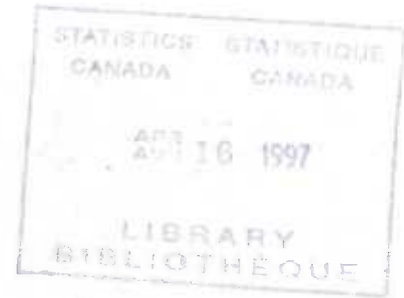


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**PROJECT TO IMPROVE PROVINCIAL  
ECONOMIC STATISTICS  
(PIPES)**

Communications Strategy  
Proposal



## **1. Introduction**

The Project to Improve Provincial Economic Statistics presents a unique communications challenge. Unlike the Census or a new business survey, PIPES is not a specific program. PIPES is more wide ranging, affecting the entire Agency and many of our respondents. As well, the subject matter affected is fairly diverse and often quite technical. The challenge is to present the changes the Agency is introducing in a clear, comprehensive manner which is consistent both within the Agency and throughout the country.

## **2. Background**

The federal government is launching an initiative to harmonize the federal Goods and Services Tax (GST) with the provincial retail sales taxes in 3 provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador). The new tax is called the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST). Revenue Canada will collect the HST; the Department of Finance Canada will allocate a portion of the tax revenues back to the provinces.

Statistics Canada has been asked to collect the data to be used in the HST allocation formula. The allocation formula will require provincial economic statistics which are much more detailed than presently available; Statistics Canada is required to substantially improve the quality of its provincial input-output data. This will have a huge impact on the Agency.

The level of detail of the surveys will increase, the survey size and frequencies may also increase. As well, within the next three years, all annual business surveys, and selected sub-annual surveys, will be unified into one survey, under the Unified Enterprise Statistics Program (UESP).

Statistics Canada will be hiring new employees: approximately 350 economists, statisticians, analysts and computers programmers, as well as a similar number of full-time equivalent interviewers.

## **3. Strategic Framework**

Given the nature of the changes being introduced, their wide scope and fairly heavy impact on the respondent, and given the fact that the Agency has not undertaken a project of this type before, there is no existing communications strategy to use as a model. This framework relies heavily on the model used by



Census Communications in preparing for the pre-Census, Census and post-Census activities.

The primary element to this strategy is the development of a core PIPES Communications team. This team would be responsible for providing a wide proactive communications program to inform respondents of the PIPES initiative and what it means; generate support from respondent groups and data users, provide communications support and advice to senior managers, individual surveys and regional offices; and plan a communications strategy for the UESP.

### 3.1 Members and Mandate

The core team would include: 1) PIPES team members knowledgeable about the entire scope of the PIPES/UESP project; 2) senior managers and subject matter representatives familiar with survey requirements and the response burden issues; 3) senior managers and subject matter representatives familiar with the respondents and their representative groups; 4) communications representatives.

This team would be instrumental in establishing the basic framework for a strong communications strategy, including a primary objective of outlining the PIPES communications mandate which would guide the communications strategies for PIPES as a whole and for the individual surveys affected. The team would also serve as a unifying voice for all the various communications activities underway and those in the planning stages.

### 3.2 Corporate Communications Objectives

A second major objective of the communications team would be to delineate the corporate objectives. Corporate objectives outline what the Agency hopes to achieve through its communications program and what perimeters must be respected.

The communications objectives will include informing respondents of the changes to expect in the survey response burden and changes to the data products which are available, and bringing respondent support groups on-side. The team is also responsible for safe-guarding the positive image of Statistics Canada through consistent application of the Agency's policies and procedures.

There is also an internal communications aspect, with a different set of objectives. Statistics Canada employees are keen to know what changes to expect in their program areas and in the Agency as a whole as well as what opportunities may exist. (See Appendix 1)





The team must also make themselves aware of the strategic issues which present themselves: foreseeable pitfalls and natural allies which must be factored into the communications strategy. (See Appendix 2)

### 3.3 Approach

The communications team would be expected to develop the PIPES communications approach. This would involve developing more comprehensive information on the target publics (see Appendix 3), appropriate messages (see Appendix 4) and effective communications tools.

## 4. **Operational Framework**

The following is an overview of areas of a comprehensive communications strategy which need to be assigned and developed to ensure the PIPES message is spread to the right audiences in an effective manner.

Elements can be modified as necessary to respond to particular situations.

### 4.1 Calendar/Project Milestones

A calendar of milestones (past and present) should be created and updated regularly. This should include significant events, such as dates surveys are in the field, conference dates, and timelines for developing communications tools and implementing of the Unified Enterprise Statistics Program.

### 4.2 Media Relations

We are currently in reactive mode.

