

comment

THE BARRIE EXAMINER

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Conservatives aiding our military might

My grandfather, Joe, and his brother, Frank, first came to the Barrie area in 1941 as servicemen posted at Base Borden (Camp Borden at that time).

They fell in love with our region, raised their families and remained here long after their service careers ended.

Base Borden has always been a significant piece of my family's past, as well as an integral part of our local history.



Patrick Brown
 PARLIAMETHILL

“People are encouraged to wear red in support of our troops and sign a huge banner that will be shipped overseas to our brave men and women.”

I am always proud to see so many people come out during Kempenfest weekend for the “Support Our Troops” event. This year's ceremony will take place on the Friday, July 30 just after 7 p.m. on the main entertainment stage at the Southshore Community Centre where the Borden Pipe Band will perform.

People are encouraged to wear red in support of our troops and sign a huge banner that will be shipped overseas to our brave men and women.

Every day, more than 62,000 regular force members and 25,000 reserve force members of our Armed Forces honour our country through their service. Currently, more than 2,900 Canadian soldiers, sailors and Air Force personnel are deployed overseas on operational missions. On any given day, about 8,000 Canadian Forces members — one third of our deployable force — are preparing for, engaged in or returning from an overseas mission.

Certainly, our main military focus has been in Afghanistan recently, but our troops have also been deployed on other humanitarian and UN mandated missions in Haiti, The Republic of the Congo, Cyprus, the Sudan and many other regions around the world.

A group of local business and community leaders led by Hon. Col. Jamie Massie, have launched Operation Hero, a campaign to fund Georgian College scholarships for members of Canadian military families. Donations can be made in any amount with contributions of \$1,000 or more receiving a commemorative Canadian flag. This is a wonderful example of our community giving back, and I hope the effort continues as strongly as it started.

Borden's Pipe and Drum Band will be on hand for my annual charity hockey game in support of RVH's Regional Cancer Care Centre on Thursday, Aug. 12. New Base commander, Col. Louis Meloche, will even suit up and play at Hockey Night in Barrie III.

Your Conservative government has always made supporting our military a major priority. When our government was elected four years ago, we saw a military stretched thin and badly in need of help. After a decade of cuts, our military was left with submarines that couldn't go down, helicopters that couldn't go up and uniforms that made our troops walking targets.

We took action. We increased the annual budget for the Department of National Defence from \$14.6 billion in 2006 to more than \$21 billion today. This helped to upgrade or replace aging equipment, modernize technologies and improve overall safety for our fighting men and women.

Our troops put themselves in harm's way every day. They deserve the best equipment we can give them and their sacrifice earns them the unwavering support of all Canadians.

Patrick Brown is Barrie's MP

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BLOGS

Welcome back, Lord Black
blog.canoe.ca

■ our opinion

Freeing media baron makes good sense

Conrad Black shouldn't be in an American prison any longer.

An argument can be made that the former media baron should have never been behind bars in the first place.

The federal judge who sentenced Black to 6-1/2 years in prison set the terms Wednesday for his release on a \$2-million US bond. He won't be allowed back in Canada and has been restricted to the continental United States.

An appeals court panel ordered a lower court judge to release Black from a Florida prison, pending the appeal of his 2007 conviction on fraud and obstruction of justice.

This isn't to say Black, 65, isn't a crook, and a convicted one at that. He was sentenced on three counts of fraud and one count of obstruction of justice for swindling defunct media holding company Hollinger International out of \$6.1 million.

Black and three colleagues were convicted for a scheme in which they paid themselves tax-free bonuses disguised as non-compete fees — as they sold off pieces of the Hollinger empire.

A video also captured Black removing boxes of documents, potential evidence against him, from his Toronto office to the trunk of his car. Hence the

obstruction of justice.

Naturally, Black contended he had done nothing wrong and was taken away to Florida prison in March, 2008 protesting that he was innocent.

Many applauded his imprisonment, saying it was high time white collar criminals received substantial sentences — even if it was just for illegally siphoning money from large corporations.

He's also an example of how the mighty have fallen. Black once led the world's third-largest newspaper publisher with titles including the London *Daily Telegraph*, Canada's *National Post* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

And Black has never helped his own case. His arrogance and refusal to admit to his crimes hasn't helped. Most Canadians know he was born here, but actually renounced his citizenship to become an English Lord.

Black has also fought his conviction since the day he was sentenced, and last month won a partial victory — or at least one which could get him out of prison.

The high court limited the reach of the federal fraud law that prosecutors frequently used in corruption cases against government officials and executives like Black, and former Enron Corp. Chief Executive Jeffrey Skilling.

While it stopped short of overturning their convictions, it sent the cases back to lower courts. Black's attorneys appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals in the 7th Circuit, and a three-judge panel agreed he should be granted bond.

The appeals court had previously turned down Black's appeals that jury instructions applying the 'honest services' law were improper. The federal law is applied to fraud cases in which a person is accused of depriving others of the intangible right to 'honest services'. It has been criticized as being too vague and overused.

None of this means Black is out of the woods. Americans take a very dim view of the obstruction of justice, ever since Watergate.

