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Delivery Date: March 18, 2019
Contracted Cost: \$218,920 (excluding taxes)

National Focus Groups – Winter 2019 Second Cycle

Executive Summary

Prepared by:
Corporate Research Associates Inc.

Prepared for:
The Privy Council Office

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Canada 

Executive Summary

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Background and Objectives

The Communications and Consultation Secretariat of the Privy Council Office (PCO) commissioned Corporate Research Associates Inc. (CRA) to conduct public opinion research using qualitative approaches, to explore the perceptions of Canadian adults on the state of current events that relate to the federal government. Findings from the research will be used to develop effective communications strategies and products, to ensure that communications with the Canadian public on important issues remain clear and easy to understand. The study entailed three cycles of focus groups, one for each of January, February, and March 2019. This report presents the findings from the second cycle of focus groups. More specifically, objectives of this second cycle of focus groups aimed to assess opinions and perceptions on the state of the economy and job market (Kitchener and Saskatoon), youth economic opportunities (Moncton, North Vancouver and Quebec City), the environment (all locations), the Canadian Coast Guard (Moncton, North Vancouver and Quebec City), and Service Canada pull-up screen designs (Kitchener and Saskatoon).

The second cycle of the study consisted of a total of ten (10) in-person focus groups conducted from February 13th to 26th, 2019. Two French sessions were conducted in Quebec City (QC) while two English groups were held in each of Moncton (NB), Saskatoon (SK), Kitchener (ON) and North Vancouver (BC). Focus group participants included Canadian residents between the ages of 18 and 74 years old, with a mix of education, household incomes, and parental responsibilities represented in each group. In each of Saskatoon, and Kitchener, one group was conducted with males and one group with females. In each of Moncton, North Vancouver, and Quebec City, one group included those 18-34 years old and one group was conducted with those 35 years or older. All participants lived in their respective markets for at least two years. Across all groups, a total of 98 participants took part in this research cycle.

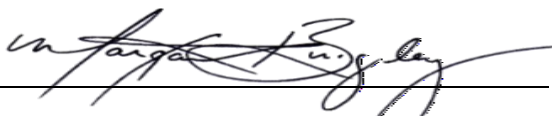
This report presents the findings from the study. Caution must be exercised when interpreting the results from this study, as qualitative research is directional only. Results cannot be attributed to the overall population under study, with any degree of confidence.



Political Neutrality Certification

I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of Corporate Research Associates Inc. that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the ***Policy on Communications and Federal Identity*** and the ***Directive on the Management of Communications***. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed



Margaret Brigley, CEO and Partner | Corporate Research Associates

Date: March 18, 2019

Key Findings and Conclusions

The following presents a summary of key findings from the ***Focus Groups – Winter 2019 – Second Cycle*** for each topic discussed.

The Economy and the Job Market (Kitchener and Saskatoon)

The state of the economy is considered to be reflective of a number of areas including jobs, the cost of living, employment rate, the gross domestic product, wage levels, and the extent to which businesses are hiring. There is a sense that the Government of Canada can influence the economy, mainly by directing funding to important areas, programming to support industry and through trade policy. That said, it was felt that the government had been reactive to the economy rather than proactively planning for the future. Perceptions are that the job market is the same or worse than a year ago, with many feeling that the job market is currently weak. Looking head, those in Saskatoon were hopeful, citing opportunities in various industries. Those in Kitchener were less optimistic, feeling that the job market would be worsening over the next five to ten years.

Skills training and retraining, and wages not keeping up with the cost of living were identified as the top two priority areas related to jobs. There was strong interest in skill training and retraining because of a recognition that industries are changing and many of the experienced job losses are in 'older' industries. In terms of wages and the cost of living, participants noted having experienced an increase in rent, groceries, daycare and education, while salaries had remained consistent. It was felt that these issues could be addressed by government through housing assistance programs, rent control policies, increasing minimum wage, and supporting the diversification of the economy.

Finally, participants did not feel that the current unemployment rate in their city (ranging from 4-6% for Kitchener and Saskatoon), was accurate or reflective of the actual situation. In particular, there was a feeling that the quality of jobs was not being accounted for in the unemployment rate, or that citizens were underemployed and working multiple jobs.



