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# Remember the sacrifice this holiday season

## Comment

by Michelle Minnoch

I thought about what my last editorial for the year should be, and I picked a topic I am passionate about and supportive of - the war in Afghanistan.

In May, MP's narrowly voted to extend our mission in the war torn nation, 149-145. It was the Bloc and the NDP who voted against the mission. The vote took place at a time when Canada lost their first female soldier in combat, Capt. Nichola Goddard of the 1st Royal Canadian Horse Artillery.

Our troops are making the ultimate sacrifice, traveling to a foreign country, and are separated from friends and family. The men and women who sign up for the Canadian military know the risks involved when they sign up. They know they can be deployed anywhere at anytime.

There was quite a spark lit when Prime Minister Harper mentioned this past fall that Canada was indeed involved in a war in Afghanistan. The word 'war' upset many Canadians, as their thoughts of our soldiers rebuilding a nation, turned into the reality of our soldiers fighting in one.

While Canadians have been generally been peacekeepers over the past number of decades, we are now a nation who produces soldiers, and there is nothing wrong with that. Peacekeeping was developed at a time when it was needed, and it still is. But right now, there are corners of the world who need help, and the help is needed in a form of soldiers.

From 2001-2011, Canada is expected to give Afghanistan \$1 billion in developmental assistance. Our country has heard the appeal from Afghanistan, asking for assistance for long term development investments. We are helping to build a nation, after the fall of the Taliban - a regime that did not believe in the rights we solely take for granted.

Since the fall of the Taliban, Afghans have a new constitution, presidential and legislative

elections, more than four million children enrolled in schools, and the reintegration of almost three million Afghan refugees.

Apparently Bloc Leader Giles Duceppe wants to topple the Harper Government in February over the mission in Afghanistan. I do not want another election, and I am sure the majority of Canadians don't want another one so soon as well. I am not comfortable with the fact that he wants to throw down the government based on how long we are to be in Afghanistan. Listen, the House voted in favour of staying until 2009, so let's honour that commitment. We have played a significant role in that country, and should continue to do so.

I support our troops, and support my country. I wear red on Fridays. I try to keep as informed as possible about what we are accomplishing in Afghanistan. I am thankful for the freedoms we have. I am appreciate the fact that there are men and women, our fellow Canadians, who have chosen to fight for the freedoms of others. The ultimate sacrifice.

Thank you.

# Rescued swan needs surgery to save broken wing

## Letters From Our Readers

Ontario  
L4N-5N3

Please make note on cheque to have it go to the SWAN FUND.

All donations postmarked before the end of December for \$10.00 & over will receive an income tax receipt for this year. Others for next year.

The swan has been sent back to Toronto Wildlife Center to care for it over the holidays. Mid January she will go back to Guelph University where vets there will perform a much needed surgery to

save the female swan's wing. If this is not done the swan would have to be euthanized. A swan cannot live without its wing.

Wye Marsh has agreed to take her in as long as wing is intact. She will never fly again. But will be company for another female at Wye Marsh that also can not fly but has adapted very well to her new life. This swan has been very well cared for in her journeys to the different facilities. She is doing very well and is healthy & strong. We are all awaiting the day all goes well that

she comes to her new home at Wye Marsh. She has been through an awful lot and is a survivor. Every dollar helps. Without your help this surgery could not be done. It is not funded and is expensive.

We want to thank the Wye Marsh, Toronto Wildlife Center, Guelph University, Brereton Field Naturalists Club, Six Mile Lake Conservationists Club, And Ontario Nature for all their help in setting this all up.

Thank you,

A local naturalist

# Salary increases for MPPs

Dear editor:

We have heard this week that the McGuinty government has extended the legislative session one more week so they can give themselves a 25% salary increase before Christmas.

Injured workers rallied in a number of communities seeking the same treatment only last week. The government representatives, from the Minister of Labour on down, said that they are studying this issue. Over the last three years, this

government has said they can't afford it; they are worried about the long term impact; and the employer lobby is too strong.

Why is it that this government is so eager to give themselves a raise, to over \$110,000 per year, while those workers with a permanent injury who are mainly unemployed and living in poverty, see their benefits decreased by inflation each year.

You may not know that there are approx. 340,000 workers in Ontario

who have a permanent disability from a workplace injury or disease. A number of research studies have consistently identified high unemployment in this group of 50 – 80%. Since 1996, injured workers have lost over 22% of the value of their pensions to inflation. If big business in our province isn't willing to employ injured workers, then those loyal workers shouldn't be forced into poverty as a result.

Two MPP's, one Liberal and one NDP, have already introduced bills

to restore full cost of living protection for permanently disabled workers. The government could easily pass these bills along with the one for their own pay increase before Christmas. It seems to me, that what's good for the goose is good for the gander.

It's time this government stands up for the most vulnerable people in our province and not just the folks already on the top.

Steve Mantis - Thunder Bay  
Injured Workers Support Group

## Saturday 'Rocks' at the St. James Community Grandparenting Hideaway

Starting Date: January 13th - 10 a.m. to 12 noon.

Program will run the second and fourth Saturday of every month.

Moms and Dads, here's an opportunity for your children to enjoy some time with "Community Grandparents". St. James United Church has a great number of seniors with life skills such as cooking, computer use, baking, dancing, reading, knitting, singing, crafts, acting, sewing, woodworking etc. These volunteers are eager and looking forward to a chance to interact with the younger generation.

It is a learning/teaching outreach program that is non-denominational in nature and all school age children are welcome to attend. This is a great opportunity for children to interact positively with seniors. This kind of intergenerational contact can help kids develop higher levels of self-esteem and self-confidence.

Families are so busy these days that sometimes these very ordinary things are just missed. Maybe your child doesn't have the opportunity to

share special time with a Grandparent. It may well be the couple of hours that you, Mom and/or Dad, need to get the household chores done, do the shopping or just have a little guilt free time on your own, knowing your children are in safe hands.

St. James will have in place all the proper 'Duty of Care' documentation and will run on an 'Open Door' policy to ensure you of the safety, quality and integrity of this community outreach program.

There was an article in the Toronto Sun recently that spoke of a very similar program. Community Care East York, a seniors' agency in Toronto, started their "Grandparenting" program in 1985. It is now offered in 12 East York schools with 100 senior volunteers sharing the hobbies and skills they love with some 800 young people.

If you and your children would be interested in or have further questions about this program, we would love to hear from you. You can also just drop in on any 2nd or 4th Sat. of the month

beginning Jan. 13th 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

Phone: St. James United Church 436-5225  
or Linda Winson 431-7149 or Roberta Noble 436-2462

## Extended French being offered

The Simcoe County District School Board invites parents and students to attend information meetings about Extended French as a Second Language programs that are offered to students beginning in Grade 5.

Goodfellow P.S. - Jan. 18 at 7 p.m.

Student Registration is Jan. 22 to 26, 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Goodfellow.

Admission to the Extended French as a Second Language program is based on a first-come, first-served basis. A minimum of 24 students is required to initiate a Grade 5 class. Priority is given to students who have siblings in the program or to students who transfer from an Extended French class in another Simcoe County District School Board school.