well-known?

The grim answer came 12 days later. COPINH community leader Nelson García, the father of five children, was shot in the face and killed as he returned from helping victims of a land eviction.

Other members of COPINH and Berta’s children, back in Honduras for her funeral, have reported being threatened and followed by unidentified armed men and cars without licence plates.

There is no doubt that Berta’s family and colleagues are in grave danger. But they are not the only ones. According to a 2015 report by the organization Global Witness, Honduras is now the most dangerous country per capita to be a land or environmental defender. Amongst the scores murdered in the past five years alone is 15-year-old Maycol Rodriguez, whose body was found in a river with signs of torture.

These atrocities will continue as long as the killers, and those who give the orders, know they will never face justice.

An Amnesty research team has documented a catalogue of failures in the official investigation into Berta’s killing. None of the people who Berta had denounced for threatening her, including representatives of companies working in the area, had been questioned. Instead, officials only called in members of COPINH and the Mexican environmentalist Gustavo Castro, who was injured and taken for dead during the deadly attack on Berta but survived as the sole eyewitness. In a country with a poor record at best with regard to witness protection, it is deeply worrying that Honduras has barred Mr. Castro from returning home to Mexico to recover from his ordeal, elevating fears for his safety.

If anything positive is to come out of this horrendous situation it will only be if it serves as a wake-up call to the international community.

There are some signs it has. The Netherlands Development Finance Company and the Finnish Fund for Industrial Cooperation both suspended financial backing for the Agua Zarca dam project following the killing of Berta Cáceres and Nelson García.

But what about Canada, whose free trade relationship with Honduras creates opportunities and obligations to apply meaningful pressure? The Harper government was criticized for taking advantage of the human rights crisis in Honduras to pursue investment goals. Canadian companies are on the ground, advancing dam and mining projects in an operating environment characterized by widespread violence, human rights violations, corruption and impunity.

That must change. The Trudeau government and Canadian companies in Honduras must speak up vocally and unequivocally. That means condemning the killings of Berta Cáceres and Nelson García; but also vigorously pressing for effective protection of their colleagues and relatives, and actively supporting their call for credible, independent, international investigators to ensure justice.

Beyond that, Canada’s engagement with Honduras must change course to put human rights first and ensure no Canadian project advances in Honduras without meaningful consultation and the free, prior, informed consent of affected indigenous peoples and certainly without fear of violent reprisals.

The people of Honduras are watching, and waiting.

Alex Neve is secretary general of Amnesty International Canada.

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Waterstreet: A wave of calm in the downtown core

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A lovely, ten minute walk along the river to Foreign Affairs

Two Luxury Condos For Sale (by owners)
An answer in five uneasy pieces, for the poetry of international relations and the plumbing of diplomacy.

Daryl Copeland

From the late 1940s through the early 2000s, Canada enjoyed a well-deserved reputation as an innovative international policy entrepreneur. From a central role in the design and construction of the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions, through the Suez Crisis and invention of peacekeeping, to the North-South Dialogue, Earth Summit and Human Security Agenda, Canada’s much-admired diplomacy of the deed translated into practical political influence and an oversized place in the world.

Although little of that legacy survived the Harper Conservatives’ visceral contempt for all that came before, the adverse consequences of that debilitating interlude just may have given rise to an historic opportunity.

In marked contrast to its finger-wagging, warrior-nation-wannabe predecessor, Justin Trudeau’s government has shown itself more interested in listening than lecturing, and in staying than leaving. The first months have given us some idea of what may be in store.

That said, if policy pronouncements constitute the poetry of international relations, then diplomacy represents the plumbing. In this respect, when it comes to converting ambition into action, we have to date heard far more about the international policy “what” than the diplomatic “how.”

Apart from a removal of the gag order and a widely anticipated return to mainstream practices in public and digital diplomacy, remarkably little has been said about the mechanics and retreating necessary to underpin a return to progressive activism.

