



Government  
of Canada

Gouvernement  
du Canada

# Continuous Qualitative Data Collection of Canadians' Views – January 2020

## Executive Summary

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Canada 

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The Communications and Consultation Secretariat of the Privy Council Office (PCO) commissioned The Strategic Counsel (TSC) to conduct continuous cycles of focus group research across the country with members of the public on key national issues, events, and policy initiatives related to the Government of Canada.

The broad purpose of this ongoing qualitative research program is three-fold: to explore the dimensions and drivers of public opinion on the most important issues facing the country; to assess perceptions and expectations of the federal government's actions and priorities, and; to inform the development of Government of Canada communications so that they continue to be aligned with the perspectives and information needs of Canadians, while remaining both clear and easy-to-understand.

The research is intended to be used by the Communications and Consultation Secretariat within PCO in order to fulfill its mandate of supporting the Prime Minister's Office in coordinating government communications. Specifically, the research will ensure that PCO has an ongoing understanding of Canadians' opinions on macro-level issues of interest to the government, as well as emerging trends.

This report includes findings from 12 in-person focus groups which were conducted between January 8<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 in six locations across the country including in Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia. Details concerning the locations, recruitment, and composition of the groups are shown in the section below.

Among the specific objectives for this cycle of focus groups, the research explored awareness and perceptions of a wide range of issues, many of them in-depth, including recent Government of Canada stories in the news, and specific initiatives and announcements in relation to the environment, such as the national price on pollution, net-zero emissions goals, and nature-based solutions to climate change. In addition, the research explored local issues of concern, identifying specific challenges with respect to infrastructure and the economy in three Eastern or Central locations, as well as topics specifically related to concerns and activities in the West, including 'Western alienation' and the Trans Mountain Pipeline (TMX), among others, in the three Western locations.

A series of exercises were also completed by participants, depending on the location and the topic being discussed. In all locations, participants were asked to complete an exercise intended to identify name preferences for the federal government's carbon pricing program. In the three Eastern and Central locations, participants were asked to identify their top priorities for the Government of Canada. And in the three Western locations, participants were asked to write down a few words which, in their view, described the relationship between the Government of Canada and their province. Participants' responses to these exercises were formally captured and recorded, as were the ensuing discussions exploring these topics in more detail.

As a note of caution when interpreting the results from this study, findings of qualitative research are directional in nature only and cannot be attributed quantitatively to the overall population under study with any degree of confidence.

## Methodology

### Overview of Groups

#### Target audience

- Canadian residents, 18 and older
- Groups were split primarily by gender

### Detailed approach

- 12 in-person focus groups across 6 Canadian cities
- Two groups conducted per location, in Windsor, Ontario (Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>), Trois-Rivières, Quebec (Jan. 9<sup>th</sup>), Sydney, Nova Scotia (Jan. 14<sup>th</sup>), Abbotsford, British Columbia (Jan. 20<sup>th</sup>), Edmonton, Alberta (Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup>), and Winnipeg, Manitoba (Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup>)
- Groups in Trois-Rivières, Quebec were conducted in French, while all others were conducted in English
- A total of 10 participants were recruited for each group, assuming 8 to 10 participants would attend

- Each participant received an \$90 honorarium in respect of their time
- Across all locations, 106 participants attended, in total. Details on attendance numbers by group can be found below.

### Group Locations and Composition

LOCATION	GROUP	LANGUAGE	DATE	TIME	GROUP COMPOSITION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Windsor	1	English	Jan. 8, 2020	5:00-7:00	Women	9
	2			7:30-9:30	Men	8
Trois-Rivières	3	French	Jan. 9, 2020	5:00-7:00	Women	8
	4			7:30-9:30	Men	10
Sydney	5	English	Jan. 14, 2020	5:00-7:00	Women	10
	6			7:30-9:30	Men	10
Abbotsford	7	English	Jan. 20, 2020	5:00-7:00	Women	5
	8			7:30-9:30	Men	9
Edmonton	9	English	Jan. 22, 2020	5:00-7:00	Women	10
	10			7:30-9:30	Men	10
Winnipeg	11	English	Jan. 23, 2020	5:00-7:00	Women	7
	12			7:30-9:30	Men	10
<b>Total number of participants</b>						<b>106</b>

## Key Findings

The following outlines a summary of the key findings from each topic discussed during the cycle of focus groups undertaken in January, 2020. Unless otherwise noted, topics were explored in all locations.

