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

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EVIDENCE

**Tuesday, November 23, 2010**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Candice Hoepfner**



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

Tuesday, November 23, 2010

• (0850)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Candice Hooppner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC)):**  
I call the meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone. This is meeting number 34 of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are now studying the impact of cancelling the long-form census.

I want to remind the committee members that we have two hours of witnesses; however, we have some committee business that we have to deal with, so we will be finishing with the witnesses 15 minutes before the end of the meeting.

For the first hour, we are very pleased to have witnesses representing the City of Toronto as well as the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association. I want to thank the witnesses for being here and for making yourselves available to us. Each one of the groups will have seven minutes to make a presentation, so we will have seven minutes from the City of Toronto and seven minutes from the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association.

I would ask you, especially because you are off-site, to keep an eye on the monitor, and I will let you know when you are close to your seven minutes. Because we are very tight on time, we try to keep all of the time limits pretty strictly adhered to.

We will begin with the City of Toronto. I believe we have Ms. Janet Davis, who is a councillor.

Please go ahead, Ms. Davis.

**Ms. Janet Davis (Councillor, City of Toronto):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I want to start by saying that the City of Toronto relies significantly on the long-form census data as part of the core data that guide the city in long-term planning for growth, service, and program planning, and for targeted funding allocations for a variety of human services and supports. It's a vital resource that helps us to better understand the socio-economic and geographic characteristics of Toronto.

The absence of this data will hinder the city's ability to accurately develop plans and policies for a wide range of service delivery requirements, from immigration settlement programs to public transit design.

Historically the long-form census has been used by the city at least as far back as the 1940s, and we think we relied on data from the long-form census even earlier. We use it in all of our program areas: public health, libraries, children's services, city planning, economic development, emergency services, transit planning, and so on.

As well, it helps us to better understand the diverse populations that we serve. Toronto, as you know, is a city of neighbourhoods, and we rely on the detailed information that comes from the smaller geographic areas for all of our targeted place-based approaches. It's the historic integrity of the long-form census data that is paramount to ensuring that we understand the needs of our city and are targeting our resources in a way that serves the needs of the very people we need to understand. We rely heavily on the data in the long-form census.

We believe that the long-form census should be restored, and city council approved a motion to that effect in July. We're calling on the federal government to reconsider its decision, because we believe that the national household survey will provide a far less reliable set of data and will absolutely affect our ability to understand the at-risk populations that we're serving.

In general we'd say that the data that will be collected from the national household survey will be less reliable. In some cases, in the small geographic samples, it will absolutely not even be available and certainly will not allow us to compare with previous census data and allow us to look at trends over time. We know there will be a significant non-response bias in the replacement survey and we know that those who don't answer a voluntary survey are likely to be the very people we are looking to serve, those from the socially and economically disadvantaged groups. We know that the proposed national household survey will pose a significant challenge for us in terms of information we use on a daily basis.

I'll give you a couple of examples. Boards of health are charged under the Health Protection and Promotion Act with protecting the interests of public health. We're required to meet the Ontario public health standards and to complete the public health assessment and surveillance protocol, which requires the city to collect data on not just age and gender, but also on education, employment, income, housing, immigration, culture, and disability. All of these data we derive from the long-form census. The data will simply not be available in the way we've had it to date.

Under section 7 of the act we also are required to undertake surveillance activities. We know that we need this information in order to better understand risk factors, behaviours, and health outcomes.

We also are required to complete the Canadian community health survey, and we rely on the census data to better inform us on how that survey is conducted.

We think it's not just a deficiency in the sense that we'll lose the information from the census; it will also make all of the other surveys that rely on the census data unreliable as well.

• (0855)

We've given a couple of examples. You have our written submission about how we've used the census data. In our TB prevention programs and our H1N1 pandemic planning, we relied heavily on the census information.

As to other areas, we rely on census data to plan our growth management strategies. We have to establish employment targets—a requirement under our official plan and under the province's growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. We will not be able to track trends: where people live or how they get there. That will affect our planning for transit and transportation. We are also required, under the growth plan for the Greater Toronto-Horseshoe, to provide and develop a housing strategy. We have to have affordable housing targets and plan for population growth.

All of those are required of us as a city, and we will simply be unable to do that kind of planning without the data from the long-form census.

Regarding immigration and settlement, we're working with the federal government for the first time under an MOU to plan for services for immigration and settlement. We simply will not be able to understand, particularly at the small geographic level, where people are residing, where they've come from, and what their needs are.

Child care subsidies are determined based on a variety of economic factors, and so is planning for recreation. Our labour market strategies clearly will be affected, if we don't have accurate and reliable information on labour market trends. As I said, we have also had a very successful place-based approach to funding in priority neighbourhoods, where needs have been identified based on the information from the census, so that we are focusing and targeting our resources in those communities that need it.

I would add one last point. At least 25 pieces of federal legislation rely on accurate data for determining funding allocations. Our transfer payments rely on accurate population data, and we simply won't have it.

In summary, I'd just say there's a bias—

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'm sorry, that is all the time you have, but thank you. I'm sure you'll have a chance to expand during the question time.

**Ms. Janet Davis:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** We'll now go to the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association. Please introduce yourself. You have seven minutes for a presentation.

Thank you.

**Mr. Brendan Wycks (Executive Director, Marketing Research and Intelligence Association):** Good morning, Madam Chair and members of the committee. I want to thank you for inviting the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association to appear before you today on this very important issue.

My name is Brendan Wycks, and I am the executive director of the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association, or MRIA for short. I'm here this morning with an industry leader from my association, Anne Crassweller. Anne is president of NADbank Inc. NADbank is a national organization that measures newspaper audiences and readership.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with MRIA, we are the single authoritative voice of the marketing and survey research industry in Canada. Our membership includes over 2,000 individual research practitioners and more than 400 corporate members, which are comprised of research agencies of all sizes and scope, as well as many corporate buyers of research services. Our association develops and enforces standards for the Canadian opinion research industry, and our industry accounts for over \$750 million in economic activity annually and employs over 5,000 Canadians.

Our association and its members consider the issue of the mandatory long-form census questionnaire to be of prime importance to our industry and to the country. We have written to Industry Minister Clement on the issue. We have previously submitted a brief to the industry committee. We have urged the minister and cabinet to reconsider their decision to cancel the mandatory long-form census questionnaire.

Our concern is that the cancellation of the mandatory long-form census questionnaire will affect the availability, quality, and reliability of essential data that Canadian businesses and other organizations, including governments, have come to depend upon. Specifically, we're concerned that the cancellation will have a negative impact on the ability of governments, institutions, non-governmental organizations, and others to plan and make decisions based upon vital social trends relating to economic security, labour markets, and social program development for those Canadians who are living in or are on the cusp of living in poverty.

The data generated by the mandatory long-form census provides survey researchers with a deep and rich set of facts about Canadians, facts that are reliable at the local, regional, and national levels. They rely on that essential data when they conduct research on behalf of decision-makers from all sectors, from governments to not-for-profit organizations, to corporations of all sizes.

As the staff head of an association that governs and represents experts in survey methodology, I can assure you that the robustness and reliability of the data generated by the mandatory long-form questionnaire is due to the huge sample involved—one in five households all across the country—and because response is mandatory.

