

National Statistics Council

News release: Immediate

Victoria, August 13, 2010 – The National Statistics Council, the government-appointed advisory body to the Chief Statistician, today commented on the August 12th statement by the Honourable Tony Clement.

"We welcome the minister's statement that 'I value the expertise of the members of the Council and look forward to working with them in the future.'"

In his statement, the minister noted the Council's welcoming of the government decision to remove the theoretical threat of jail sentences, but no mention was made of the serious issues raised by the Council related to changing the long-form census to a voluntary survey. To re-iterate, these changes will:

- Undermine the accurate benchmarking information that forms the foundation for much of the Canadian statistical system.
- Not provide the vital information needed for small area or neighbourhood uses, including housing, health and transportation planning.
- Cost significantly more money.
- Increase respondent burden on Canadians as the number of people asked to complete the long form will be increased from 20% of the population to 30%.

"Given the minister's recognition of the value of the National Statistics Council's expertise, we urgently renew our offer to meet and work with him immediately to prevent the damage that the changes to the census threaten," the Council said in a statement issued by its chair, Ian McKinnon.

McKinnon noted "the recently announced changes to the official language questions confirm the inability of a voluntary survey to provide good quality data for programs relevant to official language minorities. In the same way, a voluntary survey cannot provide good quality data in many equally important areas such as public health, transportation or for Aboriginal communities."

McKinnon urged the government "to listen to the voice of Canadians and to the remarkable number of groups who have overwhelmingly confirmed the need for information that can only come from a mandatory long-form questionnaire."

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