



## **CENSUS CHANGES HARM CANADIANS' HEALTH**

### **Health professionals warn of health impact of the loss of the mandatory long form census**

A broad range of health care professionals, medical and population health researchers from across Canada are warning that the Federal Government's decision to cancel the mandatory long form census will hurt Canadians' health.

At media events held today (Thursday, September 2) at hospitals and health care facilities in major Canadian cities, leaders from every aspect of the Canadian health care system – Medical Officers of Health, nurses, epidemiologists, community health centres, hospitals and faculties of medicine – spoke out about the damaging impact that cancellation of the mandatory long form census will have on medical research, health care, and the well-being of all Canadians.

"Effective health research, conducted across Canada by epidemiologists, biostatisticians and others, has been made possible thanks to the historically reliable administrative data collected by Statistics Canada. Eliminating the mandatory long-form portion of the census will make such research impossible, resulting in far more harm than good, both to Canadians and to the international community," said Dr. Colin Soskolne, (President, Canadian Society for Epidemiology and Biostatistics).

"As a scientist who focuses on why people become sick and what must be done to improve health across all of Ontario and Canada, I – like many researchers – need information on the entire population, and this information only comes from the long-form census," said Dr. John McLaughlin (Vice President, Population Studies and Surveillance, Cancer Care Ontario). In a letter to the Prime Minister, Dr. Patti Groome, (Canada Research Chair in Cancer Care Evaluation, Department of Oncology at Queen's University) stated that "Epidemiologists and other population researchers know that the groups who will be less likely to respond to the survey are those whose information we need most – those from disadvantage groups.... much of the work done in the area of social determinants of health is inter-country. We will no longer be able to participate in such comparisons as a country because the voluntary (and therefore non-representative) National Health Survey will not be accepted by the international research community as providing valid information."

“The Aboriginal Health & Wellness Centre of Winnipeg strongly urges the Conservative government to reconsider its plan to cancel the mandatory long form census. The information and statistics generated by this are critical to the health and well-being of all Aboriginal Peoples in Canada.” said Darlene Hall (Executive Director, AHCWC).

“The long form census is one of the richest sources of Aboriginal health data we have, and without it there will be even larger gaps in our ability to describe the health of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The voluntary surveys that Statistics Canada administers do not include First Nations people on reserve and do not include enough Aboriginal people to provide breakdowns to small enough geographic levels to inform local or regional health planning. I’m very concerned that the cancellation of the long form census will disproportionately disadvantage our ability to identify and respond to the health needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples” said Dr. Marcia Anderson (Past President of the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada).

“Reliable, comprehensive, and comparable information about the determinants of health of the population is essential for public health understanding, policy and practice. Data from the long form of the census, collected from an involuntary - and, therefore, more representative - sample of Canadians has been an important source of such information. We need more, not less, of this type of information to address the health needs of Manitobans and all Canadians, and to reduce inequalities of health amongst them,” said Dr. Joel Kettner, (Chief Public Health Officer of Manitoba.)

“The development of sound evidence –informed public policy for health and social services is totally dependent on the availability of valid up to date information. One of those sources which provide unique information is the long form census. The methods used to gather this data have been perfected by Statistics Canada over many years and are respected throughout the world. As a family doctor and health services researcher I use this data in some form every day. The loss of this reliable source of information will be a severe blow to our ability to plan the health services that Canadians have come to value,” said Alan Katz (Research Director, Department of Family Medicine, University of Manitoba).

“The information that is collected is invaluable and necessary to help health-care planners, researchers and public health officials track the needs of Canadians,” says David McNeil (President, Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario). McNeil says the data is also essential for those interested in the health and social needs of marginalized people in this country. “We need to be able to rely on this information so we can make sure people don’t become invisible.”

Most Canadians, perhaps even the members of the Conservative caucus, do not realize the degree to which canceling the mandatory long form census jeopardizes the future health and well being of all of us. By speaking out, and alerting Canadians to this danger, we encourage the government to act to eliminate this totally unnecessary health risk.

As well as the active participants in these media events, a substantial number of health care professionals have indicated a willingness to provide additional commentary on the health promotion, medical research, health research, and pandemic planning implications of this policy change.

Video footage of today's Toronto event will be available later today at [www.savethecensus.ca](http://www.savethecensus.ca) and also at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (*channel: savethecensuscanada*)

For more information, or to be placed in contact with the appropriate spokesperson, please contact:

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For more information on the "Save the Census" campaign or on the long form census, go to [www.savethecensus.ca](http://www.savethecensus.ca), [www.datalibre.ca](http://www.datalibre.ca), or [www.ccsd.ca](http://www.ccsd.ca).