Black is no Richard Nixon. He was an appealing target for those who had grown tired of rich, white-collar criminals buying their way out of prison.

But Black is no threat to the average American, or Canadian and English citizen. His reputation was ruined long ago in the business community. Black can no longer play with other people's money.

So why keep him in prison. If an example needed to be made, that has been done.

Conrad Black is no longer worth imprisoning.

Purolator should be put on block

The president of Canada Post, Moyra Green, is leaving to help new British Prime Minister David Cameron privatize the U.K. version of Canada Post — Royal Mail.

On the way out the door, Green said Canada Post and its services ought to be reviewed every five years.

Now would be a good time for Prime Minister Stephen Harper to follow that advice.



Kevin Gaudet

Canada Post's next president should start the review by looking at the case for privatizing Canada Post's Purolator Courier.

Since November 2008, the Harper government has been musing about a corporate asset review. Finance Minister Jim Flaherty even joked about selling the CN Tower.

Just last month he told a Wall Street audience the government is “looking at assets that are owned by the people of Canada that may no longer have a public purpose.”

Results have been slow, however. So far, only one Crown corporation is on the sales block — Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. It's time for more crowns to be put in the sales display case.

In terms of assets that may no longer serve a public purpose, Purolator Courier, 91% owned by Crown corporation Canada Post, should be among those at the top of list. Indeed, it's hard to understand how taxpayers owning a courier company was ever in the public interest. The public and businesses are very well-served by a variety of local and global courier companies.

When you think of core government services, military, police, fire, water, roads, and a few others come to mind.

State-run courier services don't even come close to making the list.

Given the slow but continual rebound in the markets, which are now climbing back close to pre-2008 global recession levels, it is likely many suitors would see a great opportunity in Purolator's \$1.4 billion in annual revenues and nine straight years of profitability.

In 1992, Purolator was purchased by Canada Post (read: Taxpayers) for \$55 million. Given its performance, analysts believe it could sell for many, many times more, even \$1 billion.

A buyer importantly might think it can improve the performance of the company. For 2009, Purolator's net income was only \$53 million on the \$1.4 billion in revenue. Earnings compared to revenue is a key factor in evaluating firms. In this category, Purolator importantly lags its competition.

Purolator has an earnings before taxes (EBT) ratio of 3.7%, while FedEx is better at 5.5% and UPS blows them both out of the water at 7.5%. This should make Purolator a good turnaround target.

A study by the World Bank in 1997 examined more than 60 privatized companies in 18 countries. It found, on average, privatized companies increased profitability by 45%, efficiency by 11% and output by 27% — an overwhelming endorsement of privatization.

A University of British Columbia study of the performance of major Canadian Crown corporations privatized between 1985 and 1996 including Air Canada, Canadian National Railway, Petro-Canada, Fishery Products, Potash Corporation, Alberta Government Telephones and Nova Scotia Power, showed privatized firms increased profitability, efficiency and reduced debt ratios.

Of course, any process to sell Purolator or other crown assets must be transparent and represent good value for Canadians.

It's time for the government to improve its own bottom line and put some assets in the window.

Anybody want to buy a courier company?

— Gaudet is federal director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation



■ quote of the day

He loved being a soldier. He was extremely proud to be a soldier.”

Carol Collier, mother of Sapper Brian Collier, a Bradford native who was killed by an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan, Tuesday.

It's time to place the onus on the energy user

If Enbridge went to two-month billing like PowerStream, or if their computer got smarter, that problem at least would go away. But it would still leave the problem of minimum billing.

Our gas, electric, and water billing all share a common flaw: a minimum or basic charge you have to pay every month regardless of how much you use. That amount is fixed and mandatory, no matter how much you conserve. As a result, the harder you work to save, the more of your bill is fixed charges.

Sure, those who use more



Erich Jacoby-Hawkins
 ROOT ISSUES

pay more, but their customer charge pales next to their consumption fees.

A better, fairer way to bill would be to eliminate customer charges, and raise usage fees slightly to make up for the loss. That way, your bill would simply be a multiple of how much you used, and you'd save more by conserving (or pay more for wasting).

When you tank up your car,

“When you tank up your car, do you pay a fixed station customer fee on top of the gasoline price? No those costs are rolled into the price of each litre.”

do you pay a fixed station customer fee on top of the gasoline price? No, those costs are rolled into the price of each litre. So why pay more at home?

Although there are infra-

structure costs to hook us up, the major bills these days come from upgrading and upsizing our supply to meet growing demand.

We must build new power and water treatment plants and drill more gas wells, at great financial and environmental cost. We all end up paying those costs, whether we conserve or waste. And that's not fair.

Last year, Barrie city staff proposed lowering the sliding volume-based water fees and making up for it with higher fixed customer charges. Luckily, our council saw the wisdom in making wasters

paying for waste, and kept the sliding rate fee structure.

Kudos to council, and let's see if that same attitude can be used to further lower fixed fees and put the staggering costs of new infrastructure where they belong — on the shoulders of those who use and waste the most water, gas, or electricity.

Erich Jacoby-Hawkins is an educator, father, volunteer, and politician. Comment on this and other Root Issues at www.ErichtheGreen.ca.