



The Hon. Tony Clement  
Minister of Industry  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

July 20, 2010

*By post and email*

Dear Minister Clement,

**Re: Changes to the Long Form-Census**

I am writing to you today on behalf of the President and Governors of the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA) to express our deep concern with your government's decision to abandon the compulsory long-form census in favour of a National Household Survey (NHS). We want to register our complete dismay and total disagreement with this decision, for which your government has not provided any convincing or substantiated arguments.

In doing so, we join our voices to the increasingly widespread protests from various stakeholders across the country. Indeed, as you know, complaints regarding the removal of the obligation to fill out the long-form questionnaire come from all walks of life and from all corners of the country, i.e. business groups, the medical profession, provincial and municipal governments, sociologists, economists, historians, genealogists, community groups, Francophone minorities, and more.

A census, or some other instrument that lists all individuals in a population, is required for the proper design of voluntary sample surveys. Trying to use a sample household survey in place of a census to design social or household surveys will effectively undermine the entire statistical system as it relates to non-business data. Furthermore, a voluntary sample household survey cannot be used to design or validate another voluntary household or individual survey. Finally, relying on skewed one-time voluntary surveys means that it will be impossible to compare results from one survey to another and to analyze trends, both of which are key elements in fact-based policy making.

Governments at all levels, as well as the nation's cultural organisations, use the census directly or indirectly to help design policy, plan and evaluate programs. An understanding of

the changing demographics of individual communities and neighbourhoods is essential when planning cultural programs, designing culture infrastructure, and more.

We are particularly concerned about the impact this decision will have on our knowledge of the cultural workforce. The Canadian Conference of the Arts, the Cultural Human Resources Council and all their member organisations rely on census data to provide information about culture workers in Canada.

While the census is not a perfect instrument to collect data on artists, it is still far preferable to a voluntary sample survey, which will be even less likely to capture information on artists and cultural workers. It is indeed highly unlikely that low paid artists and other types of cultural workers will have the time or motivation to provide the kind of information required for a household survey if it is voluntary. They will therefore be part of the several underrepresented elements of the workforce and of Canadian society in general.

As the national forum for the Canadian arts, culture and heritage sector, we also specifically share the concerns expressed by historians and genealogists with regards to the impact of abandoning the compulsory long form census in favour of an NHS. The census is the only source in which you get trend information regarding families instead of individuals. Through successive censuses, researchers can track the formation of the family, when children are born, when children grow up and leave the family home, patterns of migration, dates of immigration, education, naturalization, place of parents' birth, occupation, employment, income and housing. All of these details have now been eliminated.

While these data will be available in aggregate form in a voluntary National Household Survey, the change means that individualized results will never be released. Unless the data are released as individual records, the survey will be useless for the study of personal ancestry. This move will effectively cut off Canadian researchers from what is often the only information available for research into their heritage.

It is our understanding that the new approach ordered by the government will cost Statistics Canada alone (i.e. Canadian taxpayers) an extra \$ 30 million to produce much poorer data than is currently the case with the compulsory long-form census. To this, one must add the considerable costs which will be borne by other elements of Canadian society for data that will become increasingly less reliable over time, and which it will impossible to compare from one survey to the other.

Given the successive budget cuts suffered by Statistics Canada over the past fifteen years, and as recently as last year, and the ensuing degradation of services provided to Canadian citizens, we would like to know the justification for finding such an amount of money at a time when your government is looking to reduce the deficit. As member of a government officially concerned with managing Canadian taxpayers' money responsibly, how do you explain deliberately spending millions more to produce what all experts describe as lower quality if not useless results?

We note with interest that in 2003, the U.S. Census Bureau produced, at the request of Congress, a report in which it outlined the impact of abandoning the compulsory long-form census. The conclusions of this report led the Bush administration to back down on its decision. If Canada abandons the compulsory long-form census in favour of voluntary one-

time surveys whose results cannot be compared, it will be the only country we know of which will proceed in such an unscientific fashion.

For all these reasons, we strongly oppose the changes imposed by your government and urge you to reconsider your decision for the greater good of Canadians.

I thank you for the attention you will give to this letter.

Best regards,



Alain Pineau  
National Director

cc The Right Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister  
The Hon. James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage  
Mr. Michael Ignatieff, Leader of the Opposition  
The Hon. Jack Layton, New Democratic Party  
Mr. Gilles Duceppe, Bloc Québécois  
Dr. Munir Sheikh, Chief Statistician, Statistics Canada