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Chair

Ms. Candice Hoepfner

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

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•(0850)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Candice Hooppner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. I would like to call to order meeting number 33 of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Today, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we will study the impact of cancelling the long-form census.

We are very pleased to have several groups represented here today. We have Canada Without Poverty, we have the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, and we have the National Council of Women of Canada.

What I would ask is that each group take seven minutes per group to give us a presentation, and if you could just introduce yourself at the beginning of your presentation, that would be terrific. Also, if you just keep a bit of an eye on me, I will give you a sign when you're down to one minute for your time. We do try to really stick with the time limits because we have a lot of questions that we like to ask.

So we will begin with, I think right here on this side, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. If you would, please introduce yourself, and you have seven minutes for a presentation. Thank you.

Mr. Aden Murphy (Chair, Canadian Alliance of Student Associations): Thank you, Ms. Chair.

My name is Aden Murphy, and I'm the chairperson of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations and a student at the University of Alberta. I'm here with Spencer Keys, the CASA government relations officer, also based here in Ottawa.

The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, or CASA, represents 320,000 students in 26 universities, colleges, and technical institutes all across Canada. We are here today to continue our opposition to scrapping the mandatory long form and talk about how this deepens the problem of effective information of learning in Canada.

In addition to federal advocacy, such as the lobby days that have been occurring on the Hill all the past week, we also conduct policy analysis and primary research. CASA conducted a research survey of 21,000 undergraduate students of our member institutions to get an accurate reading of issues relating to student debt, work habits, and literacy about student financial aid, and at a great cost to our organization.

This survey would have been impossible if we did not have a reliable benchmark against which to measure our sample. This was not an opinion survey but a professionally designed research survey built to withstand academic scrutiny, and it's already being used to help student financial aid administrators and civil servants consider areas of improvement in student financial assistance.

The mandatory census is the only statistically reliable means of weighting voluntary surveys, like the one done by CASA. The long-form census provides invaluable information on critical topics, including post-secondary attendance and completion rates; awarded certificates, degrees, and diplomas; as well as interprovincial, interterritorial, and international flows of skilled personnel. One example of how the census is being used is that it benchmarks the enrolment projections that the governments, like Alberta's, use to plan long-term enrolment growth at institutions.

The reliability of the mandatory long form is essential to planning that framework, which, for example, sees the growth of nearly 500 students at the University of Lethbridge over the course of the next decade. Inaccurate data could easily lead the province to under-estimating enrolment growth and cause a gap between the number of seats and the number of qualified students from southern Alberta able to attend that institution. This is one important example of where adequate, accurate data helps post-secondary education.

Canada already suffers from a lack of adequate, comparable data on our post-secondary system, and further cutbacks in the size and scope of learning data collected by federal ministries and departments is being contemplated. While planned long ago to end this year, it is very regrettable that the youth in transition survey is finished, and that the national graduates survey is only guaranteed for 2010-11.

Learning data has always been a problem in Canada. In stark contrast to the vast majority of industrialized nations, Canada does not have a centrally audited and comparable source of nationally collected data available to help evaluate the quality of higher education. In fact, in 2007 Canada ranked last among 40 OECD nations when it comes to the amount of post-secondary education information provided to *Education at a Glance*, an annual international survey comparing a wide range of indicators.

Our current learning infrastructure is highly fragmented and spread over multiple departments and institutions. This has resulted in the needless duplication of research and has prevented the establishment of efficient networks of data collaboration and the sharing of best practices, even though Statistics Canada is required by law to coordinate these activities.

Those departments and institutions that do collect and analyze learning information are not resourced to conduct the number and type of studies, both long-term and short-term, needed to address key questions about the major transitions throughout the lives of our citizens, starting data collection when a student enters grade school, rather than at 15, like the current youth in transition survey does.

Suffice it to say, the dearth of effective educational statistics at the government level means that the private sector has had to respond. Contributions like CASA's survey have had to fill the void, but those efforts are rendered much less effective without a mandatory census.

Our students are deeply concerned that this change will seriously impede the capacity of all interested parties to conduct comprehensive and timely analysis into higher education issues.

The mandatory long form must be brought back for the 2011 census. If issues around coercion are truly a concern, rather than changing the essential nature of the census, we prefer that public consultations be held to review the punishments given for failure to send back a census long form.

I'd like to thank you for your time. Thank you.

•(0855)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now go to Canada Without Poverty.

Mr. Rob Rainer (Executive Director, Canada Without Poverty): Good morning. My name is Rob Rainer. I am the executive director of Canada Without Poverty.

Madam Chair, I have seven copies of speaking notes, if someone would like to pass those out to committee members.

I have just a few words about the organization. It's a registered charity, founded in 1971 as the National Anti-Poverty Organization, and is governed by a board of directors whose members have the lived experience of poverty.

Our mission is to eradicate poverty in Canada by promoting income and social security for all Canadians and by promoting poverty eradication as a human rights obligation.

We focus on the upstream end of the problem—public policy and legislation—as it impacts poverty outcomes.

I just want to take a moment to commend the committee for its seminal report, released yesterday, which we will be speaking about in a press conference on the Hill with some partners.

Our core constituency is people living in poverty, those on the margins of society due to social and economic conditions. This constituency is about four million to five million people in Canada at present.

As committee members who have been studying this issue, you know that there are certain demographic groups that are considerably disproportionately vulnerable to poverty: persons with disabilities; aboriginal people; persons of colour; recent immigrants; single parents with young children; single working-age adults from their mid-40s to age 64; increasingly, working-age adults who are working but are the working poor; and sometimes, and often overlooked, injured workers.

Our central concern, which is obviously shared by many organizations, is that the voluntary national household survey will result in the underrepresentation of people of low income generally and of people within high-risk demographic groups particularly, within the baseline population data that is meant to be derived from the long-form census, from which the bulk of census information is acquired.

I want to quote from the Statistics Canada website from yesterday. It is a standard text they have on the census of the population, which reminds us of what this census is really all about. It says that the census:

...is a reliable basis for the estimation of the population of the provinces, territories and local municipal areas. The information collected is related to more than 80 federal and provincial legislative measures and provides a basis for the distribution of federal transfer payments. The census also provides information about the characteristics of the population and its housing within small geographic areas and for small population groups to support planning, administration, policy development and evaluation activities of governments at all levels, as well as data users in the private sector.

That alone, I think, is testimony to the value of a mandatory census.

Statistics Canada, also on their website, indicates how they go about preparing the census. There are five key steps.

The first is to consult with data end-users to assess their socio-economic data needs.

Second is evaluating how those needs can be met either through a content change to the census or through other Statistics Canada data sources.

Then comes an extensive content testing program to determine the quality of information that would result from changes made to the questions and the questionnaire design.

The fourth step, which I didn't realize, is that cabinet actually reviews the options developed by Statistics Can for the content of the census.

Finally, the Governor in Council issues an order in council prescribing the questions for the census.

It seems to me that there are already a lot of checks and balances within that process to ensure high-quality and appropriate questions and so forth.

We're not data end-users in the sense that we don't mine Statistics Canada data ourselves. We don't have the capacity for that. We rely on others, experienced researchers, to do the data analysis. We also trust that those who have the expertise in the science-based collection of statistical population data are correct when they say that a voluntary survey is no substitute for a census.

I'm sure that you're all aware of the study Statistics Canada published in June. It was an internal study that was acquired under access to information. It examined how certain trends from 2001 to 2006 would have been portrayed had the long-form census in 2006 been replaced with a voluntary survey.

I want to quote from the conclusion of this report:

If the 2B census

—in other words, the long-form census—

questionnaire had been a voluntary survey in 2006, the picture of the population of Canada that would have emerged seems to be different for sub groups of the population based on citizenship, visible minority, language, and education.... [T]rends for some variables from 2001 to 2006 would have actually reversed; for others, increases would have been reduced or declines exaggerated.... The main message of these conclusions is that it is important to have proper methods to minimize the non-response bias and to ensure good response rates.

● (0900)

I will emphasize the final line from this report:

Comparisons of estimates of a voluntary survey with the previous census may be difficult.

As you know, hundreds of groups and many prominent Canadians have registered their opposition to the decision to terminate the long-form census, and only a very small number of groups have registered their support.

We at Canada Without Poverty agree that the threat of jail time should be removed from the census. An appropriate financial penalty for non-compliance seems reasonable.

Given the lengths taken by Statistics Canada to protect privacy of information, we strongly disagree with the notion that the long-form census represents an oppressive intrusion on privacy and thus should be replaced by a voluntary survey. If such a notion is true, the government cannot logically defend the continuation of the mandatory short-form census, which also contains questions of a primarily private nature—questions I would not feel obliged to answer should a stranger or private interest come to my door.

In conclusion, completing the census should be, and should be seen to be, an obligation of citizenship comparable to paying one's fair share of taxes, obeying just laws, voting, etc. Rather than characterizing the census as an oppressive intrusion into privacy, the federal government should be framing census participation as a critical means for citizens to contribute to the data analysis that underpins a wide range of programs and services intended to benefit them.

To foster this framing in the distribution of the long-form census, the government could include some great examples of how the statistically sound data derived from the census feeds forward into program and service design, right down to the neighbourhood and individual levels. In other words, help citizens connect the dots between what may appear to be random questions and the quality of life we are collectively striving to build for all Canadians.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

We will now go to the National Council of Women of Canada.

