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2015 Survey of Muslims in Canada Research Prospectus

As part of its ongoing research program on multiculturalism in Canada, the Environics Institute and its partners are seeking sponsorship to support national public opinion research on Muslims in Canada.

Background. Muslims represent the fastest growing religious minority in Canada today, but their presence in western countries has been contentious, fuelled in part by security concerns (in the long wake of 9/11) and some religious practices (e.g., Sharia law). While Canada has yet to experience the type of ethnic violence and terrorist attacks that have taken place elsewhere, Muslims in this country do not enjoy the acceptance of other religious minorities, and are a focal point for discomfort about immigrants not fitting into Canadian society. By global standards, Canada is a welcoming multicultural society but the Muslim community faces unique challenges with respect to religious freedom, national security profiling and the threat of security detentions abroad.

Much of the problem stems from the fact that the Muslim community is not well understood by other Canadians, whose impressions are formed largely through simplistic stereotypes emphasizing negative characteristics (men as terrorists, widespread acceptance of honour killings). The result is a dominant narrative of Muslims as different from others who resist adoption of “Canadian values” and so cannot be fully trusted.

How are Muslims in fact different from other Canadians? In 2006, The Environics Institute conducted the first-ever national survey of Muslims in Canada, focusing on the experience of Muslims in this country and drawing comparisons with similar research conducted in 13 other countries by the U.S.-based Pew Research Center. This research presented a revealing picture of a Muslim community that does in fact strive to be part of broader Canadian society and very happy to be in this country, while at the same time concerned about discrimination and limited economic opportunities. This study received broad public exposure through the CBC and helped to create a more positive and accurate narrative about the Muslim community and what it shares with other Canadians.

2015 Survey of Muslims. Fast-forward almost 10 years, how are Muslims in Canada faring today? The angst of 9/11 has faded but public concerns about the cultural integration of immigrants are growing. The respected Pew Research Center has updated its own research with Muslim populations in the US and elsewhere, and there is a need to do the same in Canada.

The Environics Institute, in partnership with the Tessellate Institute, the Olive Tree Foundation, the Inspirit Foundation, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation and Think for Actions, is planning a second national survey of Muslims in 2015 to update the original research and identify both important trends and emerging issues. Issues to be addressed may include:

- Experience of being Muslim in Canada
- Concern about the future of Muslims in Canada
- Self identification within the Muslim community
- Desire for accommodation of religious and cultural practices
- The role and rights of women in ethnic communities
- Islamic identity and extremism among Muslims
- Integration of Muslims into Canadian society and the economy
- Canadian foreign policy (in the Middle East and elsewhere)
- Views on who speaks for Muslims in Canada

As in 2006, this research will consist of an in-depth telephone survey with a nationally representative sample of 500 to 1,000 self-identified Muslims, stratified across regions and urban centres across the country. As in 2006, this survey will be conducted in English, French, Arabic and Urdu.

The study partners will assemble an advisory group of Muslim leaders and scholars to advise on the project design and analysis, media release and subsequent public engagement. As with other initiatives, one or more media partners will be engaged to broadly disseminate the research findings.

Complementary Survey of the Canadian Population. An important complement to the survey of Muslims will be a parallel survey with the non-Muslim population-at-large (as was done in 2006). This research will update previous Environics studies to provide a current picture of how the broader public views Muslims and other significant ethnic minorities, and the broader issues of multiculturalism as the country becomes increasingly one of immigrants.

Why be a sponsor? This type of research is essential to creating an accurate picture of the country's Muslim community in a way that is systematic, credible and media friendly. The insights gained can test and debunk myths, provide a constructive narrative, and help break down barriers between different parts of society that are built on ignorance and fear. Such research can be used by the media, opinion leaders, employers and organizations in all sectors to educate and build awareness that will have longterm benefits for Muslim and non-Muslims alike.

The strength of this research lies in the credibility of established social scientific methods for survey research, and to do this properly with a unique population like the country's Muslims requires significant resources – there are no shortcuts. The total budget for this project is \$150,000 to \$200,000 to cover the Muslim and non-Muslim surveys as outlined above. Study partners have invested seed funding, and seeking sponsorship funding to cover the balance of the required budget.

Sponsors will be publicly recognized for their contribution, given an opportunity to have input into the survey topics, and receive a special briefing on the research findings. A charitable tax receipt can be issued for contributions of \$1,000 or more (through the Inspirit Foundation).

The initiative has been publicly endorsed by leaders and organizations in the Muslim community, including: Fareed Amin (Director, Islamic Institute of Toronto), Shaikh Ahmad Kutty (resident scholar Islamic Institute of Toronto), National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), Samira Kanji, President, Noor Cultural Centre, and Sheema Khan (*Globe and Mail* correspondent).

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The Environics Institute for Survey Research

www.environicsinstitute.org

The Environics Institute for Survey Research sponsors relevant and original public opinion and social research related to issues of public policy and social change. The Institute's primary mission is to survey those not usually heard from, using questions not usually asked.

The Tessellate Institute

www.tessellateinstitute.com

The Tessellate Institute is an independent, non-profit research institute that explores and documents the lived experiences of Muslims in Canada. We conduct research, organize lectures, and create online media content that highlights Canada's Muslim heritage.

The Olive Tree Foundation

www.olivetreefoundation.ca

The Olive Tree Foundation is a philanthropic foundation that promotes community development through the collection of endowed funds and charitable contributions to fund services for the long-term benefit of the community.

The Inspirit Foundation

www.inspiritfoundation.org

The Inspirit Foundation is a national grant-making organization supporting young people in building a more inclusive and pluralist Canada, in part by funding projects fostering engagement and exchange between young people of different spiritual, religious and secular beliefs.

The Canadian Race Relations Foundation

www.crr.ca

The Canadian Race Relations Foundation is Canada's leading agency dedicated to the elimination of racism and the promotion of harmonious race relations in the country.

Think for Actions

www.thinkforactions

Think for Actions is a Calgary-based non-profit focused on effectively engaging communities through research and interaction offering new solutions. Program areas include research and mentorship development with youth and the Muslim community.
