

Feds must deliver info to our readers

Each week more than 1,000 English and French community newspapers just like the *Independent and Free Press* go about the business of telling stories that matter to the communities they serve. We are at your rinks and schools. We are at your school board and council meeting. We are at the scene when tragedy strikes. We celebrate your milestones. Our job is to cover Halton Hills, wars and all. And we are good at it.

We are in towns big and small. Some community newspapers circulate well in excess of 100,000 copies. Some are in the hundreds. It may surprise you that each week, more than 20 million copies of community newspapers are distributed across the country. Independent research shows that more than 70 per cent of Canadians read their community paper.

Despite our collective strength, ours is a medium easy to ignore. Because we focus on Canada one community at a time, we lack the sex appeal of other media. We've seen our share of federal government advertising gradually erode over the years. Our regional and national associations have met with government MPs, opposition MPs, cabinet ministers and senior bureaucrats to promote our case. We are always met with courtesy and a promise that things will get better.

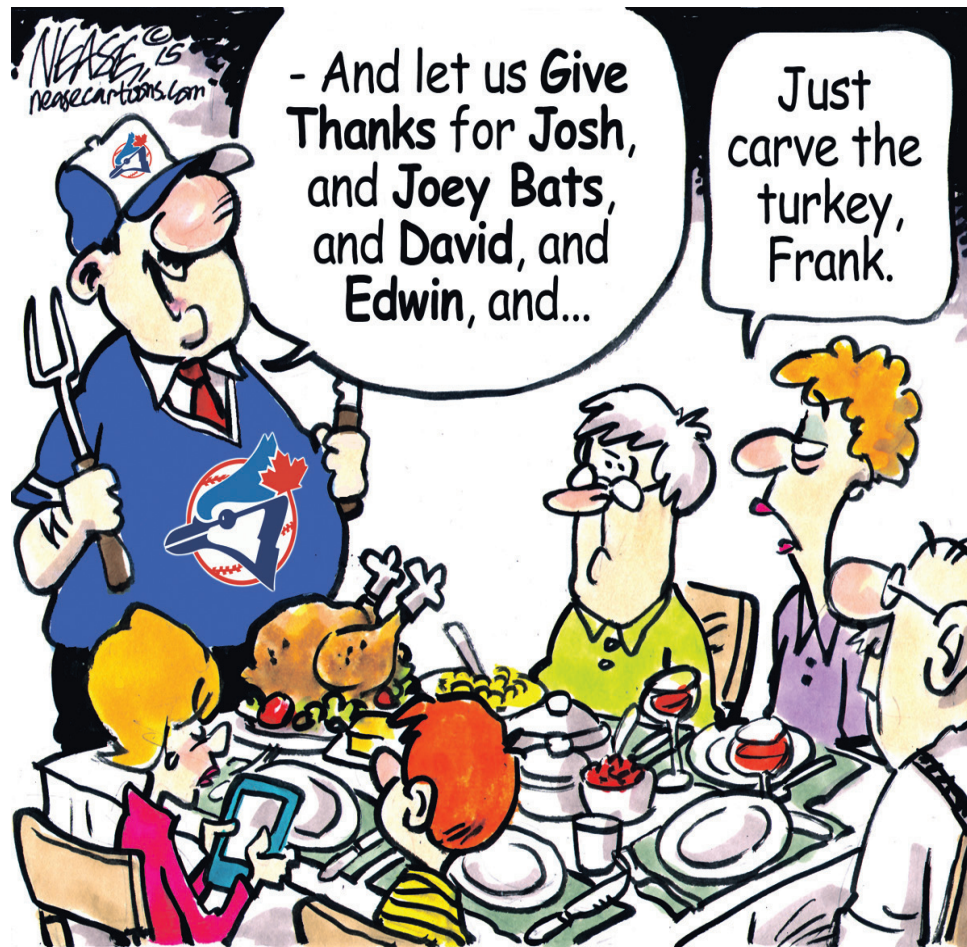
Well things are not getting better. So despite it being contradictory to everything we believe in journalistically, the time has come to tell you. In short, the federal government is all but ignoring your community newspapers like *The Independent and Free Press*. We believe this means the federal government is ignoring you and your community's right to be informed about programs and services offered by the Government of Canada.

In the last fiscal year, the federal government spent \$75 million on advertising. More than \$26 million of that went to TV ads, while another \$15.5 million went to Internet advertising—an industry dominated by American-based companies like Google and Facebook. Creating ads and paying ad agencies ate away another \$10 million. Radio advertising cost just under \$7 million.

By comparison, community newspapers saw a paltry \$867,000 in total advertising from Ottawa—or an average of about \$25 per week per newspaper. The way in which your government uses your money to communicate with you is very telling. TV and Internet ads work to build brand, not to inform. Your community newspaper generates debate and serves as a forum for discussion—and is also one of the few places where local MPs actually receive editorial coverage outside election season.

That's why those MPs submit letters to the editor, columns or buy their own local advertising to share their work with the community. They know the power of your local community paper.

The federal government is telling you they'd rather give your tax dollars to Facebook and Google than Canadian-based companies that invest in local journalism. If you believe, as we do, that government should invest in meaningful communication with citizens through community newspapers, we ask you to help us. Contact your local candidate.



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Letters to the editor

Watch out for those telephone scammers

Recently an article was published in *The IFP* about an ongoing phone scam where the caller said they were from the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA). My wife recently experienced a call and we wanted to alert the community about the impact of this type of call.

The caller identified himself as John Harrison from CRA and quoted a file number and even an employee ID #, he stated that an audit had been conducted for the years 2008-2012 and it was determined that over \$3,000 in back taxes and penalties was owing and he could arrange for payment to be made. He went on to say that an arrest warrant had been prepared and would be executed if payment was not made.

When my wife questioned him he became belligerent. My wife also suggested he call our accountant. Each question or request was met with increasing hostility. Finally he said he would mark the file as her being uncooperative and hung

up. My wife called me and I assured her that this was a scam and that CRA sends notices through the mail.

Less than five minutes after the first call a second one comes in this time a woman. The caller identified herself as Jennifer Black of the Halton Police and provided a badge number. She tells my wife that a police car will be arriving shortly to place her in custody. Once again few details are provided; my wife is now concerned that someone will show up at the door and asks me to come home. She calls the real Halton Regional Police and is advised that this is scam and the police gives her the number of the RCMP to report the call.

Later in the afternoon we receive two automated calls advising us to call the CRA to settle the account; the message even provides a toll free number. This is a highly sophisticated operation that uses intimidation and threats to trick unsuspecting people to pay bogus claims on their credit card. Check out the CRA web site about these fraudulent calls.

The callers are very convincing and use intimidation to prompt people to give their credit card numbers; obviously they are not too concerned about being

caught as they freely give a phone number to call them back.

Best advice HANG UP.

Doug Penrice
Georgetown

Mythical health card arrives

Sometime in the early to mid 1990s, I received a letter from the Ontario government advising that new Photo Health Cards would be issued over the next few years and that I should be patient while the process unfolds before being contacted to re-register.

Being low down in the alphabetical order, I bided my time.

Today, some 20 or more years later, the magic happened. A letter advising that: "It is time for you to obtain a photo health card." I am so deliriously happy. The big wait is over.

Our taxes hard at work.

Makes you want to cry, doesn't it?

Graham Willsher,
Georgetown