Ms. Monica Cullum (Vice-President, National Council of Women of Canada): My name is Monica Cullum. I'm vice-

president of justice for the National Council of Women. I am joined here by my colleague, Rashmi Bhat. We will share the presentation.

The National Council of Women of Canada was founded in 1893 and is one of the oldest women's organizations in Canada. Fifteen hundred women came together in Toronto to establish an organization with a mandate to improve the quality of life of Canadians through education and advocacy. The organization now comprises 17 local councils, six provincial councils, and 21 nationally organized societies representing women. All levels of the council bring together women's organizations in an umbrella structure, along with individual members. The National Council of Women is a self-funded organization.

Historically, members have been encouraged to participate and take leadership in social action initiatives in their communities and in national debates on issues of concern. Part of that proud heritage is demonstrated by the work of Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, and Henrietta Muir Edwards, all members of the National Council of Women, now identified with Louise McKinney and Irene Parlby as "the famous five".

The National Council of Women is affiliated with the International Council of Women and holds consultative status with ECOSOC, enabling NCWC to bring a Canadian perspective to the work of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. NCWC also participates as an observer, non-governmental organization with the permanent council of the Organization of American States. All levels of the organization are closely connected with issues and have a firm grasp of international issues and Canadian perspectives.

All policy for NCWC is generated through a resolution originating with either local councils or NCWC committees. These are adopted through a democratic process at the annual general meeting held each year in late May; thus representatives speak from the united voice of the federated membership.

In its 117-year history, NCWC has spoken out on many issues concerning Canadians. Some examples in the wide-ranging policy of the organization are: the support for hiring of women into the RCMP; building safety standards as they concern handicapped people; official recognition of the homemaker in Canada; the rights of status Indian women; elimination of the firearms registry; safeguarding of Canada's Arctic sovereignty; land mines; the environment and nuclear energy/waste disposal; and trafficking and child prostitution.

I'll now turn the mike over to my colleague, Rashmi Bhat.

● (0905)

Ms. Rashmi Bhat (Vice-President, National Council of Women of Canada): I'm Rashmi Bhat, vice-president of public affairs for the National Council of Women of Canada.

We're here specifically to speak to the elimination of the long-form census as a mandatory requirement of citizens. The National Council of Women of Canada was disappointed in the decision of the Government of Canada to eliminate the long-form census as a mandatory requirement of citizens, and to changes that particularly apply to the removal of questions related to unpaid work.

Since 1973, it has been our policy to support the recognition of the contribution of unpaid work to a vibrant economy and to society, as cited in the following resolutions:

RESOLVED, That the National Council of Women of Canada request the Government of Canada to seek ways and means of officially recognizing the contribution to the Canadian economy and to Canadian society of the homemaker or family home manager; and further that such classification be included in the Canadian Dictionary of Occupational Titles or whatever other appropriate publication is indicated and be used for the purpose of classification in the Census.

This was adopted in 1973.

RESOLVED, That the National Council of Women request the Government of Canada to give serious consideration to the wording of the questions in the Census to prevent any suggestion of discrimination to any peoples in Canada.

That was adopted in 1974.

RESOLVED, That the National Council of Women of Canada request the Government of Canada immediately to institute household surveys of a substantial size and complexity in order to establish the economic value of housework and volunteer community service for the purpose of inclusion in the Canadian Classification and Dictionary of Occupations;

Adopted, again, in 1974.

RESOLVED that the National Council of Women of Canada request an occupational listing of unpaid caregiver/home manager/homemaker in the NOC/SDOC Dictionaries and further

That the National Council of Women of Canada call upon Statistics Canada in the next census to include

questions on unpaid volunteer work

questions on care of the disabled

expand the number of hours of eldercare to be reported in the census question

continue to collect statistics on all unpaid work

develop and provide information on time use surveys

This was adopted in 1996.

It should also be noted that Canada made commitments at the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing and previous world conferences on women, specifically to the question that has now been eliminated from the long-form census for 2011.

Ms. Monica Cullum: The National Council of Women of Canada maintains that the information gathered in a voluntary census will compromise the reliability of the information collected and make the material unusable by other surveys. Almost all policy directed to family and community services is impacted by the data. Census questions are one way to keep attention focused. The removal of the question about unpaid work will have a negative impact on women, seniors, and children, through the potential to misdirect policy.

We have all heard a great deal about the sandwich generation, women who are between the elderly parent and the child.

Based on information from the 2008 census, two-thirds of Canada's unpaid work is being performed by women. As pointed out by Kathleen Lahey, a law professor at Queens University, the unpaid work economy is being removed from the data collection. The elimination of these questions suggests that work that has been traditionally identified as women's work will not be measured. Ian McKinnon of the National Statistics Council, while admitting such questions are vague, concedes that the general social survey and other Statistics Canada surveys will be less valuable in the future because they will not establish a benchmark against the now-defunct mandatory long-form census.

Rather, the questions about unpaid work should be expanded. For example, making a distinction between housework and caregiving by referencing the aspect of work benefiting others, such that caregiving could mean that the caregiver may be foregoing other income to care for persons who cannot take care of themselves—

● (0910)

The Chair: Excuse me, Ms. Cullum. Could you wrap up your presentation, please?

Ms. Monica Cullum: Yes.

The National Council of Women of Canada urges this committee to, one, take immediate steps to support the reinstatement of the mandatory long-form census, including the questions around unpaid work, and two, investigate ways to expand and to make these questions more relevant so as to increase the reliability of the data.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will begin our first round of questions. We'll have a five-minute round. For witnesses, that means for questions and answers each member will have five minutes.

Again, you may not each be able to answer the question. If you don't mind, please keep an eye on me and I'll let you know where we are on the time.

We'll begin with the Liberals. Mr. Savage, please.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for coming today, the National Council of Women; CASA, which has been busy on the Hill this week meeting with people from all parties on student issues; and Rob, for doing the great work he does.

Rob, as you know, we tabled yesterday our committee report on poverty, a report in which you played a big part. So we thank you for that.

We brought this motion forward to have a bit of a study on the implications of the long-form census no longer being mandatory. The specific purpose of this committee is to have a look at the impacts of this on those who are the least advantaged in society: the poor. They quite often tend to be people with disabilities. Quite often they are women who are in unpaid or low-paid work.

It's an important topic, because as all three of you have indicated, this is going to have ramifications for years to come for the services the government is going to be able to provide and the information government will have in providing that service.

On education, for example, you referred to the YIT survey, youth in transition, but we've also had the cancellation in recent years of both the Canadian Council on Learning and the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, both of which did significant amounts of research on education issues.

As you said, Canada doesn't have very good surveillance of education information versus other countries. The main information sources we have are now gone.

On the disability side, the disability community lost the PAL survey, a particularly important survey for many people in the disability community, and it hasn't yet been replaced.

So it is important for people to understand that on the long-form census, the Governor of the Bank of Canada has a point of view, as does the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. All have a point of view on this. In fact, one of the most telling articles all summer was an opinion piece in *The Globe and Mail* that listed the three lonely organizations that support the government's decision against the churches, the business organizations, the social agencies, the provinces, the cities, the communities, and the distinguished Canadians who have decried this decision.

Canadians didn't understand it, and they thought it was just policy. Then we found out that in fact the government knew that information would be lost. In fact, *The Globe and Mail* cited at the end of September an internal order from Statistics Canada that states: "It is recognized that the quality of the data collected by the voluntary [survey] will be lower than that of a mandatory survey". It goes on to say that some survey data "will not be useable for a range of objectives for which the census information would be needed".

The government knew what they were doing with the cancellation of the long-form census, and it follows a pattern. That is the concern. This is going to hurt people who are already the most marginalized in Canada.

My question is for Rob.

We agree with you, obviously, that there shouldn't be jail time for people who don't fill out the census. We've said that from the beginning. That's been a false argument the government has used. I'd like you, if you could, to give me a specific example of Canadians who will be hurt by this decision if it goes forward, as apparently it will.

Mr. Rob Rainer: Thanks, Mike.

I was just reviewing this internal Statistics Canada report, which is really interesting. Have committee members seen this document?

Maybe I can get a copy to the clerk or someone. It should be distributed to all committee members, because this is right from within Statistics Canada itself in the summer, when it was doing an internal study of the impact of moving to a voluntary survey. They simulated having a voluntary survey in 2006 and how the data would differ. There is a whole bunch of changes; there are reversals in trends and there are exaggerations.

Oftentimes we are talking about small percentage points, but if those magnify over millions of people, you are talking about tens to hundreds of thousands of people who will effectively not be counted through the mandatory census. As an example, we all know that recent immigrants are a critical population for us to get information on, because the country is rapidly changing. Our demographics are rapidly changing and there are services and programs that need to be targeted to recent immigrants, who are very vulnerable, as the committee knows, to falling into poverty and remaining there. In this simulation that Statistics Canada ran, the actual trend from 2001 to 2006 showed a slight increase in the number of recent immigrants. It was up by 0.15%. When they did the simulation with the voluntary survey, it decreased by 2%. It doesn't sound like much, but when we

are talking of hundreds of thousands or millions of people, you are effectively screening out a lot of people from actually being counted through a survey.

Renters is the largest one I see in this report. The actual trend in the number of renters is a decrease of 3%. When Statistics Canada ran the simulation, the number decreased by 8%. That is a 5% difference. So if you are planning for rental housing in a community and you're under-counting the number of renters by 5% or so, that is a significant number of people who will be affected.

• (0915)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Rainer.