### Government of Canada News

There was low awareness of Government of Canada news, overall, with the exception of the fatal crash of the Ukraine International flight out of Tehran. Most were aware of this event and the federal government's response. Many were following the story and were up-to-date with developments.

Other issues commonly mentioned included pipelines, primarily in relation to Alberta, the West, and Western alienation, with a few specific references to the Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) project and “Wexit”. Cannabis legalization and “vaping” were also mentioned by a number of participants in different groups, while SNC Lavalin was noted by some as “back in the headlines.”

### **Iran Plane Crash (all locations except Windsor)**

Perceptions of the federal government’s actions to date were largely positive, especially with regard to the support offered to the families of Canadian victims. The Prime Minister’s visibility and personal outreach, and the \$25,000 compensation, in particular, were all positively noted in the groups and known among most participants, who viewed this response as both appropriate and compassionate.

Most also felt that the government had managed a forceful but measured response to Iran, while staying out of the rising tensions between that country and the US, which they described as a wise decision. Some in the Western locations, however, were concerned that Canada-US relations could be harmed because of the Prime Minister’s comments regarding the role that escalation of tensions in the region had played in the tragedy.

A number of participants wanted to see the Government of Canada continue or redouble its efforts to hold Iran accountable. Some suggested imposing sanctions or an embargo, placing organizations involved on a terrorist list, or cutting existing diplomatic ties, if any, with the country. Many felt that the Iranian government should reimburse Canada and Canadian victims’ families for any costs. Some of the men in the Edmonton groups wanted to see a more forceful response, and more alignment with the US, but this was an outlying view. Most felt Canada should stay out of that conflict.

### **Government of Canada Priorities (Sydney, Trois-Rivières, Windsor)**

#### **Top of Mind Priorities (Unaided)**

There was little awareness of the Throne Speech from early December. Asked what the priorities of the federal government might be, participants widely identified climate change and the environment, with some related mention of “the carbon tax”. Other mentions included immigration, middle class tax cuts, affordable housing, homelessness, jobs and the economy.

Asked to identify their desired priorities for the Government of Canada, participants mentioned jobs and the economy most prominently, followed by health care and mental health. In Sydney and Trois-Rivières, the environment and climate change received some mention, as did seniors’ issues. In Windsor, participants were concerned about affordability in the local housing market and wanted more support for home ownership and restrictions on foreign purchases.

#### **Aided Priorities - Exercise**

Provided with a list of ten priorities included in the Speech from the Throne, participants were asked to identify the three most important to them personally.

Based on those selections, *Ensuring every Canadian has access to a family doctor* was the number one priority overall. In explaining their choice, participants spoke about their own experiences, and those of others, with insufficient access to doctors, inconsistent care, wait times, and overcrowded clinics and emergency rooms. Many described this priority as fundamentally important – to themselves and their families, and to Canadians and the Canadian health care system.

*Lowering taxes for the middle class* was also at the top of the list. In Trois-Rivières and Sydney, it was on par with universal access to a family doctor. Many expressed personal frustration and financial struggles resulting from what they perceived as over-taxation. Some felt that the current system is out of balance, and that average Canadians, like themselves, were getting financially squeezed or penalized for working hard. Some said they were struggling to get ahead or losing ground because of the tax burden.

In Windsor, an increase in the federal minimum wage was selected by more participants than tax cuts. And across locations, a national Pharmacare program was a relatively high priority as well. Environmental priorities and water on reserves fell in the middle of the list, while a national price on pollution was lower down. Many opposed an automatic rifle ban, with few identifying it as an important priority for them, placing it at the bottom of the list of priorities along with plans to cut cell phone prices, which most felt was beyond the proper scope of government and relatively unimportant.

