



# RNAO

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario  
L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers  
autorisés de l'Ontario

Hon. James Moore  
Minister of Industry  
East Tower, 11th Floor  
235 Queen Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H5

January 27, 2015

**RE: Support for Bill C626 - Reinstating the Long-Form Census**

Dear Minister Moore,

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) is the professional association representing registered nurses, nurse practitioners and nursing students across all sectors and roles in Ontario. We are pleased to offer our support for Bill C626 – *An Act to Amend the Statistics Act* which aims to reinstate the long-form census. RNAO has been one of the leading bodies speaking in support of the long-form census, leading up to, and following its demise. We commend MP Ted Hsu for his leadership in advancing this private member's bill.

In 2010, the federal government eliminated the long-form census in favour of the National Household Survey, a much shorter voluntary survey -- without seeking input from the users of the data.<sup>1</sup> The long-form census was a tool used by policy-makers, researchers, and public officials interested in creating robust public policy. Furthermore, the data from the long-form census was integral to ensuring that the needs of marginalized populations did not become invisible, as it addressed the social determinants of health. It was "Canada's only complete national database on education, income, employment, ethnicity, and language"<sup>2</sup> as well as "the only source of regular, highly detailed, systematic information on immigration, family and household structure, racialization, demography, and other vital information about Canadians." Without the data provided by the long-form census, effective and responsive policy making becomes a challenge.<sup>3</sup>

Converting from the long-form census to the National Household Survey significantly erodes the rigour of the data collected. The decision to implement the National Household Survey was made despite the protest of Mr. Munir Sheikh (Chief Statistician at Statistics Canada at the time) whose methodological expertise was unwavering when upholding that a voluntary survey could not become a substitute for a mandatory census. A voluntary survey introduces significant self-selection bias which invalidates the resultant data.<sup>5</sup> It perpetuates that "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."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, individuals who are not fluent in French or English (i.e., new immigrants and refugees), Aboriginal populations and individuals with disabilities may provide lower response rates.<sup>6</sup> Also of concern, Statistics Canada suppresses data for geographic areas where the response rate is less than 50 per cent due to the effects of non-response bias.<sup>7</sup> While this was the same procedure for the census, it becomes increasingly problematic to meet the 50

per cent criteria when the survey is voluntary. How can valid measures of Canadian trends be captured when data is suppressed?

The National Household survey cannot and does not compare to the long-form census which had a 95 per cent response rate and provided information on trends in the Canadian population since 1981.

Minister, for the reasons identified above, nurses urge the federal government -- in the strongest possible terms - to support Bill C626 as a means of generating valuable evidence that will enable effective planning and policy for Canada's continued development.

Warm regards,



Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, PhD, LLD(hon), O.ONT  
Chief Executive Officer, RNAO

- c. Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper – Prime Minister of Canada
- Thomas Mulcair – Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada
- Justin Trudeau – Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada
- Elizabeth May – Leader of the Green Party of Canada
- Ted Hsu – Member of Parliament
- Kathleen Wynne – Premier of Ontario

#### References:

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