



Canadian Library Association  
Association canadienne  
des bibliothèques

The Hon. Tony Clement, P.C., M.P.  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6

29 July 2010

Dear Minister:

The Canadian Library Association (CLA) is Canada's largest national and broad-based library association, representing the interests of public, academic, school and special libraries, professional librarians, library workers, library trustees, and all those concerned about enhancing the quality of life of Canadians through information and literacy. Many of these library professionals facilitate access to Census of Canada materials produced by Statistics Canada. As such, they are well versed in its value and usage.

It is in support of this important work that CLA wishes to comment on the recent announcements from Statistics Canada and Industry Canada related to the replacement of the mandatory Census of Population Long-Form Questionnaire (2B) with a voluntary questionnaire administered under the National Household Survey. Specifically, CLA supports the growing list of organizations that are requesting a reversal of this decision.

The rationale for moving from a mandatory to a voluntary questionnaire was described by Industry Canada as follows: "This change was made to reasonably limit what many Canadians felt was an intrusion of their personal privacy." In fact, there is no evidence to support this statement. In addition, the great effort expended by Statistics Canada to protect the privacy of all residents that contribute to its 300+ surveys is well known by government information professionals. These procedures, as they relate to the Census, are detailed in the Census Dictionary. In this way, the process is made transparent and open to scrutiny, something that is fundamental to a successful democratic society.

Conversely, no information was made available to describe the decision-making process that led to the removal of the Census Long Form, although consultations were held. Furthermore, the decision to stop using Form 2B was made without the support of the National Statistics Council. On July 26, this same body released *Seeking Solutions*, a document that provides alternate solutions for the handling of the 2011 and 2016 Censuses. This document speaks to concerns of statistical validity inherent in the proposed, voluntary National Household Survey.

These methodological concerns, if realized, undermine the usefulness of the data and any aggregate statistics drawn from it. The breadth of library users and, indeed, anyone interested in a valid representation of Canadian society, that will be disadvantaged by moving to a voluntary

survey are too numerous to mention here. Our government information professionals have identified a short list of those stakeholders that will be most egregiously affected by this change:

- non-profit sector organizations including government agencies and charities dependent on detailed demographic information to inform budget and development decisions
- educators and scholars at large that will be restricted in their choices for information resources that describe both contemporary and historical society; the methodological changes will make it difficult if not impossible to compare past Census information with future Census information
- businesses of all sizes and types that engage in market analysis and forecasting activities for current and new business development.

Moving forward with the proposed voluntary survey will undermine the integrity of the Census of Canada and the ability of information users to make informed decisions about the Canadian experience.

It is for reasons of statistical validity, which were so well described by the National Statistics Council, and also for due democratic process that CLA strongly supports the reversal of the decision to move from the Census of Population Long-Form Questionnaire to a voluntary National Household Survey.

Should you have any questions on this matter, please feel free to contact me or Kelly Moore, CLA Executive Director, at 613-232-9625 x306 or [kmoore@cla.ca](mailto:kmoore@cla.ca).

Sincerely,



Keith Walker  
CLA President

CC: Wayne Smith, Acting Chief Statistician of Canada  
Ian McKinnon, Chair, National Statistics Council