



URBAN PUBLIC HEALTH NETWORK
RÉSEAU CANADIEN POUR LA SANTÉ URBAINE

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

Dear Minister Clement:

The Urban Public Health Network brings together the medical officers of health of the eighteen largest public health departments in Canada. As senior public health physicians with responsibility for protecting and promoting the health of more than 50 per cent of Canada's population, we are writing to express our dismay at the announced cancellation of the Long Form version of the Census and its replacement by a voluntary system.

Our organizations rely upon the information in the Long Form Census to make decisions which affect the health of the residents of our regions. Data on immigration, ethnicity, language, education, employment, income and transportation are vital to our work, and we have made extensive use of them over the years. We use these data to target needs in our communities, to understand the health of the population and plan and evaluate programs and services. We also use research which has been undertaken in Canada using data from the Long Form Census and which guides us in understanding why some groups are healthier than others and what we can do to help. Without the information that we can obtain only from the Long Form Census, we will be working in the dark.

We do not understand the rationale for this decision that has been provided. We believe that Canadians understand the social contract that provides high quality effective public services in exchange for this information. We also know that Canadians trust Statistics Canada not to reveal personally-identifiable information. We also note that the Labour Force Survey and Farm Census remain compulsory.

The proposed voluntary questionnaire will not provide a sufficiently accurate estimate of these important determinants of health because we know from experience that certain disadvantaged groups will be less likely to respond.

We join with other groups across Canada, representing a wide spectrum of interests, to ask you to reconsider this decision.

On behalf of the Urban Public Health Network,

David L. Mowat, MBChB, MPH, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health
Region of Peel