



Marketing Research and Intelligence Association
L'Association de la Recherche et de l'Intelligence Marketing

BY EMAIL AND REGULAR MAIL

October 29, 2015

The Very Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Langevin Building
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

Re: Reinstatement of the Long Form Census and a Renewed Interest in Research-Based Evidence

I wish to offer you my sincere congratulations on being elected Canada's 23rd Prime Minister. Speaking on behalf of the marketing and survey research industry, I am very encouraged to see a number of planks in your electoral platform that I believe will bring welcome policy and governance changes at the federal level, and a renewed interest in and respect for evidence-based decision-making.

In particular, I welcome your commitment to reinstating the mandatory long form questionnaire and trust that you and your Cabinet will make it a priority in time for the 2016 census. In this regard, please know that you count on the full support of MRIA. Not only would the reinstatement cost less than its replacement, the voluntary National Household Survey (NHS), more importantly the mandatory questionnaire produces better data on important public policy issues such as immigration, labour market planning and poverty reduction.

MRIA has called on the reinstatement of the mandatory questionnaire since its elimination in 2010; as such, it was heartening to see that it is a promise contained in your electoral platform. This is a clear demonstration of your government's support for science, data and research-based evidence.

Of course, the issue is much broader than just the census. It involves a general attitude over the last decade to disregard the importance of science, data and research-based evidence generally.

In an important qualitative study released by MRIA earlier this year, entitled *The Use of Research-Based Evidence in Public Policy in Canada* (attached), opinion leaders in the field of policy and governance stated that the federal government's use of evidence in decision-making had changed during the last 10 years, with the most frequently perceived change being a lack of interest in data and an increasing tendency to subordinate evidence to politics.

The Study consisted of in-depth interviews with a prominent group of Canadian and international experts and thought leaders, including former senior public servants (such as former Clerks of the Privy Council and a retired Chief Statistician), politicians (including sitting MPs and former Ministers) and political strategists (including ex-PMO staff).

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Another key finding from the Study was that participants' overriding impression was that public opinion research is an effective tool for consulting with Canadians, and that government decision-making can be improved through information and data provided by public opinion research.

Despite this important function, the previous government almost entirely depleted the federal government's ability to conduct public opinion research, cutting expenditures from \$31.4 million in 2006-07 to a low of \$4.3 million in 2012-13, a decline of over 80 per cent.

Our industry is greatly encouraged by your stated intention to bring back to government a much needed and renewed respect for data and research-based evidence. Please know that MRIA would support, in whatever role or capacity required, measures taken on your part to make this happen.

The Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA) is a Canadian not-for-profit association representing all aspects of the market intelligence and survey research industry, including social research, competitive intelligence, data mining, insight, and knowledge management. Members include over 1,800 practitioners, small to large research houses, and the many buyers of research services, such as financial institutions, major retailers, insurance companies and manufacturers.

I would be pleased to meet with you or members of your staff to discuss MRIA's support for the reinstatement of the census' mandatory long form questionnaire or the findings from our important study, *The Use of Research-Based Evidence in Public Policy in Canada*.

Warm regards,



Kara Mitchelmore, MBA, FMCA
Chief Executive Officer

Enclosure:

- MRIA News Release, May 21 2015: "*Study Findings: Leading Thought Leaders and Policy Experts Believe Evidence and Public Opinion Research are Invaluable Tools for a Healthy Democracy*"
- MRIA Study: *The Use of Research-Based Evidence in Public Policy in Canada*

cc: Mr. Peter Harder, Transition Team
cc: Mr. Wayne Smith, Chief Statistician of Canada
cc: Mr. Ian McKinnon, Chair of the National Statistics Council
cc: Mr. George Dupont, Deputy Minister, Public Works and Government Services Canada
cc: Mr. Marc Saint-Pierre, Director General, Government Information Services Sector, PWGSC