Although a new voluntary national household survey will come into play and may provide information for some purposes, it will not provide reliable information for many other purposes. In particular, only a mandatory census can reliably track changes over time, and produce consistent and reliable data for small population groups and small geographic areas.

As many other organizations have pointed out, the response rate in a voluntary survey will likely be substantially lower than average from hard-to-reach segments of the population, including lower-income groups, marginalized communities such as aboriginal peoples, immigrants, and high-income households as well. The new national household survey is therefore likely to lead to skewed data and doubts about its representativeness.

We must emphasize that larger sample sizes with voluntary completion will not correct for such biases.

Survey research organizations use census data to plan and validate many sample-based surveys that they carry out. Long-form census data plays a particularly important role in the development of surveys of populations such as immigrants and aboriginal peoples. These groups have historically faced income challenges and have been particularly hard-hit during this current recession. These groups will also be key in helping meet future labour demands.

Our member research agencies make use of the long-form census data for studies in human resource planning in a rapidly changing work world, where up-to-date, accurate, and detailed information on both the supply and demand for workers is required for an efficient labour market. Applications include the development of recruitment and retention strategies, as well as planning programs to ensure the workforce reflects the community being served.

While labour market information needs to go beyond what can be delivered by a census, the long-form census questionnaire being mandatory is an essential building block for other sources of information.

● (0900)

From the survey research industry's perspective, the data generated by the long-form census questionnaire constitute crucial input for the sample designs of other national surveys because they allow researchers to compute and extrapolate rates for key social and economic indicators. In other words, survey researchers rely on the data from the mandatory long-form questionnaire to adjust their survey results to be nationally representative.

MRIA cannot stress strongly enough that without the data from the long-form census questionnaire all survey results, including those from the national household survey, will likely be biased on important dimensions such as income, education, housing status, and others.

Corporate and government decision-makers rely on accurate and reliable research data to help them make the right decisions, and measuring trends and conditions being experienced by those Canadians living in and on the cusp of poverty will be more important than ever in our post-recession economy.

In the future, the lack of reliable information may result in poor decisions, lower efficiencies, and increased costs around the

development and management of social and other programs. Productivity and competitiveness may, in turn, be affected.

We therefore urge this committee to recommend that cabinet reconsider and reverse its decision to eliminate the mandatory long-form census questionnaire.

Again, we'd like to thank you for inviting MRIA to appear before you today on this very important issue for the country, for our industry, and for all Canadians.

We look forward to any questions the committee may have of us.  
● (0905)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much for that.

We will begin our first round of questions. We'll start with a five-minute round, and that will include questions and answers.

We will begin with the Liberals. Madam Minna, please.

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

Welcome to all of you from Toronto, and Janet as well. It's a strange place to meet you this morning.

**Ms. Janet Davis:** Thank you. Yes, my MP.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Yes.

I wanted to start with Janet first, and then I'm going to go to some others.

You have, Janet—maybe I should say councillor, because that would be appropriate—quite a list, actually, of ways that this would hamper the city, in terms of developing its programs, and also, more importantly, not just generally your programs but the acts that you are obliged, as a city, to follow and to respect, and to have proper information.

You listed quite a few of those—and those are clear—with respect to health standards. I'm not going to repeat all of them, but I wanted to ask you two things.

One, you said that there were at least 25 pieces of federal legislation the city is obliged to respect, I suppose, and work with. Could you give us a couple of those and whether or not you think the Government of Canada would have to relax those pieces, given that the city would no longer have that information?

Two, from your perspective, given that Toronto went through a major issue with SARS, we had a major crisis, as you know—this goes to the health part of your presentation—could you briefly tell us how this would impact that kind of preparation, that kind of situation, from the public health perspective?

So there are those two pieces, if you could. I only have seven minutes, I apologize. If you could through those quickly, I can go to the other questions.

**The Chair:** I just want to remind the witnesses that actually your microphones are on, so when you're having discussions we can actually hear them. So when the questioner is asking, you could either refrain or turn the mike off, and that would be great.

All right, go ahead and answer, please.

**Ms. Janet Davis:** The Federation of Canadian Municipalities' submissions—I'm sure you'll be hearing from them—are much more detailed in terms of the pieces of legislation that require accurate data.

The city, in particular, is governed by the planning act, and it requires that we establish a housing strategy, housing targets, and that we have a transportation plan, all of which rely on the data that we will no longer be able to rely on.

The Health Protection and Promotion Act also requires that we provide certain information, that we undertake surveillance of our populations around specific health issues. In particular, under section 7 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, we have to be able to provide this kind of data. I know that Ontario Public Health Standards and Protocols require us to ensure that we are meeting the health standards. In order to do that, we must be able to assess the populations that we're reaching.

We must complete the public health assessment and surveillance protocol. That requires us to actually gather data on education, employment income, housing, and so on, and what I listed earlier. We simply will not be able to provide that information.

For our H1N1 pandemic planning, it's critical that we understand the populations and the characteristics of the populations by neighbourhood. The small geographic data will be far less reliable, and even Statistics Canada has said so. I'm not sure if you've heard what Statistics Canada itself has said, but even though they anticipate undertaking some different kind of sampling to try to mitigate against the non-response rate, the national household survey is anticipated to achieve a response rate of 50%, and there is a substantial risk of non-response bias. They talk about how they might mitigate; however, it is certain that there will be residual significant bias that will be impossible to measure and correct.

Even Statistics Canada itself recognizes that the bias in the national household survey will be difficult, if not impossible, to overcome through different sub-sampling.

• (0910)

**Hon. Maria Minna:** I have 30 seconds, so I guess all I can do is wrap up and hope that I can come back to you in a later round.

From what you and Mr. Wycks have said, essentially it would actually cripple the ability of not only the City of Toronto and municipalities across the country and provinces and not-for-profits but also private corporations or anyone to actually do their work.

**Ms. Janet Davis:** There will be no municipality in Ontario that will be able to meet its obligations under the planning act, under the places-to-grow policies, and under the Health Protection and Promotion Act. We will be unable to meet our required statutory obligations.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Thank you, Councillor Davis.

**The Chair:** We will now go to Mr. Lessard, please.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, I would like to thank this morning's witnesses. Their testimony is critically important to the decision that will be made regarding the long-form census.

I would like to hear your views on the reasons given by the government for scrapping the long-form census. Confidentiality is a consideration the importance of which should not be minimized. Information concerning the intimate details of households should not need to be disclosed. Two reasons were cited by the government. Having to disclose the number of bedrooms one has is a problem that was mentioned by Mr. Clement. Last week, the Secretary of State stated that it was indiscreet to inquire about the time a person leaves the house to go to work and the amount of time it takes people to get to work.

Do you consider these valid reasons? Given the impact the elimination of the long-form census will have on your work, are these good enough reasons to do away with the long-form census?

[English]

**Ms. Janet Davis:** Do you want to go ahead?

**Mr. Brendan Wycks:** I'll take a crack at that.

The government's stated objective in deciding to eliminate the mandatory long-form census questionnaire is to limit intrusion of the personal privacy of Canadians. In our view, it's very likely this decision will do the opposite, in two ways.

Because business organizations won't have census data and business insights available to them that are as reliable and specific as can be obtained—and we do have a mandatory census questionnaire—consumers will therefore receive offers or be exposed to advertising messages that are not relevant to them. They will be far less customized and targeted than can be obtained with the information from a mandatory census questionnaire. Businesses will have to collect more information from consumers to make up for the expected loss of data from the long-form census for small areas.