Most felt that it was unlikely that the Government of Canada would deliver on all these priorities. The list was viewed as long and ambitious, and many individual priorities were seen as hard to accomplish. Increasing access to family doctors, in particular, was widely viewed as a challenging goal to achieve in such a short period of time, given the perceived complexity and enduring nature of the problem. Among the other top priorities, implementing a national Pharmacare program was also viewed as difficult to accomplish, and both costly and complex. By contrast, lowering taxes and increasing the federal minimum wage were viewed as easily done but not without costs – for the government in the case of tax cuts or for businesses and the economy with respect to the minimum wage.

### **Local Challenges (Sydney, Trois-Rivières, Windsor)**

Participants identified a wide range of challenges in their respective communities, most commonly related to the local economy and jobs. Poor access to mental health care and supports for vulnerable populations were also shared concerns.

Infrastructure needs tended to focus heavily on transportation in all locations, from roads, highways and bridges to ports and public transit. In some instances, transportation infrastructure was identified as requiring basic maintenance or repair, and in others increased capacity and expansion.

In Windsor and Sydney, economic hardship was top of mind and attributed to industrial shifts, business closures, and unemployment, as well as low wages and increasing housing costs. Addiction and mental health issues were commonly viewed as on the rise in both cities, while perceptions of increased crime and violence were noted in Windsor.

In Trois-Rivières, the state of health care was a top concern among the women's group, along with employment for marginalized groups, while the men were most concerned with the diversification and growth of the local economy and supports for business. Environmental issues, from air quality to pollution in the St. Lawrence River, were also identified as challenges in this location.

Few were aware of any recent federal investments in their respective cities or could identify local impacts of federal government policies or programs, either positive or negative. Among the few mentions, some in Sydney credited the federal government with local infrastructure investments, while some in Trois-Rivières felt increased immigration had bolstered the qualified workforce. In both Sydney and Windsor, however, there were participants who felt that their cities were largely overlooked or forgotten by government, in favour of larger centres.

### **Western Issues (Winnipeg, Edmonton, Abbotsford)**

#### **Exercise**

Asked to describe the relationship between the Government of Canada and their province, many in the groups which were held in Western Canada characterized their province as forgotten, overlooked or taken for granted, especially compared to Ontario and Quebec. The concentration of people and votes in Central Canada was widely blamed for that dynamic.

In Abbotsford, many felt that their province was treated unfairly by the Government of Canada and deserved more recognition and attention. In Edmonton, negative views were more visceral and pronounced. Some said they felt hated, isolated, angry, or lied to in relation to the Government of Canada. They expressed resentment towards the federal government (and the rest of Canada), based on a sense that equalization payments favoured other provinces to the detriment of Alberta. Additionally, they framed the Government of Canada (and the rest of Canada) as disparaging, and generally unsupportive of, the oil and gas industry and consequently damaging the provincial economy.

In Winnipeg, descriptions of the relationship between the Manitoba and federal governments were more varied and generally positive, overall. Some noted strains in the relationship over "the carbon tax" or felt that their province was overlooked in favour of those with more money, including Alberta and British Columbia (BC). Others, however, described the relationship more favourably, and few felt, on balance, that Manitoba was treated unfairly by the federal government.

Asked what the Government of Canada could do to demonstrate that it is in touch with the concerns of Western provinces, there were some common suggestions in Abbotsford and Edmonton. These included profiling the contributions of the West, highlighting the national importance of Western industries and pipeline projects, in particular, and acknowledging the existing efforts being made by Western industries to implement good environmental stewardship. More listening and better communications were mentioned, and some wanted to see changes to elections, if only to the timing of the reporting of results, so that voters in the West could feel like their votes counted. In Edmonton, there was a desire for greater understanding of the fear that people in Alberta were feeling in regard

to their livelihoods, and more help with retraining and new skills development. In Winnipeg, by contrast, there were only a few suggestions, focussed on helping with the cost of living and doing more to support Indigenous communities.

### **Western Issues and Priorities**

The Western groups included discussion of a set of issues affecting Western Canada, including the Trans Mountain Pipeline (TMX), bills C-69 and C-48, equalization payments, and China's boycott of Canadian canola.

