

Restoring the long form census

Dear editor:

Eliminating the long form census was a costly mistake and it's high time Parliament fix it and restore it by passing Bill C-626.

In 2011, Stephen Harper replaced the traditional long form census with a voluntary survey that cost taxpayers more than \$22 million more and produced inferior data. Its numbers were unusable for 25% of our towns and weren't comparable to past surveys.

Worse still, groups like rural residents, the poor and youth were undercounted because of low response rates. That bias not only compromised the census, but it damaged other surveys which rely on census data to correct their sampling.

These errors make it harder for businesses to understand markets, governments to deliver services and researchers to get facts.

The census is used to design better public transit through its data on commuting patterns. It helps determine where religious groups, minorities and immigrants live, which tells us what services and businesses could succeed in their neighbourhood. It is the only source of data on small communities' skill needs and labour shortages.

Groups like the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Canadian Medical Association have been calling for a fix.

That's why I proposed C-626 to restore the long form census. It would save money and produce better data for everyone. This bill also ensures the census produces quality data that is comparable over time, and empowers the Chief Statistician to protect the integrity of the survey design and data collection process.

Canadians need the basic data that is essential to good planning. I hope Members of Parliament will vote to pass C-626 this winter so that we can stop paying more for less.

Ted Hsu, MP

Liberal Party of Canada Science Critic