



TRIEC

Toronto Region Immigrant
Employment Council

New Realities. New Opportunities.

TRIEC OPEN LETTER TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Tuesday, July 13, 2010

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

We are writing this letter to urge the Government of Canada to make mandatory the completion of the long form of the census, as per the last thirty-five years, and to do another Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants.

Statistics tell us that people who volunteer are not necessarily representative of the population as a whole. Aboriginal people, recent immigrants, and the poor are also less likely to fill in the long form.

As an organization dedicated to creating and championing solutions for immigrant employment, the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) fears that the data generated going forward will not accurately capture the well-being of immigrants. The long form responses represent Canada's best data on immigrant groups and so are vitally important to our collective growth and aspirations as a diverse and integrated society.

When the census is voluntary, the marginalized become further marginalized, and the wealthy become more comfortably invisible. The disparities at the core of so many health and social problems become glossed over.

In the United States (and almost all other rich countries), the census is mandatory. If the Canadian census were made voluntary, then Canada would just opt out of line with international standards, destroying comparability with international data. Further, we would be unable to fairly draw conclusions about immigrants because we would not have information about the households that choose not to respond. Risk averse, eliminating the collection of this information would prevent comparisons with all the relevant data collected by the census in the last thirty-five years.

We understand that the Government plans to increase the sample to 30 per cent as a corrective measure, but that will not solve the self-selection bias.

TRIEC firmly believes that Canada should keep the completion of the census long-form mandatory and maintain its integral status as a public resource. We respectfully submit that the small percentage of the population opposed to completing the census is far outweighed by the many who stand to suffer if the data is not collected and analyzed properly.

TRIEC also urges the Government to do another Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants, which underscores how well, or badly, newcomers are doing. As a country that relies on immigration for population and labour force growth, the health and well-being of immigrant groups determines how well we do.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth McKeown
Executive Director