



July 12, 2010

The Honourable Tony Clement
Minister of Industry and Minister Responsible for Statistics Canada
C.D. Howe Building
235 Queen Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H5

The Honourable Tony Clement:

RE: The elimination of the mandatory long-form questionnaire in the 2011 Census

The BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA) is very concerned about the implications of the decision to eliminate the mandatory long-form questionnaire in the 2011 Census. As you are aware, the long-form Census collects vital information that allows governments and communities to comprehensively plan for the well-being of all Canadians. This can only be accomplished through reliable demographic data. The mandatory nature of the long-form has historically ensured that the data are valid and reliable. A number of business, academic and community-based research groups and statisticians have already raised concerns about the validity of the data that will emerge from the voluntary National Household Survey. BCNPHA shares these concerns.

BCNPHA is a provincial umbrella organization that provides leadership and support to non-profit housing providers who aim to develop and operate a high standard of affordable housing across the province. We advocate on behalf of over 550 members for the continued provision of safe, secure and affordable housing through public, private and non-profit sector cooperation and partnering.

The BCNPHA Research Department has the mandate of conducting research and knowledge translation processes with and for BCNPHA members, stakeholders and strategic partners. Our research contributes to a growing body of literature that illustrates rising demand for affordable housing in communities across BC. We have recently published three studies on the need for non-profit housing for families, seniors and people with developmental disabilities throughout the province. All of these studies relied on income data from the 2006 Census, which is universally regarded as valid and reliable data.

BCNPHA recently partnered with BC Housing to create a need and demand study template that will be used in communities across BC as a means of standardizing the content and format of these studies. The sections on Community Demographic and Economic Profile, Current Affordable Housing Need and Emerging Housing Need all rely heavily on reliable Census data. Our Asset Analysis Database involves an inventory of existing properties and operating agreements in BC. Coupled with reliable Census data that demonstrates the demand for affordable housing, the database allows us to contribute to planning for the long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability of the sector. Weakening the reliability of Census data by replacing the mandatory long-form questionnaire with the voluntary National Household Survey

will make it increasingly difficult to improve access to affordable housing in communities where need is highest.

The Census in its current form is a critical data source for our research work and allows us to strive toward ensuring that all households in BC have access to safe, secure and affordable housing. This is particularly true for those citizens who are in core-housing need. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation indicates that those at highest risk of being in core-housing need are Aboriginal peoples, immigrants and lone-parent families (primarily women). Reliable census data are crucial to our understanding of the housing situations of these vulnerable groups. These are precisely the same vulnerable groups that will be less likely to complete the voluntary survey, meaning they will be under-represented in the 2011 Census data.

We urge you to consider the implications of the Census changes on the ability of communities to meet the housing needs of all citizens and re-instate the mandatory long-form in the 2011 Census.

Yours Sincerely,



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Brian Masse, NDP Industry Critic