

OPINION

What's in store for our troops?

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.

Given what we know so far, it's a battle Harper isn't likely to survive.



ReadersWrite

Send us your letters to miltone@haltonsearch.com or drop them off at 875 Main St. E.

Miltonians don't want fluoridation

DEAR EDITOR:

In regard to Joe Henry's letter in the February 24 Champion, Councillor Ron Furik does acknowledge the facts.

And the fact is that the taxpayers of 'old' Milton don't want fluoride in their water supply. Furik has been around for several referendums on the issue and the outcome has always been loud and clear. No. I applaud him for dismissing the issue outright because Furik knows exactly how we feel.

For someone who's only been here

for two years, I would recommend that Henry do some research regarding the referendum before speaking out. And I suggest that he also do some research on fluoride, which is a highly toxic aluminum by-product.

It accumulates in the body and through time can cause serious health problems and even death. Why in the world would anyone voluntarily want to drink it?

JILL BAILEY
MILTON

Aroundtown

Wood burning chimney safety's no laughing matter

When a neighbour began urgently knocking on our door one day many years ago, my family assumed he was just eager to welcome us to the neighbourhood.

Not so.

"Do you know your chimney's on fire?" he asked my mom.

Yes of course we do, we like it that way. Or not.

Nope, being inside the house, we weren't able to see the smoke pouring out, and were more than glad — although quite embarrassed — to be informed that our first fire in the new house wasn't going as planned.

If a person's first impression is determined in the first few seconds of meeting someone, I can only imagine what this man was thinking about his new neighbours.

Fortunately, the chimney fire hadn't yet spread and was quickly put out. The culprit?

A bird's nest (without any birds, thank goodness).

We learned the hard way the importance of a clean chimney and that a good sweep can do wonders for the safety of the family.

Last week, a family in town made the same mistake, I was told by training technician Barry Kory of the Milton Fire Department.

A house on Tremaine Road, just south of Derry Road, also had a chimney fire. Theirs was a little more serious, with the flames spreading within the wall. Fortunately, firefighters were able to put it out before there was any significant damage to the home or injuries to the people inside.

Kory said the blaze was due to a heavy

build up of creosote in the chimney — a definite no-no. Creosote — a soot-like substance — can burst into flames if not properly cleaned out.

He likened this build up to the clogging and hardening of cholesterol in the arteries. In other words, it's something you don't want — something that can be incredibly dangerous if not detected in time.

If a fireplace is used regularly, Kory recommends a professional cleaning once a year.

So please, learn from the carelessness of the Thiessen family and make sure your fires serve their intended purpose — relaxing warmth for those chilly end-of-winter nights.

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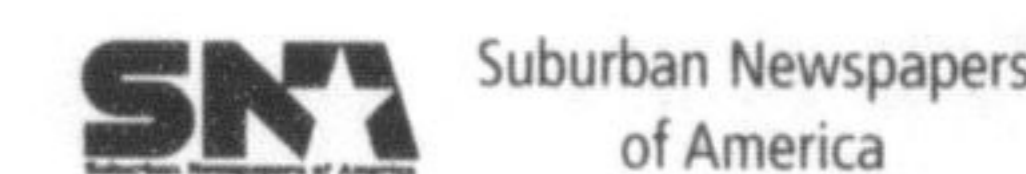
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