

A losing battle



By Nate Smelle

THERE IS NO COMBINATION of words possible to stop the bleeding and soothe the pain caused by the tragic events that unfolded last week on Parliament Hill in Ottawa and in Saint-Jean-Sur-Richelieu. In moments like these when the healing power of words seem to be an insufficient response to such a blatant disregard for life, all we can do is take action to prevent it from happening again. As Member of Parliament for Prince Edward-Hastings Daryl Kramp stated in an interview with Bancroft This Week following the attacks "There are going to be a lot of lessons learned from this."

How we put these lessons into action is up to us.

We now stand at a crossroads.

Looking forward, our nation's decision on what course of action needs to be taken is of paramount importance in preserving the health and welfare of all Canadians.

In the coming days, weeks, months we will hear many propositions put forth on what needs to be done to eliminate this mysteriously indistinguishable enemy. Before we choose our destination there are many questions we need to ask ourselves. First of all, who are we fighting? ISIS? Al-Qaeda? Monsanto? Muslims? Quebecers? One thing for certain is that the path we choose will further define our values, our principles and our future as a country.

As usual there will be a small but loud and bloodthirsty crowd of Hawks demanding swift and devastating vengeance. They will tell us we need "boots on the ground" and fighter jets in the skies to obliterate "the enemy." While the total annihilation of any potential

enemy may appear to be a solution to the threat facing us, I personally do not see war as a remedy to terrorism. As a species we have taken this route on far too many occasions to claim ignorance of the painful costs of its inevitable outcome. The rusty old war machine we have been driving since we started fighting is fuelled by the souls and skin of the dead while it consumes every resource it rolls over on its way to the same impoverished destination it has repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt in the past. We know deep down these lives and resources would be better spent in service of humanity and the planet, but all too often we still choose to fight.

When we take the time to the horrific accounts of the women and men who have returned from the battlefield to tell their story it is clear that we cannot fight a 'War on Terror' because War is Terror. Following the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York City on Sept. 11, 2001 George W. Bush re-ignited the flames of war stoked by his father in Iraq years earlier, and yet more than a decade after the war was first declared over we see how that decision worked out for the USA. How many times do we have to see the same 'Mission Accomplished' banner hoisted high only to see the meaning of its message disappear into the smoke of another car bomb exploded in the streets of Jurf al-Sakhar in Iraq, Homs in Syria or on the Gaza Strip?

The reality of choosing to fight fire with fire in this instance is that in war everyone loses. War may be necessary as a measure of self-defence but the essence of it is always evil. Does victory reside at the bottom of the lesser pile of the dead? Ask the men and women counting the bodies of their friends. Ask the soldiers coping with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder who have returned home to their families forever altered from the horrors they have experienced firsthand. Ask the families of the 160 soldiers who have committed suicide between 2004 and March 31, 2014.

There's another option of course alluded to in the title of Neil Young's memoirs *Waging Heavy Peace*. Call this strategy what you will; unrealistic, naïve, a hippie dream; but hey, I'll take a good dream over a nightmare any night.