

Utter non-census

With the slim cushion his party has enjoyed in the polls in recent months now all but gone, it will be interesting to see if Stephen Harper's government will look to refine its position on the mandatory long-form census.

We doubt most Canadians had any grievous concerns about the census before the federal government, through Industry Minister Tony Clement, announced weeks ago that the mandatory long-form census would be replaced with a voluntary survey because Canadians found the former "intrusive."

A large number of groups, provinces, municipalities, banks, unions, churches, universities, social agencies and others— have found census information invaluable to their decision-making processes. A voluntary survey they rightfully fear, will be far less reliable as citizens at the top and bottom of the income scale, immigrants and Aboriginal peoples will be less inclined to fill out survey.

A voluntary survey would make the 2011 Census little more than a poll.

The Tories' claim of switching to a voluntary form to "better protect the privacy of Canadians" and their concern about the "threat of jail" for not filling out a mandatory survey is laughable.

Surely, no one believes the federal government's utmost concern about the census is the protection of Canadians' privacy. And while a six-month jail term is included in the Statistics Act, no one has ever been incarcerated for refusing to fill out a census form. Nor would they be.

The Tories picked this fight with StatsCan—a government agency that has faced numerous cuts for decades but which provides countless groups with invaluable information about our country and its citizens— for reasons known only to themselves.

Right now it is a fight the Tories are losing with the general public—and they are likely to find that is an opponent tough to beat.

Letters to the editor policy

Letters must include an address and daytime telephone number. Anonymous letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 150 words and may be edited for content and/or length. Publication is not guaranteed.

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The Independent & Free Press

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WEB POLL RESULTS

Do you agree with the Harper government's move to replace the mandatory long form census with a voluntary version?

- Yes (25%)
- No (56%)
- Census? Who cares either way? (19%)

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Letters to the editor

Only one chance to get Barber right

Dear editor,
 Re: July 13 Public reaction mixed on latest Barber Mill hotel/retail proposal.

I would like to clarify Credit Valley Heritage Society's position on the Barber Mill development. We support well planned development of the property in a meaningful way. We want to ensure that the right vision showcases the history of the mill and the serenity of the Credit River. Ask yourself these questions:

1. Is the Credit River Valley, home to over 1,500 plant and animal species (34% of which are rare at a local, regional or provincial scale), the right location for a resort with a 65-room hotel?
2. Why block the only continuous natural corridor that we have left?
3. Wouldn't a unique paper museum/educational centre or art gallery better highlight this historic site?
4. Can the developer not create a viable plan with minimal impact to this sensitive area?

We have only one opportunity to

do this right. The people of Georgetown deserve nothing less.

*Eva Leon, President
 Credit Valley Heritage Society*

Rally 'round project

Dear editor,
 Re: The proposed restoration and development of Barber Mill.

I am sure many Halton Hills residents would agree with Ray Eckert's recent letter.

The Barber Mill has significant cultural and historical value and the only "realistic" chance of saving some of this heritage is for a private sector company with deep pockets to lead the charge. We should all rally around this win-win opportunity and provide constructive input to ensure that this project minimizes, as best it can, the impact to the valley lands and maximizes the value to this community.

How nice it would be to stroll along the banks of the Credit River by the mill and visit the historic "dynamo" downstream and to see and read about the history of the Barber Mill and have a place for visitors to our community to stay and enjoy the varied arts, culture and heritage that Halton Hills has to offer.

Rob Stewart, Georgetown

River trumps boutiques

Dear editor,
 The Barber Mill issue is more than a site in disrepair needing attention. It focuses our value system in regards to natural and built heritage.

Both the tranquil Credit valley and the historic Barber Mill deserve equal weight in the final plan; not one at the expense of the other. We need not replicate the whole mill, nor should we tear down all the mill structures to recreate an urban forest. We need balance here. The proposed development exploits every footprint to maximize development most of which is irrelevant to the essence of the Barber Mill. What do restaurants, boutiques and hotels have to do with showcasing a paper mill and a peaceful valley? The river's natural benefits trump the superfluous boutiques and restaurants that will compete with the already struggling businesses in Georgetown.

Credit Valley Heritage Society's vision of a unique paper museum and a student interpretive centre amongst a tranquil restored natural area is reasonable, meaningful and balanced. It benefits everyone, including our only remaining unimpeded wildlife corridor.

*Peter Orphanos, Chair
 Sierra Club Peel*