The end of state-centricity, profusion of new actors and emergence of complex, transnational issues have radically altered the diplomatic operating environment. The days of designated envoys discussing the business of government among themselves have been largely overtaken by events, and major adjustments are required. In an earlier article I set out the some of the structural and process reforms essential to fix Canada’s foreign ministry. But institutional change, the leveraging of social media and otherwise substituting technology for labour, while necessary, will not in themselves be enough to address the challenges of globalization.

How, then, to begin to compensate for ongoing resource scarcity, compounded by a decade of mismanagement and neglect? The diplomatic business model requires a comprehensive rethinking and strategic reconstruction from the ground up.

The following recommendations may warrant further consideration:

1. Position Canada as an agile advocate of dialogue, negotiation and compromise, a champion of diplomatic alternatives to the continuing militarization of international policy and a practitioner of creative, alternative diplomacy. This must be done across the board, bilaterally and multilaterally, and at both a reconstructed headquarters operation in Ottawa and a more diverse variety of missions abroad.

2. Connect directly with members of burgeoning diaspora communities and harness the potential of this largely untapped resource by turning the inside out and bringing the outside in. Ventilate foreign service through the targeted recruitment of first- and second-generation Canadians and assign political officers to major Canadian cities with a mandate to forge productive and mutually beneficial relationships based upon co-operation and respect.

3. Engage civil society by renewing long-neglected partnerships with universities, think tanks and NGOs at home and abroad. Reinstate sponsored visits by foreign opinion leaders and rebuild international education programs to dramatically boost the numbers of both foreign students in Canada and Canadians studying abroad.

4. Embrace virtuality and networks by experimenting with collaborative intelligence generation and open-sourced policy development to lower overheads and improve results. The pursuit of full-spectrum e-diplomacy will generate efficiency gains far beyond those which have been realized to date.

5. Elevate science diplomacy, which remains almost invisible within the current mix of available tools, to top-priority status, and reallocate resources accordingly. Canada will be unable to achieve its promise as an evidence-driven problem solver without the robust pursuit of knowledge-based, technologically-enabled solutions to the vexing array of wicked issues rooted in science and technology (from climate change to diminishing biodiversity), which together constitute the new threat set.

Ideas are the livelihood of diplomacy. In the context of a country as dynamic, diverse and multicultural as Canada, and if combined with the right mix of methods, institutions and resources, they can make a real difference.

Might a commitment to burnishing the diplomatic brand represent the best strategy for a government still finding its way forward? Perhaps, especially given our strong internationalist traditions. Indeed, showcasing diplomacy per se as the contemporary international policy instrument of choice seems ideally suited to bridge from a noble, but increasingly distant Pearsonian past to a still undefined, but quite possibly inspiring future. Success at developing a new narrative for diplomacy as a smarter, faster, more effective and, above all, non-violent approach to the management of international relations could prove not only relevant, but transformative.

An occasion to reinvest in diplomatic capacity was missed in last week’s budget. Still, by privileging diplomacy, incubating innovation and reshaping representation, Canada can both advance its interests and make a significant contribution to global security and development.

Former diplomat Daryl Copeland is an educator, analyst and consultant; the author of Guerrilla Diplomacy; a research fellow at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute and a policy fellow at the University of Montreal’s Centre for International Studies (CERIUM). Follow him on Twitter @GuerrillaDiplo.

editor@embassynews.ca
The Uruguayan Embassy and Terra Art hosted a vernissage for Uruguay-Canada: A View from the North, an exhibition of the works of Uruguayan artist Daniel Tomassini, on March 15 at Saint Brigid’s Centre for the Arts. Embassy Photos: Sam Garcia

1. Colombian counsellor Juan Carlos Rojas, Uruguayan Chargé d’Affaires Trilce Gervaz and exhibition curator Lilia Faulkner.
2. Venezuelan Ambassador Wilmer Barrera, Peruvian Ambassador Marcela López Bravo and Mr. Rojas.
3. Mr. Tomassini and Ms. Gervaz.

