

## **Will 2011 Be the Year of Service With Integrity?**

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Monday, January 03, 2011

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"Honour House is a refuge, a place of unity and composure for Canadian Forces personnel, first responders and their families to stay while healing occurs."

- [Honour House Society](#)

Think of all the people who selflessly serve our country and citizenry, often involving risking their lives. What is their healing worth to us when they suffer in the line of duty? And I'm not talking about Don Cherry building a career raging against what he feels to be the inferior Quebecois while [hypocritically visiting](#) the [Vandoos](#), a Quebecois regiment in Afghanistan, over the Christmas break.

I have some small affinity with Romeo Dallaire and the emotional suffering he endured as Canada, the UN and the world abandoned Rwanda to its 1994 genocide. What kind of respect and commitment from Canadian society do our Canadian Forces personnel deserve when they encounter difficulties including PTSD, which is significant if not rampant in the Forces.

What kind of emotional, physical, spiritual, psychological and financial support do our first responders [police, fire fighters, ambulance paramedics] deserve when they encounter some of the most brutal circumstances humans endure.

Last night I watched a short clip from The Daily Show from a few weeks ago pointing out the hypocrisy of the US Republicans holding up financial support for health treatments for the 911 first responders suffering brutally ill health. This is just tragic, but sadly not very surprising. Canada's treatment of our Forces personnel is less than dignifying as well.

Last night I also watched episodes [4.14](#) and [4.15](#) of the West Wing. They aired in February 2003 in a month when millions of people around the world protested the Republican invasion and occupation of Iraq, which was launched 6 weeks later, under cover of the lie that Saddam Hussein was connected to Osama bin Laden.

The episodes revolved around the [Responsibility to Protect](#) doctrine, [humanitarian intervention](#) and what the fictional president would do with his own Rwandan genocide. He stepped up, in case you missed the episodes.

This was also pretty much my final year teaching high school after some disturbing years of new educational policy by the BC Liberal government and Education Minister and Deputy Premier Christy Clark designed to undermine universal access to high quality education, part of the government's multi-sectoral privatization agenda.

This was also a time when I was about to start a couple political science degrees culminating in my thesis on how Canada contributed to the Responsibility to Protect doctrine, then demonstrated how to scuttle it with our participation in the kidnapping of Haitian President Aristide on 2.29.04, particularly galling after our contributions to restoring his presidency a decade earlier. Another contributing factor in the Haitian case is Canada's neoliberal economic occupation of that struggling nation which has had economically crippling effects similar to the Duvalier eras. And I won't even go into Canada's shameful behaviour in Haiti since the earthquake almost a year ago.

February 2003 civil society exercises in democracy, my views of Romeo Dallaire and the preventable Haitian genocide and these poignant West Wing episodes contributed to my desire to explore the idealism of the responsibility to protect, to promote freedom from fear and want, and to enshrine human dignity as a core motivation on our planet and in BC. And sadly, exploring idealism is often matched with understanding how it falls short.

So today, so early in 2011, I think we all ought to reflect on what service means, what integrity looks like, what gratitude demands and how commitment to the human community calls us to act. Honour House is an important but nowhere near complete response to selfless sacrifice. It deserves our support. As does the [One in a Million Fund](#) and the [Hire Canadian Military](#) initiative, among other programs.

And the BC NDP and BC Liberal parties are spending the first few months of this year rebranding themselves. Service, integrity, gratitude, community and selflessness are appropriate benchmarks to consider when watching this process.

Will 2011 be the year of service with integrity?

I know as individuals we can support programs that have merit. We can also support political movements that reflect these benchmarks because if we do not demand commitment to high standards we will all accept an inferior society. And that would be our fault.

Let us lead by example and participate in society by acting with integrity and service to those in need, particularly those who selflessly serve us.