



Cuts to Statistics Canada are Harming Canadians **October 23, 2014**

The Canadian Library Association / Association canadienne des bibliothèques (CLA/ACB) is the national voice for Canada's library communities.

Canadians know that access to reliable and high quality information, from the widest variety of points of view, is critical to a prosperous, functioning and democratic society. The decisions that citizens, communities, and governments make are better informed and have the ability to be more innovative when there is a free exchange of ideas facilitated by open and equal access to information. It is with these values in mind that CLA responds to recent and ongoing changes at Statistics Canada.

Recent programme cuts and policy changes at Statistics Canada have made it more difficult than ever for Canadians to track changes to critical issues that affect their communities, such as unemployment rates or the education of our children. The replacement of the mandatory long-form census with the National Household Survey, at a significantly greater cost, and the cancellation of many social surveys has made it increasingly challenging, if not impossible, for municipalities, hospitals, schools, and government agencies to administer social programmes and to track their success. In some cases, municipalities are financing their own surveys to gather the critical data they once had access to through StatCan¹. StatCan cuts and changes are continuing to impede effective planning for all agencies, making future programming a costly gamble. Additionally, with all levels of government focused on social and economic innovation, it is imperative that municipalities have the ability to look back on trends in order to plan for the future with reliable data.

Statistics Canada withering on the vine

Budget cuts have affected Statistics Canada enormously, which in turn affects all Canadians and all levels of government. While StatCan extended a lifeline to surveys and tools that tracked the nation's economy through these cuts, it did so at the great expense of its social surveys, where significant budget reductions to the agency and ill-advised policy changes to its census program created major gaps that cannot be filled. Canadians have forever lost valuable research that affects their communities as a result of cancellations of and cuts to surveys such as:

¹ Paperny, A. M. (2014, August 27). Health officials starved of census data pay for local info of their own. *Global News*. Retrieved from <http://globalnews.ca/news/1528225/why-lost-long-census-hurts-your-health-and-your-tax-dollars/>

- **The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth**, which followed the development of well-being of Canadian children from birth to early childhood
- **The Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics**, which provided valuable insight into the financial situation of Canadian families
- **The Workplace and Employment Survey**, which examined employer and employee issues affecting the Canadian workplace, such as competitiveness, technology, training, and job stability.

Canadians and their communities are now suffering the consequences of budget cuts and policy changes at Statistics Canada. Major, long-standing surveys that paint a dynamic picture of Canadian society have been eliminated, making it nearly impossible to do year-over-year comparisons and to track the changes in social data and programs over time. It is hard to imagine less responsible measures in the age of open data, open government, and evidence-based policy-making than limiting the supply of data or replacing it with inferior products.

In the context of fiscal responsibility, CLA believes that the government can be much more effective at planning and supporting sound planning. The current government is determined to balance the books and bring Canada into an environment of economic prosperity and growth. In order to plan for these outcomes, careful public spending is dependent on correct information to inform decisions. Statistics Canada has long been the core agency for Canada's ability to plan and spend carefully at all levels of government, and within the business and not-for-profit sectors. CLA believes that without consistent and reliable data, this ability will be lost.

The CLA urges the government to return Statistics Canada to its status as one of the world's most respected National Statistical agencies by restoring its funding and the long-form census. The CLA urges the government to provide Statistics Canada with the support it needs to collect, analyze, and publish data that has proven, longstanding value for decision-makers, communities, and Canadians alike.

The Canadian Library Association/Association canadienne des bibliothèques (CLA/ACB) is the national voice for Canada's library communities, representing the interests of libraries, library workers, and all those concerned about enhancing the quality of life of Canadians through information and literacy. CLA/ACB represents 1410 library workers, libraries and library supporters; and Canadian libraries serve in excess of 34 million Canadians through the nation's public, school, academic, government and special libraries.

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