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Tunisian Ambassador Riadh Essid and his wife, Chiraz Saidane Essid, hosted a reception on March 17 at the Double Tree Hotel in Gatineau to mark Tunisia’s national day. Embassy Photos: Sam Garcia

4. Comlan Pamphile Goutondji, ambassador of Benin, greets Mr. Essid.
5. Ndeye Thiane Diagne Paye, wife of the Senegalese ambassador, Mr. Essid, Ms. Saidane Essid and Senegalese Ambassador Ousmane Paye.
6. Mr. Essid, Ms. Saidane Essid and Foreign Minister Stéphane Dion.
7. Angolan Ambassador Edgar Martins, Ms. Saidane Essid and Mr. Martins’ wife, Domingas.

Tunisia

Tunisia
Here is the plain text representation of the document:

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30**

Canada’s Defence Perspectives 2020-2050: Recapitalization and the Canadian Forces—The MacKinnon Institute presents this second day of a two-day conference featuring a series of expert panels to inform recommendations for future Canadian defence planning. Featuring retired lieutenant general Mike Day, navy commander Vice-Admiral Mark Norman, and former army commander General Romeo Dallaire, this conference will inform and shape the Canadian defence debate.

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6**

CAF Outlook: Army 2016—Hear from Canada’s top military leadership as they discuss their goals for tomorrow’s army. Keynote speaker: army commander General Bob Chipman.

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13**

CAF Outlook: Air Force 2016—Hear from Canada’s top military leadership as they discuss their goals for tomorrow’s air force. Keynote speaker: air vice admiral Wayne Eyre.

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20**

CAF Outlook: Navy 2016—Hear from Canada’s top military leadership as they discuss their goals for tomorrow’s navy. Keynote speaker: navy commander Vice-Admiral Mark Norman.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 3**

The Royal Bank of Canada will once again host the annual bank board games tournament in the General Ballroom, Westin Hotel, 115 Sparks St. This year’s theme is “The Great Game.”

**SATURDAY, APRIL 2**

**FRIDAY, APRIL 1**

Irish Ambassador Ray Bennett and his wife, Patricia, hosted a reception to mark St. Patrick’s Day on March 18 at their home. Embassy Photos: Sam Garcia

**Thursday, March 31**

Canadian Open Dialogue Forum 2016—This two-day conference is meant to advance understanding of open dialogue, a key pillar of open government. Speakers include Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, Treasury Board President Scott Brison, and OpenNeth co-founder Scott Jenkins. 8:30 a.m. - 4:45 p.m. April 1. $495-$795. Shaw Centre, 55 Colonel By Dr. of Ottawa's Centre for International Policy Studies and Canadian Defence Perspectives.

**Wednesday, April 6**

CAF Outlook: Army 2016—Hear from Canada’s top military leadership as they discuss their goals for tomorrow’s army. Keynote speaker: army commander General Bob Chipman.

**Wednesday, April 13**

CAF Outlook: Air Force 2016—Hear from Canada’s top military leadership as they discuss their goals for tomorrow’s air force. Keynote speaker: air vice admiral Wayne Eyre.

**Wednesday, April 20**

CAF Outlook: Navy 2016—Hear from Canada’s top military leadership as they discuss their goals for tomorrow’s navy. Keynote speaker: navy commander Vice-Admiral Mark Norman.

**On the Front Lines of Afghanistan after the US Withdrawal—**The University of Ottawa’s Centre for International Policy Studies presents journalist Matthew Aikins, Scholl Fellow at the Nation Institute. He visited Kunduz, a city captured by the Taliban for two weeks last fall, in November. He will discuss the challenges facing Afghanism, as well as the prospects of a renewed US military deployment there. Free. Social Science Building, 120 University Pt., room 4004. 6:30-4:30 p.m. cips-cepi.ca/events
Diplomacy and foreign policy are engaged to marry politics and government on Wednesday, April 13. You are cordially invited.