

### **Saving the 2016 Census: Trudeau must act quickly**

In June 2010, the Harper government issued an Order in Council abolishing the mandatory nature of the census, ending a Canadian tradition older than the country itself. Strong opposition to this arbitrary decision culminated in the resignation of Munir Sheikh, the Chief Statistician at the time. His predecessor, former Chief Statistician Ivan Fellegi, correctly predicted that low response rates among large segments of the population would result in biased data. Provincial governments, municipalities, business associations, research institutes, and social scientists, all joined in rare unanimity against the decision.

We will not repeat here the arguments which have been put forward many times to describe the deleterious effects of such an anti-science measure. Its negative effects have been clearly documented. Response rates plummeted and as a result, nearly a quarter of Canadian municipalities are missing data for 2011. What's more, the 2011 data cannot be compared with those of previous years and many groups, including aboriginal, low-income and immigrant communities, are poorly represented.

The election of this new Liberal government provides an opportunity to stem the damage of these devastating changes. Mr. Trudeau has already promised to reinstate the mandatory long-form census and restore Statistics Canada's reputation as a world leader in national statistics. Undoing these mistakes cannot wait; the time for action is now as Statistics Canada is on the cusp of launching the 2016 Census. An immediate Order in Council is the only way to implement the long-form in time for the census six months from now. This must be one of the first moves made by the Liberal government of Mr. Trudeau. It would mark a clear break with the previous government and ensure that future social policies can be made on scientific grounds rather than ideological dogmatism.

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This letter is also signed by 60 professors and researchers from Canadian universities

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