

CITY OF HAMILTON

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Social Development & Early Childhood Services Division

TO: Mayor and Members General Issues Committee	WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE
COMMITTEE DATE: February 14, 2011	
SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Opposing the Elimination of the Census Long Form Questionnaire (CS11021) (City Wide)	
SUBMITTED BY: Joe-Anne Priel General Manager Community Services Department	PREPARED BY: Jane Soldera (905) 546-2424 Ext 2399 Colin McMullan (905) 546-2424 Ext 3538 Louisa Wong (905) 546-2224 Ext 6091
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That correspondence be forwarded to the Prime Minister to advise him that the City of Hamilton strongly opposes the decision to eliminate the mandatory Census long form questionnaire on the basis that it will compromise the City's ability to effectively plan for its communities, and to request that the Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Industry, reinstate the mandatory Census long form questionnaire for the upcoming 2011 Census;
- (b) That the correspondence sent to the Prime Minister regarding the Census long form questionnaire be forwarded to all local Members of Parliament, local Members of Provincial Parliament, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities;
- (c) That the item regarding the resolution from the City of Kingston regarding the Mandatory Census Long Form questionnaire for the upcoming 2011 census be identified as complete and removed from the General Issues Committee's Outstanding Business List.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 26th 2010, the Federal Government of Canada announced that the mandatory Census long form questionnaire will be discontinued as of the upcoming 2011 Census and that the source of this information will be replaced with the voluntary National Household Survey (NHS). This decision raises serious concerns and consequences for the City of Hamilton.

Data from the Census long form has provided the City of Hamilton and local decision-makers with detailed demographic profiles of our population at the national, provincial, regional, community and neighbourhood level. The information has been fundamental to informing policy and program planning in many departments such as Community Services, Culture and Recreation, Planning and Economic Development, Public Health, Corporate Services etc. It is a tool often used in planning human services as it provides insight into key social issues related to employment and income, education, immigration, ethnicity, etc.

Data from the NHS will not be the same robust data required to conduct trend analysis and detailed population profiles of small geographical areas. The data will not be representative of diverse communities and we will lose the ability to compare and benchmark with provincial and national statistics. Smaller populations of interest and vulnerable groups would be indistinguishable, and minor but important variations in demographic composition would be unperceivable.

There has been some preliminary review of existing data sources that can be used as an alternative source of the Census long form data. However to date, there has not been any source identified as being able to provide data of the same quality and reliability.

Without the Census long form data, it will be difficult for the City of Hamilton to monitor the changing needs of our population and make sound decisions and identify priority needs. The decision to discontinue the Census long form will severely limit our ability to effectively plan programs and services, meet growth management targets, appropriately address legislative requirements and responsibly account for the local, provincial and federal funding received to meet the needs of our citizens. In particular, our ability to effectively plan and monitor services targeted to the needs of under-served and/or vulnerable groups will be greatly hindered.

Alternatives for Consideration –See Page 6

FINANCIAL / STAFFING / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: There are no financial implications associated with Report CS11021

Staffing: There are no staffing implications associated with Report CS11021

Legal: There are no legal implications associated with Report CS11021

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Chronology of events)

Council approved the following motion at its December 15, 2010 meeting:

“That the resolution from the City of Kingston respecting Mandatory Census Long Form Questionnaire for the up-coming 2011 Census, be referred to the appropriate staff for a report to the General Issues Committee.”

The City of Kingston’s resolution advised the Federal Government of its opposition to the decision to eliminate the Mandatory Census Long Form Questionnaire, and called on the Government to re-instate the questionnaire for the up-coming 2011 census. Further, Kingston City Council directed that their resolution be forwarded to all municipalities with a population over 50,000 requesting that they also request that the questionnaire be reinstated.

On June 26th 2010, the Federal Government announced that the mandatory Census long form questionnaire will be discontinued as of the upcoming 2011 Census and will be replaced with the voluntary NHS.

Since the announcement many different federal, provincial and local government departments, private-sector corporations and non-profit organizations have made efforts to have the Census long form questionnaire reinstated. Letters, signed petitions and impact reports have been submitted to the Federal Government by groups such as: the Province of Ontario, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, the Ontario Public Health Association, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, etc. Several Ontario municipalities have had their Councils endorse motions to oppose the decision. A list of close to 500 groups or organizations across Canada opposing this decision can be found at the *data libre.ca* website which is dedicated to advocating for civic information and data to be more accessible.

