



**ONTARIO PUBLIC  
SCHOOL BOARDS'  
ASSOCIATION**

**Leading Education's Advocates**

**Ontario Public School Boards' Association**  
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Michael Barrett  
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To: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada

The Honourable Navdeep Bains  
Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development

House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada K1A 0A6

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Dear Prime Minister and Minister:

As the Parliament of Canada resumes this month, we would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the federal government on its decision to reinstate the mandatory long form census. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) has a strong history of advocacy for student achievement and well-being and takes pride in the contributions that have been made to shape the education policy in Ontario. In our province, school boards are responsible for not only student achievement but also student well-being.

Part of what allows us to create sound policy and determine the best interests for our students and their families is the use of reliable data. It is our understanding that the mandatory long form census will be reinstated next May 2016 and then continue to be implemented every five years. This cannot happen fast enough as we have had to use 2006 Census data - information that is now almost ten years old.

While the shorter survey was more general in its questions, we need the information contained within the long form part that captures data about categories such as ethnicity, education levels, employment, income and housing. This is crucial information for fact-based decision-making. We know there are changes in income and education levels as well as cultural and ethnic shifts in our communities.

Currently, school boards and the Ministry of Education in Ontario are consulting about education funding requirements for the next school year. The call for more current and reliable data was loud and clear. Comments suggested the 2011 National Household Survey did not convey relevant information and because it was voluntary, provided incomplete data and results.

Our frustration over the cancellation of the long form census was shared by many and not restricted to the education sector. Supporters of the census included a wide range of groups including municipal planners, researchers, scientists, anti-poverty activists, and many more, who all publically lamented its loss and demanded its reinstatement.

We know that privacy concerns must be maintained and we expect them to be. Census data is one of the best resources of information about Canadians and helps us to determine what services and programs are needed most, and where they are best located. It allows us to make better informed decisions and a means to measure our progress. Schools boards need this information as it helps us support students, their families and our communities. The reinstatement of the mandatory long form census is welcome news which cannot come soon enough.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Barrett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Barrett, President  
Ontario Public School Boards' Association

*The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) represents public district school boards and public school authorities across Ontario. Together our members serve the educational needs of almost 70% of Ontario's elementary and secondary students. The Association advocates on behalf of the best interests and needs of the public school system in Ontario. OPSBA believes that the role of public education is to provide universally accessible education opportunities for all students regardless of their ethnic, racial or cultural backgrounds, social or economic status, individual exceptionality, or religious affiliation.*