In addition, the ability to deliver goods and services locally will be affected and consumers will be inconvenienced. Think of a young mother trying to find infant formula in a grocery store in a seniors' neighbourhood to get a picture of how important good, integrated local data are to consumer convenience.

Since the long-form census has been going to one-fifth of the population every five years, any household has a statistical probability of getting the long-form mandatory census questionnaire only two or three times in their lifetime. Stats Canada's rules ensure absolute confidentiality. No data from those households or individuals are released or can be inferred. The use of summarized level data by our industry ensures privacy-friendly marketing analytics and in fact helps limit intrusion into the personal privacy of Canadians.

To sum up, it's our industry's view that from a big-picture perspective, because the mandatory long-form census questionnaire generates more reliable data, it is more effective at limiting intrusion into Canadians' lives by reducing poorly targeted marketing communications that would otherwise be sent to them than moving to a voluntary national household survey would be.

●(0915)

**Ms. Janet Davis:** If I could just add to that, the Canadian public doesn't think it's too intrusive. There have been several surveys recently—Ipsos and Angus Reid—where two-thirds of Canadians said they felt it was reasonable, and a reasonable intrusion. The majority of people think the federal government has made a mistake and they should reverse their decision. The public does not believe it is too intrusive.

We rely on information, such as the number of bedrooms or how you travel to work, to understand the patterns of behaviour in our city, so we can plan for housing adequacy, understand what affordable housing is, and whether we have overcrowding in certain neighbourhoods, based on the number of bedrooms in the housing in those neighbourhoods.

We need to plan for how people are going to get to and from work and what their travel patterns are. We rely on this information. It's important. I don't believe the public is opposed whatsoever to participating in the mandatory long-form census.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Janet Davis:** I don't know who's opposed—350 groups...? I don't know who's opposed.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Martin, please.

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Good morning.

It's nice to see you again, Janet. Congratulations on your re-election.

To build on the discussion you had with Mr. Lessard, you don't have to convince this side of the table. We believe the mandatory long-form census is the way to go and we should continue with it. It's the other side.... It was Mr. Savage who brought this forward for our discussion here.

One of the issues seems to be this whole question of how you make people comply. It's the question of whether we put people in jail, whether we fine them. There's always the scenario presented to us of the single mother of three children who doesn't fill in the form: do you put her in jail, and that kind of thing?

This is obviously an issue for the government at this time, how you punish those who don't comply. I don't think anybody can come up with an example where somebody actually has gone to jail because they haven't filled out the long-form mandatory.

Maybe one of you could talk to us a bit concerning that particular issue.

**Ms. Janet Davis:** I think you've made the point yourself, which is very clear, that we don't prosecute. There's a 94% response rate, so clearly some people are not responding and we're not tossing people into jail.

As for the single mother, the experience to date has been that this has not been punitive. The intrusion—if you want to use that word—is reasonable, considering the importance of the data for governments and the private and the non-governmental sectors.

**Ms. Anne Crassweller (President, NADbank Inc., Marketing Research and Intelligence Association):** I'd like to interject and add that we do voluntary surveys that count on census data for accuracy to weigh and adjust the data.

We're very involved in how not to punish people for not participating, but if we flip it over and talk about how we encourage people to participate in this kind of research, and the value of it, I do know that the census people are very cognizant of this, and they do actually go out to homes and sit with people, and fill it out with them.

If we start to look at how we can explain the value of what people are giving to their country by participating in the long-form census, then we turn our conversation away from punitive actions related to not doing it to the value of why they should and would contribute.

I would agree with Councillor Davis, in that we don't seem to be having very many complaints, and I think this is due to consumers understanding the value of the long-form census to every aspect of their lives.

●(0920)

**Ms. Janet Davis:** My understanding as well is that Bill C-568 is before the House, which is proposing to deal with the punitive aspect, so I think the government could deal with that if it wished.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Yes, the whole question of mandatory is critical here. In my own household and the household I grew up in, which was a very busy place, seven children, there was all kinds of mail coming in asking for a million different things. I know that in our house, if it was mandatory, we tended to get to it and do it because it was required that we do it.

Have you done any analysis of this issue of people responding because it's mandatory versus people responding because it's simply voluntary?

**Ms. Anne Crassweller:** In the work that we've done, it's really similar to the work that's done across the country by researchers. The data you get in the census is often quite different from the data you get in a voluntary survey. This is why people are talking about non-response bias. For example, if we look at age, younger people tend to be less likely to participate in voluntary surveys. Older people have more time, as you say, and they get to them.

If we look at the allophone community, we get lower participation in voluntary surveys by that community, which is one of the communities we are worried about missing when we miss the mandatory long-form census. Their participation is actually reversed. It's the younger allophones who are more likely to participate in these surveys than the older allophones.

The issue is that you don't know where that non-response bias is. It's there. You can't measure it and we know it varies across the sectors. By making it mandatory, you are encouraging everyone to participate, so that when you do the voluntary surveys, you then have a base upon which to understand how to adjust and weigh back to the known reality of the country.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much.

We'll now go to Mr. Komarnicki, please.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I've got a couple of questions for Ms. Davis, and then of course to Mr. Wycks a little later.

It was interesting that Ms. Davis indicated that she relied on the Ipsos-Reid poll, which I would understand is done on a voluntary basis. We rely on that and you rely on that. Mr. Darrell Bricker from Ipsos-Reid had this to say, and he's a professional:

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 manageable risks. And based on my professional experience doing this research all over the world, I can tell you there are people who manage these risks all the time quite successfully.

Would you disagree with Mr. Bricker, Ms. Davis?

**Ms. Janet Davis:** I'm no statistician, but what I do know—

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Well, do you disagree with him and his statement?

**Ms. Janet Davis:** —but I don't agree. I think the non-response bias that we will see as a result of the voluntary nature of the national household survey will have significant impacts on the reliability of the data.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** So I take it that—

**Ms. Janet Davis:** And Statistics Canada, if I could continue—

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** But I just wanted to know whether you disagreed with him or not. Are you basically disagreeing?

**Ms. Janet Davis:** I said I do disagree.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Okay, so I'd like to move on to another area, because obviously we've established there's a difference of opinion. I'd like to probe you in some other areas.

If I may, you asked who might be opposed. I know that the B.C. Civil Liberties Association gave some evidence and said:

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

We're all aware of some of the more unusual questions. For example, last week, how many hours did you spend doing unpaid housework, and how long did it take you to get to work, and how many bedrooms do you have? It's those types of questions I'm referring to. It seems that many were of the view that for not answering those questions, the penalty should not be very punitive. In fact, a motion of the previous committee studying this matter asked that the threat of jail be removed for non-compliance. A private member's bill, as you mentioned, was also introduced with the same point of view in mind.

Would you agree that for some of these more unusual questions, a threat of jail would be inappropriate?

• (0925)

**Ms. Janet Davis:** I think the sanctions are certainly something you can address, if that's the stumbling block.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** My question, Ms. Davis, was—

**Ms. Janet Davis:** So, yes, if it would mean that the government would proceed with the long-form mandatory census, this would—

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** My question, Ms. Davis, was whether you thought—

**Ms. Janet Davis:** If you would let me answer—

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Could you, please?

