



CAM  
ACSF

Canadian Association of Midwives  
Association canadienne des sages-femmes

## **CAM opposes the Canadian government's decision to replace the mandatory long-form of the 2011 Census with a voluntary form**

Dear CAM members,

CAM opposes the recent decision on the part of the Conservative government to cancel the mandatory long-form questionnaire as part of the 2011 Census of Population. We feel that the data from the Census long form are uniquely important. They function as the basic source of information about the population of Canada and the benchmark against which all other data are measured and evaluated. The data are a key part of the decision-making processes of professional organizations (such as CAM), public service providers, community service providers, businesses, and charities. In addition, without the mandatory long form, the effectiveness and responsiveness of public policy initiatives of federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments will be compromised.

The usefulness of the long-form Census depends critically on the exceptionally high response rate – over 95 percent– that is only possible with a mandatory questionnaire. Replacing it with the voluntary National Household Survey, as has been proposed, is not an acceptable alternative. Past experience indicates that the responses will not be representative of the total population. In particular, the responses from key communities of concern, such as the very poor, Aboriginal communities, recent immigrants and some ethno-racial communities, will likely be quite low. Effective health services, such as midwifery care, would be compromised. Consequently, the impact of these changes will be disproportionately borne by those who are already most vulnerable. This is of great concern to CAM, who believes that midwifery care should be universally accessible to Canadian women, regardless of socio-economic circumstances.

As the professional organization representing midwives across Canada, CAM depends on information derived from the Census long-form questionnaire by researchers in order to inform our lobbying and advocacy efforts at national, provincial and territorial levels. Reliable data at local and national levels is crucial for understanding the needs of families and midwives nationwide. The loss of data from the Census long-form questionnaire would mean a less efficient and effective use of the precious money and resources we wish to devote to insuring that midwifery is a regulated, publicly funded part of the primary maternity care system in all provinces and territories. The mandatory long-form questionnaire of the Census is unique and internationally recognized as a cornerstone of knowledge about our society. The basis it provides for evidence-based policy cannot be stated strongly enough.

For these reasons, CAM opposes the decision to cancel the mandatory long-form questionnaire of the 2011 Census of Population. Many other organizations, including the Canadian Nurses Association, the Canadian Medical Association, United Way-Centraide Canada, and the Canadian Research Data Centre Network also oppose this move. The Minister of Industry, Tony Clement has maintained the government's decision to cancel this form in a hearing before Parliament on July 27, 2010. It is nevertheless still possible to lobby at the local level, by writing directly to individual MPs. If any CAM member is interested in contacting their local MP on this issue and would like more information, please contact Eby Heller, CAM Project Coordinator, at [eheller@canadianmidwives.org](mailto:eheller@canadianmidwives.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gisela Becker". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Gisela Becker, President  
Canadian Association of Midwives

Email: [president@canadianmidwives.org](mailto:president@canadianmidwives.org)

This information has been synthesized from letters written by the Canadian Research Data Centre Network and a consortium of organizations coordinated by United Way Canada-Centraide Canada. To find complete versions of these letters, follow these links:

[Canadian Research Data Centre Network](#)

[United Way Canada-Centraide Canada](#)