

July 16, 2010

Hon. Tony Clement
Minister of Industry Canada
235 Queen Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H5

Dear Mr. Clement:

Re: Census Long Form

On behalf of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and our 105,000 members across Canada, I am very concerned about the recently announced decision to radically alter 2011 Census methodology. Mandatory long-form census data provides vital information on the economic and social fabric of the nation. CFIB has in the past extensively used Census data. We firmly believe that any changes must be based on sound methodological principles, meaningful consultation and appropriate testing. We would therefore strongly support a thorough consultation process on this matter.

CFIB is highly experienced in the design and conduct of surveys, relying on them to form accurate pictures of the small- and mid-sized business community. We therefore understand the strengths and weaknesses of voluntary questionnaires, managing response burden and dealing with sensitive subject matter. Because of our experience with authoring surveys and with purchasing Census long-form data, CFIB has grave concerns about how your proposed changes could diminish data quality and harm comparability with previous Census years.

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We are not making an argument against change—the Census needs to evolve along with the needs of Canadians. However, if there are concerns about survey burden or respondents' sensitivity to certain questions on the form, there are more appropriate solutions available. The information collected in the Census is extremely important, and any changes deserve a thorough review process during which all key stakeholders can be consulted. We look forward to further discussions on this vital issue.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Ted Mallett,
VP & Chief Economist

cc. Dr. Munir Sheikh
Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper
Hon. Jim Flaherty
Hon. John Baird