**Ms. Janet Davis:** If the government proceeded with the long-form census and these provisions were changed, then of course I would support it.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** So you're saying that the threat of jail should be taken away?

**Ms. Janet Davis:** I'm saying, yes, if the government proceeded with the long-form mandatory census.

I know that—

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Now, many expressed the view that if there were to be a fine, it should be a nominal fine, like \$20, or perhaps no fine at all. What's your view about the size of the fine?

**Ms. Janet Davis:** I personally don't have a number that I would pick out of the air, but obviously the sanctions are symbolic, in any event, because they have not been exercised.

The City of Toronto has not taken a position on this particular matter, but personally, if the sanctions were reduced and the mandatory long-form census were to proceed, then, clearly, I think both municipalities and non-governmental agencies more broadly would support that.

**Ms. Anne Crassweller:** Would the government not be interested in finding solutions to encourage participants if they believe that the long-form census provided value for them?

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** The point I was trying to make is that if you make the fine very nominal, you're more likely to rely on people's civic duty to complete the form. It's not as if the questions would be taken out altogether, but they would just be made voluntary. I think the consensus is that we're getting very close to a voluntary census.

But I have one more question, and I would ask this of Ms. Davis as well—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Komarnicki, but your time has expired, so you don't have time for one more question. But there'll be a second round, so you'll have time at that point.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Well, that's good.

**The Chair:** Yes.

All right, so we will begin a second round. It will be a shorter round of three minutes each.

We will begin with Mr. Savage, please.

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

I want to thank the witnesses for appearing from Toronto.

I would just remind everybody that nobody's ever been jailed for not filling out the long-form census, and I think we all agree that we shouldn't have jail time. That's just a bit of a diversion.



We called this couple of sessions on the census, and a lot of other committees—the industry committee and I believe the status of women committee—are looking at it today as well. We specifically wanted to look at the impact on the lowest-income Canadians, the most marginalized, because they are the ones who are going to be hurt by this. Last week this committee tabled a report on poverty, which I think is very good. It's similar to a report that was done by the Senate. The problem is that a lot of the recommendations in there and a lot of the work that's been done in that report can't be followed up on without tools like the long-form census. The old saying is “you can't manage what you can't measure”.

Mr. Wycks, first of all, thank you for your testimony. It was very helpful, because it does go to this issue of a mandatory versus a voluntary census. I think in your comments you indicated that only a mandatory survey can provide accurate data over time, and you specifically indicated that with regard to aboriginal Canadians, new Canadians, and lower-income Canadians there would be doubts about the data. Can you explain that a little bit more?

Then, perhaps, Councillor...if there's time.

• (0930)

**Ms. Anne Crassweller:** I think the issue, just to reiterate, is that it has been shown in research work around the world, across this country, and by very many statisticians that it is in fact the groups you have highlighted who will be less likely to participate in the voluntary surveys, and who therefore will be missed. That is not measurable, so it can fluctuate, and therefore comparisons over time will no longer be relevant. They're not accurate.

I think the statement that if you can't measure it you can't manage it is a very succinct way of summarizing the issue.

**Ms. Janet Davis:** I would just add that Statistics Canada itself has modelled the non-response bias that's likely to occur in three sample municipalities, one of them being Toronto. Very clearly, the modelling that Statistics Canada has done shows that there will be significant bias in particular populations. Low-income families will be under-represented significantly as a result of the non-response bias, as will construction versus public-sector administration jobs. Also, the cultural diversity of the city will not be measured accurately. There will be an over-representation of the Chinese population, and a significant under-representation of the black community and youth. So we know that the bias will be there, and the very populations we hope to serve will be under-represented as a result of the non-response bias.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Vellacott. Mr. Savage, you'll have a chance, I'm sure, with the next question.

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC):** I'll maybe address my question to Mr. Wycks right off the top, then.

Wayne Smith, the chief statistician at Statistics Canada, said, “The national household survey will produce usable and useful data that can meet the needs of many users.”

My question is to Mr. Wycks of the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association. Can you explain why you as an organization, or you as an individual, feel you are in a better position to

comment on the data than is the head statistician at Statistics Canada, who said it will produce usable and useful data?

**Mr. Brendan Wycks:** Yes, I'd be happy to.

Our organization is the single authoritative voice of the marketing survey and public opinion research industry in Canada, and we represent all of its sectors. Our members are research practitioners, experts in survey methodology.

There was a question earlier about Darrell Bricker from Ipsos Public Affairs. Darrell is a very prominent senior member of our industry, and is quite well respected, so what he has to say cannot be dismissed lightly. But I will say that his opinion is not shared by the vast majority of members of our association, and there is a strong consensus view among our members that the voluntary national household survey will not produce data with the same degree of rigour and reliability that the mandatory long-form census questionnaire produces.

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott:** Okay, I accept that. I need to get on with my questions here.

I appreciate the fact that you're acknowledging there's split opinion within your association, but I guess I'd go to this kind of a question then. You're well aware that it's up to the government. The cabinet actually—and whoever wants to can respond here—makes decisions in terms of what's mandatory and what's voluntary. Recently the government has declined certain questions. The Paul Martin government said certain questions were necessary. So it is currently the government or the cabinet.

Do you feel that a question such as what time people leave for work in the morning should be a mandatory question? How strongly do you feel that this should be a mandatory as opposed to a voluntary question? Do you feel so strongly about it that you believe people should be exposed to fines or imprisonment if they don't say when they leave for work in the morning?

**Ms. Janet Davis:** Let's put aside the fines and imprisonment, because I do think they are a red herring.

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott:** No, it's my time, ma'am. I'll finish up here.

Insofar as it's mandatory, it's required. If you're saying there are no fines and imprisonment, that's not mandatory any more—

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Point of order, Chair.

Mr. Vellacott asked the question. He should allow time for a response.

• (0935)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Savage. It's a very short time, and I'll allow Mr. Vellacott to use his time the way he would like to.

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott:** I have a very short time, so I would bluntly disagree with you when you say that can be dismissed because it's no longer mandatory if there are no longer imprisonments or fines. You can't cut it otherwise.

**Ms. Janet Davis:** Let me answer the question.

Is it important to know when people go to work? Absolutely. We need to understand what the demands are on our transportation capacity, both roads and public transit, and we need to know where people are going and what time of the day they're going. How else can we understand what the needs are for our transit systems?

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott:** Okay, so I've got your answer then.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, that's your time. Thank you.

We'll now go to Madame Beaudin.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for joining us today.

May I point out that the only reason given by the government was imprisonment provision. The members on this side of the table are all in favour of doing away with the imprisonment provision. So then, this argument does not hold water. I'm not sure if you agree with me, but I think this is a case of creating a problem where one did not exist before. I am even more convinced of that on hearing your testimony this morning.

As my colleague said earlier, we conducted a study on poverty which we tabled last week. We often asked ourselves how best to gauge poverty. I would imagine that this would involve drawing comparisons every year between Canada and other countries and correlating data on the individuals targeted in our study.

More specifically with respect to this study, I want to know if will be possible to implement the proposed measures to deal with poverty if we do not have all of the data needed to evaluate our target population groups.