The following actions have also taken place locally since the federal announcement:

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- Former Mayor Eisenberger sent a letter opposing the elimination of the Census long form questionnaire to the Honourable Tony Clement on July 14, 2010. (attached as Appendix A to Report CS11021)
- City staff participated in the open forum “Code Red for Neighbourhood Data: A Community Forum About Changes to the 2011 Census” organized by Hamilton’s Social Planning and Research Council to discuss the implications of the decision (September 8, 2010). Speakers at the forum included:
 - Chris Charlton, MP Hamilton Mountain
 - David Christopherson, MP Hamilton Centre
 - Tom Cooper, Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction
 - Howard Elliott, The Hamilton Spectator
 - Sara Mayo, Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton
 - Kathy Short, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
 - Carmen Bian, City of Hamilton
 - Louisa Wong, City of Hamilton
- Staff from the Community Services Department, the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and McMaster University met with MP David Sweet on September 17, 2010 to discuss the issue and strategize ways to voice the concerns to the government.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

City staff have been involved in ongoing consultation and discussions regarding updates to the issue, strategies for increasing awareness in our community and possible actions that can be taken to voice concerns to the government with the following groups:

- The Canadian Council for Social Development’s (CCSD) Community Data Consortium which is comprised of 17 regional data user groups which include more than 50 municipalities across Canada. The Community Data Consortium provides a gateway for municipalities and community based organizations to access data from Statistics Canada and other institutions in order to identify and better understand the social and economic trends within their individual communities.

- The City of Hamilton's Census Consortium which includes representation from :
 - Community Services Department, Social Development and Early Childhood Services Division
 - Community Services Department, Social Housing and Homelessness Division
 - Corporate Services, Customer Service, Access & Equity Division
 - Planning and Economic Development, Strategic Services - Special Projects
 - Public Health Services, Planning and Business Improvement
 - Public Works, Environment and Sustainable Infrastructure
 - The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
 - The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton

- The Federation of Canadian Municipalities which represents the interests of municipalities on policy and program matters that fall within federal jurisdiction. Members include Canada's largest cities, small urban and rural communities, and 18 provincial and territorial municipal associations.

ANALYSIS / RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Canada has been conducting a nation wide census on its population for the past 140 years. The earlier versions of the census had simply collected data on the age, sex, marital status and occupation of the population. Since 1971, the Census of Canada has been comprised of a short form and a long form questionnaire. The mandatory short form questionnaire is sent to all Canadians and collects basic population demographics which include attributes such as age, gender, marital status and household composition. The mandatory long form questionnaire is sent to one in five Canadians (approximately 20%) and collects more detailed socio-economic attributes of the population which include education, labour status, employment sector, immigration status, ethnicity, etc. The data collected from the long form questionnaire is extrapolated to the rest of the population based on rigorous methodology that produces statistically reliable data representative of the population as a whole.

The Federal Government, without public consultation, has decided to eliminate the Census long form questionnaire and is justifying the decision with the rationale that its mandatory nature poses a violation of privacy rights and the jail time penalty for non-compliance is unjust. Despite objections from many groups and organizations, the Federal Government of Canada maintains their decision to shift to the voluntary NHS and indicates that the NHS will be sent to a larger proportion of the population than the census long form (30% vs. 20%) and will hence yield the same, if not more, representative data of the population.

In actuality however, although the sampling rate of the NHS would be higher than the Census long form questionnaire, the response rate will likely be much lower by the very fact that the survey is voluntary. Certain groups of Canadians and vulnerable populations such as recent immigrants and those in lower socio-economic groups would be less likely to complete the survey. Hence, the data received from the NHS could be skewed and would not be an accurate reflection of the actual diversity of the Canadian population.

Unpredictable response rates, common aggregation of populations with similar attributes in concentrated geographies and the new surveying methodology would also compromise data availability at smaller geography levels such as planning units, wards, census tracts or dissemination areas.

Furthermore, although the National Household Survey will be collecting essentially the same information as what was collected through the Census long form questionnaire, due to differences in sampling and data collection methodology, the two data sets would not be comparable to each other.

A sample list of projects, reports and programs that would be impacted by the loss of data from the Census long form questionnaire highlights just a few of the many departments and services this decision would affect (attached as Appendix B to Report CS11021).

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

The Mayor on behalf of Council could meet with all local Members of Parliament and local Members of Provincial Parliament to express their concern about the elimination of the mandatory Census long form questionnaire. Meeting in person would allow the Mayor to highlight the negative impact of the federal decision on the City's capacity to plan policies, programs and services for our residents, and provide an opportunity to further advocate for the reinstatement of the questionnaire.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN (Linkage to Desired End Results)

Focus Areas: 1. Skilled, Innovative and Respectful Organization, 2. Financial Sustainability, 3. Intergovernmental Relationships, 4. Growing Our Economy, 5. Social Development, 6. Environmental Stewardship, 7. Healthy Community

Intergovernmental Relationships

- ◆ Influence federal and provincial policy development to benefit Hamilton

Social Development

- ◆ Residents in need have access to adequate support services

Healthy Community

- ◆ Adequate access to food, water, shelter and income, safety, work, recreation and support for all (Human Services)

APPENDICES / SCHEDULES

Appendix A to Report CS11021 – Letter from Mayor Eisenberger to the Honourable Tony Clement

Appendix B to Report CS11021 – Project, Reports and Programs Using Census Data



CITY OF
HAMILTON
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

July 14, 2010

The Honourable Tony Clement
Minister of Industry
C.D. Howe Building
235 Queen Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H5

Dear Minister Clement:

I am writing to you in response to the recent Government of Canada announcement that the Census long form questionnaire will be discontinued as of the upcoming 2011 Census, and that the source of this information will be replaced with the voluntary National Household Survey (NHS). This decision raises serious concerns and consequences that must be reviewed and reconsidered.

