



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF WATERLOO

OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL CHAIR  
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August 20, 2010

The Honourable Tony Clement  
Minister of Industry  
Industry Canada  
235 Queen Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H5

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SEP 17 2010

alPHa

Dear *Minister* *Tony*

On August 19, 2010, Waterloo Regional Council approved the following resolution:

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo take the following actions with respect to the discontinuation of the mandatory nature of the "long form" for the 2011 Census,...

- a) Advise the Federal Minister of Industry that the removal of the mandatory long form questions from the 2011 Census will adversely impact the Region's capacity to plan and deliver quality public services and to effectively use taxpayer dollars;
- b) Request that the long form questions be reinstated as mandatory for the 2011 Census;
- c) Inform and continue to work with professional associations and other organizations who are also advocating for the reinstatement of the mandatory Census long form; and
- d) Circulate this request to all local Members of Parliament, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa), and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA).

The loss of the highly reliable data that was previously collected through the mandatory Census long form will significantly impact planning, policy development and programs at the Region of Waterloo. The long form Census data are used by Regional staff in many areas including community planning, transportation planning, social planning, crime prevention, public health, community services and strategic planning to inform our policy and program development, delivery and evaluation.

The replacement of the mandatory long form with a voluntary survey, albeit with a larger sample size, will produce less reliable and less representative data that is subject to considerable bias. It is the mandatory nature of the long form which ensures the high

quality of data collected. A voluntary response will skew data toward those who are more inclined or able to respond to the survey which will likely result in an under-representation of those who are disadvantaged and for whom many of our programs are oriented, such as new immigrants and those living in poverty. This will also significantly impact the Region's ability to accurately measure program outcomes and undermines our capacity to ensure that taxpayer dollars are well spent and appropriately targeted to real needs in the community.

I have enclosed a copy of the Council report P-10-067/SS-10-036/PH-10-035 Discontinuation of the "Long Form" for the 2011 Census. It provides greater detail about the impact on our community of this Census change.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ken Seiling  
Regional Chair

cc: The Hon. Gary Goodyear, Minister of State, Science and Technology, M.P. Cambridge  
Harold Albrecht, M.P. Kitchener-Conestoga  
Peter Braid, M.P. Kitchener-Waterloo  
Stephen Woodworth, M.P. Kitchener Centre  
Peter Hume, President, Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)  
Hans Cunningham, President, Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)  
✓ Valerie Sterling, President, Association of Local Public Health Agencies (aIPHa)  
David Rennie, President, Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA)



**REGION OF WATERLOO**

**PLANNING, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**  
**Community Services**

**SOCIAL SERVICES**  
**Social Planning, Research & Evaluation**

**PUBLIC HEALTH**  
**Medical Office**

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**SEP 17 2010**

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**TO:** Chair Sean Strickland and Members of the Community Services Committee

**DATE:** August 10, 2010

**FILE CODE:** D15-80

**SUBJECT:** DISCONTINUATION OF THE "LONG FORM" FOR THE 2011 CENSUS

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT the Regional Municipality of Waterloo take the following actions with respect to the discontinuation of the mandatory nature of the "long form" for the 2011 Census, as described in Report No. P-10-067/SS-10-036/PH-10-035, dated August 10, 2010:

- a) Advise the Federal Minister of Industry that the removal of the mandatory long form questions from the 2011 Census will adversely impact the Region's capacity to plan and deliver quality public services and to effectively use taxpayer dollars;
- b) Request that the long form questions be reinstated as mandatory for the 2011 Census;
- c) Inform and continue to work with professional associations and other organizations who are also advocating for the reinstatement of the mandatory Census long form; and
- d) Circulate this request to all local Members of Parliament, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa), and Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA).

**SUMMARY:**

On June 26, 2010, changes were announced to the 2011 Canadian Census of Population (the Census) that will have a significant impact on the data that will be available for planning, policy and program work at the Region of Waterloo and other municipalities across Canada. Through an Order of Council, the Federal government has removed the approximately fifty questions contained in the census long form questionnaire (the long form) from the mandatory census that will take place on May 10 2011, leaving only the eight basic questions in the Census "short form". A new voluntary survey will be initiated by Statistics Canada to replace the long form.

