



May 12, 2011

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

Dear Minister Clement:

At the April 2011 Annual General Meeting of the British Columbia Library Association, members voted unanimously to support a resolution asking the Canadian Government to re-instate the mandatory Long Form Census. The resolution, attached, urges Government to take the advice of the National Statistics Council and both:

- Reinstatement of the mandatory Long Form Census; and
- Engage in a thorough and public review of the Long Form in time for the 2016 Census, in order to ensure that the appropriate questions are being asked and that the Census is the best place to be asking these questions.

Statistics Canada Census data is one of the most heavily used and requested data sources in libraries. Libraries themselves rely on the level of detail provided by the Long Form questionnaire in developing and appropriately targeting library programs and facilities. There is truly no comparable source to aid in planning relevant and responsive community services. The mandatory nature of the Long Form resulted in robust and comprehensive data that has been used in evidence-based policy making, service planning, and business planning. We are concerned that the new voluntary National Household Survey will not be as effective in capturing essential data from all Canadian communities – especially those who most require the resources and assistance that libraries provide. Library users have expressed the same concern – that portions of their communities will go unrepresented in Census data due to the elimination of the Long Form questionnaire.

We request the reinstatement of the mandatory Long Form in time for the 2016 Census, and we strongly encourage Government to ensure that a thorough review of the efficacy and reach of the National Household Survey is completed following the 2011 Census.

Sincerely,

Christopher Kevlahan
President, BCLA

CC: The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada
Jack Layton, Leader of the Official Opposition
Elizabeth May, Green Party of Canada
Bob Rae, Liberal Party of Canada
Ian McKinnon, Chair, National Statistics Council
Wayne Smith, Chief Statistician of Canada

RE-ESTABLISHING THE MANDATORY LONG FORM CENSUS

WHEREAS the Canadian government has eliminated the Mandatory Long Form Census in a short period of time, with limited testing, and with little or no consultation with stakeholders;

AND WHEREAS the Mandatory Long Form Census contributes to robust and comprehensive data that can be used in evidence-based policy making, service planning, and business planning;

AND WHEREAS a Voluntary National Household Survey will have a higher and more variable sampling error than would have been achieved with a Mandatory Long Form Census as well as a high likelihood of significant non-response bias;

AND WHEREAS Statistics Canada takes the protection of privacy extremely seriously, and Section 17 of the Statistics Act legislates the confidentiality of this data:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that BCLA urges the Government of Canada to take the advice of the National Statistics Council to:

- Reinstatement of the Mandatory Long Form in the 2011 Census, and
- Engage in a thorough and public review of the Mandatory Long Form for the 2016 Census to ensure that the appropriate questions are being asked and that the Census is the best place to be asking these questions;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that BCLA continue to work with other library associations, nationally and regionally, to advocate for the reinstatement of the Mandatory Long Form Census.