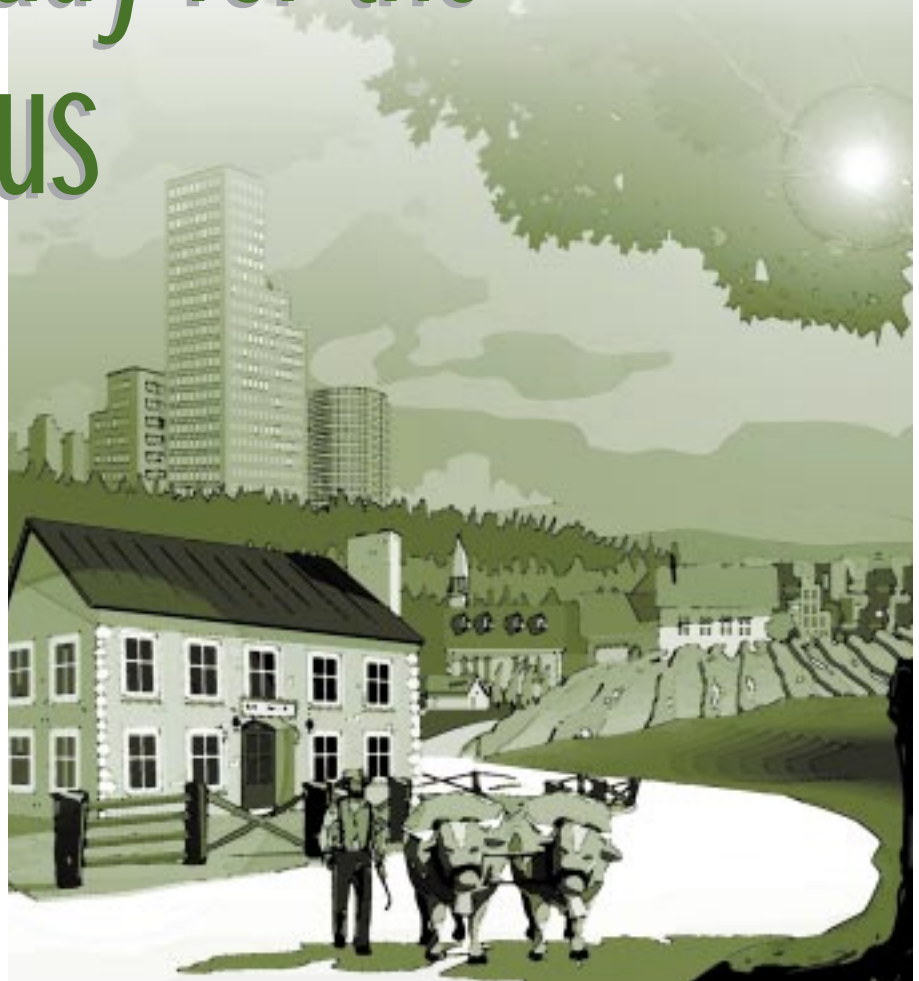


# Getting ready for the 2001 Census

by John Flanders

**W**hen Jean Talon set out to conduct the first census for the colony of New France more than 300 years ago, he did it the best way he knew how. He went knocking on doors.

*Talon, an energetic and imaginative man, arrived in the new colony in 1665 on a mission from King Louis XIV. Louis wanted to stimulate employment, trade and industry. As intendant of justice, police and finance, Talon began his administrative appointment by taking stock. He wanted to know exactly how many people had settled in New France, which towns they lived in, how many young men and women there were of marriageable age, what trades were practised and so on. Over the winter of 1665-66, he initiated a door-to-door enumeration of the colony's inhabitants.*



Talon counted 3,215 people of European descent — 2,034 men and 1,181 women. Among these were three notaries, three schoolmasters, three locksmiths, four bailiffs, five surgeons, five bakers, 27 joiners and 36 carpenters. The colony consisted of three major settlements, inhabited by 528 families. Québec had a population of more than 2,100 people, Montréal had 635 and Trois-Rivières had 455.

Then Talon put his statistics to work. His figures showed that men outnumbered women nearly two to one in the male-dominated fur-trading and missionary outpost. So he arranged for “strong and healthy” single women aged 15 to 30 to come

from France. From 1665 to 1673, more than 900 “filles du roi” arrived at Québec. Talon imposed penalties on bachelors and rewarded early marriage and large families.

Canada had thus become the first country in the modern world to use a census as a source of economic and social information. Today, on the eve of the 19<sup>th</sup> national census scheduled for May 15, 2001, Talon would likely be thunderstruck by the extent to which his rudimentary efforts at profiling the population have grown.

Census data will help determine how public services such as transportation, fire and police protection, housing, day-care and health care will be carried out in your neighbourhood

Canadians will see some important changes when they sit down to fill in their census questionnaires on May 15, 2001. The 2001 short questionnaire contains seven questions, the same number as in the 1996 Census, but two fewer than in 1991. However, the long questionnaire contains three questions that were not asked in 1996.

