

## Harper: Canada quits Afghanistan in 2011

by UPI

OTTAWA - Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper proposed to parliament in Ottawa Canadian troops end their NATO mission by 2011. In recent weeks, his minority Conservative government has been at odds with opposition Liberals over defining a cut-off, with Liberals threatening to topple the government and force a spring election, Canwest News Service reported. The bill Harper offered Thursday night says Canadian troops would begin pulling out of Kandahar in July 2011 and all would be home by December 2011. Liberals will be hard-pressed to vote against the bill, as much of it was taken verbatim from their own version of a military schedule, the report said. Canada's existing commitment to NATO expires in February 2009, although Harper has argued more time is needed in the fight against al-Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan's violent Kandahar province. Under the Conservatives' motion, Canada would only extend its mission if NATO provides an additional 1,000 combat troops in the province, the Canwest said. A vote on the measure is expected by the end of March.

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