

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

Each candidate should be given fixed amount of campaign funding

Re: "Current campaign finance laws bad for democracy," (*The Hill Times*, May 21, p. 11). I have to vehemently disagree with Gerry Nicholls. The problem with campaign financing is not that it's too restrictive but that it's not restrictive enough. The system we have now means that in about 90 per cent of the elections in Canada, the candidate who spends the most money wins the election.

Now you could say that maybe that's tangible proof that those candidates have the most public support and it's reasonable that they win. The wrong assumption here is that money equals public support.

I would argue that the candidate with the most donations is the one who is most likely representing the interests of the sub-population, special interest group if you will, of people with money to donate and not the whole public. When that candidate is in office they are more likely to vote for initiatives that favour their campaign contributors.

The more money was donated to their campaign, the more open they to be influenced in their policy and legislative decisions. Our system of financial contributions to election campaigns is at the root of all that is wrong with our democratic system today.

If we want truly representative, democratic government there should be no campaign financing



The Langevin Block: Campaign financing should be more fair, says a letter-writer.

allowed at all. All the candidates should start from an equal financial footing so that the election campaigns are about their ideas, not their bank accounts. In theory, you

could set up a system where each candidate is given the same, fixed amount of funding to run their campaigns. They can be as imaginative, frugal, careful, or wasteful of that fund as they like and that also will be a measure of their competence to hold public office.

Mr. Nicholls argues that in this modern world you have to advertise to get your message out, but he fails to mention the powerful and free tool for campaigning that the internet provides. Even U.S. President Barack Obama used the internet to win voters and votes. A few well-placed big signs may do as much good as a hundred small signs littering the neighbourhood. Maybe the public forums and debates would become much more integral to the campaigns. Maybe there would be more shaking hands and kissing babies and actually connecting to the voters. Maybe there'd be more talk about the issues and less about the fundraising.

The equation is simple. More freedom means not being held hostage to the social and economic policy agenda of the wealthy. More freedom means a true democracy where everyone is represented whether or not they can afford to donate to a campaign. More freedom means not everything is about the economy stupid. Sometimes it's about the people.

Katie Oppen
Ottawa, Ont.

G8/G20 2010 Summit compares to Olympics in London

The G8/G20 summit in 2010 in Canada garnered a lot of attention before, during and after and it has been mostly negative. There were overzealous police officers, kettling, rights-violations, charges against protesters and police officers. Businesses suffered, expensive gazebos were never used, artificial lakes and hundreds and hundreds possibly billions of our money was spent to host a few delegates from eight or 20 countries for a few days.

I was listening to the news and heard about staging this event would cost \$2-billion, and I thought enough about the G8/G20 meeting in Toronto/Huntsville. They were talking about London's hosting of the Olympics.

The cost for staging the Olympics, for 17 days, with 70,000 volunteers, 10,000 police officers and 13,500 military personnel, battleships, eight million spectators, dignitaries and athletes from 204 countries and National Olympic Committees compare to Canada hosting a few people from less than a couple dozen countries for a few days. Something is not quite right.

I hope this government never stages an Olympics because it would probably cost \$20-billion after \$100-billion in infrastructure costs. Then maybe every city, town, village, and hamlet would get an artificial lake and an expensive gazebo.

The minute I hear Treasury Board President Tony Clement is heading the committee to bid on the Olympics I would have to quit my job and start a gazebo building-business, I could retire a very wealthy man.

Garfield John Marks
Red Deer, Alta.

Charging fees to avoid criminal charge bad idea

Charging fees for people to avoid a criminal charge is simply wrong. It makes no sense for Public Safety Minister Vic Toews to re-institute the fee for the unnecessary licensing regime, when what he should be doing is working to repeal the Liberals' old, wasteful and ineffective Firearms Act. There are many problems with Canadian firearms law, and none of them will be resolved by forcing people to pay for the privilege of enjoying the use of their property. Just because that property happens to be firearms doesn't mean that innocent Canadians should be as stigmatized under this government as they were under previous ones.

