

Knowledge is power

How much reliable data has been lost since the Harper government killed the census, and what is the cost? No one, well hardly anyone, likes to do paperwork. Make it mandatory— as in do it or else— and even fewer of us will do it happily.

And yet a surprising number of Canadians are applauding the return of the long-form census for 2016. And they should because it's a very good thing for the country overall, even if the heavy-handed mandatory nature offends many of us.

Why? Because you don't have to be a statistician or social scientist to know that bad data equals bad decisions. That's what Canadian policy-makers at all levels were left with when the Harper government killed the census.

The rationale at the time was that it's too invasive and infringes on our privacy rights. It may do that, but those relatively minor problems pale in comparison to the benefits of the good data the long-form census has provided in the past and now, thankfully, will provide in the future.

Quite simply, the long-form census is the best tool we have to make evidence-based, people-centric public policy decisions. The Canada Pension Plan, employment insurance, Old Age Security, public transit, public health investment, education and social services— these are just a few of the areas benefiting from the best possible data. Lack of information means deteriorating data, and inadequate data means bad decisions.

Where will school populations grow? What does demographic data for a certain area mean about health spending? What is the current status of the wage gap between men and women? What do we know about poverty now and in the future in specific areas? Where are labour shortfalls most acute, suggesting those areas need training and education investment?

There is really no credible, logical argument against the benefits of better data. And yet a sizable percentage of us remain adamantly opposed to the mandatory census, which explains why the Harper government's decision was unpopular in the academic, science and public policy world, but quite the opposite in the land of broader public opinion.

But the results don't lie. The response rate for the mandatory long-form census before it was killed was 93.5 per cent. The current version is shorter, more expensive, goes to more people and was voluntary, yet it could only boast a 68.6 per cent response rate when it was last employed in 2011. The result of Harper's misplaced decision is all the data we would have had for the decade in between is gone. We don't get another chance at it. That's tragic.

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Letters to the editor

Artists say thanks for the support

Our members want to express their appreciation and thanks to all those who journeyed to our cottage home in Cedarvale Park to view and purchase work at the recent show and sale of the Credit Valley Artisans.

Thanks also to *The Independent & Free Press* for your support in publicizing our event and helping to make it the success it was.

Congratulations to Lorraine Hutton, Kris Gaterell, Gia Gelok, Matthew Samuel and Carolyn Martin.

These were the winners of the fundraising raffle which was drawn on Sunday, Nov. 22.

Our thanks to all those who bought tickets but were unlucky this time.

Your ticket purchases help fund the activities of the four guilds of the Credit Valley Artisans whose mem-

bers produced the wonderful array of artwork displayed for sale during this two-day event.

Frank Anthony,
Credit Valley Artisans

Christmas kettle campaign needs volunteers

As Christmas is fast approaching, our lives get much more busy.

We start thinking about those many gifts we need to buy, who will be hosting the festive dinner and various travel plans out of town.

There are many people right here in Georgetown who will not be thinking about those things.

Stressful time

They are worried about what they will have for their next meal, right down to having enough money for simple things, like a box of Kleenex.

As a volunteer at the Christmas kettles, it is a chance for me to help

those less fortunate.

I have found it to be such an uplifting experience and it only involves a two-hour shift.

People that pass the kettle I stand beside always have a smile and give generously.

Goal is \$75,000

Children especially are so excited to come up and put some money in the kettle.

This year, the Salvation Army has a goal of \$75,000.

The money collected stays right here in Georgetown to help those in need, not just at Christmas but throughout the whole year.

Volunteers needed

Volunteers are needed this year, so give it a thought, even if it only involves one shift during the days leading up to Christmas.

For a contact number to volunteer, you can call the Salvation Army Community Church and ask for Em-ily at 905-877-1374.

Lynn Carscallen,
Halton Hills