We'll go to Mr. Lessard, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Thank you for being here this morning. Your testimony helps us better to understand the impact of cancelling the long-form census. It may be appropriate for us to try and see what is behind all that. This exercise is also aimed, in a more practical sense, at finding how useful the long-form census can be. I believe we are in agreement about this. We mainly agree about the pretext used to cancel it, the jail penalty, even though it has never been used. I even have the feeling that everyone had forgotten about it.

Then, there was a kind of consensus in the House, at least between the opposition parties, to get rid of all that because it just did not make sense. Then the government used another argument and said there were intrusive questions, such as the one relating to the number of bedrooms. Why would we ask people how many bedrooms they have? It is precisely because such information allows us to assess housing problems in Canada. If a family answers that there are eight persons living under the same roof with only two bedrooms, there is a problem. This data also allows us to assess the level of poverty, of course, and also the quality of our housing stock. It is only an example and I believe that we are all in agreement about those things.

I would like to know what you think the intent of the government was in making that decision. When the Conservatives were in the Opposition and Mr. Dryden tried to set up a Canadian network of childcare services, the Conservatives said that grandmothers should take care of children. Their decision reveals their whole concept of what society should look like. It seems to me that we should look at the impact. As you said this morning, women's organizations have told us what the impact would be on the status of women.

There is also the fact, for example, that we would not know how many people do unpaid work in Canada. That also is intentional, I believe.

The issue is not anymore whether this long-form questionnaire is useful or not. We all know it is. However, we now have a government that does not want us—especially you who fight for women, for youth and for people living in poverty—to have those tools to do this work.

Do you agree with this analysis? If so, what can we do to resist this attack against the most disadvantaged members of our society? I put this question to all of you.

• (0920)

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry, but there are just 60 seconds left to answer that question.

Mr. Spencer Keys (Government Relations Officer, Canadian Alliance of Student Associations): We really can't speak to the intentions behind this. We can certainly speak to the effects, which we consider to be overwhelmingly negative for our sector.

What can be done about it? Well, we're not parliamentarians; you are.

The Chair: Go ahead, there are 35 seconds left.

Mr. Rob Rainer: What's really behind this is up to the government, I think, to answer. It seems like their response rests on the privacy issue and their concerns about privacy. But to me, it's a bogus argument. Statistics Canada has rigorous protection of the private nature of this information, and I think, as I said in my remarks, we have to change the frame on this and help Canadians understand how the data relate to them and benefit programs and services they may participate in.

So I think it's a question here of changing the frame around this whole issue, and I would hope it's not too late for this decision to be reversed.

The Chair: We'll now go to Mr. Martin, please.

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Thank you for this opportunity.

I just wanted to share with the panellists and with the members that, if they haven't done this, they might want to go to a website called "Census Watch", and there they'll find a short list of names of people who support the government's decision—the cancelling of the mandatory long form—and then there are 15 pages of names of groups and organizations of all sorts that claim this is a wrong decision. They are groups like the B.C. Chamber of Commerce, the C.D. Howe Institute, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, and my own City of Sault Ste. Marie, who have written letters opposing this decision.

We all know how important data and information are. When we were doing the report on poverty that Rob mentioned earlier, which was tabled yesterday, at one point we wanted to see if we could cost what this would require in terms of money, and I moved the motion here that we go to Treasury Board and ask the clerk to check with Treasury Board to see if that was possible. The answer we got back was yes, but it would take a long time because the data that would be needed were quite comprehensive and complicated to put together.

I also asked the Parliamentary Budget Officer if he would do that, and I got the same answer, which indicates to me that if we're going to get the information we need to implement this really important document now, we will need very detailed data, particularly when we look at costing. For example, Food Banks Canada claims it costs the economy of this country \$90 billion a year not to do anything about poverty. How do we take that \$90 billion and spend it more effectively so that we don't have poverty? Then maybe we could spend that money on other things.

I would ask Rob to comment on that.

Mr. Rob Rainer: Sure. Thanks, Tony.

Again, the process that has been in place for determining the content of the census had the appropriate checks and balances to ensure appropriate information was being collected. The first step is to consult with data end-users to assess their socio-economic data needs. So in the context of the report the committee has just released, there are all kinds of data we need now that we can compare to 2006 and so forth.

I'd love to see more data being collected on actual deprivation, if appropriate questions could be put forward in a census about the material deprivation that Canadians are experiencing, because we know that's obviously real, but it's sometimes hard to get access to real deprivation data.

I think the system wasn't broken, and now a decision has been made to fix a problem that really didn't exist. It would be nice to have a sense, leaving the discussion today, if there's still an opportunity for this decision to be reversed.

• (0925)

Mr. Tony Martin: If I have some time, I want to—

The Chair: You have a minute and a half.

Mr. Tony Martin: Oh, thank you. Okay.

I just want to ask the women's association.... I'm surprised to hear they've stopped collecting data on wages. We all know the tremendous effort, particularly by women, to look after children, and I'm trying to imagine why they would do that—why this government would choose not to measure that. Maybe they think parents mollycoddle their criminal children too much or something—I'm not sure—or they're criminal parents....

Maybe you could share with me what your thinking is around why that decision was made.

Ms. Monica Cullum: We're not sure why it was made, because taking care of others is work, no matter how you look at it. If the questions weren't right, then they can be corrected. They can be expanded on; they can be nuanced in some way so that we get a different conclusion. But if you start with a false premise, you end up with a false conclusion. Removing the questions is really a false premise, from our point of view.

I'm not sure that answers your question, Mr. Martin.

The Chair: Sorry, that's all the time. Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Mr. Komarnicki for five minutes.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that very much.

Certainly, there's been a lot of debate and discussion about whether questions should be mandatory or voluntary, and I can appreciate that. I know the general public has been concerned about the fact that what started out as a short questionnaire has turned into a fairly lengthy one with fairly intrusive questions. There's no doubt that there needs to be a balance with respect to the questions and every question should satisfy the need for data users, but only as weighed against the cost and intrusiveness of the question. I guess that's what has to be weighed.

I found it interesting that both Aden Murphy and Rob Rainer mentioned the following facts. Aden said there should be public consultation for the review of penalties, and Mr. Rainer indicated the threat of jail time should be removed and the size of the penalty reviewed.

I take it that the reasoning behind that is that some of the questions that are posed in the form are probably not the types of questions that should invoke a penalty like jail or even the \$500. Take, for example, a single mother with three children, working one or two jobs, who is asked some questions like the time she leaves for work or what the daily commute time is. I know the previous census asked questions about that—and we've heard Mr. Lessard mention that—in addition to how many bedrooms and bathrooms there are in the house, and things like that.

Would you think that not answering a question—let's deal with the time they leave for work or the daily commute time—should be sanctioned by a prison sentence, Mr. Rainer or Mr. Murphy?

Mr. Rob Rainer: No. As I said, we don't support the threat of jail time for a census. It seems very much disproportionate to the weight of the so-called offence. But as I said, I think the notion of a citizen's obligation to support the data upon which a lot of decision-making rests, within the public and the private sphere, is totally reasonable. And it is totally reasonable to ask people to comply with that, with a reasonable penalty if they don't.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: That's fair. It's probably reasonable to ask them to complete the application, but would a \$500 fine be disproportionate for a mother of three failing to answer a question relating to how long it takes her to commute to work or what time she leaves for work?

Mr. Rob Rainer: Well, you're giving some examples of types of questions where obviously there could be room for debate on whether or not we think those are suitable—

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: The question is simple. Do you think a \$500 fine is appropriate or disproportionate for that type of failure?

• (0930)

Mr. Rob Rainer: If that's the level of the fine, I think that is disproportionate.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: What do you think would be appropriate and proportionate?

Mr. Rob Rainer: I don't really want to hazard an opinion on that. I'd have to give that some more thought.

In Australia, I understand if you fail to vote, there's a fine of something like \$20, which seems to be a little bit on the low side, but there's obviously a medium there that has to be derived in terms of an appropriate penalty.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Here's the point I'm making. Some people, because of privacy or other reasons, don't choose to answer a particular question, specifically if the question is somewhat intrusive, yet we expect them to answer. But if you're saying jail is not appropriate and a \$500 fine is not appropriate, maybe a \$20 fine is appropriate.

What they're looking at is bringing it almost to zero, and that's the point that we have made, that these questions can be answered when

we ask people to do so, based simply on their civic duty, their obligation, and their desire to want to complete the form.

My question to you is, why should we fine anyone anything if they feel the question is intrusive? And if \$20 is appropriate, it might as well be zero, wouldn't you agree with me?

Mr. Rob Rainer: No, I don't agree with you. It seems, from what the experts were saying, that the mandatory nature of the census is what drives higher rates of compliance and better confidence in the resulting data. If you go with a voluntary basis, and I think the internal StatsCan survey bears this out, you're going to see less participation from some groups who are most vulnerable in our society, and that's a great concern.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: In July, during one of the hearings, Don Drummond, whom you'd be familiar with, said he was unable to identify which single question in the long-form census warranted a \$500 fine or jail.

Again, it's the concern of coercing people or, if you will, threatening them to complete something by way of imposing a penalty. That's the central point behind that, isn't it?

Mr. Rob Rainer: The same logic must also apply to the short-form census.

If a private citizen or a private interest comes to my door and asks if I'm married and how many people live in the house, that is none of their business. But if the federal government comes to my door and asks that question, I understand there's an obligation and I can understand the context.

