

SUBJECT: Enhancing Provincial Data Collection

SUBMITTED BY: Human Resources Committee

BACKGROUND/ISSUE

The various kinds of census data gathered by Statistics Canada is used by all levels of government in a variety of ways, including program development and delivery, the assessment of infrastructure needs, and the tracking of broader demographic and economic trends.

Good government planning should be based on accurate, up-to-date, and detailed information about relevant jurisdictions. Statistical information, which serves as the basis for creating planning forecasts, is also essential to the democratic process since it enables citizens to examine the decisions made by provincial and federal governments, as well as those made by local authorities, and then decide whether those entities are adequately serving the public.

Businesses and other organizations also use census data when developing expansion plans, training and hiring employees, and analyzing the various traits of customers and stakeholders.

Since Statistics Canada is a federal agency that is responsible for gathering data across all of Canada, it is often not able to collect data on every item of particular interest to specific provinces or regions. This is not necessarily a fault in Statistics Canada, but simply a side-effect of having to gather information on such a large scale.

While Saskatchewan's provincial government and businesses are significant users of federal census data, there is also information that should be collected within the province that is not falling within the scope of Statistics Canada's priorities. Data collection activities focused specifically on Aboriginal issues, labour market needs, and other business-related issues would be of particular interest to both the Government of Saskatchewan and the province's business community.

Regardless of how Statistics Canada's censuses are created and deployed in the future, there is an increasing need for the Government of Saskatchewan to improve its ability to gather provincial data for use in local government and business planning.

RECOMMENDED

1) That the Government of Saskatchewan identify specific areas of provincial data that do not currently fall within the mandate of Statistics Canada and then create a process to gather useable data in those areas once a cost-benefit analysis has been undertaken to confirm that the data collection will be worth the expense.

2) That the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce work with the Government of Saskatchewan to identify issues of particular importance to the province's business community so that the collection of useable data in those areas can be made a priority.

3) That the Government of Saskatchewan communicate directly with industry associations and businesses to ensure that the quality of data being collected on identified issues is of high quality and as useful as possible.