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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
ALBERTA

David Swann, MD

M.L.A. CALGARY MOUNTAIN VIEW
LEADER, OFFICIAL OPPOSITION OF ALBERTA

Premier Ed Stelmach
307 Legislature Building
10800 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

July 29, 2010

To the Honourable Premier,

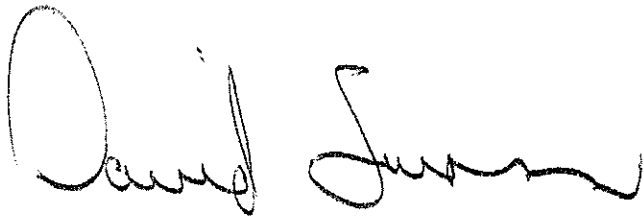
Without any provincial consultation, the federal government and Industry Minister Tony Clement have elected to eradicate Canada's long-form census. We strongly disagree with this action as the long-form census provides crucial data needed to provide social programs and supports for those Canadians who require them. A voluntary version of the long-form census, preferred by Industry Minister Tony Clement, is a poor substitute as it would not supply the depth of information needed for government to make effective decisions and allocate resources appropriately, now and into the future.

One of the most concerning effects of changes to the mandatory long-form census will be the loss of reliable data used to track important social information such as family income, educational status, area of residency, and employment information. This is crucial data to have at hand when planning for health care delivery. It should be the goal of the Government of Canada, and the Province of Alberta, to reduce health inequalities wherever possible and the information gathered by the long-form census is an important tool in locating and analyzing social determinants of health. The information gathered by the long-form census is especially important for fast growing provinces like Alberta. We need this data to adapt to and understand the rapidly changing social and economic demographics in this province.

Alberta is currently the only province that has not come out in opposition to this decision. As Leader of Alberta's Official Opposition, I feel it is my duty to urge you to join with other provinces in voicing these concerns to the federal government. It is time to be brave and make a stand – to stand up for Albertans and to stand against this irrational decision by Prime Minister Harper's government.

It is the opinion of the Alberta Liberal Caucus that without the information provided by the mandatory long-form census, it will be very difficult to address many of the factors that contribute to the numerous health and social inequalities that exist in our great province. I urge you, as Premier, to take a stand and let Prime Minister Harper know that you oppose his government's decision regarding the census.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Swann". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

David Swann, MD
Leader of Alberta's Official Opposition

Cc: Gene Zwozdesky, Minister of Health and Wellness