



## Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario

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Direct all correspondence to the office of the Chair

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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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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