[English]

**Mr. Brendan Wycks:** I'd like to make the first attempt at answering that question. And in doing so, I'd like to refer the committee to a very helpful article or paper that was recently published in a prominent journal called *Canadian Public Policy*. It's volume 36, number 32010, I believe, and it was published in September of this year. The article is entitled "The Importance of the Long Form Census to Canada" written by David A. Green and Kevin Milligan, from the department of economics at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. To quote a short excerpt from that, it says that

All voluntary Statistics Canada surveys come with a set of weights of this type that researchers need to use to obtain accurate statistics. But constructing those weights requires having a "true" population benchmark, and the census is that benchmark. Thus, without the census, both the stratification and weighting stages of all other surveys would be affected. For the LFS this would mean inferior statistics on unemployment and employment. Beyond the set of surveys collected by Statistics Canada, privately collected (e.g., by polling firms) surveys

—the members of our association—

must also be compared to some standard to ensure they are providing unbiased statistics. Comparing them to some other voluntary survey (such as the NHS) which has its own, unknown, response biases is obviously of limited usefulness. Thus, to ensure the quality of these surveys, the mandatory census short and long forms are important.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I'm sorry, that's all the time for that question.

Mr. Watson, please.

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

Thank you to our witnesses for appearing and for your testimony today.

Ms. Davis, I'd like to start with you, if I could.

Thinking through the logic of your testimony today, if there's no penalty and enforcement, then how is something mandatory? How will people not treat it as if it's voluntary?

**Ms. Janet Davis:** It's a civic duty, just like voting and other contributions we make as a society.

But I did just want to add, if I might, a previous—

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Ma'am, if I could, I want to follow up on a question. The way you've answered it, "It's a civic duty", so is voting, but we don't make that mandatory as well. But that's a civic duty.

The next question I have—

**Ms. Janet Davis:** Jury duty is another example.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Fair enough.

The next question is for Mr. Wycks, I believe it is, who said that privacy would be intruded upon, or that the unintended consequence would be that business would then have to ask questions and thereby intrude on citizens' privacy.

Is asking a question an intrusion?

● (0940)

**Mr. Brendan Wycks:** No, I'm not sure I used the term "intrusiveness" in the example I gave, but it's the bothersomeness—

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Actually, you did.

**Mr. Brendan Wycks:** Okay.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** So by its very nature, asking a question is intrusive?

I'm trying to figure out how you prove that Canadians would be more intruded upon if business had to ask the question instead of the government. That was the thrust of your argument.

**Mr. Brendan Wycks:** Let me just refer back to that argument. Because the mandatory long-form questionnaire generates more reliable data, it is actually more effective at limiting intrusion into Canadians' lives by reducing poorly targeted marketing communications that would otherwise be sent to them, and by—

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** But where does the increased intrusion come in if business is asking the questions?

**Mr. Brendan Wycks:** Because the more robust, reliable data from the mandatory long form will no longer be available, private sector businesses will no longer be able to purchase that reliable data from StatsCan and therefore they will feel compelled to—

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** So it's okay for StatsCan to intrude by asking the questions but not for business? Okay.

I have a simple question.

**Mr. Brendan Wycks:** Because it's a civic duty, yes, that's right.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Okay, well, it's tortured logic.

So plan A, if I understand the witnesses today, is to try to convince the cabinet to change its decision. Should that not happen, what's your plan B for the information? What do you do about the information that you say you will be missing?

**Ms. Janet Davis:** This is not a position of the City of Toronto, but I know there are those who are suggesting that you defer a year and undertake the mandatory—

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** What's your plan B?

**Ms. Janet Davis:** —long-form census in 2012.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** You're asking about the government's plan B.

**Ms. Janet Davis:** There is not a plan B, because we do not have the capacity to replace the reliable information that we get from the long-form census.

I was cut off twice before, so if I could, I would answer the previous questioner on whether or not I believed the chief statistician, who said "...we are confident that the national household survey will produce usable and useful data that will meet the needs of many users." The questioner neglected to finish the paragraph, which concluded: "It will not, however, provide a level of quality that would have been achieved through a mandatory long-form census."

Moreover, the chief statistician concluded:

We have never previously conducted a survey on the scale of the voluntary national household survey, nor are we aware of any other country that has. The new methodology has been introduced relatively rapidly with limited testing. The effectiveness of our mitigation strategies to offset non-response bias and other quality limiting effects is largely unknown. For these reasons, it is difficult to anticipate the quality—

**The Chair:** Excuse me. Thank you so much. I want to thank you. Just to let you know, I'm not cutting anybody off, but we all adhere to time restraints around the committee table, just so that you are aware of that.

**Ms. Janet Davis:** Okay, I'm sorry. I'm animated. I'm excited about this.

**The Chair:** Yes, thank you very much.

I want to thank all of you for appearing before the committee.

I will suspend the meeting now for just one minute so that we can change the witnesses, as we have other witnesses who are going to appear.

Thank you.

• (0945) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (0955)

**The Chair:** Good morning to our witnesses. Thank you so much for being here and thank you for your patience.

We have two groups represented. We have Campaign 2000 and the Chinese Canadian National Council. Each one of you will have seven minutes to make a presentation. I would ask you to please introduce yourself.

We will begin with Campaign 2000, and Laurel Rothman, national coordinator. Please begin. Thank you.

**Ms. Laurel Rothman (National Co-ordinator, Campaign 2000):** Thank you.

Chair, members of the committee, and other participants, I'm pleased to be here to represent Campaign 2000. As you may know, we're a non-partisan cross-Canada network of more than 120 national, provincial, territorial, and community groups committed to raising awareness about child and family poverty and proposing practical solutions.

We appear today in support of the long-form census, a critical part of the statistical system that provides for accurate data at the national, provincial, and small-area level. It's collected, from our point of view, at a reasonable cost to government, and from all we know and have read, it respects well the privacy of Canadians and protects information. In fact, I know that clearly from looking at the data, where you see numbers of suppressed cells, particularly in smaller provinces. To our knowledge, that privacy has never been breached by well-respected Statistics Canada.

Our specific recommendations—and then I'm going to talk about our rationale—urge the committee to indeed use its powers to ensure that the mandatory long-form questionnaire is included in the 2011 census of Canada. We support the government-appointed National Statistics Council in its August 12, 2010 statement that sets out a series of proposals for the long-form census, including removing the threat of jail from the long form and setting out a regular and transparent process for reviewing current questions and adding new questions for future censuses.

We also support the proposal to amend Canada's Statistics Act as was set out in a letter in September to the Prime Minister from Ivan Fellegi, former chief statistician; David Dodge, former Governor of the Bank of Canada; and two former Clerks of the Privy Council, Mel Cappe and Alex Himelfarb. I should say that we've reviewed that in order to assist us in making this decision.

Our coalition is a network representing low-income people, those providing services in health, housing, child care, education, food security, child welfare, as well as faith communities, women's groups, labour organizations, social planning councils, and many others. As you may or may not know, Family Service Toronto is our lead partner and host, and that's where I work. I'm going to talk a bit about my Toronto work later on.

Each year we do a report card, which you're probably familiar with. In addition to doing the national report card, we coordinate our partners in seven provinces who do report cards on the provincial situation with regard to poverty. One of my tasks is to coordinate the acquisition and distribution of data. As you know, the importance of clear, reliable, and consistent data is central to making convincing arguments on many issues, in particular, poverty and low-income status.