**Religion:** Information on religion measures cultural diversity, and is used in combination with other characteristics to trace fundamental changes in Canadian society. For example, religious groups use data on religion to measure potential strengths and trends of various denominations. School boards use the data for planning purposes.

The 2001 Census will contain an open-ended question on religion. Respondents can fill in the denomination or religion of their choice, with an option of checking a "no religion" response, or marking in other responses such as "atheist" or "agnostic". This allows respondents total freedom on the questionnaire to indicate what they feel best describes their beliefs, including writing down "no religion".

**Birthplace of parents:** There is growing interest in how children of immigrants are integrating into Canadian society, given the fact that an increasing number of immigrants are visible minorities. Data from this question will also be used to assess the labour market outcomes of "second generation Canadians" compared to those of other Canadian-born and foreign-born individuals.

**Language of work:** The information from this new question will help assess the use of mother tongue at work by official language minorities and the linguistic integration of non-official language minorities in the labour market.

In addition to the new questions, there are two changes to existing questions.

**Home language:** The question has been expanded to include all languages regularly spoken at home, not just the language spoken most often. This question will provide more detail on language retention and language transfer.

**Same-sex partners:** In light of growing legal and societal recognition of same-sex unions, many organizations and governments have expressed a need for this information. For example, some provincial and municipal legislation, as well as some private sector insurance plans, now extend rights and benefits to same-sex partners. The "relationship to Person 1" question and the "common-law status" question now include categories for "common-law partner (opposite-sex) of Person 1" and "common-law partner (same-sex) of Person 1."

**Ethnic origin:** An introduction has been added to the question to help clarify the intent. "Canadian" is now listed as the first rather than the fifth example out of 25 examples of possible ethnic origins.

during the next few years. Parks, municipal boundaries and future economic development are all planned using the information provided on census forms.

### Census a valuable planning tool

During the past 350 years, the census, like the country, has changed dramatically. But the goal remains the same — a statistical portrait of Canada's people. The census provides detailed, accurate and comparable data on the social, economic and cultural characteristics of the population. These data are used to help run the country at all levels because they are the only source of data on conditions in small geographic areas, and on very specific or unique groups of people. As such,

they are essential to the welfare and efficiency of people's neighbourhoods, municipalities and provinces.

A special staff of 45,000 is poised to carry out a meticulously refined plan. Instead of canvassing 3,200 households, as did Jean Talon, the 2001 Census of Population will canvass about 12 million households and a total population estimated at more than 30 million. The Census of Agriculture, which will be conducted simultaneously, will enumerate some 276,000 agricultural operations.

The 10-year, or decennial, census has been conducted every 10 years since 1871 as a constitutional requirement under the *Constitution Act* and is used to determine representation in the House of Commons. The five-year

census, mandated by the *Statistics Act*, has been conducted nationally since 1956. It was introduced to monitor the rapid economic growth and urbanization during the post-war years and it remains the backbone of many social programs, such as the population estimates program, which helps determine federal-provincial transfer payments.

### Four out of five households get a short questionnaire

In 2001, 80% of Canadian households will receive a short questionnaire which contains seven questions, and requires about 10 minutes to complete. The remaining 20% of households will receive the long form, which will take about 30 to 35 minutes to complete. The long

## CST Milestones in the history of the census in Canada

**1605:** Roman Catholic missionaries in New France take the colony's first population count at Port Royal, in what is today Nova Scotia.

**1665 to 1739:** During the French regime, 36 censuses are conducted in New France, the last in 1739. Jean Talon conducts the first systematic census of the colony. Talon's census records age, occupation, marital status, and relationship to the head of the family. It also measures the wealth of industry and agriculture, the value of local timber and mineral resources, and the number of domestic animals, seigneuries, government buildings and churches. Over the years, new questions are added on topics such as buildings and dwellings, agricultural and industrial output, as well as armaments.

**1765 to 1790:** Under the British administration, censuses are held in 1765, 1784 and 1790. As the need arises, questions are added on livestock, crops, buildings, churches, gristmills and firearms, as well as questions on race, religion and ethnic origin.

**1847:** Statistics-gathering is legislated in the United Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada through the *Statistics Act*. The legislation calls for a decennial census, which is first taken in 1851.

**1851:** Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island — then separate colonies — also take censuses. This year marks the start of regular decennial enumerations of the population of what is to become the Dominion of Canada.

**1867:** The *British North America Act* lists "The Census and Statistics" as falling under the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government. The *Act* also calls for "a general census of the population of Canada" to be taken in 1871 and every tenth year thereafter.

**1870:** The first census taken under Dominion auspices is conducted in Manitoba to divide the province into its four original electoral districts.

**1871:** Canada's Census is the most comprehensive ever conducted in North America. The nine schedules and 211 questions are designed to be the instrument of collecting data nationwide and are the basis of Canada's present-day statistical system. The 1871 Census count begins two traditions still with the census today. First, the questionnaire is available in English and French; secondly, information on the ancestral origins of all Canadians, including Aboriginal people, is recorded.