#### **TMX**

Most participants were aware of controversies, opposition, and delays related to the construction of the TMX pipeline. In Abbotsford and Winnipeg few were sure of the current status of the project, while in Edmonton most were aware that it had been approved and many believed that work had already begun.

Despite either knowing little about the status of the project or believing that it had started, few felt that TMX would be built on schedule. Many noted that it was already behind and would likely encounter more obstacles and delays. Some questioned the federal government's commitment to this project. And many felt that large projects were rarely completed on time, even without the kind of controversy and opposition encountered by pipeline projects.

#### **Bills C-69 and C-48**

There was little awareness of these two bills recently enacted into federal law, one aimed at strengthening the requirements for environmental assessments and community consultations for large infrastructure projects and the other at preventing oil tankers from transporting large amounts of oil along the North Coast of BC. Participants were provided with a description of each, including a brief outline of economic or practical concerns voiced by some regarding their implementation. Participants were then asked for their own opinion of the bills.

Overall opinion was somewhat mixed. Most in Edmonton and some in Abbotsford were either wary of these bills or opposed to them outright, based on their perceived potential harm to the economy and jobs. Others in Abbotsford and most in Winnipeg generally supported them as a good idea but had questions and some concerns about the potential for unanticipated negative consequences.

#### **Equalization Payments**

Most were at least somewhat familiar with the notion of, if not specifically the term, 'equalization payments', but very few could describe how the system worked with much confidence, detail or accuracy. Most of the explanations provided revolved around a sense that monies flow to the federal level from the provinces and are then redistributed back to the provinces based on a formula which some felt was outdated and should be reviewed. In the West, in particular, there was a sense that under the system currently in place Alberta has been and continues to "pay too much" while Quebec "pays too little" or has historically been on the receiving end despite changes in economic activity and conditions across the provinces, specifically a downturn in Alberta.



Most were unsure if this was accurate and whether the system should be changed as a result, though many felt it should be reviewed to ensure that it was fair. Some in Abbotsford and Edmonton, however, overwhelmingly believed that the system was unfair and should be changed. But due to a lack of knowledge about how the system worked, no one had any concrete suggestions for how it might be improved.

### **China's Boycott of the Canadian Canola Industry**

There was limited awareness of this issue, except in Winnipeg, and most did not know any details other than to ascribe the boycott to a larger dispute between Canada and China arising from the house arrest of a Chinese business executive.

Participants were provided with some background and asked for their opinions regarding the federal government's approach to resolving the issue. They were given three options to consider: making concessions, retaliating, or continuing to negotiate with China while supporting farmers. Most opted for negotiation as the most reasonable, constructive, and "Canadian" approach to the problem. It was widely felt that retaliating or making concessions would prove counterproductive.

### **Top Federal Priority for Western Canada**

Of the various issues discussed, participants were asked to select one of them as their top priority for the Government of Canada.

In Edmonton and among some in Abbotsford, who consistently prioritized economic concerns, there was a consensus that building the TMX pipeline should be the top priority for the federal government, given its importance to the economy and employment. Many also felt that Bill C-69 was important and had a direct role to play in enabling this project. Many in Winnipeg, and some in Abbotsford with heightened concerns about the environment, opted for negotiating with China to resolve the Canola boycott. A few in Winnipeg selected either TMX or equalization payments.

## **Carbon Pricing**

### **Awareness of Environmental News**

Most participants demonstrated low levels of awareness regarding current events and news coverage related to the environment. The most common mentions included general references to climate change, related weather events or activism. A "carbon tax" received a mention in most groups, with some attending comment on opposition and controversy surrounding the initiative. Pipelines were widely mentioned, as well, in relation to greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), opposition, and Alberta. The fires in Australia were identified in most groups and the proposed ban on single-use plastics was noted by a few participants.

There was even lower awareness of recent environmental news related to the Government of Canada. Pipelines, "the carbon tax," and efforts by the federal government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions were mentioned, mostly in reference to opposition and controversy. The proposed ban on single-use

plastics was mentioned again in this context by some. And there were a few comments about sending Canadian firefighters to assist with efforts in Australia.