Whether we're the food bank people, the child care providers, the affordable housing providers, or health care providers, we work with people every single day and see the situations face to face on a one-to-one basis. But we know that objectivity and credibility of the data are what we need to try to make the case with people like yourselves and provincial legislators across the country.

So we rely on Statistics Canada's sound data and we also work with a community social data strategy that the Canadian Council on Social Development coordinates. So we're quite distressed with the removal of the long-form census because we see it as limiting our ability to illustrate the true statistical picture of poverty in Canada, and it will also limit the planning of many of our service-delivery partners. You're probably aware that in many situations, data for the Atlantic provinces is often not available on anything other than the census because the sample is too small and is considered by Statistics Canada as not acceptable for release. So our partners use the data in their local trends.

• (1000)

We at Family Service Toronto use the neighbourhood profiles that the City of Toronto prepares using data from the long-form census. I wanted to illustrate one particular way in which the lack of the long-form census data will impact our work and I think the bigger picture regarding children living in poverty in Canada, and that's on a chart that I actually.... I don't know if you got it; I e-mailed it to the clerk yesterday. It's a chart that we did regarding child poverty rates for selected social groups over three different censuses, 1996, 2001, and 2006.

Do you have the chart there?

**The Chair:** No, I'm sorry, we don't.

**Ms. Laurel Rothman:** You don't have it, okay.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Georges Etoka):** It was only in one language.

**The Chair:** It was only in one language. Sorry, it has to be in both official languages so we can pass it out.

**Ms. Laurel Rothman:** My apologies. That's my fault. I do have the chart in both languages. I just didn't get it there fast enough.

It's basically a bar graph. For example, it shows that for recent immigrants the child poverty rate in 1996 was 58%, in 2001 it was 49%, and in 2006 it was 48%. My point there was that obviously data does lots of things, including showing important trends. If we don't have the next iteration or segment of the long-form census, we will interrupt some very important trends.

Our service community partners use these numbers to plan specific services, whether it's classes for English as a second language, personal support services for learning in integrated classrooms for children with disabilities, or specialized health services.

**The Chair:** If you could just wrap up your presentation, that would be appreciated.

**Ms. Laurel Rothman:** Yes.

For Family Service Toronto, in planning our own services, whether it's for women suffering family violence or people with intellectual disabilities, we also rely on this data for helping to project our service needs.

I'll stop there.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

We will now go to Victor Wong, executive director of the Chinese Canadian National Council.

You have seven minutes, Mr. Wong, please.

**Mr. Victor Wong (Executive Director, Chinese Canadian National Council):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, everyone. Honourable members, thank you for inviting us to present today.

I'm Victor Wong, with the Chinese Canadian National Council. Founded in 1980, the CCNC is a national non-profit organization with 27 chapters across Canada. We're a community leader for Chinese Canadians in promoting a more just, respectful, and inclusive society.

Our position is that we support the compromise proposal advanced by the National Statistics Council. That's our first recommendation to this committee, that you also support what the National Statistics Council is recommending, which is to retain the long form in the 2011 census and to rewrite the Statistics Act ahead of the 2016 census.

There are a number of issues I want to cover, but I only have seven minutes.

I just want to say that census data is invaluable to so many groups. As you heard, the issue pertains to anti-poverty programs but also to immigrant settlement services, housing, and to smaller population groups in Canada.

It also has an impact for small businesses. Many small-business owners are newcomer Canadians wanting to establish themselves here, and they benefit from the small-area data. If you don't have this kind of data, it could lead to inefficient business planning, which would lead to reduced tax revenues. This could possibly lead to higher unemployment or underemployment, lost opportunity, increased cases of business failure. This is bad, not just for the business person, but it's bad for the city, the country, and it's bad for society. We would ask the committee to reflect on this impact.

The ethnocultural groups are very concerned with this move to the voluntary national household survey. We believe this will increase the undercoverage because of the non-response bias, and the quality of the data.

No matter what you decide, whatever happens next year we encourage Statistics Canada to conduct a comprehensive outreach program. Whether you have the mandatory long form or the voluntary national household survey, you should do a comprehensive outreach program directed at, and with the involvement of, ethnocultural and other groups so we can increase the participation.

I had sent something to the clerk, but I guess because it was only in English it didn't get to the members. I want to point out a few things with regard to response burden. I'll need you to follow with me as I go through this document; I'm assuming you don't have it.

For the 2006 census, assume there are 15 households. If you have 15 households in the 2006 census, 12 households would get the short form and three households would get the long form. All 15 forms are mandatory.

Now, if you go to the 2011 census, based on the current plan, all 15 of those households would get the short form and then an additional five households would get this national household survey. In fact, 20 forms are handed out under this new process. This is a 33% increase in response burden, but the quality goes down. All 15 short forms are mandatory, and now five of those households will also get the long form. The long form will contain some of the same questions as the short form because the long form is voluntary. Based on Stats Canada's data quality report...they had conducted a test of data quality of the national household survey and found that the response rate was lower, around 16%, compared to 19% for the mandatory approach of the 2006 census.

•(1005)

If you dig a little bit deeper, it has a tremendous impact with respect to the visible minority communities. I'll just read some data. For Toronto, for visible minority communities, it's estimated that this would lead to a bias of minus 2%. So there would be an underestimate of the minority communities in Toronto. And Toronto is a big city.

There's a bigger problem, in that the subgroups within this category will vary tremendously. For the Chinese group, there would be an overestimate, according to the study, of 17.6%. For the black community, it would be an underestimate of minus 13.2%.

You can see that this kind of variation can have an impact on social cohesion, because you don't have the proper data to begin with.

I just want to end there. I'd be pleased to answer questions from honourable members.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

•(1010)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for both of those presentations.

We will begin with a five-minute round. That includes questions and answers.

We'll begin with Madam Folco, please.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

First of all, Mr. Wong, I will say thank you for your presentation.

I would say that the second part of your presentation particularly, when you talked about statistics, is perfect proof of how important statistics are, first of all, for having as full a statistical portrait as we can have in order to have as full an analysis as we can have. I think that the second part of your presentation was really proof of how important this is. I agree with you that it is important to increase participation of the members of the ethnocultural groups all over Canada in the census, whichever form the census takes.

One of the speakers who appeared in the panel before you mentioned that many members of the ethnocultural community,

particularly those we'll call the non-young members, the people who are a little older, tend to not answer the request for statistics. There are all sorts of reasons, which I don't want to go into now but which I can well understand. If there were more people from the ethnocultural groups who actually took part in asking for the statistics, we probably would get a much better profile and a much better portrait.

I don't have a question except to say thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

I have a question for Ms. Rothman.

[*English*]

**Ms. Laurel Rothman:** Yes, thank you.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Madame Rothman, if I can put it this way, you're an expert on poverty in Canada, particularly, I imagine, in your own milieu.

[*Translation*]

We heard from the previous group that the rate of response among the lowest-earning Canadians was low and that accordingly, there was a risk of not being able to draw a sufficiently accurate picture of persons who fall into this group.

[*English*]

We have a quote that said that the government based its decision on the fact that there were already a number of documents that existed, such as income tax returns, passports, drivers licences, social insurance numbers, and birth certificates, and that these documents were sufficient, and when we add the new form they will want to get statistics from, these would be enough documents to give us a really good portrait of what is going on in Canada. From your standpoint concerning poverty, do you feel that this is right?

