

Request for Decision

Changes to 2011 Census

Presented To:	Policy Committee
Presented:	Wednesday, Aug 11, 2010
Report Date	Wednesday, Jul 28, 2010
Type:	Managers' Reports

Recommendation

That Council request that the Federal Government maintain the current long form and mandatory reporting requirements and not proceed to a voluntary National Household Survey process.

Background

The Canadian Government recently announced that it will no longer be using the census long form for the 2011 Census. The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed changes to the 2011 Census and how they could impact the City of Greater Sudbury.

Proposed Changes to the 2011 Census

For the past 35 years, the Census has been comprised of two separate forms: a short form and a long form, both of which must be completed by law. The short form is sent to 100% of Canadians and gathers data on the topics of age, gender, marital status, household characteristics (e.g. number of dependents), and mother tongue language. The long form is sent to one in five Canadians (20% sample) and extrapolated to the rest of the population. The long census form is the only source of regular, detailed and consistent data (35 year archive of directly comparable data) on socio-economic information. The data collected on the long forms includes activity limitations, ethnicity, culture, immigrant status, income, education, labour-force, and housing. The Federal Government plans to replace the mandatory census long form with a voluntary National Household Survey (NHS). The NHS has not yet been released, but it is expected to contain the same long form questions of the 2006 census. The NHS is proposed to be conducted within four weeks of the May 2011 Census and will be sent to approximately 4.5 million Canadian households (one in three Canadians). This represents a 13% increase in distribution compared to the 2006 Census long form, albeit without a legal mandate to respond to the NHS questions.

Potential Issues with Data Accuracy

Signed By

Report Prepared By

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Senior Planner
Digitally Signed Jul 28, 10

Division Review

Paul Baskcomb
Director of Planning Services
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Recommended by the Department

Bill Lautenbach
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Recommended by the C.A.O.

Doug Nadorozny
Chief Administrative Officer
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The City of Greater Sudbury is a heavy user of Census data, therefore any changes to the type of census data or the manner in which it's collected will impact the accuracy of different City projections and plans that use the data.

The proposed NHS will be a voluntary survey, meaning that the resulting data may not be statistically valid and thus reliable as a resource for effective service planning. Essentially, asking more people to voluntarily complete the NHS questionnaire does not mean that the data generated will be useable or is comparable to the traditional mandatory long form census data. By definition, a change in statistical collection methodology precludes direct statistical comparison of data gathered before and after the change. To date, Statistics Canada's adherence to the same statistical collection methodology for 35 years has allowed for accurate data comparison and invaluable trends analysis. While some comparative analysis may be possible between previous long form census data and NHS model data, direct accurate data comparison and trend analysis will not be possible. Variations in sampling in different jurisdictions could render data dissemination at smaller geography levels impossible. The result would be the provision of data at higher levels of geography to maintain statistically accurate analysis, rendering NHS model data's use for local place-based planning difficult or impossible.

Summary

The federal government has recently decided to drop the mandatory census long form from the 2011 census and replace it with a new voluntary National Household Survey. This move will impact the 35 years of reliable data that the long form has produced and that the City of Greater Sudbury relies upon for numerous projections and reports.



July 14, 2010

The Honourable Tony Clement
Minister of Industry
C.D. Howe Building
235 Queen Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H5

Dear Minister Clement:

I am writing to you in response to the recent Government of Canada announcement that the Census long form questionnaire will be discontinued as of the upcoming 2011 Census, and that the source of this information will be replaced with the voluntary National Household Survey (NHS). This decision raises serious concerns and consequences that must be reviewed and reconsidered.

The mandatory Census long form questionnaire has long provided local decision-makers with detailed, rigorous demographic profiles of Canadians at national, provincial, regional, community and neighbourhood levels. This information has been fundamental to informing policy and program planning for key social issues related to employment and income, education, immigration and ethnicity. The same high quality data cannot be expected from the proposed NHS that would likely result in far fewer responses (by the very fact that it is voluntary) and skewed data that under reports vulnerable groups (i.e.: recent immigrants and those in lower socio-economic groups would be unlikely to complete the voluntary survey, the very groups that rely most on local-level programs and services).

Without the Census long form data, it will be difficult for our local government to monitor the changing needs of our population making it even more difficult to make sound decisions and identify priority needs. The decision to discontinue the Census long form will severely limit our ability to plan programs and services, meet growth management targets, appropriately address legislative requirements and responsibly account for local, provincial and federal funding received to meet the needs of our citizens. This is a serious matter that puts citizens, programs, services and the credibility of our work at risk.

