

# Firefighters gearing up for Combat Challenge

*Team ready for nationals  
over Labour Day weekend*

By STEPHANIE THIESSEN

*The Champion*

Get ready, get set, go!

Members of the Milton Fire Department's Combat Challenge Team know what it means to push themselves to the limit.

They know what it means to keep going when their bodies are crying out for rest. And they know what it means to be so close to victory, they can almost taste it.

For the past month-and-a-half, the seven team members have been participating for the first time in various Firefighter Combat Challenge competitions across Ontario.

So far, they've entered regional competitions in Niagara Falls, Toronto and Quinte West. Tomorrow they're headed to Windsor and after that, on August 21 and 22, it's off to Brampton for the Metro Regional competition.

Their greatest challenge will come September 2 to 5 when they compete at the nationals in Quebec.

In the Combat Challenge, firefighters race against the clock performing a number of physically strenuous tasks similar to what they do on rescue missions. This includes lifting a 42-pound hose and carrying it up five flights of stairs and dragging a 175-pound rescue dummy to safety.

The kicker is these feats are performed wearing full bunker gear — including a breathing apparatus and boots.

"The Challenge is very demanding and many participants perform at the level of elite athletes," said team member Tim Roberts.

The team has been training together for months and now practices four or five nights each week.

"We've run up the (Kelso) ski hill with tankers on our backs," said team member Don Ronan, giving an example of one of their makeshift practice facilities.

Each team member has already qualified for the nationals, completing the Challenge individually under the required time.

With Mr. Ronan and Mr. Roberts on the team are Steve Ramkalawan, Steve Ellis, Marcel Fournel, Stu Curran and Chad Harper.

If these names sound familiar, it's likely because several of these men have taken part in such fundraisers as the Bunker Run and CN Tower Run. They're also looking forward to September 19th's Terry Fox Run.

The team is currently trying to get sponsors to cover the cost of its equipment. They could perform better with newer, lighter-weight equipment, Mr. Ronan said.

So far, team members have been paying the competition fees out of their own pockets.

Mr. Ronan said he's happy the team has qualified for the nationals, something nobody expected. But it certainly wouldn't hurt to go a step further and qualify for November's world championships in Las Vegas, he added quickly.

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File photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Combat Challenge team members (from left) Chad Harper, Steve Ellis, Marcel Fournel, Don Ronan, Stephen Ramkalawan and Tim Roberts take time out from their ongoing training for regional and national competition. Absent from the photo is Stu Curran.

## Bat activity at its peak this month

They may not be the creepy critters associated with Halloween and vampires, but bats can be dangerous all the same — especially this month, when bat activity is at its prime.

It's important to treat bats seriously and take the necessary steps if you suspect you have bats in your home, said Bill Dowd, president of AAA Wildlife Control.

"We tend to see a lot of bats right in Milton, as well as more rural (areas) like Campbellville," Mr. Dowd said, adding, "This month people are more in contact with bats — they're colonizing and coming into people's living spaces."

Buildings are increasingly becoming

preferred breeding grounds for bats, he said.

"Bat issues should be dealt with swiftly, and not allowed to spread throughout the home," said Corey Lewis, a wildlife technician supervisor with AAA Wildlife Control. "Since bat colonies tend to double in size each year, it doesn't take long for a few bats in the attic to become a major infestation of several hundred (bats)."

Bats found in a living or work space are a serious health concern and are often a sign of more bats living in the attic, roof or walls.

Rabid bats and human contact with bats is on the rise in Ontario.

Although most bats aren't rabid, they're the most common species to carry rabies. Symptoms can take up to one year to appear, and if not treated before that, serious illness or death can result.

People who may have come into contact with bats should seek medical attention and possibly receive a rabies shot. Bat bites can often go undetected and their saliva can infect the eyes, mouth and open sores, said a spokesperson from AAA Wildlife Control.

Bats can be difficult to detect and dangerous to remove. It's best to consult a professional to take care of the problem.

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Documents are posted on the board website: [www.haltonrc.edu.on.ca](http://www.haltonrc.edu.on.ca)

For any information about the tender contact Frank Crouchman, Manager, Purchasing Services, (905) 632-6300, ext. 136.



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