

Don't waste food

It is especially unfortunate for those living close to the poverty line that a price pinch in Canadian grocery stores is expected to get even more painful this year.

A weak loonie is largely blamed for adding an estimated \$325 to an average family's food costs in 2015, with the Food Institute at the University of Guelph warning household budgets could take another \$345 hit in 2016. There is no doubt many people will find this tough to swallow, particularly since the prices of healthy fruits and vegetables— more than 80 per cent of which are grown outside the country— are most affected by our sagging currency.

But as they brace for additional hikes of up to 4.5 per cent, there may well be a silver lining in an otherwise dark cloud if consumers are forced to take a closer look at how they consume, or don't consume, the most basic of commodities.

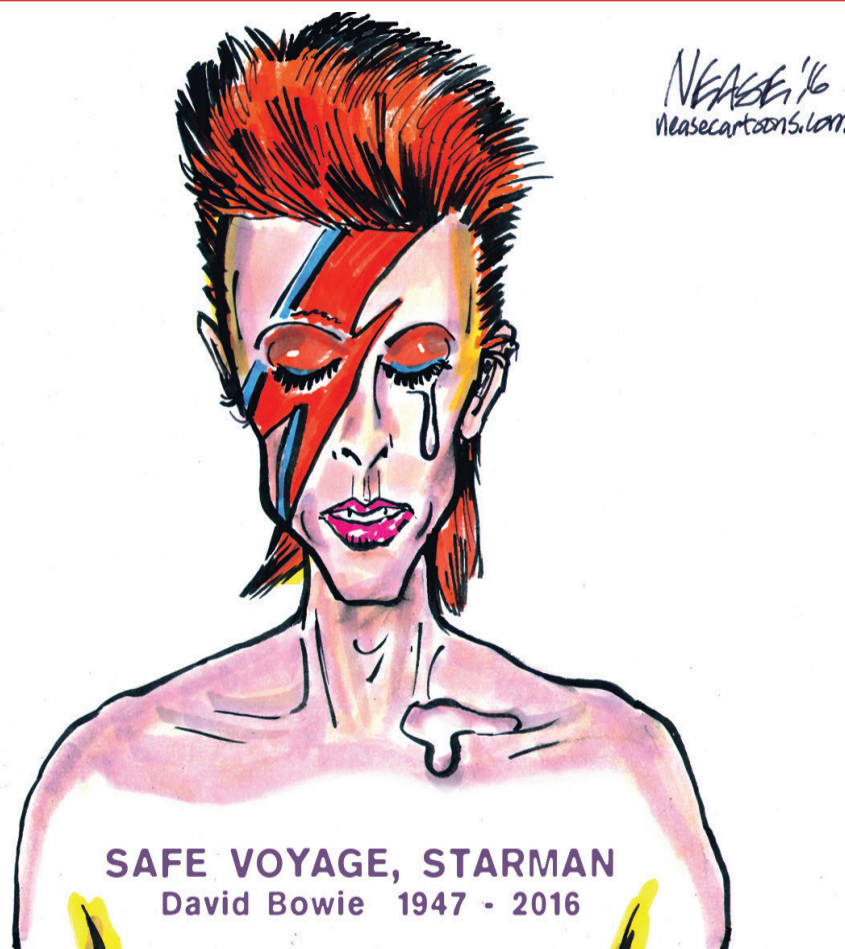
Higher prices for imported food could make many grown-in-Canada products more of a bargain and, hence, an attractive alternative. Perhaps Canadians will start buying more local, in-season produce, for instance stocking up on more Canadian-grown carrots and apples in winter while opting for fewer foreign tomatoes and oranges. Such a development would please the Canadian farming community as well as environmentalists who argue that favouring locally-grown food over products produced thousands of kilometres away can in some cases reduce the carbon emissions driving climate change.

But another aspect of food consumption in this country deserves attention. By one estimate, \$31 billion worth of food— fully two per cent of the nation's gross domestic product— is wasted in Canada every year, a staggering number that speaks both to our relative affluence and the potential to compensate for cost increases by being a little smarter, a little more responsible.

Just over half of the waste falls at the feet of businesses, including farmers, food processors, restaurants and retailers, raising questions about the ethics and efficiencies of practices and policies that could be a subject for another day. The remaining 47 per cent of the waste, however, is directly created by consumers who don't bother with leftovers, do some planning before shopping, or think of donating unwanted food to community agencies such as food banks. We clearly have it within our own control to soften the blow of food inflation by using more and throwing out less.

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Letters to the editor

Treat refugees with an open mind

Letter writer Ms. Martin has put words to the uneasiness and fear some have concerning refugees moving to Halton Hills as a result of the crisis in Syria.

While it does not follow from the poll she references that one out of every five refugees will be supporters of ISIS, the very organization from which these families are seeking refuge from, it is fair and right to say that both the UNHCR and the number of Canadian government agencies involved in screening these families prior to their arrival in Canada are both thorough and competent.

It would be good for us all to keep in mind that refugees come in all shades of colour, worship any number of gods and hail from all regions of the world.

It is both untrue and uncharitable for us to characterize all refugees, whatever their colour, religion or regional homeland, as terrorists sympathizers because their experience does not align with our

own points of self-identification.

In leading the Halton Hills Coalition for Refugees, I am so encouraged by the opportunity to talk with people about their hopes and fears concerning this situation and see both result in the outpouring of support and a promise to welcome refugees to our community with warmth and kindness.

Josh Brake,
Georgetown

Change already under way

In his recent Report From Ottawa Michael Chong our MP failed to mention some of the very aggressive and positive changes already initiated by Justin Trudeau and the new Liberal government.

As an example, the 7 per cent reduction in the middle class tax rate, affecting income from \$45,000 to \$90,000 was passed by Parliament. It will begin to reduce middle income taxes by as much as \$680 beginning in January, 2016. Interestingly, only the Conservative caucus, including Mr. Chong, voted against

this motion.

Liberal Minister Carolyn Bennett launched Phase 1 of the enquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Minister Catherine McKenna, who was named as a facilitator at the Paris climate change conference (COP21), was part of the landmark 196 country agreement which sets out to limit global warming to 2 degrees C with a goal of 1.5 degrees.

Mr. Trudeau convened a first ministers meeting with provincial and territorial leaders on Nov. 23, just one month after being elected. The first such meeting since 2009. And Canada is now among the leaders in efforts to help Syrian refugees. Many Canadians were especially heartened by images of the Kurdi family being reunited at Vancouver Airport. It allowed us to temporarily forget how inaction by the previous government precipitated desperate actions by Abdullah Kurdi, resulting in the death of his wife, little Allen and his five year old brother on the shores of Turkey.

Many of us are hopeful that in the new year our new government will continue to bring a larger and more generous vision to this great country.

Peter van Vloten,
Fergus