I think the challenge here is to reframe this issue to help Canadians understand the value that results from the data that's collected from a mandatory survey. That's the opportunity we have here, and I urge you to capture it.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That's five minutes.

We do have a very short amount of time before we bring in our next group of witnesses. So I'd like us to try a three-minute round and see how far we get.

We'll begin with Madam Minna for three minutes.

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Very quickly, then, I have two questions to start off with.

The segregated data is something that is needed. When I was on the Status of Women standing committee, we were doing studies on gender budgeting and all of that. One of the problems was making sure that we had properly segregated data. With this census, I need to know from Ms. Cullum or Ms. Bhat what that means now.

I have a very quick question for Mr. Rainer.

Can you tell me how many surveys, in addition to the long-form census, are you aware of that have been dropped?

Those are my two questions.

Ms. Rashmi Bhat: I would say that through a voluntary census, information gathered becomes unreliable and unusable for the very specific reasons that have been mentioned here already. Any other surveys on social services are also compromised without a reliable, comparative demographic scale to be used alongside.

To answer your question, I think it's the comparative demographic scale that would result from a long-form census that could then be applied to any other voluntary census. You do need a base that you can use that's reliable.

Hon. Maria Minna: So we can no longer do an analysis on women's issues, really.

Ms. Rashmi Bhat: It would be almost impossible to try to figure out how to compare that to the population. The unpaid worker will likely remain hidden and fail to be valued by public policy planners. To fill the information gap, all we could suppose is that a market approach will develop using mining data, through credit card usage and that sort of thing. Again, you would still fail to capture the unpaid worker.

Hon. Maria Minna: Sorry, my time is tight, obviously.

Mr. Spencer Keys: With respect to surveys that affect our sector, there's the youth and transition survey, which was planned to be wrapped up and is not going to be renewed. There is also the national graduate survey, which currently has just one year of guaranteed funding right now and its status is questionable for the future. Those would be the two primary surveys that we use a lot.

● (0935)

Mr. Rob Rainer: The only specific example I can give you is that PALS survey that someone mentioned on disability. In fact, we're part of a research project led by university researchers who rely on the PALS survey for their information.

I know there have been other surveys that have been dropped.

I think this has been overshadowed or hasn't gotten as much attention as the census issue, but it seems that there's almost an effort to undermine the data and evidence base that we need for decision-making. That's very troubling.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Vellacott for three minutes.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): I want to address, initially, my questions to Monica and to Rashmi in particular.

I do have some empathy, and I have felt for years, whether by census or otherwise, that the unpaid work and the invaluable contribution made by moms, mostly women, contribute in a great way to our society.

I'm a little confused insofar as your suggestion goes. We've had other suggestions from other groups as well. It seems more the issue of...and we get recommendations, I would expect, all the time from various groups as to what kinds of questions should be there.

What seems to be another issue is whether it should be mandatory or not and punishable by fines, jail terms, or whatever. I appreciate both your comments. I heard that you're strongly suggesting that.

The issue, more to the point, is whether it should be mandatory or not. I need to better understand what you mean in respect to that. For example, if a young mom, a caregiver—and it's unpaid work—is as busy as can be and maybe doesn't have a lot of time left over, do you really want her to be punished by a fine? She's a low-income mom as it is. Is that what I'm understanding you to say?

Maybe Rashmi could respond first.

Ms. Monica Cullum: In terms of fines and so on, we're not necessarily in favour of that kind of thing. I think it's a red herring that has been thrown into the mix. There's no evidence, from what I have read, that anyone has ever been fined.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: So it should be mandatory, but there should be no sanctions, no measures brought against a person.

From my point of view, it is no longer mandatory in that sense. I think voluntary with enforcement or encouragement to do civic duty and so on, as Rob made the point, is more the way to go.

If you're saying you don't think that's the way to go, I don't know how it becomes mandatory then. You would in effect probably be agreeing with me, when I say encourage civic duty and so on.

Ms. Monica Cullum: I would say we believe it should be mandatory, but I don't think it's for us to decide how that is enforced. I think it is a political issue.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: With due respect, if you don't have some enforcement measure, as in fines or whatever, then it's no longer mandatory.

Ms. Monica Cullum: I'm not saying there shouldn't be—

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: You don't want fines, penalties, or whatever, so—

Ms. Monica Cullum: I'm not suggesting that. I'm suggesting it should be mandatory and it's for the government to decide how that is enforced.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: But I'm asking, are you suggesting penalties and fines? Are you suggesting penalties and fines for a young single mom?

Ms. Monica Cullum: I guess to me that's a facetious remark.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: It's a contradiction in terms, actually, to say you want it to be mandatory but there should be no penalties. That doesn't square; it's not logical.

Ms. Monica Cullum: I don't think that is a contradiction.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: It clearly is, but I'll leave that to the public to decide.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Vellacott.

We'll go to Madam Beaudin, please.

[Translation]

Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Thank you very much, Mrs. Chair.

Thank you and welcome.

The main issue is not whether anyone not answering the questionnaire should be fined, but what the impact will be of not having the data needed to have a clear picture of our society. Let us not forget that we have just tabled a report on poverty after a three-year study for which we needed data over many years.

Further to what you said earlier, Mr. Rainer, I believe that the simulation done by Statistics Canada is very significant. You said that, had we changed the questionnaire in 2006, we would not have today the same image of our society. My question is how long will this go on in the future if we do not have the right data and an accurate portrayal of Canada.

The government often uses simple questions such as: How many bedrooms do you have? How much time does a single mother with three children spend in public transit to go to work? I believe such questions are essential for our community organizations and to get accurate data.

For example, knowing that a mother has to get up at 6 AM, that she has three children but only two bedrooms, that she comes back home at 7 PM, and that she must travel an hour and a half in the morning to go to work and another hour and a half in the evening to go back home, seems to me to be very relevant in order to plan the policies or initiatives that would make her life a bit easier.

Do you believe that this kind of information, that may seem to be quite simple for most people—and that is why the government makes regular use of such data—is important for your organizations? How long will we be faced with the impact of not having an accurate image of our population?

● (0940)

[English]

Mr. Rob Rainer: I do think they're very important questions. I think every question on both the short-form census and the long-form census can be objectively assessed for the value the data will bring to society. It should go through that scrutiny. If a question doesn't meet the test of value, then it shouldn't be included. The fact that these questions can be revised, altered, dropped, and that new questions can be added...all that process has already been in place.

To further respond to Mr. Vellacott on the subject of fines, I agree that's not really where the focus should be. This was not an issue for as long as Canada has been doing the census. It was not an issue until it was made an issue.

There's been a very good record of participation and confidence in the data that's resulted from those who have participated in a mandatory framework, with apparently zero levying of any penalties at all.

If Canadians understand the context in which the questions are being asked and how it can relate to their lives, I think the participation rate will be very strong, even with the prospect of a penalty hanging over their heads. It doesn't seem to me, based on the participation we're getting, that this is what's driving people. I think most people are replying out of a sense of duty.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Rainer.

Mr. Watson, go ahead for three minutes, please.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you, of course, to our witnesses for appearing.

The central issue at stake here, of course, is Statistics Canada's collecting of information through mandatory or voluntary questions. I shouldn't say mandatory or voluntary; they do both, right? So the question here is essentially which questions should be mandatory and which should be voluntary. I see some heads nodding "yes".

Witnesses, you all understand that essentially the only change the government has made is to move some questions from being mandatory to being voluntary. Is that correct? We understand that's the change this government has made here?

Mr. Rainer, do you want to comment?

Mr. Rob Rainer: But the long-form census results in the bulk of data being collected. So if all of those questions are moved to a voluntary basis, you're essentially putting at risk the credibility or the reliability of data for the bulk of the information—

Mr. Jeff Watson: You're arguing about the outcome. I'm establishing here what the actual change has been. The change has been to move questions from being mandatory to being voluntary.

And essentially what I'm hearing from the evidence today is that you object to the government's decision to move certain questions from mandatory to voluntary. Is that correct? Is that what I'm understanding?

Mr. Rob Rainer: That's correct.

Mr. Jeff Watson: You've raised the issue of accuracy. Canadians give up a lot of information voluntarily. Anybody who does a political poll, market research, or product testing knows they give up a lot of valuable information, some of it very personal in nature.

Take political polls. I worked in market research for a long time, actually. A sample of 2,000 Canadians giving voluntary data is accurate to within about a percentage and a half, 19 times out of 20. Is that good accuracy?

Mr. Rob Rainer: Yes.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Voluntary information does yield accurate information, right? It can. Okay. So it's about sampling if you want accuracy, even on voluntary questions. Would you agree with that statement?

● (0945)

Mr. Rob Rainer: As I said in my opening remarks, I am not a statistical expert. I'm not the person to ask that question to. I am relying on the expertise of those who have already spoken on this issue, including the chief statistician, who resigned over this issue precisely because of this tension—

Mr. Jeff Watson: Okay. You're raising the opinions of others. Then you don't have an opinion on whether voluntary information can be achieved accurately. Okay.

On the question of mandatory versus voluntary, Mr. Rainer, since you've been answering some questions, can you tell me if this is a voluntary or a mandatory question: what are the total regular monthly mortgage or loan payments for your dwelling? Is that mandatory or voluntary?

Mr. Rob Rainer: I'm not going to answer that question in the way you would like me to, only because I think that's a question that needs to be posed to the committee or whoever it is that screens this and in a proper setting to evaluate—

Mr. Jeff Watson: I'm not asking who decides the question—

The Chair: Mr. Watson, I'm sorry, but actually your time is up, so just let Mr. Rainer finish.

Mr. Jeff Watson: My only point, Madam Chair, is that the question was about whether it's mandatory or voluntary. It wasn't a question of who decides whether it's mandatory or voluntary.

The Chair: Right. I just wanted to let you know your time has expired.

Did you want to comment, Mr. Rainer?

Mr. Rob Rainer: Again, I think there has been a process in place. It seems to have been working. For some reason the government made the decision that it's not working and has made, unfortunately, an issue when there wasn't an issue.

The Chair: Okay.

I want to thank all of the witnesses for being here. It was very informative. Thank you so much. We tried to squeeze a lot into a short amount of time. Thank you again for being here.

We will suspend for one minute and bring in the new group of witnesses and question them.

Thank you.

• (0945) _____ (Pause) _____

• (0950)

The Chair: Please come to order. We need to begin.

We're very happy to have representatives right now from the Canadian Council on Social Development, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Wellesley Institute, and the Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain.

Welcome here. We have a seven-minute presentation from each group. I would ask you, when you give your presentation, to please introduce yourself. Also, if you keep an eye on me, I'll let you know when you're getting close to your seven minutes, because we really are tight on time. There will be many questions, so I would ask that you try to keep to the seven minutes.

We'll begin. Would you introduce the group you're from and introduce yourself, please? Thank you.

Ms. Peggy Taillon (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Council on Social Development): Thank you.

Good morning, everyone.

Depending on which side of the issue you are, you're either lucky or unlucky, because I have laryngitis today.

I am Peggy Taillon. I am the head of the Canadian Council on Social Development. I'm here with my colleague, Katherine Scott, who is our vice-president of research. She is also the vice-president of research for the Vanier Institute of the Family.

Thank you, Madam Chair, committee members, and fellow participants. I am happy to be here today to talk about this very important issue.

As you all likely know, CCSD is Canada's longest-established social policy organization, founded in 1920 by Charlotte Whitton. We have a long history of working collaboratively with successive Canadian governments. CCSD developed the concept of some of our most fundamental social programs in Canada, including EI, disability, and old age pension at a time when Canadians needed it most.

One of CCSD's flagship programs today is called the community social data strategy. This information allows communities to focus on their efforts at the neighbourhood level, making better use of our tax dollars and targeting services that respond to those most in need. This is a pan-Canadian partnership in which members collectively purchase approximately \$900,000 worth of census and other StatsCan data at a discounted rate. The consortium members include police services, municipalities, United Ways, provincial government departments, and front-line service agencies.

As CCSD has said many times since the decision was taken, losing the long-form census is equal to the government turning off Canada's navigation system. Those in government who support this decision must consider the impact very carefully.

Over the past five months, Canadians certainly have, and their response has been unequivocal. More than 370 organizations, representing every aspect of Canadian life, have voiced their opposition to this challenge. Hundreds more have quietly expressed their alarm but fear that if they speak out too vocally there could be repercussions to their organizations. More than 17,000 Canadians are petitioning for a reversal of this decision. More than 11,000 have joined the long-form census Facebook page.

As we all know, Canada's chief statistician resigned in protest. Opposition parties have private members' bills and have been unanimous and vocal in their condemnation of this decision. Challenges, as you know, have been launched in the Federal Court. And tens of thousands of ordinary Canadians have written, called, or visited their MPs to voice their concerns.

Polling on this decision shows that 60% of Canadians want this decision reversed. For so many Canadians it is inconceivable that our government would choose to navigate the country's current and future direction without the most comprehensive source of information, which is universally relied on as a tool to respond to the needs and priorities of every Canadian, and doing so against the advice of experts across the country and abroad.

Despite the government's contention that it is too late to reverse the decision, we know it is not. A simple cover letter from the chief statistician, our Prime Minister, placed on the national household survey could make this tool mandatory. Until the surveys reach our mailboxes, there is an opportunity to restore the long form.

If the logistics of implementing a reversal require time, there is no magic in a spring census. As Ivan Fellegi has said, we could easily move the census into the fall. The important thing here is to get it right. Why pay more and get less?

Experts across the country and abroad have been clear. A voluntary survey will underrepresent significant communities, such as aboriginal Canadians, Canadians living with disabilities, and visible minorities. A voluntary survey will underrepresent the numbers and skew the needs of very marginalized communities in this country.

The under-counting will be more evident at the local neighbourhood level, rendering this data virtually unusable for local service planning, depriving our under-counted of the services to which they are entitled as Canadians. In essence, we'll look whiter, more middle-class, and in need of less government support.

In responding to this overwhelming and real concern, the Canadian Council on Social Development, along with 12 other organizations across the country, has launched a challenge in the Federal Court defending Canadians' equal right to be counted. Partners in this challenge include the African Canadian Legal Clinic, the National Aboriginal Housing Association, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians, and many others.

• (0955)

The moral, legal, and economic aspects of this decision just don't add up. We're selling our children's future, weakening the evidence that will direct where and how our tax dollars will be spent, and further weakening our social infrastructure at a time when our country needs it the most, while doing it by discriminating against some of Canada's most vulnerable groups.

We don't need to look far to see where this data is used. Each and every one of us in this room uses and benefits from this information each and every day.

One of the things this decision exemplifies is that when our public institutions demonstrate excellence, we need to respect them and allow them to fulfill their mandate independently and respect the expertise that they bring to the table.

Now I'm going to turn it over to Katherine Scott to provide a briefing on some of the areas in which CCSD uses the long form, just to demonstrate how fundamental it is.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

You have less than one minute to do that, please. Thank you.

Ms. Katherine Scott (Vice-President, Research, Canadian Council on Social Development): Did you say less than one minute? Certainly. I'll cut to the chase, then, and go to my conclusion. I hopefully will bring up some of the research that CCSD has used extensively, relying on the information generated by the census, in our social research and economic work over the years.

I would like to conclude and leave with you the thought that CCSD strongly recommends the committee use its powers to ensure that the mandatory long-form census is included in the 2011 census.

We certainly would like to add our support as well for the recommendations proposed by the National Statistics Council that were generated this past summer, as well as for current efforts under way to establish and maintain the autonomy of Statistics Canada and its chief statistician to pursue, with all due science and professionalism, the quality work that they have done.

I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that the census is the foundation of our data collection systems in Canada. The decision to abandon the long-form census will critically undermine the integrity of the census and certainly will have far-reaching consequences into the future. It will compromise the ability of governments, certainly federally but at all levels in Canada, to pursue evidence-based decision-making and inform policy program choices, especially at the community level.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go to the Canadian Public Health Association.

Dr. Cordell Neudorf (Chair, Board of Directors, Canadian Public Health Association): Good morning.

My name is Dr. Cordell Neudorf. I'm the current chair of the Canadian Public Health Association and a local medical health officer in Saskatoon. I'm here with our CEO, Debra Lynkowski.

CPHA represents the interests of public health professionals across the country, many of whom work at the local level in the 115 public health departments in Canada.

In addition to our presentation today, we've submitted a brief to the committee on the impact of cancelling the long-form census on health equities and public health.

The primary factors that shape the health of Canadians are not just medical treatments or lifestyle choices. About 80% of what determines our health are things like the socio-economic, physical, and political environments in which we live, work, and play. Research has also found that the quality of these health-shaping environments and conditions is very strongly determined by decisions governments take on a range of different public policy domains.

The information that's been gathered and made available through the long-form census has been essential to understanding the health of our communities and to designing and targeting programs and policies to improve the health and well-being of Canadians at that small-area level, particularly for those most vulnerable and most at risk.

The shift to a voluntary survey like the NHS is of particular concern to the public health community in Canada for a lot of reasons, but primarily it's because the long-form census is really the only reliable, valid, and historical source of this foundational demographic data, down to areas as small as sub-neighbourhoods for specific cities, or for provinces. Alternate local data sources just don't have that historical aspect and the sample size to get down to that level. They don't have the same kinds of response rates as the census has provided.

There's broad agreement amongst statisticians and social scientists that the voluntary survey won't provide data of the same quality and reliability compared to data that was gathered through the mandatory form over the past years.

A voluntary survey basically means that some people answer and others do not, and more people do not answer when it's voluntary. Those people tend to be poor and from marginalized and immigrant communities because of barriers such as language, literacy, disability, and, quite frankly, just the complexity of their lives. First nations, Métis, and Inuit are already underrepresented in current data, and a voluntary move would exacerbate this problem.

The scale and location of the non-response biases can't be completely assessed ahead of time. The estimates from other attempts to generate data in this way have found that in order to maintain statistically accurate analysis, data would have to be generated at a higher geographic level than the former census model. Basically that means it becomes unusable at the neighbourhood level because we can't drill down to that level with confidence and make the kinds of decisions we want to on targeting programs and policies to sub-populations.

We use this data at a local level in public health to generate things like our annual health status report, which drills down, using census data as a model, on subgroups that have certain demographic profiles to see what kinds of differential health outcomes and health disparities are being seen at that sub-neighbourhood level.

Accurate comparisons to past data are essential to measure whether changes we've made to certain health or social policies are having the intended effect of improving the conditions in which Canadians live and work.

The conventional census model provided a critical foundation for the generation of data from other surveys as well. It's basically used to establish sample frames and ensure accurate representativeness of the population. I would compare it to...the existing high-quality data is building your foundation for other surveys on solid bedrock, compared to voluntary surveys that you are now using as a benchmark; it becomes a less stable foundation, basically, on which to design other surveys.

