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## THE ECONOMIST VENTS SPLEEN ON PM'S DECISION TO PROROGUE

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The influential and mostly right-wing British magazine The Economist has taken a dim view of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's decision to prorogue Parliament until after the winter Olympics.

"Mr. Harper's move looks like naked self-interest," the magazine said in a strongly-worded editorial entitled [Harper Goes Prorogue](#) that accompanied a longer story on the [Canadian Parliamentary suspension](#).

"His officials faced grilling by parliamentary committees over whether they misled the House of Commons in denying knowledge that detainees handed over to the local authorities by Canadian troops in Afghanistan were being tortured. The government would also have come under fire for its lack of policies to curb Canada's abundant carbon emissions."

Mr. Harper is a competent tactician with a ruthless streak, the editorial said.

"He may be right that most Canadians care more about the luge than the legislature, but that is surely true only while their decent system of government is in good hands. They may soon conclude that it isn't."

The longer magazine piece points out that Mr. Harper chose Dec. 30, the day five Canadians were killed in Afghanistan and when the public and the press were further distracted by the announcement of the country's all-important Olympic hockey team, to let his spokesman reveal that Parliament would remain closed until March 3 instead of returning as usual, after its Christmas break, in the last week of January.

Mr. Harper, the story said, clearly reckoned that giving legislators an extra winter break, during which they might visit the Winter Olympics, would not bother Canadians much.

But, suggested the magazine that once called Canada cool and dubbed former prime minister Paul Martin "Mr. Dithers," Mr. Harper may have miscalculated.

"A gathering storm of media criticism has extended even to the Calgary Herald, the main newspaper in his political home city, which denounced him for 'a cynical political play,'" said the story, pointing out that there are a host of demonstrations planned across Canada for the Saturday before Parliament was due to return following the Christmas break.

Proroguing Parliament twice in two years sets what many constitutionalists say is a dangerous precedent, the magazine said.

"The danger in allowing the prime minister to end discussion any time he chooses is that it makes Parliament accountable to him rather than the other way around."

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