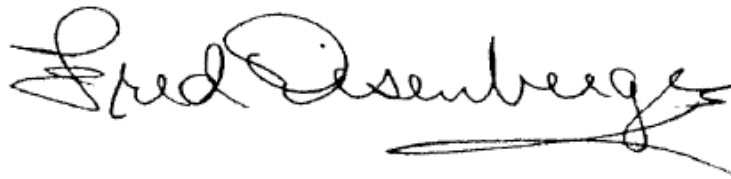
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On behalf of the City of Hamilton, I urge the Government of Canada to reinstate the Census long form questionnaire for the 2011 Census and subsequent censuses to ensure that a solid foundation of reliable, consistent information is available for evidenced-based public policy and program planning that contributes to the health and well-being of our citizens.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter and I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Fred Eisenberger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Fred Eisenberger
Mayor

Copies:

David Sweet, MP Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough, Westdale
Dean Allison, MP Niagara West-Glanbrook
David Christopherson, MP Hamilton Centre
Chris Charlton, MP Hamilton Mountain
Wayne Marston, MP Hamilton East-Stoney Creek
Carl Zehr, Mayor of Kitchener, ON, Chair Big City Mayors' Caucus, Federation of
Canadian Municipalities
Joe-Anne Priel, General Manager, Community Services – City of Hamilton



Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario

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July 9, 2010

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

Dear Minister:

Re: Discontinuation of the Long Form Census Questionnaire

The Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario (RPCO) are gravely concerned about the decision to discontinue the long form Census questionnaire (2b) and replace it with the **voluntary** National Household Survey (NHS). The long form Census questionnaire is a trusted and reliable source of socio-economic, labour force and education data essential to the planning process.

The Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario (RPCO) is a group of senior land use planning officials from upper- and single tier municipal governments across Ontario. The majority of Ontario's population live, work and play in the cities, counties and regions that are represented by the RPCO. These municipalities are economic engines and cultural centres whose continued health is vital to the long term prosperity of Ontario and the over 12 million residents who call this province home. Planners require the high quality data provided by the **mandatory** long form Census questionnaire to develop and monitor effective policies, to ensure these municipalities remain sustainable.

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*Mark Smith
Gary Wright
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Bryan Tuckey*

The integrity of many planning programs is affected by this decision. Municipal planners analyse the census data in a disaggregated manner, allowing them to understand demographic trends down to the neighbourhood level. The absence of accurate data at a fine geographic level will hinder a planner's ability to:

- understand the impact the recession has had on employment,
- monitor how people get to and from work,
- identify the language spoken in specific neighbourhoods to provide same language services,
- examine the availability and affordability of housing,
- defend planning policy at Ontario Municipal Board hearings,
- model housing, transportation and employment demand,
- determine appropriate development charges to recover the cost of new infrastructure, and
- monitor conformity with the Ontario Places to Grow Act.

Each of these activities directly impacts the effective expenditure of taxpayer dollars on municipal infrastructure and programs.

The replacement of the long form Census questionnaire with the voluntary NHS would introduce bias into the data, as some groups would be more likely to respond than others, skewing the results. Additionally, the voluntary nature of this survey will also create gaps from one jurisdiction to another. Variations in sampling in different jurisdictions might render data dissemination at smaller geography levels impossible. The inevitable outcome will be to report at the least common geographic denominator: the larger level of geography. Hence, data at lower levels of geography (e.g. wards and neighbourhoods) will likely be lost.

The Census of Canada has evolved and expanded over many decades, offering Canadians important insights into long-term social and economic trends. The standardization and continuity of survey methods is critical to identifying and monitoring such trends. An entirely new survey will break the link with past data, making historical comparisons difficult and unreliable.

RPCO, through the Regional Information Systems Working Group, has worked closely with Statistics Canada during the 2011 Census Consultation process to enhance the 2011 Census data collection and dissemination. The NHS was not mentioned during this process and RPCO is greatly troubled by the lack of consultation.

It is for these reasons that we request you to reinstate the mandatory census long form.

Sincerely,



A. L. Georgieff, MCIP, RPP, Chair
Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario

ALG:db

- c. Munir A. Sheikh, Chief Statistician, Statistics Canada
Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Transportation - Ontario
Honourable Brad Duguid, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure - Ontario
Honourable James Bradley, Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing – Ontario