### **Price on Pollution**

Participants in all groups were asked if they had heard anything about the Government of Canada introducing a national price on pollution. The question elicited very limited recognition and response, owing to a lack of familiarity with the language. Once “a national price on pollution” was understood as the more familiar term “carbon tax,” most were aware of the initiative.

Most associated this initiative with controversy and opposition from some provincial governments, increased costs to businesses and consumers and an added charge at the gas pumps. Participants generally understood that the purpose of the policy was to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and some were aware that it was a charge levied on businesses. Most, however, had little understanding of how the national price on pollution worked, including how it was collected and where the revenues went. Some felt the government had failed to adequately explain the policy to the public.

Attitudes toward the policy tended to be mixed. Some were opposed to it as a “tax grab” or negative influence on the economy and cost of living. Some were more positive, saying the policy represented a good “first step” toward getting emissions under control. And many were ambivalent, concerned about the impact on costs and the economy but confused about the details and in need of more information to form a judgement.

For clarity, participants were given some basic information on the federal policy, including where it was being applied and why, where the revenue was going, and how the money was collected. For many, however, the description did not serve to clarify their understanding of the policy. Instead, it tended to give rise to questions. Most commonly, participants wanted to know where they could get more information, why the revenue being collected was going toward consumer rebates instead of efforts to further reduce emissions and how outcomes would be evaluated, monitored, and reported. Many were admittedly confused. Some reiterated their opposition to the policy, including implementing the federal pricing system in provinces that did not meet the federal standard, which they felt was unwarranted or counterproductive.

### **Naming Exercise**

On the basis of the description above, participants were asked to consider some potential names or phrases to describe the policy. Participants were asked to identify the two they liked the best, and any they disliked, from the following list.

- Putting a Price on Pollution
- Carbon Tax
- Carbon Pricing
- Taxing Pollution
- Taxing Big Polluters

- Penalizing Those Who Pollute More
- Raising Taxes on Companies with High Carbon Emissions

### **Top Choices**

Overall, participants strongly favoured the two names or phrases already in use: Carbon Tax and Putting a Price on Pollution. Nearly as many disliked these choices as liked them, but for most names and phrases on the list, negative votes either equaled or outnumbered positive ones.

Putting a Price on Pollution was widely viewed as easier to understand, relate to, and support, than a “carbon tax” and as a better description of the policy. Many felt it simply had a “better ring to it”. Some also liked the idea that a price on pollution could apply more broadly to other forms of pollution, but others disliked it for the same reason and that felt that imprecision could lead to confusion. Others who did not like this phrase tended to dislike the policy in general and criticized the wording of “price on pollution” as an attempt to shift opinion on what they perceived to be an unpopular initiative.

Most who chose Carbon Tax did so primarily because it was already widely established and familiar. Many felt that attempting to call it something other than this would only lead to more confusion. Beyond that, participants liked that it was short and simple. Some who selected this name did so because they felt it was the most accurate, especially compared to some of the terms they considered euphemistic. Many who said so, however, tended to oppose the policy. Those who disliked this name focused, primarily, on the negative connotations associated with the word ‘tax’, although some also felt that it was an inaccurate description of the policy. Some did not like the word ‘carbon’ either, saying it sounded it vague, abstract, or like “government jargon”.

### **Other Options**

Compared to the top choices above, relatively few selected Carbon Pricing or Taxing Pollution as their number-one choices, but nearly as many placed them in their top two. Participants tended to like these names for being short and simple. Among those who preferred Carbon Pricing, quite a few felt that it was the most precise description of the policy, with its focus on carbon versus pollution, and its use of the word ‘pricing’ versus ‘tax’, which some felt more clearly conveyed the discretionary nature of a cost that could be reduced through lowered emissions.

The other phrases and names tested generated more negative votes than positive ones by quite a large margin. While some liked their focus on big polluters and companies, as the rightful targets of this policy, in their view, many more found that problematic. Some felt it sent the wrong message to the public about only some needing to play their part in reducing emissions, and many felt that the phrases were unduly negative or “anti-corporate” in assigning blame to companies and big polluters.

