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Gord Johns,
MP House of Commons, Courtenay—Alberni
Ottawa, Canada
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Regarding: more money for science in the proposed 2018 budget and the need to safeguard the integrity of publicly funded science

Dear Gord Johns

Canada's 2018 budget includes a proposal for a \$4 billion funding increase for basic science over the next five years. But will more money for science result in improved understanding and a better society?

With arguably one of the best statistical agencies of any nation in the world, Statistics Canada, Canadians should have one of the best informed societies in the world. Yet, when it comes to basic information such as Canada's demographics, why was it that "Canada's latest baby boom caught experts by surprise" (National Post article July 2014)?¹ Experts interviewed for this article included demographers, Canadian Population Society members, government population analysts, and academics from across Canada.

Statistics Canada has a role of informing Canadians, through mass media, about fundamental socio-economic shifts; therefore, this basic fundamental shift, the latest baby boom, should not have caught anyone, including experts, by surprise.

Indeed, Canadians, with one of the best statistical agencies in the world, should have been well aware of the increasing number of young children (boom bust echo), and should have been thoughtful of impacts on public service delivery, and on society in general.

This obvious fact – obvious to anyone who looks at reliable sources of demographic information such as Canada's Census of Population, conducted by Statistics Canada every 5 years at a cost of over \$2,500,000,000 since 1996, should have been taken into consideration when looking at public facility reviews including closing public elementary schools.

Anyone who looked at Canada's Census of Population could see, between 2006 and 2011, the rising number of females of child bearing age as well as the increase in the number of young children (under 5) relative to the number of females of child bearing age.²

¹ [With One Of The Best Statistical Agencies In The World, Canadians Have Fundamental Misunderstandings About Demographics Trends](http://wminformatics.com/WManalytics/Articles/161020/WhyExperts.html), William Warren Munroe, October 20, 2016
wminformatics.com/WManalytics/Articles/161020/WhyExperts.html

² [Canada, Age Distribution, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 Census Counts](http://wminformatics.com/WManalytics/Articles/120530/2011AgeSexCan.html), William Warren Munroe, May 30, 2012,
<http://wminformatics.com/WManalytics/Articles/120530/2011AgeSexCan.html>

Nonetheless, while the echo was obvious, tax funded experts justified closing public elementary schools claiming that the number of school aged children would continue to decline.

Requests to see the methods and data used to come up with the new single enrolment forecast (much lower than the previous enrolment forecast) in our school district used to justify closing 4 of 15 public schools received this reply from the Superintendent of Schools "Any attempt to suggest/imply a grassy knoll conspiracy theory is disrespectful ...".

More money may simply give the impression of better information while citizens who question the more monied information may be considered even more disrespectful - disrespectful of all the money and the experts who control it, and the information they spread and disseminate.

Perhaps priority should be given to raising awareness about the importance of verification and replication, recognizing that government scientists can make mistakes, and that citizens can point out inconsistencies and suggest refinements without becoming targets for abuse, but rather, treated as informed and consulted citizens.

MP Johns, could you please advocate that the increase in funding for science be monitored by formal policies and assigned clear accountabilities to safeguard the integrity of tax funded science.³ This starts of course with ensuring that correct methods and data accompany findings, rather than incorrect methods and data accompanying unfounded numbers as was the case with BC Statistics from 2002 to 2011 (at least).

In other words, the correct methods and data must be published with the findings and the findings must be verifiable and replicable. Also, while funding for specialists in the scientific method is increased there should be an increase in efforts to explain the tax funded scientific projects clearly to the public rather than practising obfuscation. Too many time citizens are told that they would not understand.

Implementing formal policies and assigning clear accountabilities recognizes that science is meant to be true and clear rather than not true and not clear.

Sincerely,



William Warren Munroe
Population Projections Project

³ For a list of clear steps see [Analytic Activities At Statistics Canada](http://www.infomatics.com/WP/ANALYTIC_ACTIVITIES_AT_STATISTICSCANADA.pdf) presented by former Chief Statistician, Ivan Fellegi during his 1999 presentation at the Conference of European Statisticians at www.infomatics.com/WP/ANALYTIC_ACTIVITIES_AT_STATISTICSCANADA.pdf