



Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUMA calls for reinstatement of mandatory long-form census

During the 2015 federal election, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) is calling for the reinstatement of the mandatory long-form census.

“The loss of the mandatory long-form census four years ago has resulted in a significant loss of the data municipalities need to plan for the future to meet the ever-changing needs of their residents,” said SUMA President Debra Button. “In some cases, the data is completely unavailable, and many statisticians say the data we do have is unreliable — even worthless.”

The federal government cancelled the mandatory long-form census in 2010 and replaced it with a voluntary National Household Survey first executed in 2011.

The projected response rate for a traditional mandatory census is 94 per cent. The 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) had a response rate of only 68 per cent. Upon the release of the data, Statistics Canada noted that results of the NHS were considerably less reliable for communities with fewer than 25,000 residents. In fact, Statistics Canada decided to withhold ALL data on one-quarter (1,128) of Canadian communities.

Saskatchewan had the worst survey results. There were “no socioeconomic statistics about the populations in about one-half of [the province’s] communities,” according to Sask Trends Monitor. This shortfall represents more than 185,000 residents, or nearly one in six people in Saskatchewan.

A recent article in Maclean’s magazine, “Vanishing Canada” (September 18, 2015), highlighted the magnitude of this issue, and the loss of most of the statistical data for the City of Melville.

“How are municipalities supposed to plan when data is unreliable, incomplete, or completely missing? The end of the mandatory long-form census and the resulting loss of data is hampering our ability to analyze infrastructure needs, and plan for transportation, affordable housing, schools, and other essential services,” said President Button. “My colleague in Melville, Mayor Streelasky, is living first hand with that loss of data. There is no way to know for sure what the makeup of his community is

Founded in 1905, SUMA is the voice of urban Saskatchewan, representing cities, towns and villages.



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— marital status, unemployment and wage information, even how many people are new to Canada. Now he and his council must make decisions based on what amounts to a best guess.”

President Button noted that SUMA is not alone in its call to have the mandatory long-form census reinstated. Groups in support of reinstatement include: provincial and municipal governments, urban planners, economists, statisticians, chambers of commerce, unions, medical associations, charities, academics, scientists, business leaders, pollsters, policy makers, boards of trade, and groups representing some of society’s most vulnerable.

“Without the reinstatement of the mandatory long-form census, our municipalities are relegated to fumbling in the dark when it comes to making good evidence-based policy decisions,” said President Button. “We must ensure urban municipalities can plan for population changes and provide the services necessary for the continued growth of our cities, towns, and villages — and ultimately our province.”

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For more information visit www.suma.org, or to arrange an interview please contact:

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