

OPINION

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Dangerous liaisons

Prime Minister Stephen Harper is standing tall, for now, about Canada's continued military role in Afghanistan.

We wonder how long this position will last.

The prime minister plays upon Canadian pride when he suggests that our nation's respected military history doesn't include turning our backs on allies when casualties begin to mount.

"Canadians don't cut and run at the first sign of trouble," the prime minister said following a deadly week for Canadian soldiers stationed in Kandahar.

"That's the nature of this country and when we send troops into the field, I expect Canadians to support those troops."

It's not the support of troops Harper should be worried about.

As the prime minister accurately stated this week the proverbial buck stops at the federal cabinet when it comes to deciding when Canadian troops should be recalled from the region.

While Canada's military commitment of 2,000 troops to Kandahar was for a one-year period ending next March, it would be extremely naive to believe that our American allies won't come looking for an extension to that promise within the next 12 months.

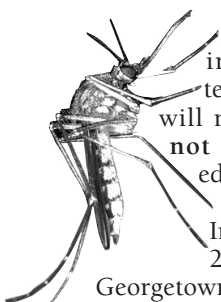
Classified Canadian threat assessment documents reveal that Afghanistan terrorist activity is supported financially by the country's \$2.8-billion (2004 figure) opium trade. A protracted Canadian mission in Afghanistan—some military experts suggest Canada might be needed in the region for up to a decade—will inevitably result in more images of caskets draped in the Canadian flag leading off the evening news.

Down the road, the combination of rising Canadian casualties and no measurable improvement to the situation in Afghanistan could lead public opinion to conclude the effort is futile and should be abandoned by our government.

The longer Canadian soldiers are stationed in Kandahar, the thinner the political tight rope becomes for Harper. Too many military funerals on Canadian soil could become the downfall of the prime minister and his minority government.

Something bugging you?

Send us a letter!



Letters to the editor must include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 200 words and may be edited for content and/or length.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Amalgamation only looks fine on paper

Dear editor,
I'm responding to Mr. Morrow's Feb. 22 letter in which he posed the question of Halton possibly becoming a single tired government/city by amalgamating the municipalities of Halton Hill, Oakville, Burlington and Milton.

The idea might look fine on glossy financial paper, but in reality, it's very much more of a nightmare as clearly demonstrated by the growing degree of public discontent shown by those that have been FORCED to amalgamate under the guise of "glossy" projected financial savings.

Democracy is not about projected financial savings, it's more to do about effective, not long-distance citizen representation, nothing less.

Every group of communities that have been FORCED to amalgamate is now fighting to be de-amalgamated. There must be some tested-truth in this unfolding reality.

Factual conclusions about amalgamation speak for themselves. It appears that a few might win, but in reality the citizens actually lose because they lose their hands-on local representation, have increased taxes and have a dramatic loss of usable services. If there is a winner, it's clearly not the citizens.

I'd suggest to Independent & Free Press readers to speak to those who are fighting for de-amalgamation

and not just listen to those pushing being amalgamated.

As this paper's name suggests, being independent is better than

Bob Beyette
Campbellville,
in the Region of Halton

Leash-free zones available

Dear editor,
We'd like to respond to Andrea DiMonte's letter of March 1 (Someone needs to clean up Georgetown).

We agree that dogs running off-leash is a problem as not everyone enjoys a bouncing pup heading their way and no one appreciates a dog owner who doesn't pick up after a dog.

We would like to commend our Town of Halton Hills council for being proactive in providing the citizens of Halton Hills with two locations for our dogs to run safely off

leash. Prospect Park in Acton has had a popular fully fenced off-leash zone since October 2003 and a second fenced off-leash zone at Cedarvale Park will open this spring. Both sites are managed by the Recreation and Parks Department in cooperation with the Halton Hills Dog Owners Group (HH-DOG).

For further information on keeping your dog safe in a leash-free zone, and to offer your support, please see our website at www.hhdog.com.

Kathy Dorbeck and Sandra Hall
HH-DOG

Youth wants spray-painting to stop

Dear editor,
My name is Rachel Detmers and I am six years old. I go to George Kennedy Public School.

There is spray paint on my school's playground and walls. I keep seeing more and more paint, and I am worried that soon it will be all over our school.

It makes me feel sad when I see paint everywhere. I want whoever is doing this to know that it isn't being respectful to our school. Someone

has to work very hard to clean it off.

I wish the people doing the painting had to do the cleanup as well. I also wish whoever is painting things on my school would stop, because this would make a lot of people very happy.

Rachel Detmers, Georgetown

For more letters
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