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The mission in Iraq

Dear editor:

ISIL represents a real and present threat to the Middle East region. It has ruthlessly and systematically killed thousands throughout Iraq and Syria ? innocent civilians, ethnic and religious minorities, humanitarian workers, and journalists ? displacing hundreds of thousands more in its wake. Both the security threat and the urgent humanitarian crisis created by ISIL require international action.

The question is not whether Canada can contribute to this effort; we can, and we must. The question is this: in the context of a wide-scale, international effort to confront ISIL, what is the most effective contribution that Canada can make?

The Liberal Party of Canada believes that our efforts are best devoted to the humanitarian side of the equation. Displaced Iraqis who have been forced from their homes at the hands of ISIL need our help. Canada is uniquely positioned to be a leader in the humanitarian efforts in this region. In addition, we can and should facilitate the resettlement of Iraqi refugees here in Canada. We also have unique capabilities that should lead us to focus our time, personnel, and financial resources on non-combat roles such as strategic airlift, training, and medical support.

We have repeatedly said that there is a clear line between a non-combat and combat role in Iraq. If the Prime Minister wants to take Canada across that line, he must make the case to Canadians as to why this is a necessary step for our country. The Prime Minister did not make this case. For this reason, the Liberal Party opposed the government's motion to go to war in Iraq.

However, now that the decision has been made to send the brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces into harm's way, they have our ? and all Canadians' ? full and unwavering support.

Marc Garneau, MP

Liberal Party of Canada Critic for Foreign Affairs