

OPINION

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Phone: 905-873-0301
Fax: 905-873-0398

PR battle?

As the first 200 of an anticipated 2,000 Quebec-based soldiers boarded a plane bound for Kandahar last weekend, it was eerily appropriate that a light rain was falling.

Although our troops' efforts continue to garner strong support back home, there is a gathering storm of public opinion about the mission, Canada's disproportionate number of casualties and the absence of a date for an exit strategy.

Canadian casualties have increased a staggering 57 per cent in the last eight months of fighting— from 42 in early November of last year to 66 as of this week.

British casualties stand at 63, this despite the UK having nearly 1,000 more soldiers in Afghanistan and having served a year longer than Canada.

With so much Canadian blood being shed and so little positive news coming out of the war-torn country, it's only natural more civilians would start to wonder when our troops might be coming home for good.

Anyone expecting a direct answer from Prime Minister Stephen Harper has been met with political double-speak. Earlier this month Harper dodged questions about Canada's plan as it approaches the expiration of its military commitment through February 2009, saying only that the issue of an extension would likely be debated in Parliament sometime next year.

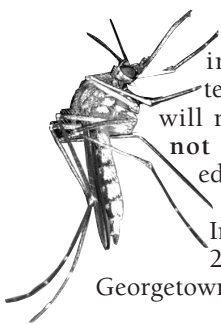
The prime minister now finds himself tiptoeing along a political tightrope— especially in vote-rich Quebec where 76 per cent of those polled immediately following the most recent Canadian deaths in Afghanistan felt Canadian casualty levels have reached an unacceptable level.

Some outside observers believe the Canadian government has only itself to blame for growing dissent surrounding the country's mission in Afghanistan. Ottawa has done a poor job of explaining the dangerous mission from the outset, has banned the media from military funeral services and hasn't publicized mission objectives that could have given Canadians a way to track our soldiers' progress.

With so little tangible evidence offered of the impact our troops are having in Afghanistan, is it any wonder weekly casualty reports have become the foundation from which many Canadians form their opinion of how the war is going?

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.

Mail or drop off:

Independent & Free Press,
280 Guelph St., Unit 29,
Georgetown, ON., L7G 4B1

E-mail:

jmcghe@independentfreepress.com

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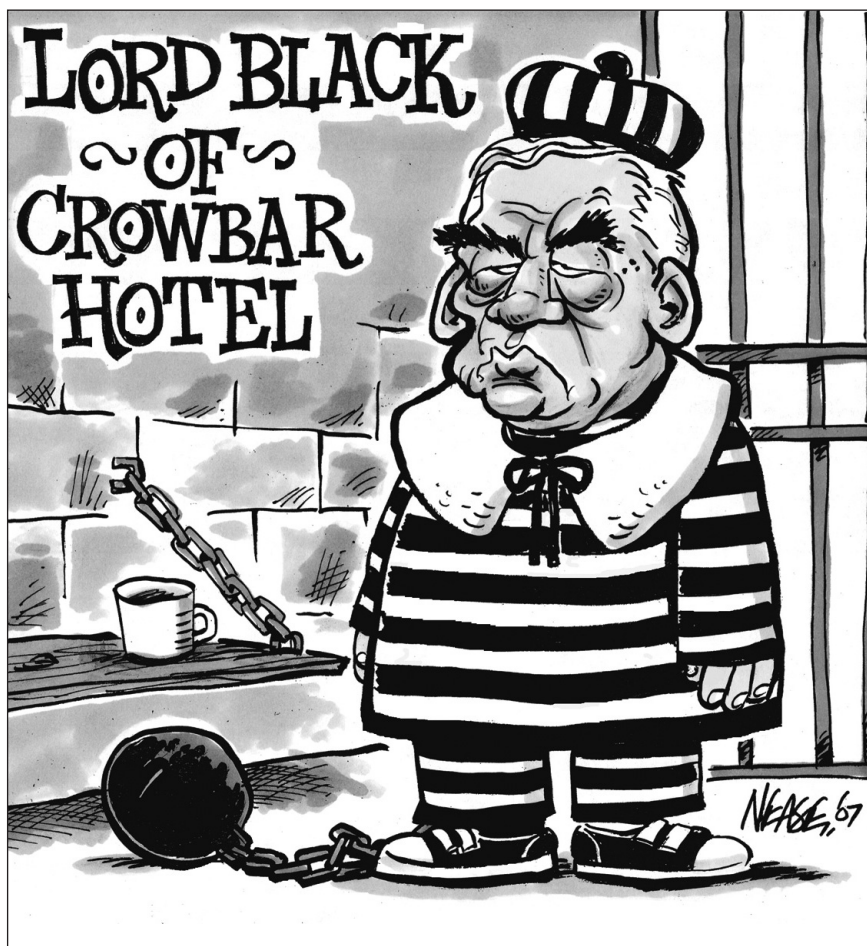
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Steve Nease