This report summarizes the concerns of Regional staff about the loss of highly reliable data with the cancellation of the mandatory long form, and the implications on planning, policy development and programs at the Region. The recommended solution is to reinstate the mandatory long form for the 2011 Census. This issue has also been addressed by many provincial and Canadian organizations, including the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) in a consistent manner.

**REPORT:**

The Census of Canada is undertaken every five years and provides a reliable picture of Canadians over the past 35 years. The basic Census form is mandatory for all Canadians, while the mandatory "long form" is provided to one in five Canadian households, and includes questions related to characteristics such as immigration status, income, education, employment, dwellings, place of work, and mode of transportation. These data are used by Regional staff in many areas, including community planning, transportation planning, social planning, crime prevention, public health, community services, and strategic planning to inform policy development and program delivery. The data are also shared with Area Municipalities, as well as community partners, including School Boards, Social Planning Councils, United Ways, Ontario Early Years, Opportunity Waterloo Region and Community Foundations, and is useful down to a neighbourhood level (Census Tracts and smaller) to understand the characteristics of our residents and households.

Federal Government Action

The 2011 Census questions were published in the Canada Gazette on June 26, 2010, as required by the Statistics Act. This was the first notification to the public that the Minister of Industry had decided to discontinue the mandatory long form. The Region of Waterloo is involved in a number of initiatives, including the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Quality of Life Reporting System, Community Social Data Strategy, and the Regional Information Systems Working Group. All of these organizations have participated in extensive consultations with Statistics Canada regarding the 2011 Census, and were never advised of the contemplated loss of the long form. Regional staff is concerned with the lack of process and consultation surrounding this decision.

In press releases and media interviews following the announcement, the Minister of Industry has stated that the reason for dropping the mandatory long form, comprised of about 50 questions, is complaints from the public received by MPs, regarding unwillingness to provide the required information and privacy concerns. However, almost all of the 20% of Canadian households who received previous long Census forms have complied, and Statistics Canada is vigilant in limiting the questions asked, as well as guarding privacy of responses. The switch to a voluntary survey with a higher target response rate will result in even more Canadians being asked to complete these questions.

Implications for the Region

Regional staff have relied on accurate, statistically significant, and reliable data at fine levels of geography (such as neighbourhoods), obtained from the Census every five years, and do not accept that the proposed voluntary survey will be a viable substitute. Examples of how Census data are used to ensure the effective use of taxpayer dollars, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making in Waterloo Region include:

- Neighbourhood-level analysis to assess gaps and to design programs, including early learning, community outreach programs, crime prevention, and health services delivery;
- Calculating "persons per unit", a critical input used in growth forecasting and development charge calculations;
- Planning transportation corridors and inter-city routes by understanding characteristics of commuters;
- Identifying trends which compare data from earlier censuses in the Public Health Briefs on Low Income Status, the Immigrant Fact Sheets, The Community Fit for Children Report and the Census Bulletin series;

- Providing context for reports such as: Older Adults Health Status Report, Children's Services Stabilization Strategy Report, Recommended Top Languages for Interpretation Report, and Immigrants and Growth;
- Providing local population health information as per the requirements of the Ontario Public Health Standards;
- Regional Growth Management strategies, including implementation of the Ontario Government's Places to Grow legislation through the Regional Official Plan, monitoring jobs and people to meet density targets, and forecasting population and employees;
- Planning for the implementation of the Early Learning Program (ELP) and assessing the impact of the ELP on the Child Care System;
- Developing and monitoring the Community Action Plan for Housing, and the Affordable Housing Strategy;
- Key planning initiatives in Social Services, including the Employment and Income Support Service Plan for Ontario Works, Children's Services and System Plans, Seniors' Services Research Report and Strategy, the Poverty Strategy, and the Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy; and
- Trend analysis and benchmarking to gauge overall community vitality.