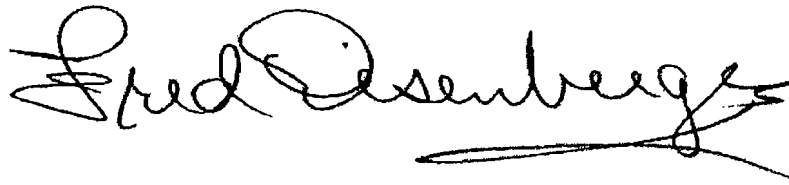
The mandatory Census long form questionnaire has long provided local decision-makers with detailed, rigorous demographic profiles of Canadians at national, provincial, regional, community and neighbourhood levels. This information has been fundamental to informing policy and program planning for key social issues related to employment and income, education, immigration and ethnicity. The same high quality data cannot be expected from the proposed NHS that would likely result in far fewer responses (by the very fact that it is voluntary) and skewed data that under reports vulnerable groups (i.e.: recent immigrants and those in lower socio-economic groups would be unlikely to complete the voluntary survey, the very groups that rely most on local-level programs and services).

Without the Census long form data, it will be difficult for our local government to monitor the changing needs of our population making it even more difficult to make sound decisions and identify priority needs. The decision to discontinue the Census long form will severely limit our ability to plan programs and services, meet growth management targets, appropriately address legislative requirements and responsibly account for local, provincial and federal funding received to meet the needs of our citizens. This is a serious matter that puts citizens, programs, services and the credibility of our work at risk.

On behalf of the City of Hamilton, I urge the Government of Canada to reinstate the Census long form questionnaire for the 2011 Census and subsequent censuses to ensure that a solid foundation of reliable, consistent information is available for evidenced-based public policy and program planning that contributes to the health and well-being of our citizens.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter and I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred Eisenberger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Fred Eisenberger
Mayor

Copies:

David Sweet, MP Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough, Westdale
Dean Allison, MP Niagara West-Glanbrook
David Christopherson, MP Hamilton Centre
Chris Charlton, MP Hamilton Mountain
Wayne Marston, MP Hamilton East-Stoney Creek
Carl Zehr, Mayor of Kitchener, ON, Chair Big City Mayors' Caucus, Federation of
Canadian Municipalities
Joe-Anne Priel, General Manager, Community Services – City of Hamilton

Sample List of Local Project, Reports and Programs that Use Census Data

1. City of Hamilton - Affordable Transit Pass
2. City of Hamilton - Anti-Racism Training (Demographics)
3. City of Hamilton - Child Care Fee Subsidy Business Process Review
4. City of Hamilton - Consideration of Transit Fare Increase
5. City of Hamilton - Disability Demographics: Gender, Poverty and Age
6. City of Hamilton - Disability: Some Highlights in Hamilton
7. City of Hamilton - Early Development Instruments (EDI) Social Risk Index
8. City of Hamilton - Environmental Scan
9. City of Hamilton - Equal Access Program (Equal Access Newsletter - Volume 2010 - Issue Q1)
10. City of Hamilton - External GISNet site
11. City of Hamilton - Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy
12. City of Hamilton - Hamilton Infrastructure Strategy Study
13. City of Hamilton - Hamilton's Urban Official Plan
14. City of Hamilton - Homelessness Partnering Strategy - Community Plan
15. City of Hamilton - Human Services Planning Initiative (HSPI)
16. City of Hamilton - Immigration Strategy
17. City of Hamilton - Neighbourhood Strategies
18. City of Hamilton - Nodes and Corridors - Light Rapid Transit
19. City of Hamilton - Nutritious Food Basket Report
20. City of Hamilton - On Any Given Night (OAGN)
21. City of Hamilton - Our Community Culture Project Phase 1 Report -- Baseline Cultural Mapping
22. City of Hamilton - Outdoor Facilities Study
23. City of Hamilton - Persons with Disabilities: 2006 Facts and Figures
24. City of Hamilton - Population and Employment Projections
25. City of Hamilton - Secondary Plan
26. City of Hamilton - Snow Angels
27. City of Hamilton - The PHacts Hamilton: A Socio-Demographic Profile
28. City of Hamilton - Transportation Master Plan Studies
29. City of Hamilton - Transportation Tomorrow Survey
30. City of Hamilton - Utilities Arrears
31. City of Hamilton - Vision 20/20 - Sustainability Indicators Report
32. City of Hamilton - Ward Profiles

33. Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) - Riverdale 2009 Report
34. Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)
35. Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction - Poverty Matrix
36. Integrated Energy Mapping For Ontario Communities
37. Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC) Incomes and Poverty Report
38. Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC) Neighbourhood Profiles
39. The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council -A Demographic Profile of Immigrants in Hamilton
40. The Spectator Code Red series