STAFF DIRECTORY

Publisher

Ken Nugent

Advertising director

Steve Foreman
(sforeman@independentfreepress.com)

Retail advertising manager

Cindi Campbell
(ccampbell@independentfreepress.com)

Managing editor

John McGhie
(jmcghe@independentfreepress.com)

Distribution manager

Nancy Geissler
(distribution@independentfreepress.com)

ADVERTISING

Advertising co-ordinator

Jennifer Christie (jchristie@independentfreepress.com)

Retail Sales:

Jennifer Spencer (jspencer@independentfreepress.com)

Adam Spinney (aspinney@independentfreepress.com)

Andrew Key (akey@independentfreepress.com)

Amy Sykes (features@independentfreepress.com)

Real estate:

Sue Spizziri (realestate@independentfreepress.com)

Classifieds:

Kristie Pells (classified@independentfreepress.com)

ACCOUNTING

Rose Marie Gauthier, Michelle Wimmer

EDITORIAL

Cynthia Gamble: News editor

(cgamble@independentfreepress.com)

Ted Brown: Photography

(tbrown@independentfreepress.com)

Lisa Tallyn: Staff writer

(ltallyn@independentfreepress.com)

Eamonn Maher: Staff writer/sports

(emaher@independentfreepress.com)

PRODUCTION:

Mary Lou Foreman, Kevin Powell,

Shelli Harrison, Dolores Black, Debbie MacDougall

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Residents wasting a precious resource

Dear editor,
I am a resident in the Four Corners area in south Georgetown. With the environment concerns in the forefront of recent news, our family does what we can to have as positive an impact on our environment as we can.

In the dry days of the past two months, especially July so far, it is very apparent that the concern for how green one's lawn is very apparent in our subdivision. Even though grass will go "dormant", many folks seem concerned that the look of their lawn going yellow is cramping their landscaping style— so on go the sprinklers regularly. The amazing fact of this is that a few of these folks even expect that they are getting their money's worth watering between the hours of 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. when it's sunny and more than 30C.

Maybe they really don't know that much of that precious water being used during this time is being "sprinkled into evaporation". So not only are these folks wasting valuable resources that are being taxed by Mother Nature, they are wasting their own money to keep their grass green.

If there is a way to police these folks' watering habits, it would be interesting to learn about it.

I don't think the water ban in Halton is a newsflash of any kind to most residents, but some appear to feel as though they reserve the right

to do as they please. Unfortunately, this is how we end up with premiums on resources such as precious water during dry conditions. I think most of us know who will be the first to complain.

Please neighbours, help contribute to keeping all of our natural resources plentiful.

Neil Ireland, Georgetown

Will Town replace plants lost to drought?

Dear editor,
There seems to be lots of water for development that we don't want or need.

There is plenty of water for golf courses that serve the privileged that can afford it; but no water for the lawns and gardens of the homeowners who have been here for years.

Is the Town going to replace my plants or my grass when the grubs destroy my lawn?

Arnold Ellis, Georgetown

Region doesn't have water to accommodate development

Dear editor,
Re: Water ban in effect— June 29, Independent & Free Press.

At the end of June, Halton Region instituted a complete water ban on all areas of the region. We went from a voluntary reduction to a mandatory ban in a relatively

short period of time.

The ban on outdoor watering comes at the end of June— not even the hottest and driest months. This makes me wonder why we continue to build homes in Halton Region at a fast and furious pace, when clearly we don't have enough water for the residents we currently have.

I realize municipalities are eager to get the development revenues and homeowner residential taxes but how can our regional political leaders justify continued growth AND limited resources, at the same time.

It's time for a stop in growth in the region until a more stable source of water can be found and distributed.

Dan Harmer, Georgetown

Better late than never...

Dear editor,
In *The Independent Free Press* on June 29, you had an article on page 8 starting that Halton Hills now had a restriction on lawn watering and a hose ban.

Many people I have spoken with were surprised that such an important announcement was not given priority on the front page. Our local paper is the only source of such information.

Barbara Scully, Georgetown

(Editor's note: The Region's water ban press release was received after the June 29 edition had already been sent to the press. A page was recalled to ensure the notice was printed.)