

Census concerns

While there may be some debate over whether we're getting better, there's no question we're getting older.

According to 2006 census data released by Statistics Canada this week, Canada's senior population (those over age 65) leapt by 13 per cent from 2001. For the first time in history Canada has more than four million seniors, while at the other end of the spectrum, the under-15 demographic experienced the greatest decline, shrinking to 17.7 per cent of the population. The median age of Canadians, which has risen steadily, is now 39.5—in 1966 it was 25.4.

Thanks to a low birth rate and the fact Canadians are living longer, Stats Canada projects that within a decade seniors could outnumber children under the age of 15.

While the fact seniors today are healthier and living longer than ever before is certainly good news, the country's aging trend may present problems down the road.

For example, there is a 1:1 ratio of people (age 15-24) about to enter the workforce as opposed to people (age 55-64) about to leave it. This will mean major challenges for employers in the future when it comes to training, turnover and "knowledge transfer".

A labour shortage is also a real possibility, as is the belief many baby boomers, who may not be able to afford retirement, could face a conundrum if their health prevents them from staying in the workforce. These same boomers may also have the added responsibility of caring for dependents.

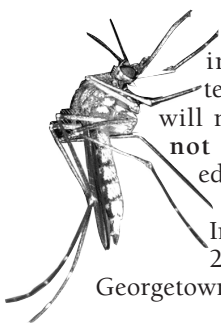
An aging population will also put a strain on a variety of services, particularly those involving assisted living. And who will be around in years to come to provide care to today's caregivers?

Will the health care system and pension plans be able to withstand the pressure of the boomers 10, 15 or 20 years hence?

The recent census statistics should not be a cause for alarm, but rather a wake-up call for our politicians—and society in general. Adopting a proactive approach today in how to handle our aging population tomorrow is not only sensible, but vital.

Something bugging you?

Send us a letter!



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Independent & Free Press,
280 Guelph St., Unit 29,
Georgetown, ON., L7G 4B1

E-mail:

jmcghie@independentfreepress.com

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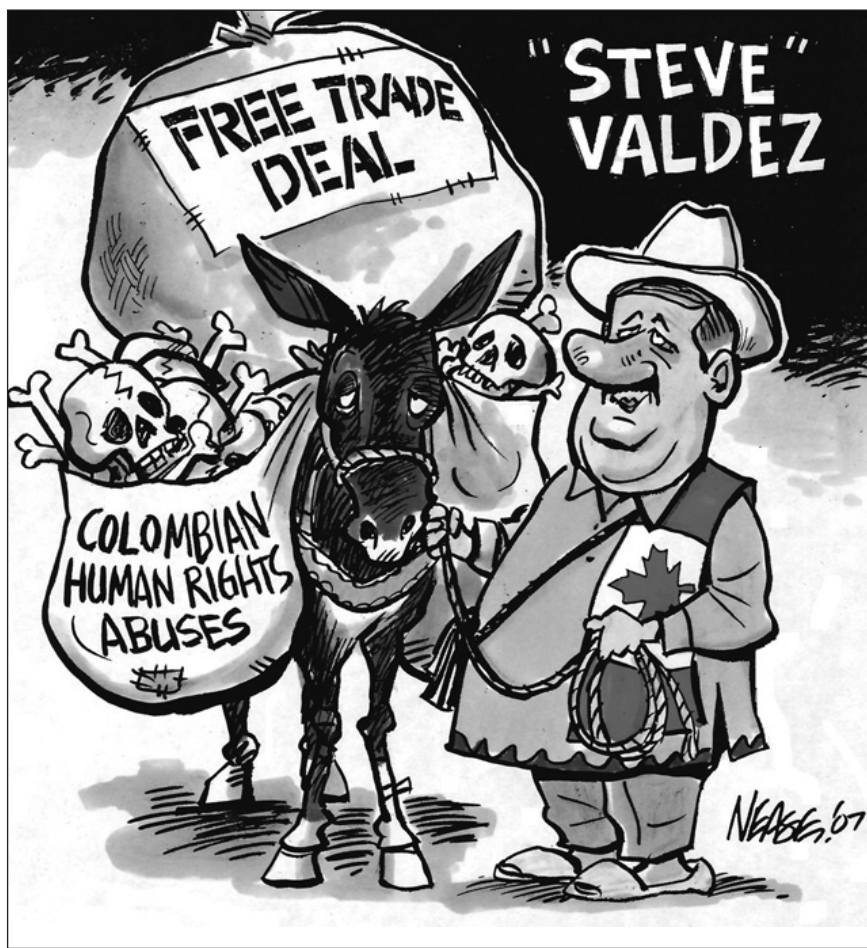
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Steve Nease



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Make a food donation during Homecoming

Dear editor,

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the community at large for the great success of the 16th annual Scout/Guide Food Drive on Nov 4, 2006. We collected more than 50,000 lbs. of food. I know for a fact how large the heart and generosity of this community is.