The move to replace the mandatory long form with a voluntary survey, despite the larger sample size, "is subject to substantial bias and likely of little use to policy makers" according to the Statistical Society of Canada. It will have the following impacts on data used by the Region:

- The voluntary response will skew data toward those who are more inclined or able to respond to the survey, which may under-represent those who are disadvantaged, and for whom many of our programs are oriented, such as new immigrants and those living in poverty;
- There will be a negative impact on the quality of data collected through other surveys, as there will no longer be a "gold standard" available to correct for survey bias;
- Comparisons with previous years' data will be affected due to the change in methodology, making analysis of trends and benchmarks less reliable; and
- Validity of data for smaller levels of geography, such as neighbourhoods, may be questionable.

Given Waterloo Region's diverse nature and high growth, data from the Census long form plays a crucial role in allowing the Region, its Area Municipalities and partnering agencies to effectively plan and efficiently deliver services to its diverse residents and to address issues that affect many of the vulnerable population groups that live, work and play in the Region (immigrants, seniors, visible minorities, people with disabilities, people with low income, etc). A lack of accurate data on these groups will produce significant challenges in devising comprehensive and long term strategic and program master plans.

#### Steps Being Taken

Many Municipal Councils have considered reports and resolutions about this issue. Numerous newspaper articles, television segments, petitions, blogs, and Facebook Sites protesting the elimination of the long form have been published. Many Canadian and Ontario organizations have stated positions, including:

- Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has written a letter to the Minister of Industry, urging him to consider the consequences of the change, and requesting an explanation of how Statistics Canada will ensure that the negative effects anticipated will not occur.

- Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) has raised concerns with the Ontario government so they will engage with the Federal government, and has written to the Minister of Industry to ask him to reconsider.
- The Canadian Society for Epidemiology and Biostatistics has issued a letter to the Minister of Industry on behalf of its members and is urging its members to also contact their local MPs.
- The Association of Public Health Epidemiologists in Ontario has written an open letter to the Minister of Industry outlining in detail the impact of the change on public health units in Ontario.
- Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) issued an email to members, encouraging them to contact their local MP to request that the Federal government reverse the decision to eliminate the long-form Census questionnaire.
- The Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario has written to the Minister of Industry to request reinstatement of the mandatory census long form.
- United Way Canada coordinated a letter signed by 23 large organizations requesting a meeting with the Minister of Industry to discuss concerns about the loss of Census data.
- The National Statistics Council (the senior external advisory group appointed by the Government of Canada to advise the Chief Statistician) has issued a statement indicating their belief that the changes will harm the integrity and quality of the Canadian statistical system. They recommend that each Census question be re-examined for 2016 to ensure relevance, but that the mandatory long form be preserved for the 2011 Census, although without the threat of jail for non-completion, and without the questions on household activities.

#### **Area Municipal Consultation/Coordination:**

Area Municipal staff have received ongoing updates on the Region's activities related to this issue.

#### **CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN:**

Data from the Census "long form" are used to support analysis, program development and policy in the Region of Waterloo to achieve goals in the following focus areas:

##### Focus Area 2: Growth Management

Manage and shape growth to ensure a livable, healthy, thriving and sustainable Waterloo Region;

##### Focus Area 3: Healthy and Safe Communities

Support safe and caring communities that enhance all aspects of health;

##### Focus Area 4: Human Services

Promote quality of life and create opportunities for residents to develop to their full potential;

##### Focus Area 5: Infrastructure

Provide high quality infrastructure and asset management to meet current needs and future growth; and

##### Focus Area 6: Service Excellence

Foster a culture of citizen/customer service that is responsive to community needs.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The request to reinstate the Census long form does not have significant direct financial implications

for the Region in the short term. However, the loss of this valid, accurate and comprehensive data base could have serious financial implications for future policy, program and infrastructure development.

**OTHER DEPARTMENT CONSULTATIONS/CONCURRENCE:**

Staff in the Crime Prevention Council, Legal Services, Housing, and Transportation Planning contributed to this report.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

NIL

**PREPARED BY:** *Margaret Parkin*, Manager, Planning Information and Research  
*Leigh Golden*, Manager, Social Planning, Research & Evaluation  
*Jessica Deming*, Epidemiologist, Epidemiology & Health Analytics Team

**APPROVED BY:** *Rob Horne*, Commissioner of Planning, Housing and Community Services  
*Michael Schuster*, Commissioner of Social Services  
*Dr. Liana Nolan*, Commissioner/Medical Officer of Health

