

# Canada should not abandon Afghanistan!

Canada still has an important role to play in Afghanistan.

We owe the Afghans our help and should stay in that country until the job is done.

There has been some progress made in that strife-torn country, which still faces a lot of challenges and problems in the future.

Afghanistan has been at war with itself, in one form or another, since the 1970s.

It is not easy for this vast country to return to true democracy in a few years.

It will take time, effort, negotiations, financial help and a lot of sacrifice before the nation is able to

stand on its own feet.

This year, as I pointed out in my earlier column, will be a crucial year for Afghanistan.

Canada's military role is under the microscope again following a detailed report by John Manley, a former well-respected Liberal cabinet minister, who was asked by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to assess the situation in Afghanistan.

Manley and his panel have given us a frank and reasonable analysis.

The panel recommends Canada extend its military mission to Afghanistan indefinitely.

This recommendation comes with certain conditions.



Sultan JESSA  
Opinion

## Snowshoeing 1920



Pictured above are three happy snowshoers around 1920. This photograph is from the collection of the Cornwall Community Museum/Archives.

Cornwall Community Museum photo

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Manley has placed new emphasis on diplomacy, training and reconstruction provided NATO antes up more troops from other countries to relieve combat pressure from Canadian soldiers.

The 90-page report does not put any time limit on ending the Canadian mission.

Canada does need help from its NATO partners and should spend the money needed to make sure our soldiers are well equipped.

Let us also not forget it was the Liberal government that initiated the Kandahar mission in the first place.

The New Democratic Party, the Block Quebecois and, to some extent, the Liberals, want Canada to end the mission in Kandahar, reducing troop deployments and shifting them to training, civilian protection and reconstruction in safer zones.

Already, 77 Canadian military personnel and one diplomat have died in Afghanistan since 2002.

Canada has 2,500 soldiers in Afghanistan. It is true that Canada has suffered a lopsided toll in the conflict.

Canada's former Prime Minister Paul Martin decided to send troops to Kandahar in August 2005.

Our country's role in Afghanistan is justified for global security and interests.

Canada has an important role to play on the international scene.

Since Canada was so heavily involved in Afghanistan, the Harper government had little choice but to continue with the mis-

sion.

It was never intended to be a lifelong effort or a long-term commitment.

However, over the years, Canada became even more entrenched in the conflict to restore democracy in Afghanistan.

Manley says the extension should come with some commitments from Canada's NATO partners.

The panel likes to see the deployment of a new, 1,000-soldier battle group in Kandahar province, allowing Canada to focus on training the Afghan National Army.

The Manley panel has also recommended obtaining new medium-lift helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles by February 2009.

All these recommendations make a lot of sense.

Canada cannot and should not fully abandon combat duties by a hard and fast date.

Harper appointed the panel last October to consider at least four possible options for Canada's involvement in Afghanistan.

A parliamentary vote on the mission's future is expected some time in the spring.

One thing is clear: NATO needs to send more soldiers to Afghanistan, which is still home to a multitude of warlords hardened by decades of continuous combat, funded by billions in heroin profits and hardened jihads.

Prime Minister Harper has a big challenge. He has to do a better job of explaining the mission to Canadians.

His bigger task is to convince NATO to re-examine the mission in Afghanistan and make the necessary changes.

## The "think and listen"

Recently, I was listening to an audio CD program by Dr. Laurence Martel called "Real Intelligence" (because you can never have enough of that, right?). Dr. Martel is a former faculty head at Syracuse University. In one session he discussed various communication tools and techniques. Today, I'd like to share one of these techniques with you. It's called the "think and listen."

The "think and listen" is a great tool for both soliciting information as well as problem solving. Here's how it works: Let's assume we have two people—Steve and Jane. Steve comes to Jane with a problem he's having with one of his staff members. He says "I need a five-minute 'think and listen'." So Jane puts down whatever she was doing and gives Steve five minutes of her undivided attention. As Steve describes the problem he's having, Jane listens. That's all she does. She does not speak; she simply listens to whatever Steve has to say. At the end of five minutes Steve stands up and thanks Jane for helping him out with his problem. He's decided how to resolve it. Meanwhile Jane feels like she hasn't done a thing for Steve. And that's the key. The "think and listen" technique allows people to express themselves fully, in an uninterrupted manner.

Similarly, the "think and listen" technique

could also be used by entire organizations or companies. The first step would necessarily be to teach all your staff how to use the technique. Yes, this would probably take five or ten minutes. However, the benefits to the organization could be enormous. For example, picture a staff meeting where members from all the various departments are seated at the meeting table. The chair of the meeting gives each person a five-minute "think and listen" opportunity. No interruptions, no debating, just good old-fashioned listening, information sharing, and focused concentration.

Imagine the time you could save in your meetings. Ask yourself, "Could our organization benefit from the "think and listen" strategy?" If so, try it out.

P.S. I don't know about you, but to me, this technique sounds a lot like the one my school principal employed when I got called down to the office in grade school. He would talk, think, and talk some more, and I would listen.

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Greg Smith is a member of Seaway Toastmasters in Cornwall. Toastmasters International is an organization which teaches communication and leadership skills. For more information on Toastmasters, visit <http://seaway.freetoasthost.info>.



Greg SMITH  
Speaking & Communication

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