

October 30, 2017

To the Premier of the Provincial Government of British Columbia

Dear Premier Horgan,

Thank you for making an effort to improve the quality of service to British Columbians. As you are aware, many errors were made in the “facts” used to justify public service delivery over the last decade and a half.

While Canadians, including British Columbians, have arguably one of the best sources of information of any nation in the world with which to understand current demographic trends, namely, Statistics Canada, why for example did the “Canada’s latest baby boom [catch] experts by surprise”? (National Post, July 4, 2014).

How can service providers intelligently participate in the setting of provincial priorities if they do not understand where we are and where we are heading on current trends, including current demographic trends? In particular, trends in fertility (is fertility continuing to increase?), life expectancy (has the increase come to an end?) and migration by age and sex (are migration patterns changing?)

Why did BC Statistics’ new management team, brought in after BC’s 2001 election, misinform British Columbians including BC Government Ministries about population estimates and forecasts for over 10 years?

Why did BC’s Ministry of Education misinform British Columbians claiming schools needed to be closed due to “declining enrolment” when enrolment was beginning to increase again (boom, bust, echo)?

Having served the British Columbia public from January 2002 to February 2006, hired as an Economist in the position of BC Statistics’ Population Analyst, I would like to share my experience, as well as easily implementable solutions. First though, what is the role of an Official Statistical Agency Analyst as described by Statistics Canada?

*“- Analysis [is] a means to ensure continued relevance. It is much more difficult to maintain the longer-term relevance of our product lines without a **strong analytic capacity within the statistical office**. There are several related reasons for this.*

*The discovery of evolving gaps within the statistical product line is an intrinsically analytic activity. If we want to be proactive in promoting the development of important missing statistical information, we first of all must have a good understanding of what is missing, but even more important, why it matters to national policy. This **requires analytic activity of a very high order** because it calls for **attempts to understand not only the current structure of our society and economy, but also their dynamics: the forces that shape their evolution and which might be beneficially impacted through policy**. I want to emphasize that we cannot wait for others (policy departments) to gain the needed understandings and then tell us what data to collect. **The needed development is an iterative process of conceptual work, data development, program implementation, program evaluation, followed by conceptual work, and so on. Such work requires the active intellectual partnership of the statistical office.***

So the analytic activity by the statistical office can and should highlight issues which new information could help to illuminate.”ⁱ

Why did BC Statistics new management team not highlight issues? BC Statistics new management team did not highlight issues was because they imposed a hierarchical, and hostile work environment with a weak to non-existent analytic capacity that did not try to understand but rather imposed false information designed to support policies and directions of the current government .

How? Reviews of methods and data were stopped. For example, the new manager would not allow me to see the test results of the use of telephone landline hookups as an indicator of the number of people living in BC’s municipalities.

Also the new manager required that the numbers generated by the methods not be used but rather to use the numbers he would give us. ⁱⁱ

Also aggressive yelling “YOU IDIOT” “GET OUT OF HERE!” etc. was considered acceptable.

BC Statistics was the opposite of Statistic Canada description of a statistical office – rather than intellectual partnership there was aggressive dumbing down.

Officially, this coercion was found to be acceptable by the Deputy Minister (Gordon Macatte), the BC Public Service Agency, the BC Government Employees Union, an Arbiter, and the Labour Relations Board. Rather than implementing formal policies requiring external peer reviews and assigning clear accountabilities, arbitration and disclosure of the false reporting were denied; therefore, false information was presented to the public and to Statistics Canada for over a decade.

Premier Hogan, would you please implement formal policies including external peer reviews and assign clear accountabilities to make Directors responsible for the information used to guide public service delivery as well as call for an investigation into the real methods, data and practices of BC Statistics over the past decade and a half.

I make these request with the goal of improving the quality of BC’s public service

Cordially,

William Warren Munroe

ⁱ Analytic Activities at Statistics Canada,

ⁱⁱ In one case, in response to my questions, “why are your numbers different than the numbers from the models”, the new manager said he didn’t know. When asked how the new numbers were created, the new manager told me to look in a particular file; however, the particular file was either not there or did not explain how the new numbers were created. I asked for the supporting files for over 3 weeks. Finally, I sat in the new manager’s office refusing to leave until the new numbers could be explained. The new manager phoned the new Executive Director who came to the office and said, “did you look in the file from the Ministry of Finance?” And there is was, the file that could not be found for 3 weeks. The file simply changed the numbers with no supporting documentation – the numbers were just made up. (April 2005).