I have a few examples of how we're using this at a local level.

Ongoing research and monitoring is done in a lot of cities to track the depth and breadth of health disparities between areas in the city with higher levels of deprivation compared to those with lower levels. We use an index to do this, which is comprised of data from the long-form census: income, education, employment, and various social factors. Many years have been spent in trying to set up this index in a way that's valid and reliable across the country.

● (1000)

We can then generate aggregate, small-area-level data that we can put our health data on to track how the differential health outcomes play out at a far less intrusive level than if we drilled down to an individual level.

In using this type of study we found health disparities. For example, infant mortality rates in low-income areas of the city were 448% higher than in high-income areas. We're instituting programs

to try to intervene at this level. But if we institute major program or policy changes and don't have an ongoing reliable set of data that's collected in the same way, it will be hard to measure the impact of these programs and services. There tends to be a fairly small impact over the short term.

Our recommendations include three options to maintain the continuity of decades worth of accurate and reliable data.

One is to make the NHS survey mandatory through a legislative mechanism like a private member's bill. Two is to postpone the census for a year to allow time to examine and resolve the issues pertaining to the mandatory long-form census. Three is to reinstate the former census model for the 2016 census, with public consultation about mechanisms to maximize compliance.

A portion of the funds allocated should be used to encourage Canadians to respond to this survey to increase awareness about how the data is used and the measures in place to protect personal information.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Neudorf.

Mr. Shapcott, you have a seven-minute presentation, please.

Mr. Michael Shapcott (Director, Affordable Housing and Social Innovation, Wellesley Institute): Thank you very much. My name is Michael Shapcott. I'm director of affordable housing and social innovation at the Wellesley Institute. We're an independent research and policy institute dedicated to advancing urban health.

We understand that good evidence is fundamental for good policy and good governance. Good evidence is required, first of all, to understand the scale, scope, and complexity of the critical challenges facing Canadians. Good evidence is necessary to set realistic targets and timelines, and to set effective policy solutions. And of course, good evidence is important to measure accountability in government initiatives.

The Wellesley Institute is here today in support of the mandatory long-form census. We understand it as being an important tool in our national statistical system to provide accurate data at the national level and for small-area needs. These data are collected at a reasonable cost to government and are available at a reasonable price to a variety of users. The privacy of Canadians is fully protected, and that privacy has never been breached.

We therefore urge this committee to use its powers to ensure that the mandatory long-form census is included as part of the 2011 census of Canada. We support the statement of the government-appointed National Statistics Council of August 12, 2010, which sets out a series of proposals regarding the mandatory long-form census. We also support the proposal to amend Canada's Statistics Act set out in a letter of September 9, 2010, to Prime Minister Harper from Ivan Fellegi, the Chief Statistician of Canada, emeritus.

Members of the committee, it's not too late for the Government of Canada to ensure that the long-form census remains a vital part of Canada's national census. The proposal to replace it with a voluntary survey is bad science. It will undermine public confidence in our national statistical system and in government policy-making; it won't yield accurate results, especially for small-area needs; and the sharpest impact of the proposal will be felt at the local level and among groups that are already vulnerable—recent immigrants, low-income people, aboriginal people, diverse racial and cultural groups, people facing physical and mental health challenges, and others facing equity challenges.

I want to mention to you that over the last decade we've published hundreds of internal and commissioned research reports that range from the "Street Health Report", which is a comprehensive review of the health status of people without housing, to "Cashing In", which is community-based research on payday lending. Much of our research relies on the long-form census and other statistical materials.

I will give you some examples.

First, we have a report called "Poverty is making us sick". This is a comprehensive and current national review of the complex links between poverty and poor health, which we released in December 2008. There were many striking findings in that report, but let me mention just a couple. The poorest one-fifth of Canadians, when compared with the richest 20%, have more than double the rate of diabetes, as well as a staggering 358% higher rate of disability. Our researchers used sophisticated multi-variant analysis and demonstrated that every \$1,000 increase in income leads to substantial increases in health and nearly 10,000 fewer chronic conditions. So the data from the long-form census and other sources provide critical evidence of the staggering burden of inequality facing Canadians, while pointing to the policy solutions. This evidence is all underpinned by reliable data from the long-form census.

Second, "Precarious Housing in Canada (2010)" is a report dear to my heart. Unfortunately, it is available only in English, so I can't formally file it with the committee. This is the most comprehensive and current national review of housing and homelessness. We relied on the long-form census to find, for instance, that 705,165 households in Canada are overcrowded; 1.3 million households are in substandard housing; three million households are paying 30% or more of their income on housing. This information is derived from asking people about their bathrooms and bedrooms. This is how we get this practical and important information. We use these data not simply to describe the problem, but also to set out practical solutions.

Third, I want to mention that we're using long-form census data to develop the Wellesley urban health model. This model is an exciting new initiative that allows community leaders and policy-makers to move beyond single-issue analysis and understand the interconnectedness of policy issues and policy options. It employs a systems-dynamic model that maps and mathematically sets out the complex interactions between a number of key social and economic variables.

I should also say that the Wellesley Institute is part of the nationwide community social research and data consortium you've already heard about.

• (1005)

I just want to end, though, by congratulating the committee on the report, which I eagerly downloaded yesterday. I have to admit I haven't read the entire document, but it's a good report. When I get these kinds of reports, I tend to read from the back to the front, so I started by reading the comments of the various parties in the report, and I was especially struck by some comments from the Conservative side, which broadly accepted the intent of the report but raised some issues and concerns. For one thing, they said, there wasn't proper credit given to government initiatives towards poverty reduction, such as the \$2.1 billion in the 2009 budget for affordable housing, and one of the—

• (1010)

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: On a point of order, Madam Chair, this probably should at least come close to dealing with the subject matter under review, which isn't the poverty report.

The Chair: Okay, sorry. Thank you. I'm sure the witness wants to talk about the long-form census, so I think we'll all try to stay on that. That's the topic we're studying.

Mr. Michael Shapcott: It is, and the point I was trying to make was that one of the issues raised was how we measure the effectiveness of government programs, including the \$2.1 billion the government committed for affordable housing in the 2009 budget. We're equally interested in measuring the results of that, and one of the ways we do that is through the long-form census, so in fact the long-form census allows us to do that. It also allows us to cost out a number of these kinds of measures because it gives us the scale of the problem.

So for us, the long-form census is a vital tool to address many of the concerns that in fact are raised in this report.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Madam Ferreira, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Melisa Ferreira (Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain): Thank you, Mrs. Chair.

Good morning everyone.

I am here to speak on behalf of FRAPRU, the Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain, a Quebec City organization, as well as the Regroupement des OSBL d'habitation et d'hébergement avec support communautaire de l'Outaouais.

Our main concern relates to the impact that the withdrawal of the mandatory questionnaire will have on our knowledge of housing issues—our colleague just referred to that—and especially on our ability to raise those issues with government.

The data collected through the long-form questionnaire is absolutely essential for us. I refer here to the rates of ownership, the quality of our housing stock, the rent paid by households, the number of renters having to pay too much of their income for rent, and the issue of overcrowding.

After each census, our organization issues a Black Book on housing in which we take stock of the housing situation, especially in Quebec, and compare it to the previous census. For example, we found that, year after year, people spend an always increasing share of their income for housing, up to 30% to 50%, and even 80% in some cases.

Our concern is that, with the new questionnaire, we will not be able to put as much pressure on government and that the data collected will not give us an accurate portrayal of our population and families. If we do not get accurate data, we fear that we will not be able to make good representations to government. FRAPRU as well as our collective and the 130 members it represents have been using this type of data for 20 years.

On the basis of the census data, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is able to target the dire housing needs—that is to say the percentage of their income that families pay for rent—and then to allocate funds between the provinces. In other words, the direst the housing need, the more money the province gets for housing.

So, we are concerned and we ask your committee to use its powers to ensure that the long-form questionnaire is included in the next census.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I think we have just enough time for one seven-minute round of questions. I would just suggest that if the parties would like to share their time, this would be the best opportunity to do that, and we'll begin with the Liberals and Mr. Savage for seven minutes.

Mr. Michael Savage: Thank you. I'm going to split my time with Ken Dryden, so please give me some notice. We're going to move fairly quickly.

I want to thank you all for coming, those of you who have given witness today. Those of you who are new did fabulously. Those of you who are veterans also did very well.

This decision on the census stunned Canadians. I suspect it stunned even some of my Conservative colleagues on this committee who found themselves defending an indefensible position when this came out. But you know, this has brought together business and labour, health and education. It has brought together politicians of all stripes, premiers, and many others. It has brought together the United Church of Canada, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, the Anglican Church of Canada, and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. It brought everybody together, unfortunately, in opposition to this decision. It would be nice if Canadians could come together in that way on other issues.

But here is my question to you. It doesn't seem that this was an accident. Initially it seemed like just a poor decision, but it seems it was made deliberately. It's always tricky to ask witnesses to assume the motives of a government, but I want to ask anybody, perhaps starting with CCSD, if they could give us any reason why the government would want to make this decision.

•(1015)

Ms. Peggy Taillon: Since June 26 there's been a lot of talk and a lot of debate about where, why, and what's at heart. One of the things that seems to be happening in the broader context is that there almost seems to be, if you're paranoid or a big thinker, perhaps, a bit of a war on information in this country. In the most fundamental sources of information—centres of excellence, research grants—and in the purveyors of information—NGOs, etc.—there have been lots of cuts in areas where information is being brought out to the public.