- Q&As are constantly evolving; they should be updated as necessary (which involves media monitoring to track emerging issues, drafting new Q&As for approval, and having them translated and distributed);
- Monitoring the media and alerting spokespersons of evolving issues;
- Media training for spokespersons;
- Short backgrounder should be available; one page of easy-to-understand information which could be faxed, upon request, to interested media;
- Create and update the list of media spokespersons, tailored to meet the needs of specific media (i.e. general spokespersons for global inquiries, more targetted spokespersons for specific issues, such as the Ombudsman responding to media inquiries regarding response burden or a FAMEX representative to respond to FAMEX issues).

### 4.3 Respondent Relations

This is the key to the PIPES communications strategy. While the respondents may not like the fact that PIPES will result in more work, strong respondent relations can help minimize respondent frustration by demonstrating our best





efforts to control respondent burden; to collect relevant, significant data; and to respond to issues quickly.

Respondent relations strategy could include:

- Focus groups: are we comfortable with the knowledge we have of the respondents and their likely reactions? A focus group could test several elements: the mandatory nature of surveys, the response burden issue, whether a thank you gift is in fact motivational, what level of respondent support is necessary, whether other substantial issues exist. This tactic is only effective if the issue to be tested is clearly delineated and if ambiguity exists as to the relevance or outcome of the issue being tested.
- Thank you gift: would some form of thank you to respondents be helpful? Ex. A data product similar to the "Farm Facts" which shows respondents how data are used.
- Conferences, Exhibitions and Special Events
  - a series of small meetings and larger information sessions are planned; several use a standard presentation, slightly adapted for different audiences;
  - conference planning includes: determining the appropriate list of invitees, obtaining mailing lists, drafting invitations and agenda, co-ordinating speakers, co-ordinating presentations (common look and feel of materials), co-ordinating day-of proceedings (location selection and set up, simultaneous translation, etc)
- Material Management

The ongoing production and delivery of communications and promotional materials are vital both to the day-to-day operations of a project and to the historical record that should be left. Accurate records should be kept of what is produced, the cost of production, and the distribution lists. A central depository of records should also be maintained.
- Writing Services

Consistency in content and style in all communications materials is essential to a unified message. Clearly delineated lines of approval and documentation of correspondence are important.

Editing assistance in both official languages is available upon request. Translation services can be arranged.

Text which should be available include:

- one-page backgrounder: brief, clear explanations of 1) PIPES and our involvement in the HST program; 2) UESP and where Statistics Canada is going with its business surveys; 3) response burden: our policy, improvements made to date and the effect of PIPES;
- project charter: a summary document which offers a public statement of the goals of the PIPES initiative as well as a briefing to the parties



involved and the reasons behind its implementation. This is not a complete and detailed program description;

- overhead presentations: developing a common, standard presentation, which follows the common look and feel guidelines of PIPES documentation;
- information kits: tailored to the audience, including backgrounders, discussion papers related to presentation topics, schedules, contact names, brochures, etc.
- Q&As: media Q&As are discussed above; similar Q&As should be in place when Statistics Canada goes to meet respondents and respondent groups; Q&As will also be useful on the web site under FAQ
- other support documentation as deemed necessary depending on the audience

#### 4.4 Third Party Support

- Joint introductions: Statistics Canada representatives and industry representatives meeting jointly with respondents to discuss PIPES
- corporate sponsorship can make a positive impact
- many sponsors will be very willing to cooperate if we are able to provide all the support material (such as bilingual copy for a membership newsletter)

#### 4.5 Program Identification: Common Look and Feel

- assist with design of logo and co-ordination of design elements (font, colours);
- assist with design of Web site;
- develop and circulate common look and feel guidelines for documentation and presentations.

#### 4.6 Co-ordination

Regional Offices need to be involved in the planning stages and in the implementation of the communications strategy. They must also be regularly updated concerning developments in the program. Regional communications managers must also feed information from their areas into Headquarters and the other regions so all are informed of the developments in other parts of the country.

#### 4.7 Evaluation and Monitoring

- Are we able to track complaints and respond effectively?
- Are we ready for emerging issues?



## Appendix 1

### Corporate Communications Objectives

Before approaching the public, it is crucial that the Agency determine its objectives: what does the Agency want to achieve?

External Communications, aimed at the public, seek to:

- facilitate implementation of the program by informing the public of its benefits;
- ensure the public is aware of Statistics Canada's role: we collect and analyze data; we do not set fiscal policy;
- encourage compliance and participation by highlighting the importance of accurate, improved data;
- actively seek support of respondents and their representative groups;
- foster (continued) good relations with respondents; to foster positive working relationships;
- provide detailed explanations to interested publics (business groups, enterprises, etc) of the PIPES initiative, the reasons for the new/changed surveys and the effort to control the response burden;
- make governments aware of the PIPES program and the importance of their support;
- engage policy-makers at the federal and provincial levels to ensure their support;
- respond to media coverage in a balanced, clear manner;
- have clear, understandable answers ready to respond to members of the public, respondents and advocacy groups who may challenge the need for the changes to surveys;
- improve awareness of data availability and quality and to expand base of data users;
- make small businesses aware that they do in fact use our data.