Youth Economic Opportunities (Moncton; North Vancouver; Quebec City)

Younger residents generally believe that it is more difficult for them than past generations, notably in terms of a higher cost of living, access to employment, financial issues including debt load and housing access, and information overload as a result of technology. Older participants, by contrast, sometimes felt that the younger generation has it easier because of access to education, more career options, and greater parental support, although in some cases older residents recognized the challenges faced by the younger generation.

Mixed opinions were expressed across groups regarding whether or not the Government of Canada has given more attention to young people as compared to older generations. It was believed that while there are education grants and programs, and support for young families, participants were unable to identify any other specific initiatives put forth to support younger citizens.

A number of challenges faced by young people were identified, including employment, the high cost of education, high debt load, and low wages. Youth felt that government should place priority on aspects that would make life more affordable, including helping with the cost of raising children, making it more affordable to buy their first home, and relieving student debt.

In terms of housing affordability, the high cost of making a down payment was identified as one of the greatest challenges, and there was support for the government developing a program to help people buy their first home.

The Environment (Moncton; North Vancouver; Kitchener; Quebec City; Saskatoon)

Top of mind environmental issues include global warming and climate change, plastic use, and carbon pricing. Participants identified two key actions for the federal government to focus on in terms of the environment: investing in clean energy and phasing out coal, and keeping plastic pollution out of the oceans, lakes and rivers.

Changes to weather and climate have been noticed, including more extreme weather patterns, flooding, lower water levels, weather fluctuations in winters, longer winters, hotter summers, changes to wildlife, and an increase in forest fires. These changes have personally affected participants, with the impact involving a decline in mental health, changes in lifestyle, flooding in certain areas, and impacts to agriculture crops.

While there is agreement that Canadians need to make lifestyle changes to reduce emissions, there is a sense that companies need to do their fair share as well. Some lifestyle changes had already been undertaken, but the inconvenience of change, entrenched habits, and the cost were seen as discouragements.

There is awareness of Canada's plan to put a price on pollution, but specific knowledge of the plan is limited. There is also limited awareness of the Climate Action incentive.



Across locations it was felt that the government should take a global leadership role in terms of protecting the environment and fighting climate change. There is a sense that it is Canada's role to act responsibly and demonstrate stewardship to others.

The Canadian Coast Guard (Moncton; North Vancouver; Quebec City)

Familiarity and specific knowledge of the Canadian Coast Guard was limited in these three cities. Generally top of mind mentions described areas related to the organization's mandate, including safety, protection, and security. The Coast Guard was widely seen as playing an essential role in ocean safety and access. Opinions were mixed in terms of the government's performance in managing the coast guard, and many felt they were not familiar enough to effectively comment.

When presented with six priority areas for the Coast Guard, ensuring the safety of Canadians at sea was considered the most important priority. Participants were also asked to select the top areas for investment in relation to the Coast Guard, with maintaining and upgrading existing ships, and recruiting and growing the Coast Guard's workforce being seen as the most important.

There was a general lack of awareness regarding the fleet of icebreakers, with many unable to comment on whether or not the fleet should be given priority.

Service Canada Pull-Up Screen (Kitchener and Saskatoon)

When evaluating three new possible design options for Service Canada's use on banner signage, participants generally felt that "Concept C" (a red-and-white colour scheme with a design that includes a few symbols) worked best, being a more modern representation of the organization's work. Meanwhile, "Concept A" (featuring a red-and-white colour scheme with colour block features and no images) was felt to strongly align with Service Canada's current reputation and offered a clean and bold message. "Concept B", which featured multiple symbols in multiple colours, was liked by participants, but was not felt to clearly communicate Service Canada's goal of having representatives available at a particular location and was seen as a larger departure from existing Service Canada communications.

Across concepts, nothing stood out strongly as being disliked, though participants identified a number of small issues, namely wanting the Service Canada logo and flag to be more prominent, and some confusion related to the geotag symbol. Further, some of the symbols were confusing to participants, who felt that more clarity could be offered in how the symbols related to Service Canada's offerings. That said, the breadth of symbols was felt to be inclusive of people across the country, and to represent diversity.

Of the two taglines shown, the phrase "Here for You" was preferred over "People Serving People" for being simple, clear and welcoming of those needing service from Service Canada.

The URL "Canada.ca" was preferred for its simplicity and memorability, as most would use a search engine to locate the information they need.