I perhaps think that we need to look at the fact that this may be connected to that. It's a very troubling trend for Canada to know less about our social condition than we do about pop culture. As I've said before, I think Lady Gaga is fascinating, but I'd much rather understand the real issues that happen on the ground with respect to the needs of the most vulnerable Canadians in the country.

Mr. Michael Savage: Thank you.

Anybody else? Mr. Shapcott or Dr. Neudorf?

Mr. Michael Shapcott: Can I just say very quickly that I of course cannot see into the hearts of others and assess that. I will say that this goes in the face of what's happening internationally, if you look, for instance, at the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, of which Canada is a member—the richest 33 countries in the world. They've had a major initiative for years to push for more data, to get better evidence, to define better the problems, but also to ensure that the government initiatives are actually meeting those problems, that we have good governance.

The entire world is moving in the direction of more evidence-based policy-making. Canada seems to be moving in the other direction. It's a mystery to us why.

Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.): I'm sorry to ask quickly here, but we don't have very much time.

In listening to everybody today and also to the debate outside, it seems as if we really are talking by each other, and there's very little listening going on in either case. On one side, it is primarily about information, and on the other side, it's primarily about intrusiveness and the right of a citizen to say yes or no. That doesn't mean that on either side there isn't a feeling about the other, but the feeling that the way things are and the way life is lived...that this is the position to come down.

I believe very fundamentally in the importance of information, and while you don't offer the final voice—nobody around here offers the final voice—collectively, we offer a mixture of voices, which really matters. If the mixture is weakened, then the discussion and the debate are weakened. The voices depend on the money to help fund those voices in one way or another, corporate or charitable, and also the access to information. If either of them is cut short, then we have a big problem.

We all know the experience that if you don't measure it, it doesn't exist; if it doesn't exist, then there isn't a problem; if there isn't a problem, then why have programs? That follows, unfortunately, except the fact is that life intervenes and demonstrates the need for programs. That's what I think is really lost here. And this really wasn't an issue until it was made an issue. The vast majority of Canadians think, and have thought, it's no big deal. For those who think it is a big deal, they don't fill it out or fill out parts of it, and they don't get fined and they don't go to jail.

The reality is, the way in which life is lived, the way in which this has worked, it has been no big deal. There has been the combination of information and the absence of intrusion.

Does anybody have some comments on where you think we are in this?

The Chair: Sixty seconds, please.

Dr. Cordell Neudorf: I've certainly been speaking about this to a lot of friends and colleagues locally. What I've come to understand is that the vast majority of people have no idea how this information is used on a daily basis. While they initially may feel they understand the privacy and intrusiveness issues, once they hear how the data is actually used and that the protections are in place, I've found them overwhelmingly supportive of the need for collecting the information in the way that it's collected.

I think the bigger issue that's behind this is just a misunderstanding or a lack of information for Canadians on how this data is safeguarded and how it's used for the public good.

• (1020)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

You have the floor, Mr. Lessard.

Mr. Yves Lessard: Thank you, Mrs. Chair.

First, I want to thank you for being here this morning. Your testimonies are extremely important. Even if we do not always understand why the government wanted to change this, I believe that your statements throw even more light on the usefulness of this major component of the census for scientists as well as for social organizations.

My first question is for Mr. Neudorf. You started by saying that, in order to do any prevention work, since healthcare is not only a matter of healing but also of prevention, steps have to be taken for people to be able to live in healthy environments. I would like to hear more about that.

You specifically referred to the fact that First Nations and Métis are underrepresented with this questionnaire. Could you tell us more about this?

Mrs. Taillon, you stated that not having this kind of data would jeopardize the health of our children. There may be a link between those two issues.

I would like both of you to give us more information about this, but very briefly since Mrs. Beaudin also has a few questions for you.

[*English*]

Dr. Cordell Neudorf: Very briefly, what I was referring to is at the rural and on-reserve level, as opposed to at the city level, where we do have a more representative sample of first nations, Inuit, and Métis with the census data.

So the underrepresentativeness is the group as a whole, once you get into the rural and reserve areas.

Ms. Peggy Taillon: If you think about the short form, it's a snapshot at a very high level, almost like a satellite level. The long form takes a look at what's happening on the ground in our local communities, in our local neighbourhoods. It can isolate troubled communities by postal code. It can help identify the most pressing issues for marginalized communities.

So, again, it helps us understand how to develop programs like Success by 6; where to put resources in the event of a pandemic; and where you mobilize and bring communities to respond to their greatest needs in the most specifically targeted way so that you're not just tackling poverty: you understand there's a group of Somali Canadians who live in this particular community with children under the age of five who need a specific type of service and you can provide it to them. We can better respond to those needs in that way—very targeted.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Thank you.

Mrs. Josée Beaudin: Good morning and thank you for being here. My question is especially for Mrs. Scott and Mrs. Taillon. However, the other witnesses may also want to answer.

To be as practical as possible, I would like to come back to the 2 or 3 questions that are often asked by the government since they are often the ones that people do not think may be useful. I refer to the number of bedrooms, the distance traveled to go to work, and the time at which she wakes up. Those are the examples the government often uses to claim that such questions are not very useful.

I would also like you to tell us how you would use the answers to such questions in the census.

[*English*]

Ms. Katherine Scott: Absolutely.

The question about the quality and type of housing that Canadians have has been some of the most used information from the census. Certainly CMHC, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, has done extensive research over the last 40 years, describing the Canadian housing stock, the quality of housing stock.

They've developed a measure of Canadians in need of core housing, which assesses the quality of their housing, whether they're overcrowded. Certainly the number of bedrooms in a home as compared to the population is how we determine whether there is significant overcrowding.

The census provides such detailed community-level data that we can then identify, for instance, aboriginal communities or smaller communities where there are significant housing problems. That's a very concrete example of how that question is used.

I happen to know, certainly in municipalities across the country, that the data on commute times is critical. Are people commuting to their places of work? How long does that take? What kind of urban infrastructure is in place to accommodate commuters? What is the time and the health impact on Canadians who drive an hour and a half to two hours per day, each way, to their places of work?

This information is critical in Canada, certainly in the largest three urban areas. I know for a fact that information is critically important to the cities of Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, and certainly Calgary as well.

That particular information, for instance, was used by the City of Calgary when they attempted to look at the prevalence of transit poverty in that city during the boom before the last recession. They were finding that in the absence of good public transit, people were spending extraordinarily large sums of money on transportation because they couldn't afford to live adjacent to their places of work. They were talking about an emerging problem in Calgary called transit poverty.

This type of information is absolutely derived from the information on the long-form census. We can understand this at the community level. These are all very important things.

• (1025)

Dr. Cordell Neudorf: In addition to that, in terms of not just planning for future transit and those types of issues—family time and quality of life—some of the issues around housing and the number of rooms versus number of people are used a lot, from an overcrowding perspective, for disease prevention planning, things like tuberculosis, influenza. Many of the respiratory conditions are far more easily spread in overcrowded situations.

It allows us to fine-tune a different type of approach for disease prevention planning based on where overcrowding is in our communities as well.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Martin.

Mr. Tony Martin: Thank you very much.

Thanks for coming this morning.

Katherine, I'm interested in what you're seeing. You're the professional here, the researcher. We've had cities—33 of them on the list from Census Watch—and provinces indicating their concern with this decision. We have social planning councils, townships...a lot of them have indicated concern.

Ultimately the federal government transfers money; the provinces and municipalities have to deliver the programs. They're getting less money. Particularly now, as they look at the deficit we've run up because of the recession, there will be less money. They have to be very careful where they spend that money, so they need good data.

In your work, I know there have been cutbacks to some of the organizations that collect that data. Where is it at? What are the stress levels? Are you going to be able to deliver?

Ms. Katherine Scott: As a national non-profit, are we able to continue to do work by using these data to tell the story? I think there's a tremendous stress, certainly at the national level. There are fewer national non-profits. There are fewer social community-based research organizations that are doing research of this type.

I can't speak directly to the status at the provincial and municipal levels, but certainly there is a prevalent concern about the capacity of the community to continue to monitor and assess social and economic trends and to engage actively in policy and program debate.

The issue of information is a common concern across all sectors, and we hear this from colleagues across the country. We hear it from communities across the country, that we are losing our ability to tell the story of Canada in all of its complexity and diversity, and we remain committed to...

Yes, it's a huge problem, absolutely.

• (1030)

Mr. Tony Martin: I guess, Michael, the reference you made to the amount of money dedicated to housing in the last budget was that it was not enough. It never is, actually. We're calling for a national housing strategy in the report you referenced.

How important will it be to organizations like yours and the municipalities you serve—and we can extrapolate here—to have the mandatory long form, as opposed to anything else, in determining where best to put this new housing?

Mr. Michael Shapcott: The mandatory long form gives us the vital information so that we know where housing needs are across the country. It's the basis for establishing core housing need.

I do want to say that while there's a general view that the \$2.1 billion in the 2009 stimulus budget for affordable housing was not enough, it was actually very welcome at the same time, as was the \$1.4 billion the federal government put into housing in 2006. Both of those were welcome. But one of the things we want to know is, what impact has that spending had? I'm sure everyone, and I think the government members too, based on their observations in this report, would like to have that information. It's accountability for results.

The way we measure results is by having these data sources over time. So if the core housing need goes down, because the government has actually been making investments in housing, and we think it actually should and would, then we actually have proof there's accountability for results.