Internal Communications, aimed at Statistics Canada employees, seek to:

- inform Statistics Canada employees of the changes PIPES will bring to the Agency;
- make Statistics Canada employees aware of employment opportunities;
- keep Statistics Canada employees aware of changes happening to their programs as a result of PIPES;
- keep Regional Offices informed of changes and to make them aware of areas of concern which may arise from respondents;
- strengthen support of interviewers, making them aware of the need for the changes to surveys, including possible increases to response burden.







## Appendix 2

### Strategic Issues

Communications strategies seek to take advantage of opportunities which may present themselves and pinpoint problems early in order to respond effectively. The communications team must take the following into account when planning the communications strategy.

- Focus could easily rest on the fact that this initiative results in bigger government, more expenditure on government by government.
- This initiative does result in greater government involvement in the daily workings of Canadians' businesses and lives. Combating the perception of an invasive, burdensome busybody will be the major challenge. FAMEX is already feeling the weight of public censure.
- While Statistics Canada must remain neutral in terms of the taxation policy, it must be active in promoting its role as the impartial data collector and analyst. Portraying Statistics Canada as an independent partner, working with the Finance Department, but not for it, is important. Media interest is likely to be negative: the main stories are bigger government, more involved government and greater response burden. Statistics Canada must be ready to point out the advantages to the new and expanded surveys.
- There will be changes in the response burden for several surveys. Members of the business community will not be pleased with the increased paper burden. Statistics Canada must stress that the goal is to reduce the global response burden (including the paper burned associated with tax compliance) and that the data being collected is necessary to the governments' efforts to harmonize the tax system.
- Many businesses do not currently use Statistics Canada data so they will not necessarily be swayed by the argument that the data are better, more useful or more comprehensive. Statistics Canada may need to develop strategies for encouraging businesses to use Statistics Canada data and to prove to businesses the importance of proper representation (if a business does not complete the surveys, their sector will be less well in the total picture).
- There is a certain amount of discontent with the amount of information government collects about private citizens and their affairs. Statistics Canada must ensure that confidentiality and privacy are guaranteed and seen to be so.



- The new HST is only in place in three small provinces. Arguing that businesses benefit from a globally reduced paper burden (tax and Statistics Canada forms) will not be an effective argument in the non-HST provinces and territories. Encouraging compliance in the non-HST areas will be more difficult.



## Appendix 3

### Target Publics

What groups need to be informed of the changes to Statistics Canada's surveys? Are there groups who will benefit from the changes being implemented and will those groups help inform our public about the benefits of those changes? What groups will react negatively to the changes?

#### Federal government departments

- Revenue Canada
- Department of Finance Canada
- Treasury Board
- Industry Canada (including ACOA, FORD(Q), WEDC); Minister Manley
- Natural Resources Canada
- Transport Canada
- Agriculture and AgriFood Canada
- Bank of Canada
- Environment Canada
- Heritage Canada
- Privy Council Office

#### Statistics Canada

- National Statistical Council
- "Sectoral" divisions of Business Statistics
- Industrial Production Statistics Branch
- Economy Wide Statistics Branch
- Methodology Branch
- Regional Operations Branch
- Personnel Branch
- Input/Output Division
- Surveys Division
- Education, Culture and Tourism
- Business Register Division
- Household Surveys Division
- National Accounts and Environment Division
- Senior Management

#### Provincial governments

- Departments of Finance
- Provincial statistical agencies
- Industry departments
- Economic development and trade departments





