

Give to your favourite charity before Dec. 31



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If you are my age or older, you may remember a time when taxpayers received significant tax benefits for charitable donations.

Up until 1987, donations reduced taxable income by 100 per cent of their value. Taxpayers could claim \$100 of donations without receipts. This recognized that everyone gives donations here and there without obtaining receipts — loose change in a donation box or a few extra dollars at the store checkout.

Today's system of tax credits provides less incentive to donate. Donations no longer reduce taxable income. Tax credits are applied after tax is calculated. Credit is only given for a small percentage of each donation.

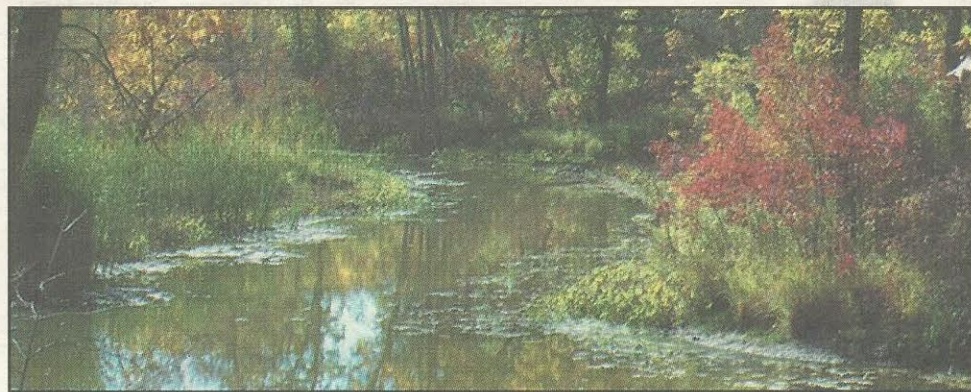
I wonder what impact the “new” tax

system has had on charitable giving over the past 30 years?

Has it decreased donations and restricted the impact of charities? It is difficult to know. The reports available online do not go back that far. Recent surveys by Statistics Canada suggest that average donations are rising but fewer people are donating.

People donate for different reasons. People give to health care and hospitals, social services, religious organizations, education, arts, and environment. Many donate out of compassion for other people or animals. Some want to contribute to their communities. Others are passionate about a specific cause. Many have been personally touched by health problems. For some, donations are a religious imperative. Others are encouraged by family members or co-workers. Relatively few people are motivated by tax credits, perhaps because there is so little benefit at modest incomes.

Although my main motivation for giving is not the tax credit, I know that I could afford to donate more under the old tax system. Imagine if our tax system provided greater



Supplied photo

Annual donations allow SOS River Keepers maintain the Seine River and its trails.

incentives for everyone to donate more. Charities could provide more food and shelter for people, better response to natural disasters, and greater protection for wildlife and the environment.

If you are still planning to donate in 2016, you are not alone. Canada Helps is a non-profit organization that facilitates on-line donations to charities across Canada. It handles the largest number of donations in the last four days of the year. In fact, Dec.

31 accounts for six per cent of all charitable donations.

Among the charitable gifts listed for Winnipeg (www.canadahelps.org), you will find one from Save Our Seine. For \$100, SOS River Keepers will maintain 500 metres of the Seine River or its trails. Donors receive their tax receipts within seconds — if this matters.

Michele Kading is a community correspondent for St. Vital and the executive director of Save Our Seine — www.saveourseine.com