So it's not just about assessing need and identifying where the issues are, but also about measuring government initiatives and their impact on communities. So for both of those reasons, it's very, very important to carry forward.

Core housing need, defined by Stats Canada, is a basket of measures of the standard of housing, overcrowding, and affordability, all combined together. Because it's based on the long-form census, we're able to get into local areas as well as getting a national picture of it. Therefore, you can actually target housing to the particular needs of local communities. In some communities, affordability is a bigger issue. In other communities, it may be repair or the standard of housing, or it may be issues of overcrowding. All those issues can actually be addressed very effectively, and then you can measure, after the fact, the accountability for the results. These are very important public policy tools that the long-form census allows us to use.

The Chair: You have two more minutes.

Mr. Tony Martin: You make a compelling case—for me anyway. All of you do, and certainly the panel before did. Some 15 pages of people, organizations, and groups have indicated their concern with this decision, and Mike listed some of the major or big organizations across the country that have written in to say this is not the way to go.

The question in my mind is, why are we doing this? There was a suggestion by an earlier group, the National Council of Women of Canada, in conversation with me afterwards, that maybe what we're doing here is trying to clear the deck so that corporate interests can come in and mine that information, and then sell it back to municipalities and organizations.

Do you have any thoughts on that, if that's where we're going? First of all, have you heard or sensed that was where we were heading? And if that happened, what impact would it have?

Ms. Peggy Taiton: Certainly there's been a lot of discussion about that. One of the things people need to remember is that StatsCan is actually a revenue generator for the government. We purchase almost \$1 million worth of data through a pan-Canadian consortium every five-year census cycle. There are all kinds of other organizations that are purchasing this data, and there have been some people in the private sector who have told me that they really question the decision, but they don't want to launch in because they see there's an opportunity for them to make some money if the long form is no longer there.

So that is a possibility, and I think one of the challenges is that there is nothing like the long-form census data out there. The long form is the source. It is the soundest source, the most comprehensive source, and there's nothing that's going to replace it, and certainly not in the short term. I think it was Don Drummond who told me that maybe 25 years from now we could have something comparable, based on what the government is proposing today.

• (1035)

The Chair: Thank you.

Be very, very brief.

Ms. Katherine Scott: Very briefly, I'd also just like to add, though, that if we move into a climate where people no longer have access to the long form, in small communities in particular, these communities will go without. We may well, our large municipalities, try to attempt to generate their own comparable data collection, but for small communities across the country, or even medium-sized communities, they simply will not have the resources or access to

generate this picture. It's not a stretch of the imagination to say that they will be flying completely blind on critical social economic policies because they will not have the resources to produce this information.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Komarnicki, please.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll split my time with Mr. Vellacott. I'll get to some commentary, and then I'll have a question or two.

The B.C. Civil Liberties Association had this to say:

As a civil liberties organization, we're obviously concerned about the severity of the penalties that can be brought against citizens who do not fill out the census. We might question the policy justification for some of the more unusual questions that have been included in the past.

That's part of it.

Then a Lawrie McFarlane, former deputy minister of health in British Columbia, had this to say: "Institutions that use coercion in order to deal with people, characteristically have relationship difficulties with the people they deal with."

I think Mr. Dryden summed it up when he said, "People don't get fined, and they don't go to jail. That's the point."

The only reason you would fine or send people to jail is because you want to threaten them to do something that they otherwise might not be prepared to do. What has happened in this case is not a question of information; it's taking the information from one place and moving it to another place where it's voluntary. And I know you might not be experts and professionals in this, but a Darrell Bricker had this to say: "As far as I can see, the idea of going to a voluntary census, or actually a voluntary sample, carries with it certain risks. The question is whether they are unmanageable risks. Based on my professional experience", he said, "doing this research all over the world, I can tell you there are people who manage these risks all the time quite successfully."

Given that background, one of the questions that is perhaps interesting, and we've talked about some of that, is asking people what time they leave for work in the morning, for example, and how long it might take them. Specifically, if it were directed to a single mother with three children, the question would be, do you feel that persons like that should be exposed to a fine of any kind, or imprisonment, if they choose not to say when they leave for work in the morning? Perhaps Debra Lynkowski and Cordell could answer that question. Do you think they should be fined or they should be sent to prison for choosing not to answer that question, for whatever reason they have?

Dr. Cordell Neudorf: I think the basic issue that lies behind that is the difference between a voluntary and a mandatory census.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Right. If you don't have a fine or a penalty, as Mr. Dryden suggested, it's because people do have a civic responsibility and a duty, and there are professionals who say you can actually get the information you want on a voluntary basis without threatening or compelling people, and that seems reasonable.

Dr. Cordell Neudorf: I can tell you, based on the fact that I do voluntary surveys in Saskatoon and in our region on a regular basis, that it is not the same. Depending on the audience I speak to, even using the authority of the health region and my office as medical officer, with repeated follow-ups with individuals I cannot approach the level of compliance that the mandatory census gives me with data, even when I'm collecting locally and people know me and how I'm using the data.

The reality is, people like that, who you mentioned, are inundated with voluntary surveys on a regular basis, and that's becoming more the norm. The fact that it's voluntary means it's no different and it gets put into the garbage.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: I'll just stop you because my time is limited. My question is, do you think that question should result in a fine or an imprisonment to the single mother of three who's working? That's the question. Do you think there should be fines?

Dr. Cordell Neudorf: The issue, to me, is that there should be repercussions for not answering a mandatory census?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Should they be fined or imprisoned in that case?

Dr. Cordell Neudorf: I don't know what the nature of those would be. Some kind of fine, probably.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Then do you feel there should be a threat of some kind of a consequence to compel people to do what they might otherwise be prepared to do voluntarily?

• (1040)

Dr. Cordell Neudorf: It's been shown throughout our history that when that is applied to the census, it gives us the compliance without having to exercise the threat, and that's the point.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Here's what the same Lawrie McFarlane had to say on the matter of compelling data: "I've heard it said that important interests are at stake here justifying gathering this data by compulsion." He said, "I disagree." I guess he would disagree with you. He said, "I worked in the health care field for some years. I was a deputy minister of health in British Columbia, and I set up the first regional health authority in Saskatchewan. We don't compel people to participate in clinical trials. We don't access or link their patient files without consent, and we certainly don't threaten them with jail time if they don't release their medical records."

He seems to say that there is another way of doing that, and that is not through threatening them through fines or penalties.

Dr. Cordell Neudorf: And for this fundamental information, I guess I would have to disagree.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: I guess my point now is somewhat along the same lines. I have to get my head around the fact that some here actually believe that we're not going to get information of the kind that I think we all need for good planning. I certainly want that. I think my colleagues all around the table want good information for planning, and will and can still get that. So I think maybe there's misunderstanding or possibly some other things going on here.

I do know that with the mandatory long-form census, one in five households got the long form—not everybody, as we know, so about 20%. With the survey, as we call it—we just changed the name, same number of letters actually—33% will get the long-form survey, as an

attempt, as I understand it, to offset. So some 13% more will get that. We understand from statisticians and so on that this will in fact provide the appropriate offset to get the same levels and competence of information.

The other thing that I've heard, and it's troubled me a little bit because I've heard it said in the last set of witnesses and again now.... I don't know if you'll even have time to respond, because my time's going to run out pretty quick here, but Corey, whom I count as a friend—we worked on the health board in Saskatoon together, and instead of the more formal "Dr. Cordell", I refer to him as Corey—I appreciate the good work you've done, especially the surveys on the west side of the city, digging down and getting to some of the stuff there. It's so much appreciated, the good work you do.

It has been said, and, Corey, you may have acknowledged this as well...it's our more vulnerable aboriginal and those populations where there's less participation in a voluntary.... I think Rob was the gentleman's name in the last group that made that point as well. So let me get my head around this one. If there's less participation by vulnerable groups in a voluntary census, do we then want to suggest bringing a threat against them in terms of a mandatory possible fine and so on? I can't quite get my head around that one. These are vulnerable groups already, and now we're going to threaten them with fines and so on.

Getting back to the question of whether we even have the time to answer it...an aboriginal person on the west side of Saskatoon with a poverty-level income I do not believe should be threatened with a fine for not providing that. I think there are ways to do it—advertise it, publicize it widely, stress the need for it—but I don't think fines against a poverty-level aboriginal on the west side of Saskatoon is the way to go.

The Chair: Mr. Vellacott, your question time is over, but I'm wondering who you would direct that question to, and then I will give that person—

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: I think Corey would be good to respond.

Dr. Cordell Neudorf: Very, very briefly, I can tell you by doing those voluntary surveys on the west side, with repeated follow-up, explanations, parent meeting groups, that I get a 50% response rate compared to 80% to 90% in other neighbourhoods, without having to do that, simply because it's voluntary.

The mere fact that the census is mandatory means people respond at a much higher rate right now, and have in the past, in those areas. It's not the fact that you're fining them or putting them in jail. The mandatory nature raises it to a different level. People understand it is their duty to fill this out, in a way that they wouldn't by having it voluntary and saying it is one's duty.

That has been our experience.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to again thank all the witnesses for being here, and, as Mr. Savage said, the ones who are experienced did a great job and those who were new did a very good job too. So thank you very much, all of you, for being here.

We do have a very small amount of committee business to take care of. We have the budget that we need to approve. You've been given a notice of motion, so I wonder if someone would please move that motion to adopt the budget.

It is moved by Mr. Martin.

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

● (1045)

The Chair: Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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