

August 5, 2010

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier McGuinty:

I'm writing to request your assistance in sharing concerns of the Toronto Real Estate Board (TREB) with your fellow Premiers and Prime Minister Stephen Harper on the issue of planned changes to the Census of Population. We are particularly concerned about data quality and the consultation process and have also expressed these concerns to Minister Clement and the Prime Minister.

As you stated in your video greeting to TREB celebrating our 90th Anniversary this year, our 30,000 REALTOR® Members in the Greater Toronto Area "promote neighbourhoods and understand that buying a home is a fulfillment of a family's dream". Our Members are active in both the residential and commercial real estate markets which together make a significant contribution to the Canadian economy.

The real estate sector, like other private, public and not-for-profit groups, uses Census data collected through the long form survey to track socio-economic and demographic change over time and for business planning purposes.

Our sector also uses information from other Statistics Canada and third party surveys/polls that are based at least in part on Census long form survey data. One example of this is Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS) from which we collect monthly employment, unemployment, population and wage data. Periodically, the LFS is redesigned to account for the evolution of Canada's population characteristics, which are tracked in part using answers provided through the Census long form survey.

TREB is concerned about how comparable data from a voluntary National Household Survey (NHS) will be with data collected in conjunction with past Census exercises.

We have respectfully suggested that the Federal Government provide detailed guidance (likely through Statistics Canada) as to where historic comparisons between NHS data and past Census will be difficult and what steps could be taken to make the data more comparable and thus more suitable for analysis. If this is not possible well in advance of the NHS roll-out in 2011, the Federal Government should seriously consider the reinstatement of the mandatory long-form survey for the 2011 Census.

If faced with reinstatement, TREB has strongly urged the government to immediately roll-out plans for broad-based consultations to determine and address privacy and data quality concerns for the 2016 Census.

We appreciate your consideration of sharing our concerns with the Federal Government and we look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

Sincerely,

Bill Johnston, M.A., LL.B.,
President

c.c. The Honourable Monique Smith, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
Dorothy Mason, President, Ontario Real Estate Association
Paul Genest, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs