



February 25, 2004

Ms. Sheila Fraser  
Auditor General of Canada  
240 Sparks Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada  
K1A 0G6

Dear Ms. Fraser:

As you are no doubt aware, syndicated research projects have come under closer scrutiny in light of your recent report. There exists a perception that Government of Canada clients buy the "same" report many times, which conveys an image of waste and abuse (or worse). There is also a concern about the inclusion of voting/political data in syndicated studies. The broader sponsorship scandal is exacerbating this negative impression. In light of these misperceptions surrounding syndicated studies, we would like to clarify how EKOS' syndicated studies are actually conducted.

The Government of Canada does not buy a single report several times over. In the case of *Rethinking Government*, each year *three* large-scale telephone surveys are conducted with the general public, and a large-scale mail survey is undertaken with Canadian decision-makers. EKOS consults with sponsoring clients, who are given the opportunity to include a number of questions in the general public surveys which are of particular interest to their department. These questions are reported in three individual reports, as well as a compendium report. A separate report based on findings from the decision-makers' survey is also prepared. Results are also presented individually to participating Government of Canada departments. In 2003, over 200 variables (questions) were collected and analyzed from some 5,000 households as part of the *Rethinking Government* study. In addition, an elite survey was mailed to over 5,000 senior decision-makers in the private and public sector. Clearly this was not a \$27,000 poll sold 10 times over.

*Rethinking Government* is purchased by Departmental officials in the Government of Canada, not Ministers' Offices as some media reports have erroneously suggested. Indeed, syndicated studies are designed to be cost-effective and transparent partnerships between departments and organizations with overlapping areas of interest. The *Rethinking Government* study has been conducted since 1994, underlining its value to clients. As you are likely aware, the Office of the Auditor General has participated in the *Rethinking Government* study in the past.

---

**Head Office**  
99 Metcalfe Street, Suite 1100  
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6L7  
T. (613) 235-7215  
F. (613) 235-8498

**Toronto Office**  
480 University Avenue, Suite 1006  
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1V2  
T. (416) 598-8002  
F. (416) 598-2543

**Edmonton Office**  
9925 109 Street NW, Suite 606  
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2J8  
T. (780) 408-5225  
F. (780) 408-5233

We would also like to point out that no federal department either paid for or received political analysis as part of our syndicated studies (a separate concern raised in your report). Any political analysis was separately funded by our media clients and/or EKOS and placed in the public domain.

In our view, horizontal, syndicated products provide exceptional value for money for the federal government. Following are some of the key advantages:

- *A Credible Big Picture View:* Problems and issues which are outside of the scope and resources of research within a single department can be examined in greater depth by pooling resources across several government departments. Examples of such issues include: trust in government, electronic service delivery, values and broad expectations of government , etc.
- *Criterion Reference Data:* The pooled resources and issue development offered by syndicated studies provide a shared source of evidence on key issues. Individual departments often have conflicting interests and perspectives, and department sponsored research can sometimes have real or imagined biases. Syndicated studies provide all departmental stakeholders with a common empirical picture.
- *Economies of Scale/Pooled Resource Efficiencies:* Compared to custom, one-off research, syndicated studies allow several organizations to share the costs of examining emerging issues. In many cases, the costs are also shared by the private sector, other levels of government, and associations (i.e., the other sponsors of syndicated studies). Typically, the resulting research syndicate provides a far more powerful and neutral research tool than those permitted by individual organizations.
- *Valid and Reliable Monitoring of Key Trends:* Our syndicated studies contain consistent questions/measures which are carefully tracked over time to gauge any shifts in public opinion.

It is worth noting that our syndicated products have consistently been at the forefront of public policy debates in Canada over the past decade. They have been presented at high-level national and international conferences and symposia, have appeared prominently in the national media, and have been published and presented in numerous academic settings. Indeed, although they constitute a minority of our research undertakings, our syndicated products have been, in our view, the most influential, cost-effective and insightful products of our organization.

There is clearly a misperception regarding syndicated studies based on your report, and we wanted to bring to your attention how syndicated studies are conducted by EKOS. If you have any questions, or would like further clarification/discussion of this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

**EKOS Research Associates Inc.**



Frank Graves  
President