**1881:** All census takers are required to take an oath of secrecy, which is still required today. The census is also extended to include British Columbia, Manitoba and Prince Edward Island.

**1896:** For the first time, the Census of Agriculture and Census of Population are conducted separately.

**1905:** The census bureau becomes a permanent government agency.

**1906:** The first mid-decade censuses of agriculture and of population for the Prairie provinces take place.

**1911:** The census date is changed from April to June to avoid bad weather and road conditions, and the difficulty of determining crop acreage in early spring.

**1918:** The first *Statistics Act* creates the Dominion Bureau of Statistics and provides for the Censuses of Population and of Agriculture, for the whole of Canada, in 1921 and every 10 years thereafter.

**1921:** The population questions no longer include those on "insanity and idiocy" and fertility.

**1931:** Questions are added to gauge the extent and severity of unemployment, and to analyze its causes.

**1956:** The first five-year national census is conducted. It is introduced to monitor the rapid economic growth and urbanization that took place during the postwar years.

**1971:** The majority of respondents now complete the census questionnaire themselves, a process called self-enumeration. Under the new *Statistics Act*, it becomes a statutory requirement to hold censuses of population and of agriculture every five years.

**1986:** The Census of Population contains a question on disability, which is also used to establish a sample of respondents for the first post-censal survey on activity limitation. Also for the first time, the Census of Agriculture asks a question on computer use for farm management.

**1991:** For the first time, the census asks a question on common-law relationships.

**1996:** A question on unpaid work is included in the census.

**2001:** The definition of "common-law" is expanded to include both opposite-sex and same-sex partners. Also, the Census of Agriculture asks about production of certified organic products.

questionnaire contains the seven questions from the short form as well as 52 additional questions on topics such as ethnicity, mobility, income and employment.

Sampling by distributing the long questionnaire to only one-fifth of households provides detailed data on the entire population without imposing an unreasonable burden on all respondents.

No new questions were added to the short questionnaire for the 2001 Census. However, there are three new questions on the long questionnaire that were not asked in 1996, concerning religion, birthplace of parents and language of work. There are also important changes to some existing questions, including one that will collect information on same-sex partners.

While for most Canadians, the census will be collected in the same way as in 1996, Statistics Canada will conduct an Internet test where people living in two locations (London, Ont., and Crowfoot, Alta.) will have the option of answering the questionnaires using the Internet or on paper. This test will be in preparation for the 2006 Census, which will offer all respondents this choice.

The first data from the 2001 Census, which will be population counts, are scheduled for release in April 2002. Successive releases will run from July 2002 through May 2003. The Census of Agriculture releases its first data in May 2002.

Technology will be the buzzword as well for disseminating data from the census. Statistics Canada's web site will be put to greater use to provide the public with the data they require.

### **Census of agriculture: basic inventory of farming**

The first Censuses of Agriculture were taken in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Prairies when farming was a common way of life. Even in

1931, 1 in 3 Canadians lived on a farm compared with 1 in 30 in 1996. The Census of Agriculture is the basic inventory of Canadian agriculture taken every five years. It asks 184 questions on a variety of topics, including land use, crops, livestock, paid agricultural labour, and land management practices.

This census identifies trends and issues within the agricultural community, and has become the backbone of Canada's agricultural statistics program. It provides comprehensive information on the industry, from the township and rural municipality level to the national level. The questions are designed to shed light on new developments in agriculture; to build a picture of farming over time; to provide information on the human side of agriculture, such as the age and sex of operators; and to understand the business of farming, such as the use of computers.

Farm organizations, government departments, agriculture service providers and academics all use census data to understand and respond to changes in the industry. For example, some groups use Census of Agriculture data to help determine whether there are enough farms using the Internet for business to warrant the development of web sites to deliver information.

In 2001, the Census of Agriculture will ask farmers not just to indicate if they use a computer, but specifically what they use it for. In addition, for the first time they will be asked whether their operation produces any certified organic products for sale, and if so, what these products are.

### **Privacy and confidentiality: the law protects what you tell us**

Each person living in Canada is required by law to provide the information requested in the census. That same law requires that Statistics Canada keeps all personal information

absolutely confidential. Only Statistics Canada employees who work with census data and have taken an oath of secrecy see the forms. Personal census information cannot be disclosed to anyone outside Statistics Canada.

Employees must follow specific instructions and procedures to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. One of the most important measures taken to ensure the confidentiality of information is that names, addresses and telephone numbers are not entered into the census database. Statistics Canada controls access to its premises to keep them secure, and there are no public communication lines connected to its database to avoid attacks from hackers. Only a small number of employees have access to completed questionnaires.

The *Statistics Act* contains penalties in the form of a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or a jail term of up to six months if an employee releases personal census information. In his annual report to Parliament in May 2000, Canada's privacy commissioner, Bruce Phillips, held Statistics Canada as a model for all government departments to follow in the management of information and protection of privacy.

He wrote: "Only Statistics Canada gathers comprehensive information about individuals, but does so only for statistical purposes, not to make decisions about them. And Statistics Canada's data are stringently protected; abusers can be fined or jailed."



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