**Ms. Laurel Rothman:** First of all, I would say I'm not a bona fide statistician, but I work a lot with numbers, and I work with others who do. I think we know that things like drivers licences and other kinds of ID don't tell us very much. I don't think at this point we even have access to any aggregate data. I shouldn't say they don't tell us. They tell us the basic fact-sheet information that your property tax might tell you. Property tax forms for renters don't tell you very much at all, so forget that one.

When we want to talk about better understanding people's situation, we need firm and consistent data. Neither of those sources that you were talking about are set up to give us a picture of who is in Canada, who lives in Canada, who is new to Canada, and who's living in what income bracket.

When we talk about the income tax forms, we'll make an important comment. We've tried to use income tax data at times. First, it's quite costly. Second, it can only be used in a small area—at least in my experience—but it does not give us any demographic breakdowns, nor should it. You pay your income tax according to your income. It doesn't tell us whether you're a newcomer, whether you're of aboriginal identity, or whether you're from an ethno-racial group—all important factors from our perspective. I would say we desperately need a census, because the other major measure of poverty that we use—and we use it in our report card, as do many other people working with statistics—is the survey of labour and income dynamics that is done every year. It follows a panel of people over time and it supplements the census.

It's a much smaller sample. It means that if somebody asks me why we don't have a poverty rate expressed in the same way for Nova Scotia as we do for Ontario, it's because the data's not there. The sample is not big enough. I'll just leave it at that.

I think from our experience of doing report cards since 1992, that census data is an essential marker, especially to establish the trends.

• (1015)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Lessard, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** I yield the floor to Mrs. Beaudin.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Madame Beaudin.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Josée Beaudin:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Rothman, you work for Campaign 2000. Your organization has always painted a picture of child poverty. Given that you have been working for 21 years to try and eradicate child poverty, I would imagine your report contains recommendations to that effect.

Can you tell me what kind of impact the elimination of the long-form census will have on these proposed measures? Since you've been working tirelessly for 21 years, do you anticipate that this move will have a major impact? Will the scrapping of the long-form census mask the socioeconomic reality of certain population groups? Isn't that in some respects the objective sought?

[*English*]

**Ms. Laurel Rothman:** On your first question, about the impact of removing the long form, I think it will certainly have an impact on our work, particularly when we look at groups that are highly vulnerable.

I have the chart I referred to in French as well as English, so I will send it to the clerk.

Those groups include recent immigrants who have come to Canada in the last five years, all immigrants, children of aboriginal identity, and children in ethno-racial groups. It used to include children with disabilities. That came from a companion survey, so I won't even talk about that one; it's a separate issue.

If we don't have the solid data from the long-form census we will not be able to track the changes, which we hope are improvements in those groups that are more at risk. What does that mean? It might have an impact on services that are or are not available for recent immigrants, whether it's English as a second language or settlement services that perhaps Mr. Wong can speak to more fully than I.

On aboriginal identity, we know that the question of determining our aboriginal population is important. I know that Statistics Canada is working with the aboriginal communities on that. But what we have now that's the most robust or full is the long-form census. If we lose that we will lose the ability to track what's happening and plan services for that.

The loss of the long-form census will hide the economic reality to some degree. To be fair, income tax data will give us numbers, although we've never been able to get income tax data for the whole country, so that's pretty impossible. It will certainly make it much harder to chart the economic reality for children in low-income and modest-income families.

• (1020)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Josée Beaudin:** I have no further questions.

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** I have a question.

The Conservative government has stated numerous times that the onus is on organizations to ask questions in keeping with their needs. How do you respond to that?

[*English*]

**Ms. Laurel Rothman:** I'm not sure what you mean. Do you mean put questions to individuals or do surveys of their own?

**The Chair:** You just have a couple of seconds please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** The government has said at times that organizations going on about questions that will no longer be included in the long-form census... The government maintains that the onus is on these organizations to...

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Please be brief, Madam Rothman.

**Ms. Laurel Rothman:** I find that totally unacceptable. It doesn't make any sense. Not only do we not have the resources to do it, but the purpose of having that kind of information is broad. It will be important for governments, school boards, religious organizations, and businesses. All of those groups, as I understand it, have spoken up and recommended, by and large, that we keep the long-form census.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

Mr. Martin is next, please.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Good morning. It's good to be chatting with you about this very important subject here today.

We're still at the table, on this side anyway, trying to figure out why it is that the government wants to do this. We've heard and seen in the documentation that we have over 350 groups across Canada saying this is the wrong way to go, this is not the right thing to do. We have maybe at most a dozen that have given the government their approval or support, some of it conditionally. We're trying to get a handle on why it is that we would do this. We certainly heard this morning on the impact to both of your groups.

At a previous meeting, and apparently at the committee on status of women, what we were finding is that not only is the government not going to do the mandatory long form, but they are no longer going to measure the contribution that women who are not paid for their work make to the overall benefit of society and the way we measure development and growth.

I'm not sure what that is saying about where they want to go with this. It certainly is disturbing, and I would guess working out of Family Service Toronto that would be something that would concern Ms. Rothman.

We also heard a little bit about, from the previous discussion we had, this maybe being just a clearing of the deck, so that private for-profit gatherers of information can move in, begin to collect this data, and then sell it. I can only imagine the impact that would have on organizations like Campaign 2000 and perhaps some of the smaller groups in the Chinese community trying to service their population.

Maybe you could comment on both of those topics for us here this morning.

**Mr. Victor Wong:** Thanks, Mr. Martin.

It's important to have a complete census and one where the data is reliable, because we need a national portrait. The data would act as a benchmark, so we can also make use of all of the other administrative data tools. When you start to drop things, if you drop collection of information on unpaid work, that removes a part of that national portrait, which is the contribution of all members of our society.

In terms of the costs, I believe this move to the national household survey will cost more. The government is spending more, it is increasing the response burden, and it's getting less reliable data.

I made the point about business. For newcomers, sometimes one of their options is to start up their own small business. Small business is one of the largest job creators in the country. If we don't have data to back them up, they may make the wrong decision and this will lead to lower tax revenues. So there is an impact for the entire country. We're trying to deal with the deficit right now, so we need to make sure that businesses have every opportunity to flourish.

I would urge the committee members here to support our recommendation. Our recommendation is to look at the compromise proposal by the National Statistics Council. I think they put forward a very good case for the retention of the long form in the 2011 census.

• (1025)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Mr. Vellacott.

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I find it interesting that when we've had witnesses here we get into what types of questions should be on the form, and which of those questions should be mandatory. It's a bit confusing. I'm sure people don't mean to be misleading. We all have different types of questions we think would be valuable.

That's not the nature of the discussion here today. I have a lot of sympathy for calculating and getting a handle on unpaid work. In our household, my wife gives me part of the cheque. She does a deposit, and I end up getting a bit at the end of the day. But that's fair. She takes care of all the other good things in the running of our household.

As for the questions people would like to see on the census survey, there are various suggestions from various groups. Certainly there are forums for that to percolate and work its way up. You folks here as witnesses, and others we've had, are aware of that. Some may not be. But there's a process for it. If you were to include all of those questions, with no end to the questions, it could become a long, long, long-form census. We could add to it no end.