Once more I am addressing the community at large to let them know that the summertime is at an all-time low for collections for the food bank. With everyone on vacation and away over the course of the summer donations for the food

bank are down. With Homecoming 2007 (July 27-29) fast approaching, if each person attending brought one non-perishable food item to the event they are attending this could make a great difference.

I have talked to the food bank workers and the items most needed now are canned meat, canned pasta, canned salmon, large cans of juice (apple), salt, jams, ketchup, skim milk powder, crackers, cold cereal, canned fruit and instant coffee.

This community is the best and I know we can make a difference.

'Memory' coverage was much appreciated

Dear editor,

Although this letter is belated, we still wish to thank you for the coverage you gave our "Keeping the Memory Alive" tour 2007, April 5-19.

Not only did your editorial address the 90th anniversary commemorations of the battle of Vimy Ridge, but you also published Ted Brown's experiences of our battlefields tour in five different issues.

Your interest and willingness to publicize our Canadian history and heritage is much appreciated and is important in "Keeping the Memory Alive", the theme originating from the millennium renovations of Remembrance Park.

We very much like the special significance that Ted Brown was

able to relate in his reports. He did not just report on historical events and places but personalized the stories and identified the places and events with the experiences of ancestors and relatives of some tour members.

For many tour participants these visits to battlefields and grave sites of ancestors were a pilgrimage and a closure to personal stories. Quite amazing how significant and meaningful this can be after 90 years have past.

Again "thank you" for your interest and coverage. We are now making plans for "Keeping the Memory Alive" tour 2008 to Holland, Ypres and Vimy.

Martin and Helen Boomsma,
Georgetown

Thank you for your past and continuing support.

Darlene Moss,
Co-ordinator for the Scout/Guide
Food Drive

Health department says thanks for coverage

Dear editor,

I read the editorial in the June 19 edition of *The Independent & Free Press*—"Proactive approach benefits us all".

It was very gracious and generous of your newspaper to acknowledge the efforts of the Halton Region Health Department. I have also expressed the same sentiments to Jill Davis, editor in chief of the Oakville and Burlington papers.

I would also like to thank you for your paper's ongoing coverage and support of many of our initiatives. You are certainly aware that the residents of Halton Hills look to your paper for trustworthy, local news and information. The coverage in your newspaper of our programs certainly has assisted us in many of our comprehensive health promotion strategies.

Again, on behalf of staff of the Halton Region Health Department, thank you for your support. It is very much appreciated.

Dr. Bob Nosal,
Medical Officer of Health
Halton Region

STAFF DIRECTORY

Publisher

Ken Nugent

Advertising director

Steve Foreman

(sforeman@independentfreepress.com)

Retail advertising manager

Cindi Campbell

(ccampbell@independentfreepress.com)

Managing editor

John McGhie

(jmcghie@independentfreepress.com)

Distribution manager

Nancy Geissler

(distribution@independentfreepress.com)

ADVERTISING

Advertising co-ordinator

Jennifer Christie (jchristie@independentfreepress.com)

Retail Sales:

Jennifer Spencer (jspencer@independentfreepress.com)

Adam Spinney (aspinney@independentfreepress.com)

Andrew Key (akey@independentfreepress.com)

Amy Sykes (features@independentfreepress.com)

Real estate:

Sue Spizziri (realestate@independentfreepress.com)

Classifieds:

Kristie Pells (classified@independentfreepress.com)

ACCOUNTING

Rose Marie Gauthier, Michelle Wimmer

EDITORIAL

Cynthia Gamble: News editor

(cgamble@independentfreepress.com)

Ted Brown: Photography

(tbrown@independentfreepress.com)

Lisa Tallyn: Staff writer

(ltallyn@independentfreepress.com)

Eamonn Maher: Staff writer/sports

(emaher@independentfreepress.com)

PRODUCTION:

Mary Lou Foreman, Kevin Powell,

Shelli Harrison, Dolores Black, Debbie MacDougall