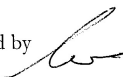




PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5, Canada

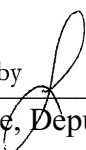
Item No. 10.1.6
Halifax Regional Council
August 3, 2010

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed by 

SUBMITTED BY:

Wayne Anstey, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by 

Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: July 9, 2010

SUBJECT: **2011 Census Long Form Survey**

ORIGIN

Staff

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Mayor write to the Government of Canada and request that its decision to eliminate the mandatory Long Form Census Survey for the 2011 Census be reversed, and refer the issue to the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) and encourage them to adopt a resolution in supporting the retention of the mandatory Long Form Census Survey.

BACKGROUND

In every census for the last 35 years, Statistics Canada provided a Long Census Form to 20% of Canadian households, every five years, to obtain detailed data on household characteristics, housing, income, employment, education, ethnicity, disabilities and other information required to help understand the make-up of the Canadian population. 80% of households received a Short Census Form (eight basic questions). Completing both the Long and Short forms by recipients was mandatory.

Beginning with the 2011 census, the Short Form structure/questions will remain the same and the survey will be distributed to all households. Completion of the form will be compulsory. However, the Federal Government has decided to do away with the mandatory Long Form, and replace it with a “National Household Survey” which will be distributed to one in three households. Completion of this survey will be voluntary rather than compulsory.

The explanation given for the change, according to a spokesperson for Minister Tony Clement, was “to reasonably limit what many Canadians felt was an intrusion of their personal privacy”.

Numerous business units within HRM rely on census data for a variety of analytical purposes. There is concern regarding the elimination of the compulsory census long form.

DISCUSSION

HRM uses detailed census information in a variety of ways to assist Council in decision-making and policy formulation. For example, socio-economic data and analysis is used for optimizing municipal service delivery, transportation and infrastructure planning, economic development and housing needs. However, the data must be reliable in order to be effective.

The Census, at least historically, has been one of the most reliable and consistent data sets available. The mandatory requirement for people to complete the long form census results in a validity and comprehensiveness of data that is not likely to be achieved under a voluntary system. Statisticians argue that with a voluntary survey, certain socio-economic groups may be less likely to participate, which skews the results of the survey and calls into question the reliability of the census information. Without accurate and reliable information, it is difficult to compare data with previous years. As well, policy decisions based on the census data may be less effective.

With respect to the protection of privacy matter, staff advises that Statistics Canada goes to considerable lengths to protect the privacy of information provided in the Census. No one, other than selected Stats Canada Staff, is able to review individual responses. Anyone using census information, including the general public, researchers and other government agencies, only have access to aggregated data - responses that are added together and totaled for a given geographic area.

The smallest area for which data is available is the Dissemination Area which encompasses a population of about 400-700 people.

Many organizations have concerns over the elimination of the mandatory Long Census Form, including the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Atlantic Provinces Economic Council and the Canadian Institute of Planners. The City of Toronto recently passed a resolution asking the Government of Canada to reverse its decision. (See Attachment A). HRM can add its voice to others by communicating directly to the Federal Government and through its affiliation with the FCM and UNSM.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications resulting from this report. However, if the proposed changes to the 2011 census are implemented, there may be implications for the effectiveness of HRM investments and budgeting decisions.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement is required for this report.

ALTERNATIVES

None.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Motion of Toronto City Council July 7, 2010

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Fred Wendt, Planner, Regional and Community Planning, 490-3971

Report Approved by: _____
Austin French, Manager, Planning Services, 490-6717

Report Approved by: _____
Paul Dunphy, Director of Community Development

Original Signed



City Council

Motion without Notice

MM51.12	ACTION			Ward: All
----------------	---------------	--	--	-----------

Federal Government Decision to Cancel Long-Form Census - by Councillor Davis, seconded by Deputy Mayor Pantalone

** This Motion has been deemed urgent by the Chair. Council has added this Motion to the agenda for debate.*

Urgent

Recommendations

Councillor Davis, seconded by Deputy Mayor Pantalone, recommends that:

1. City Council immediately request that the Federal Government reverse its decision to scrap the mandatory long form census, which will reduce the City's capacity to plan and deliver quality public services.
2. City Council direct the City Manager to work with other governments, community organizations, and academic institutions in urging the federal government to reverse this decision.

Summary

The Federal Government is doing away with the 35-year-old long census form for the 2011 Census and will replace it with a voluntary "National Household Survey". This recent announcement has taken municipalities and the NGO community by complete surprise.

The City relies on this data as a vital resource to help better understand the socio-economic characteristics of the residents that we serve. The work on the City's Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, inter-governmental initiatives, neighbourhood revitalization such as Lawrence Heights, and many other service programs rely on Census long form data and their comparability historically.

Attachment A

The City relies on valid, credible and good quality census data, and this decision will hinder the municipal sector's ability to plan policies around everything from immigrant settlement programs to public transit design. Major users of this data at the City include Social Development Finance and Administration; City Planning; Children's Services; Economic Development; Toronto Employment and Social Services; Shelter, Support and Housing Administration; Public Health; Toronto Police Services, Toronto Transit Commission, and Emergency Medical Services.

All of the City's current Neighbourhood and Ward Profiles (which the community sector uses constantly) will also be impacted in the ability to update these important information resources. This move also jeopardizes the effectiveness of a variety of initiatives where the City is taking leadership, such as the Quality-of-Life-Reporting System and the Community Social Data Strategy.

(Submitted to City Council on July 6 and 7, 2010 as MM51.12)

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM51.12

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2010/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-31913.pdf>