



The Honourable Tony Clement  
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re: long form Census

July 26, 2010

Dear Sir,

We write, further to our letter of July 9, 2010, concerning the cancellation of the 2011 long form of the census and its replacement by a voluntary survey. Many groups and individuals (including members of the government) have now spoken on the importance and the use of the data in the long form census. It is clear that it is essential to the Canadian economy and society. We agree with the government that some changes to the census should be considered. We also believe that these changes should be thoroughly tested to ensure that the quality of the data is not adversely affected, and that there is considerable expertise at Statistics Canada and on the National Statistics Council to provide the direction and framework for any major initiative restructuring the census.

We therefore respectfully request that you consider the following position, which provides a reasonable compromise between the need to protect the privacy of individuals and the extreme importance of these data to Canadians:

- That the mandatory long form of the census for 2011 be reinstated (20% sample as previously).
- That Statistics Canada, with the advice of the National Statistics Council, be directed to undertake studies to show the impact of a voluntary survey<sup>i</sup> over a mandatory one for collecting census long form data. Statistics Canada will prepare a report indicating the degree of bias in each question of the voluntary survey. This report will inform Statistics Canada and the government on the future evolution of the census.
- That wherever possible the privacy concerns of individuals on specific questions be addressed with the assistance of the privacy commissioner, either by the removal or the rewording of specific questions.
- That, in order to restore faith in the independence of information provided by Statistics Canada, one of the pre-eminent statistical agencies in the world, the methodology used for collection and analysis by Statistics Canada be reaffirmed to be free of influence from any other body including government and NGOs, and private corporations, subject to those laws enacted by parliament protecting the privacy of individuals and the public<sup>ii</sup>.

In addition, of course, penalties applied for non-compliance with the Statistics Act may be reviewed by parliament. We believe that the suggestions above provide a basis for a resolution of the current situation which respects both the unbiasedness of the data currently obtained with the mandatory long form as well as the rights of individuals to privacy.

Respectfully yours,

Don McLeish, President, *Statistical Society of Canada*

Bovas Abraham, Past-President, *Statistical Society of Canada*

John Brewster, President-elect, *Statistical Society of Canada*

Sastry G. Pantula, President, *American Statistical Association*

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<sup>i</sup> and other methods of data collection if desired

<sup>ii</sup> Every accredited Professional Statistician in Canada must adhere to a code of ethics which includes the requirement to "Maintain objectivity and strive to avoid procedural or personal bias. The creation of valid data-based information is vital to informed public opinion and policy."