As long as the Liberal Firearms Act remains law, the freedoms, rights, and property of all Canadians remain at risk. Fundamental firearms law reform will not have been achieved until the Government of Canada replaces the 1995 Liberal C-68 Firearms Act with new legislation that respects the freedom, rights, and property of ordinary Canadians. Firearms laws have often been pushed upon Canadians under the guise of public safety when in fact these laws are merely serving to limit hard won freedoms. Neither the firearm registration system, nor the licensing programs have ever truly been about saving any lives. These bad laws have really been about trying to change Canadian firearms culture.

Sheldon Clare
President
Canada's National Firearms
Association
Edmonton, Alta.

Outraged by government's plans to change refugees health-care program

Re: "Changes to Refugee Health Care Program need reconsideration," (*The Hill Times*, May 21, p. 15). The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions shares Y.Y. Brandon Chen's outrage about the federal government's changes to the refugee health-care program. As nurses, we see everyday health emergencies that could have been avoided. To deny primary health care to the most vulnerable is immoral and it is also illogical as it does not reduce costs, just shifts them.

The federal government promised that it would not balance the books on the backs of the provinces. Not only will this move cost provinces, but so also will removing the RCMP from the list of uninsured persons under the Canada Health Act. Another day, another broken promise.

Linda Silas
President
Canadian Federation of Nurses
Unions
Ottawa, Ont.

OPINION

ARCTIC & SECURITY

Arctic becoming increasingly vulnerable

There is an increasing list of delayed or reduced projects aimed at insuring that we can monitor the Arctic effectively.



BY PIERRE LEBLANC

OTTAWA—Although I was one to congratulate the Harper government for its efforts to increase our capability to properly look after the security of the Arctic, I am increasingly concerned that many of the promises made in the past may no longer materialize. It seems that history is about to repeat itself yet again.

There seems to be an increasing list of delayed or reduced projects aimed at insuring that we can monitor the Arctic effectively and be in a position to take measured actions should the need arise. The latest report about the lack of winter gear for the Army is alarming. The fact that our Army does not have sufficient gear to operate in its own country all year round despite the fact that there is no emergency or situation requiring an increased level of activity should be of concern to Canadians.

This is taking place at a time when the access to the Arctic continues to increase along with human activity be it exploration, exploitation or eco tourism. Dr. David Barber, Canada's leading expert in Arctic sea ice, has recently stated that the Arctic ice is disappearing at a rate that exceeds the most optimistic predictions. This brings with it a lot of uncertainty as to what will happen in the Arctic and the need for us to be prepared to deal with the unexpected.

As I have stated on many occasions, my concern is not with the responsible shipping companies that may not consider the Northwest Passage an economically viable route. If they ever use it, they will likely have the right ships, qualified pilots, suitable equipment, maps and insurance. It is with the fly-by-night, uninsured and unscrupulous operators who have little care for the environment, crimi-

nal elements or the activities of rogue nations who may, for example, want to move weapons of mass destruction through this eco-fragile area in the hope of being undetected.

At present there is not a classical state-to-state threat to Canada's sovereignty although one should be concerned with the growing power of China to influence a situation or potentially impose its will. China is already the second largest economy and it continues to increase the size and capabilities of its armed forces. It has an eye on the Arctic and has shown a serious interest by acquiring an ice breaker and doing research in the Arctic. It is in the process of building another one. Given its track record on human rights and its actions as an international player such as blocking initiatives against human right abuses in Syria one could wonder what a totalitarian government may do in the future in the pursuit of its national interests.

One of my biggest concerns is the potential of losing our ability to monitor the Arctic from space. One of the programs alluded to earlier is the funding for the replacement of RADARSAT 2. The Arctic is a vast area larger than continental Europe. It is best monitored from space. Although there is talk of using unmanned aerial vehicles to monitor the Arctic, I am not convinced that they have proved their capabilities in the challenging conditions of Arctic winter conditions.

Will the present commitments go the way of nuclear submarines and Polar Class 8 ice breaker? Let us hope not because nature is following her own timetable and is opening up the Northwest Passage which is still contested as an international strait with all of what that implies for Canadian sovereignty.

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