



The College of  
Family Physicians  
of Canada

Le Collège des  
médecins de famille  
du Canada

*Strength in Study*  
*L'étude est notre force*

Wednesday, July 28, 2010

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

Dear Minister:

On behalf of the College of Family Physicians of Canada and its Section of Researchers, we are writing to advise you that we strongly oppose the replacement of the long-form of the Canada Census survey with a voluntary household survey. The opinion of many in the Canadian medical community, and in particular those who are involved in family medicine research, is that this shift would no longer give us the essential data we need to improve the health of Canadians.

Research has shown that people who respond to voluntary general public surveys are oftentimes wealthier, better educated, and healthier than non-responders. Self-selected responders will not provide a complete picture, and thus information about a significant portion of the Canadian population will be lacking. The voluntary survey results will not be as generalizable as the Canada Census data has been in the past. This will have a serious impact upon myriad public policy decisions, including health and social policy.

**We cannot manage what we cannot measure.**

With respect to health policy, we need to use social determinants of health to forecast health care needs now and in the future. We need robust Canadian Census data to understand where progress has been made in health care, and where gaps still exist. Many health care researchers depend on Canadian Census data to provide a robust baseline against which to compare their findings. Planning for health human resources will be shortchanged without the availability of adequate census information, and health care system planners cannot begin to formulate sound policy without comprehensive census information.

If this critical database is lost, Canadian citizens will be deprived of the benefits derived from health policy-making based upon sound data. Furthermore, we know that your government appreciates that using poor evidence in making funding decisions is anathema to fiscal prudence.

We urge the government to reconsider its decision to drop the long form of the census today.

Sincerely,

Cathy MacLean, MD, CCFP, FCFP  
President

William Hogg, MD, CCFP, FCFP  
Chair, Section of Researchers



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