

William Warren Munroe
763 Beach Road
Qualicum Beach, BC
V9K 1S2
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Margaret MacDiarmid
Ministry of Labour, Citizens' Services and Open Government
PO BOX 9594 STN PROV GOVT
VICTORIA BC V8W 9K4 (sent via email)

Honorable Minister,

Thank you for asking the Assistant Deputy Minister to look into the reliability of the population numbers created by British Columbia's Official Statistical Agency, BC Stats.

I appreciate, and am encouraged by, the effort to focus on the real matters in dispute, more in keeping with the professionalism befitting responsible, open government, ready to participate in fair labour practices, in contrast to BC Stats' past management's efforts to distract attention away from the real methods used to create population numbers.

My apologies for the delay in responding as I have been very busy showing School Districts and local and region governments the benefits of population analysis (see link below), as well as gathering information regarding the statements in the ADM's letter dated November 22, 2011.

In case you did not know, I was the Population Analyst and BC provincial expert on migration from 2002 to 2006, and my responsibilities included understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the methods and models used by BC Stats and Statistics Canada to estimate population.

I made many improvements to the methods and models including reducing the error in the Generalized Estimates System (GES), from more than 6% to less than 2%, and the monthly interprovincial migration model, as well as making improvements to the database management system including initiating and championing the successful estatBC project (which went on to win a government award for innovation after I was dismissed), and the LIQUIDS database.

Regarding the well worded and thoughtful statements made by the ADM, I have received information highlighting the importance of a closer examination of the methods used by BC Stats, for example, regarding the statement:

"Statistics Canada, Canada's national statistics agency, holds in high regard the methodology and estimates produced by BC Stats: In a 2005 feasibility study prepared by Statistics Canada (STC) for Finance Canada, the agency concluded that: "...population estimates produced by three provincial/territorial statistical agencies (Quebec, British Columbia, Northwest Territories) were all found to be of better quality when compared with those based on any of the three STC methods. "

I have asked Statistics Canada population methodology experts, the Demography Division, whether Statistics Canada reviewed BC Stats' use of telephone, along with electrical, landline hookups to estimate population change to the sub-provincial level. In response to my questions to Statistics Canada Demography Division:

"When was Statistics Canada first informed by BC Stats of the use of these two indicators to estimate population change?"

Did Statistics Canada provide feedback to BC Stats about problems with the use of these two indicators?"

... the Demography Division of Statistics Canada replied:

“Demography Division does not consult with BC Stats regarding the telephone landlines. The data is forwarded to us from BC Stats and used to produce our estimates.” (link below)

Statistics Canada Demography Division did not test BC Stats use of telephone landlines. Please provide the bibliography for the feasibility study referred to above.

In April 2005, I tested whether Statistics Canada’s Demography Division component method provided more reliable results than did BC Stats population estimates model, GES. Test results for the STC component method showed, for example, that there was an increase in the number of people aged 45 to 65 in the Nanaimo Regional District for 2004 (July1), while BC Stats methods showed a decrease. Also, BC Stats methods estimated more young adult males moving into, rather than out of the Nanaimo Regional District, while Statistics Canada’s methods showed the opposite. The 2006 census proved the STC component method to be of “better quality” than BC Stats method. Indeed, a 2005 report could not benefit from the 2006 census results used to adjust the intercensal estimates.

Also, I was the person from BC Stats who reviewed Statistics Canada’s proposal to do sub-provincial population estimates using residential tax assessment data. Statistics Canada would use this method to achieve consistency in population estimates across Canada, including BC, Quebec and the NWT. My assessment showed that Statistics Canada’s methods provided more reliable numbers than BC Stats’ methods. Regarding the statement:

“BC Stats’ provincial ministry clients and Statistics Canada are quite satisfied with the underlying methodology and quality of outputs associated with BC Stats’ sub-provincial populations estimates program.”

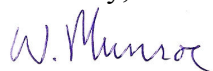
Please be aware, the many changes to BC Stats’ population methods between 2001 and 2011 were not published; therefore, provincial ministry clients and Statistics Canada are not aware of the real methods used to create population estimates and forecasts. The BC Stats population estimates methods paper from 1998 was referred to by many ministry clients including School District administrators and consultants and parents dealing with public school closures, until the publication of the August 2011 paper. The changes to the methods during this decade still need to be published.

The testing of the changes to the methods used by BC Stats can be published, unless of course, an effort is still being made to guard the integrity and objectivity of BC Stats from peer and public scrutiny. Your Ministry’s letter states:

“The integrity and objectivity of the population estimation procedures and methods are guarded by BC Stats” .

Please understand by offering solutions to reduce error I was ensuring the integrity and objectivity of the methods. Will the Minister allow arbitration to proceed regarding the real matters in dispute namely, whether my efforts to reduce error to ensure integrity and objectivity were justified? If an independent review determines that my efforts were justified, will the Minister change my record by removing the claim that I was insubordinate and dismissed for just cause? In the mean time, will the Minister acknowledge my contributions?

Sincerely,



William Warren Munroe
Cc, BC Stats, BC MLAs
www.wminfomatics/PopGeog/home.html