



Northwestern Health Unit

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July 30, 2010

VIA E-MAIL

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

Dear Minister Clement:

Re: Elimination of the Mandatory Long Form, Census 2011

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Health for the Northwestern Health Unit to express the Board's concern regarding the decision made by your government to eliminate from the 2011 Census, the mandatory Long Form used in prior censuses, and to replace it with a 'Voluntary Household Survey'.

As you know, the census has historically used two forms to collect information: a Short Form (2A) and a Long Form (2B). The Short Form is completed by 80% of the Canadian population and contains eight questions. The Long Form is randomly distributed to 20% of the population and has the same questions as Form 2A, with 53 additional questions.

The Board of Health for Northwestern Health Unit is responsible for the delivery of public health services to a diverse population of 80,500 people living across an area of approximately 171,300 square kilometers of northwestern Ontario. This northwest corner of Ontario is larger than the combined area of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. The availability of information provided by the Short, and in particular the Long Forms, is essential to enable our Health Unit staff to develop detailed and case-specific descriptions and profiles of the population we serve. Our staff require these profiles to design and deliver the many public health services for which we are responsible.

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Boards of Health are required to tailor programs and services to meet local needs, to address the determinants of health, and to reduce health inequalities. These requirements are considered fundamental to the work of public health providers in Ontario and are mandated through the *Public Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol* for the Ontario Public Health Standards 2008 (OPHS). Without the comprehensive information provided to us through the Census Long Form we shall be unable to meet our obligations as set out by the OPHS:

“...[to provide] public health programs and services that contribute to the physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being of all Ontarians.

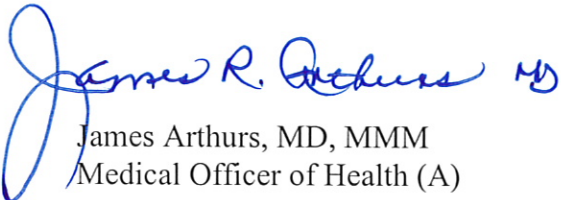
“...[be] responsible for assessment, planning, delivery, management, and evaluation of a variety of public health programs and services that address multiple health needs, as well as the context in which these need occur.”

(OPHS, page 1)

As Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in Ontario from 2001 to 2003, and following your experience with SARS during that time, you recognized that the public health system in Ontario required significant change. You recognized as well the importance of the availability of sound, verifiable data. To that end the Ontario Public Health Standards 2008 document, initiated during your tenure as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, has been enacted. Without the ‘sound, verifiable data’ made available largely through the Census Long Form questionnaire, the objectives of the OPHS cannot be met.

From your own experience as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, you understand the importance of public health planning. This planning requires detailed verifiable data that is collected with consistent methodology. We strongly urge you to reconsider your decision, and reinstate the Long Form as part of the 2011 Census.

Sincerely,



James Arthurs, MD, MMM
Medical Officer of Health (A)

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Copies to:

Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister
Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health
Honourable Laurel Broten, Minister of Children and Youth Services
Honourable Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Honourable Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion
Greg Rickford, MP, Kenora
John Rafferty, MP, Thunder Bay-Rainy River
Howard Hampton, MPP, Kenora-Rainy River
Bill Mauro, MPP, Thunder Bay-Atikokan
Dr. Arlene King, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Allison Stuart, Assistant Deputy Minister
Vivek Goel, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion
Debra Lynkowski, Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Public Health Association
Connie Uetrecht, Executive Director, Ontario Public Health Association
Linda Stewart, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
John Albanese, Chair, Board of Health
Ontario Boards of Health
Ontario Medical Officers of Health