



July 26, 2010

The Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

A mandatory census is important to both business and government. It facilitates the long-term planning for implementing programs and services that support all aspects of community from business, cultural, social and health care to education, housing and recreational needs. Without proper demographic data, business and government cannot plan properly.

The Burlington Chamber of Commerce disagrees with the federal government's decision to replace the mandatory long form census with a voluntary long survey; this will inherently eliminate several groups and skew the data towards Canadian born, more-literate respondents. Like the Canadian Association for Business Economics (CABE) and the Canadian Association of University Teachers, we are particularly concerned about the loss of the compulsory census long form as it will undermine research and innovation initiatives.

The quality of data collected in the census will drop considerably if it is through only voluntary participation. Businesses and governments all depend on data for analysis and making investment and operating decisions. Funding decisions by governments are based on census data. Errors in the data with voluntary collection could cost provincial and municipal governments millions of dollars.

As the CABE stated: "achieving an adequate quality and an appropriate response rate from a voluntary survey will be very challenging and will almost certainly involve more resources than retaining the compulsory long form of past censuses. Secondly, the costs of maintaining existing programs in business and government will be increased because of the need to fund new data sources. Thirdly, high quality regional data at the municipal level will be seriously compromised, if not lost entirely in many parts of the country. This will require the development of alternative data sources with an enormous analytical and resource cost as well as a loss in comparability."

The Burlington Chamber of Commerce, a grassroots business organization, does not understand why the government did not solicit our input on this issue. Through the national census, we can have an understanding of our country, a country that prides itself in economic, political and

ethnic diversity across a geographically huge land mass. If a voluntary only census were to take place, the lack of data leaves us wondering just what the government will do to keep gathering the data it needs to function effectively and efficiently.

We believe that privacy issues, if there are any, can be circumvented.

We strongly urge the government to reverse its decision to eliminate the Census long form.

Sincerely,



Keith Hoey  
President

cc: Mike Wallace, MP Burlington  
The Hon. Lisa Raitt, MP Halton