I do want to say, though, that I'm a little confused. It has often come up that there are certain more vulnerable groups—low-income groups, groups living in poverty—that typically don't fill in the census. I don't understand the logic of threatening these people, who are the most vulnerable in society. We threaten them with a jail term, which they say doesn't take place. But we punish them with big fines. What's the logic behind that?

You don't need to respond now.

The fact that these groups—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry to interrupt you.

I will remind everyone around the table that when you have the floor, that's your chance to speak. And when you don't have the floor, I ask that you not speak out of turn. I just want to remind everyone around the table of that basic principle.

Thank you.

Continue.

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott:** Anyhow, what is the logic behind threatening vulnerable people, who are already paranoid about filling out the survey? Threatening them with punitive action doesn't make a lot of sense to me.

But I think there are some lessons to be learned. I appreciated the comment about the outreach program; I think something needs to be done there. Mr. Wong, I appreciate your comment along those lines.

It has been remarked that in the Chinese community there's a greater response rate. In the black community there's a lower rate. Can you tell me why this might be? I think we understand the self-interest thing, whether people see a benefit in doing something or whether they see an intrusion and possible threat.

Could you give me some inkling of why the Chinese community seems to be responding in greater numbers, while the black community, for example, seems to be rather under-represented? Maybe there are some lessons to learn; maybe we need an outreach program. Maybe pitching it to people in terms of basic civic duties would give us a good result with a voluntary long-form survey. Why do the Chinese people respond in greater numbers and the black community in lesser numbers?

Do you understand my question, Mr. Wong?

• (1030)

**Mr. Victor Wong:** Yes, but I prefer not to compare two groups.

Actually, an overestimate is just as bad as an underestimate. As a result of the data that comes out, you end up rejigging a whole bunch of social programs, and you may inefficiently allocate funds to one community and under-allocate to another community.

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott:** I understand that.

**Mr. Victor Wong:** When you step back from it and look at the data from a dispassionate perspective, it's poor planning.

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott:** Maybe I'll frame the question in a different way in order to get some value for us on this back-and-forth.

In the Chinese community, does the leadership emphasize and quietly relate to others that there's a benefit to this, and that they don't need to be paranoid? Is there any of that leadership and influencing that happens? Why does the Chinese community respond in greater numbers? Is it because you, as leaders, are telling them it's a good thing to do, that it gives us a better understanding of things, so that we can provide the services? Is that what is quietly being done?

**Mr. Victor Wong:** Statistics Canada does do some outreach, and they've done that on all of their major surveys, including the census in the past. We've also helped out with this in promoting participation in past census initiatives.

We're saying you need to have more, because when you look at the 2006 results there is still an under-count, in our view, of the Chinese community. You asked why you see an increased participation in the Chinese community. But I just quoted Toronto. If you look in the study for Bathurst, it's a smaller community of Chinese and it's under-counted by 75%. So the point we're trying to get at is it's a distinction between having a voluntary survey and a mandatory survey. We will be injecting this non-response bias throughout the whole system.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, that's all the time. Sorry, Mr. Vellacott.

We're just about out of time. I would probably allow for one very quick two-minute question. There wouldn't be time for discussion, but just a very short question and answer.

Mr. Savage.

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Thank you, Chair.

Canadians who would be watching this would still be amazed that we even have to have this discussion about a census that has worked for many years, that people haven't complained about. I've been a member of Parliament for six and a half years, and nobody has ever

complained to me about having to fill out the long-form census. Statistics Canada has helped other countries—including, I believe, China—implement censuses, and those countries look at this and say that it's an unbelievable situation. They don't understand this.

The government keeps coming back to the issue of jail time. Well, here's an idea. Let's have a unanimous recommendation from this committee that all those Canadians languishing in jail right now for not filling out the long-form census should go free. We could have it done by noon. It would be simple and easy, because no one has ever gone to jail for not filling out the census. It's absolutely bizarre. Yet the government says it's intrusive and people don't want to do it. It's quite frustrating.

I'd like to ask Ms. Rothman, if I could, because she was part of the poverty study that this committee did. Very briefly, could you tell us in what ways the cancellation of making the long-form census mandatory is going to hurt the ability of any recommendations that might be implemented from the poverty report we've had—which I'm sure you've seen—from being followed, tracked, and perhaps providing improvements to Canadians?

• (1035)

**Ms. Laurel Rothman:** It will make it quite difficult. I know there was some interest—I think it was in the Conservative supplementary report—to look at the costs of the recommendations, which is of course an important thing to do. And if you're going to do that, you need to look at the “current” and the “future over time”. For that, you need some of the things from the long-form census as well as other data. So I think it will have a big impact.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

Is there a very quick two-minute question from the government side, Mr. Komarnicki?

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Thank you.

Ms. Rothman, can you give us the results of your annual report card on child and family poverty?

I'm kidding. You can relax. I understand that's coming tomorrow.

**Ms. Laurel Rothman:** Yes.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Lawrie McFarlane, the former Deputy Minister of Health in British Columbia, put the long-form census this way. He said if there is a right to privacy, the census long form abrogates that right. Would you agree that by making it mandatory, punishable by a fine or threat of jail, it abrogates a right to privacy? Yes or no, in your opinion.

**Ms. Laurel Rothman:** I would say no, but I also want to go on record that we're supportive of the recommendation to take off the threat of jail terms.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Or fines.

One of the witnesses I think went almost as far as to say that we should make it mandatory from the perspective of civic duty, but without the threat of fine or jail. Would you agree with that proposition?

**Ms. Laurel Rothman:** Yes, definitely.



**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** If we were to make it mandatory without the threat of fine or jail, we would certainly develop a good relationship with those filling out the form. Would you agree?

**Ms. Laurel Rothman:** Probably.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** So if we're going to make it mandatory, without the threat of fine or penalty, but from a point of civic duty, why don't we make it voluntary with the request that it be completed from a point of civic duty?

**Ms. Laurel Rothman:** Because I think you probably implement things differently, quite frankly. I think in either case—

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** I think our time is up. Even though I have a question and you have an answer, I guess we'll leave it for another day.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I think Mr. Lessard has a very quick two-minute question.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** In addition to doing away with the mandatory nature of the census form, the government is also scrapping certain parts of it. As our colleague Mr. Martin pointed out, this will have an impact on the whole question of volunteer work, and more specifically the situation of women.

Ms. Rothman initially stated that children would be affected more by the changes to the long-form census. Why would that be case?

[*English*]

**Ms. Laurel Rothman:** Taking out the question on unpaid caregiving will certainly have an impact. Well, I don't know if it will have a direct impact on children, but it will take away some

important information that we know affects family income. It affects both children and seniors.

In my work in Toronto, I have a large group of co-workers who provide support services to caregivers of seniors, who are by and large the daughters of older mothers who are caring for their mothers at no cost. Sometimes it's their second or third job, in addition to being a parent to young children and often being in the paid labour force.

So I would say there are many aspects of the impact of taking away the question for tracking unpaid caregiving.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Martin, did you have a very quick question you wanted to ask?

**Mr. Tony Martin:** No, I'm good.

**The Chair:** Okay, great.

I want to thank you so much for being here and for being patient with our time restraints. I know that sometimes I had to stop you before you were quite finished. That's just the way we operate, and it seems to work pretty well, but I know it means that we have to be very concise in our answers.

Again, thank you very much for being here and for the information you have provided.

We will now take a couple of minutes to do some committee business, so we'll go in camera at this point.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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