



The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A2

July 20, 2010

Prime Minister:

The Vanier Institute of the Family is writing to formally add its voice to those of the many highly respected national organizations and distinguished Canadians who have stated their opposition to the government's intention to eliminate the mandatory aspect of the long-form national census questionnaire.

The Vanier Institute of the Family is an independent national research and educational organization committed to the well-being of Canadian families in all their diversity. The Institute serves Canadians as a trusted and reliable source of accurate information on family trends. It presents the facts and interprets these trends to focus on the challenges confronting families and those who work to strengthen and support them.

The Institute was created in 1965 and given this mandate by His Excellency Governor General Georges Vanier: *"To function as a Royal Commission to investigate and learn all there is to know about the families of Canada in a world of change. But since the need for knowledge and study will continue as long as we inhabit the globe, this Royal Commission will never be discharged"*.

In fulfilling that mandate for the past forty-five years, the Institute has relied heavily on data provided by Statistics Canada – particularly that provided in the long-form census – as the basis for monitoring trends in family life, identifying challenges and strengths, creating public awareness, and informing the development of public policies. These records help us understand the challenges faced by families, and to identify the supports required for them to function as the cornerstone of our society.

94 PROM. CENTREPOINTE DR. OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA K2G 6B1 TEL: (613) 228-8500 FAX/TÉLÉC : (613)228-8007
WWW.VIFAMILY.CA

Patron
Her Excellency The Right Honourable
Michaëlle Jean, C.C., C.M.M., C.O.M., C.D.
Governor General of Canada

Founded by the late
Right Honourable *Georges P. Vanier*
and the late Honourable *Pauline Vanier*

Présidente d'Honneur
Son Excellence la très honorable
Michaëlle Jean, C.C., C.M.M., C.O.M., C.D.
Gouverneure Générale du Canada

Fondé par feu le très
Honorable *Georges P. Vanier*
et l'Honorable *Pauline Vanier*

President/Présidente
Verna Bruce

Chair, Executive Committee
Président, Comité Exécutif
Jean T. Fournier

The Institute takes this information and reports on a broad range of issues including family finances, vulnerable families, disability issues, the families of new Canadians, as well as questions related to education, housing, and work-family balance to name just a few of the topics we have addressed in the past few years (see www.vifamily.ca).

The Institute's seminal report, "**Profiling Canada's Families**" which is released every five years, is based largely on the data provided by the long-form census. Our 4th edition, titled *Families Count*, is to be released this fall. It is the only study of its kind in the country and is heavily relied upon by policy makers at all levels of government to make well-informed decisions as new legislation is framed.

The "Profiling" study identifies emerging challenges and trends which can have an impact on family life; provides resources for educators and researchers; gives those on the front lines of family service agencies better tools to help them deal with the challenges facing Canada's nearly nine million families, and serves as a source of information for Canadian families themselves, by providing easy access to practical information in easily understandable language. Its integrity is jeopardized by data that would be seriously compromised by a voluntary approach to the detailed long-form survey.

Furthermore, the loss of in-depth census data not only affects the work of the Institute and the audiences we serve, but also our ability to provide feedback to governments and policy makers. As we use the census information to understand the trends, and as we connect with our constituencies, we are also able to provide feedback to Statistics Canada about emerging data/information requirements which will form the basis of future surveys.

As an organization that works closely with data provided by Statistics Canada, the Institute can attest to the high level of security involved in collecting and making available the findings. It is our view that the provisions made by Statistics Canada to ensure anonymity of results are very effective and do not jeopardize or unduly impinge on the privacy of Canadian citizens.

Living in an information age when the importance of knowledge workers is broadly recognized, it makes no sense to the Institute to reduce capacity to obtain countrywide information which will enhance knowledge about ourselves, and hinder those charged with policy development by reducing their access to statistically sound data.

It is also the Institute's view that the legislative obligation to complete the census is a reasonable requirement and obligation of Canadian citizenship, much as citizens are required to participate in jury duty, and to submit tax forms when income is earned.

Therefore, the Vanier Institute strongly advocates the government of Canada reverse its policy decision on this issue, and reinstate the mandatory element of the long-form census survey.

Sincerely,

Clarence Lochhead, Executive Director
The Vanier Institute of the Family

Copy: Hon. Tony Clement, Minister of Industry
Hon. Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health
Hon. Rona Ambrose, Minister for Status of Women
Hon. Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development
Hon. Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance
Hon. Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Hon. James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages
Hon. Rob Nicholson, Minister of Justice Attorney General of Canada
Hon. Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development