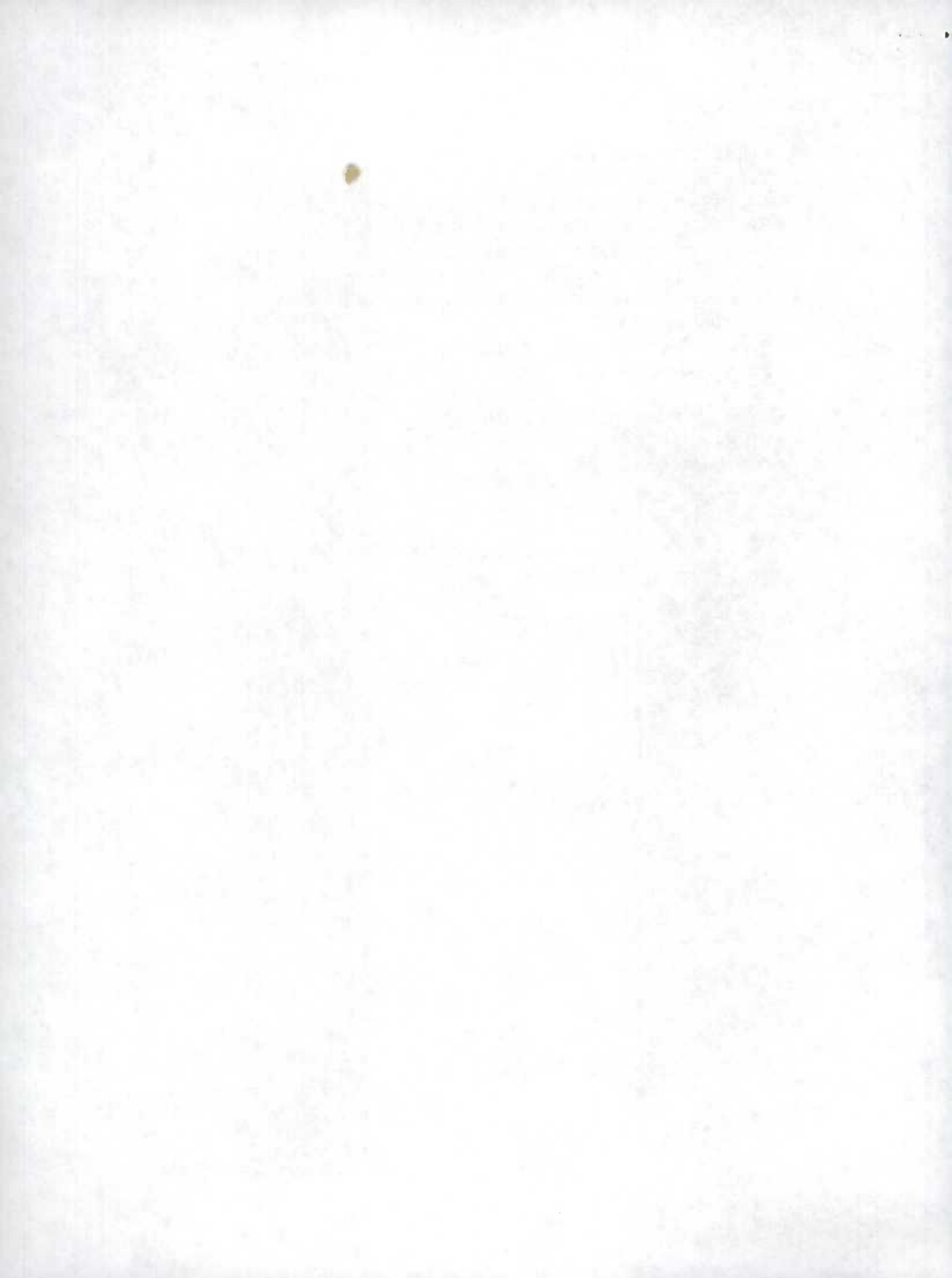
- Data users

Media: national and regional, all formats

Constituency groups: respondents and groups representing their interests

- CEOs and company executives
- accountants and accountants' professional organizations
- Canadian Federation of Independent Business
- Federal Government Joint Forum on Response Burden
- other business associations
- social and economic policy groups
- Retail Council of Canada
- Alliance of Manufacturers and Exporters Canada
- construction industry representatives
- CBSC
- chambers of commerce
- consumers associations

Data Users



## Appendix 4

### Messages

Statistics Canada must develop clear, uniform messages to present to the public. More detailed or tailored messages may be necessary for special groups. The communications team would be responsible for developing the core message and modifying text as necessary to meet communications objectives.

- The Canadian population will benefit from the availability of improved data which will result in a more accurate picture of Canada.
- The availability of improved data will allow the Finance Ministers to equitably divide tax revenues.
- The provinces will benefit from more accurate, detailed and more frequent data for use in regional economic analysis and policy development.
- Business will benefit directly from a more integrated reporting scheme and will benefit from the availability of more accurate business and trade data reflecting their business activities.
- Statistics Canada guarantees stakeholders that responses are confidential and private; data released will not breach Statistics Canada's standards of confidentiality and privacy.
- Statistics Canada is a technical advisor working along-side the Finance Department; Statistics Canada will then turn to collecting and analyzing the data.
- This is a positive project: growth, improved data.
- Statistics Canada initiates surveys only when the information required is not already available from other regulatory or administrative processes.
- Statistics Canada collects only the minimum set of data, required by developed countries, to produce basic national accounting measurements and economic indicators.
- The minimum set of data sought from businesses is readily available within their organization. Statistics Canada collects data that already exists. Questions are formulated according to General Accepted Accounting



Principles (GAAP). Collection vehicles are designed to minimize cost associated with the provision of data to Statistics Canada.

- The data collected by Statistics Canada is protected by confidentiality provision of the *Statistics Act*.
- The statistical information is extensively used by government administrations, businesses and non-profit organizations and has important impacts on the business and social life of Canadians.

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