

Opinion

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The Morning Star

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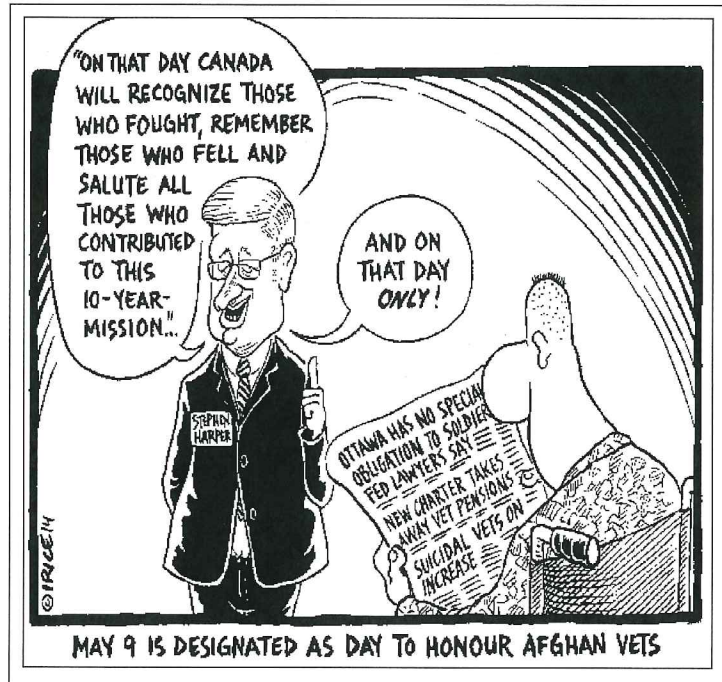
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Money, it's a gas...

Well, the excitement has kind of died down now here at the palatial South Vernon offices of *The Morning Star*. I speak, of course, of former employee Donna Ritchie and her husband, Ron, winning a million bucks on the Lotto Max.

The win meant instant retirement for Donna after nearly 10 years with *The Morning Star*, the last few as a smiling circulation assistant (for the record it's believed Donna gave about four hours notice after informing staff of her and Ron's windfall, which is totally fine with all of us).

After the usual hugs and even a "big *&^%\$# deal" from yours truly (in jest, people, relax), Donna and Ron were off to Kamloops to collect their \$1 million and begin a new adventure in their life.

Trust me, as has been said repeatedly, the lottery win couldn't have happened to a nicer couple. I wish them all the best.

I asked Donna how she and Ron were getting to Kamloops to collect the cheque. This was on a Monday, two days after finding out they had won, and they were heading to Kamloops on Tuesday.

"Ron said he's going to drive but I don't know, we haven't slept in 48 hours," laughed Donna. Happy to report that the Ritchies did make it safely to and from Kamloops.

I bring this up because we, the collective geniuses in *The Morning Star* editorial department, once had quite the debate on how we would get to Kamloops to collect a \$50 million Lotto Max prize if we were that fortunate.

Ten people in the department in on the ticket, 10 different ways of getting safely to Kamloops.

Drive? Heaven's no. We could end up in Monte Lake with the ticket being ruined. Fly? Oh my, the plane may crash on the

20-minute flight to Kamloops.

Train? Semi? Bus? Taxi? Boat? Walk (you can imagine how that suggestion went)?

Once we picked the mode - if memory serves, I believe it was decided we would rent a bus with individual seats - we then couldn't decide who would hold the ticket.

So much for trust factor among colleagues.

Wasn't it at a fast food restaurant in the Fraser Valley in the late 1990s where a group won the lottery, then excluded one member of the group because she didn't pay that particular week - the week they won - even though she had been paying regularly for years, and the matter had to go to court?

Nothing dissolves friendships more than cash.

Is there any one non-human item that we as a society worry more about than money?

We lose sleep and increase blood pressure over bills, sports registrations, car repairs, house repairs, braces. Groups fundraise for themselves, or go to public votes to borrow cash for new facilities.

Money, or lack of it, has forever been immortalized in music:

Brother (or Buddy), Can You Spare A Dime? - Yip Harburg, 1930, made famous by Bing Crosby and Rudy Vallee; *Money For Nothing* - Dire Straits; *Money* - Pink Floyd; *Money - That's What I Want* - The Beatles; *Take The Money and Run* - Steve Miller Band; and, of course, the Ritchies' new favourite: *If I Had A Million Dollars* - Barenaked Ladies (no word if Donna and Ron have bought Dijon ketchup, however).

Money has also left its mark in literature: *"The lack of money is the root of all evils."* - Mark Twain; *"A fool and his money are soon parted."* - English proverb; *"When I was young I thought that money was the most important thing in life; now that I am old I know that it is."* - Oscar Wilde.

Personally, I'll side with late British comedian Spike Milligan, who said: *"All I ask is the chance to prove that money can't make me happy."*

Mussel scare a wake-up call

It should be considered a shot across the bow for federal and provincial officials.

On March 12, a commercial transport truck showed up at the Osoyoos border crossing with a boat believed to be infested with zebra and quagga mussels. While the border guard didn't have the legal authority to stop the truck from entering Canada, he ensured the boat didn't head to its moorage spot on Okanagan Lake before it could be properly decontaminated.

Without the customs officer being proactive, it's quite possible life in the Okanagan could have changed forever.

Native to Europe, quagga and zebra mussels have spread across most of North America, causing devastation wherever they go.

They clog water intake pipes, pumps and boat motors. They also deplete food sources for fish and birds and contaminate drinking water.

Razor-sharp shells can also spread across beaches, making them dangerous places to tread barefoot.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board has estimated it could cost \$43 million a year to manage the mussels if they arrive here.

Federal and provincial officials have ignored the threat up until now, but that can no longer be the case.

Ottawa needs to initiate legislation immediately that prevents boats from entering Canada from the U.S. unless they have been inspected for mussels, while the provincial government must ensure there are monitoring stations along the U.S. and Alberta borders.

And as the March 12 incident demonstrated, these invasive mussels could show up in the Okanagan at any time because there are no firm procedures in place to search for them.

By continuing to sit on their hands, the federal and provincial governments are telling Okanagan residents that their economy, lifestyle and environment aren't a priority.