### **Perceived Goals and Outcomes of the Policy**

Following the naming exercise, participants were asked what they thought the main goal should be of a strategy that puts a price on pollution. A wide range of responses were given. Most fundamentally, many said it should be about reducing emissions and tackling climate change. More instrumentally participants felt it should be about changing behaviours and getting everyone to do their part, which involved everything from raising public awareness and establishing new norms to holding companies accountable, developing new technologies and green energy sources, and transitioning the economy.

Asked directly if they felt this policy would be likely to reduce Canada's overall carbon emissions, responses were mixed. Some were hopeful, while acknowledging that it would be a challenge, requiring big changes in behaviour, along with significant advancements in technology and considerable costs. Others were more skeptical, largely for the same reasons, feeling that public support, technology and the commitment from industry were currently inadequate. Some were unsure and did not feel educated enough to judge, or wanted to see more evidence that the government's plan was feasible. A few felt strongly that the policy would not work and dismissed it as a "tax grab" that would hurt the economy and drive up prices for consumers. Some felt that the policy was not tough enough and that higher prices would be necessary to force the kind of emissions reductions required. Some felt it was a start and might stabilize emissions, at least.

Most agreed that the public needs more information on this initiative and more education, tools, and support to make the kind of behaviour changes required to reduce overall emissions. Most also agreed that industry needs to be monitored and overseen to ensure that it follows through.

### **Net-Zero**

There was very low awareness of the federal government's pledge to reach a goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. Most were also unfamiliar with the concept of "net-zero" with many assuming that it meant zero emissions. Only a few understood 'net' to mean that some kind of deduction or offset subtracted from total emissions to achieve a balance of zero.

Participants were provided with more background on the net-zero goal, including a range of initiatives that could reduce or offset carbon emissions. Asked if a 30-year time span was appropriate for achieving this net-zero goal, or even possible, participants had mixed responses.

Those who were doubtful, pointed to a wide range of barriers: continued debate and political disagreement, resistance from the public and industry, insufficient technology, a lack of public tools and supports, big economic costs and trade-offs and the degree of our current reliance on oil and gas. Most felt that the challenge was enormous. Many others were unsure, citing similar reasons, but felt it might be possible if everyone made the effort. Others were more optimistic. They felt that the necessary shifts in attitudes and behaviour were already underway, leading to progress and new possibilities for successfully transitioning the economy and reducing emissions. Some were excited about a collective effort in support of "a stretch-target" that would advance human progress.

Regardless of where they stood on Canada's likelihood of achieving net-zero by 2050, most agreed that this was a necessary undertaking. Many liked the idea of "net-zero" and felt that it was far more

practical and achievable than simply reducing emissions and attempting to reach targets without offsets.

Asked whether the reduction of carbon emissions should take priority over the growth of the economy, few thought so. Many felt that Canadians can and should do both. But most concluded that, all things considered, Canadians cannot lose sight of economic imperatives. And some, especially in Abbotsford and Edmonton, were very strongly in favour of supporting the economy, no matter what.

### **Perceived Impacts of the Transition**

When asked about it, many said they had concerns about moving swiftly away from traditional energy sources to alternative ones. In most groups participants voiced concerns about the impacts on the economy, industry, and jobs, especially in Edmonton and Sydney. Many felt that we did not yet have the technology or alternatives sufficiently developed to support this transition. Some raised concerns about the environmental impact of green energy sources not being adequately understood or factored into the equation. Furthermore, many were concerned that the public did not yet have the tools or support needed to undertake the changes required without significant costs or disruptions to their current way of life. Some downplayed or pushed back against these concerns, but most agreed that moving swiftly to transition the economy involved considerable effort and investments, and significant support from government to assist with the changes required.

Asked if they were concerned about the impact of a transition from fossil fuels on their lives and communities, many said they were. Most were concerned about the impacts on jobs and the cost of living, especially with regards to household heating and transportation. Some were concerned that economic disruption, increased costs and unemployment would have a universally negative effect, reducing the money available for infrastructure, social programs and government services, across the board. In Edmonton, in particular, many felt that impact on the economy and communities in Alberta would be dire.

In most groups there were also participants with more positive outlooks who felt that the shift would create new sectors and businesses, new investments in research, development and innovation, and new jobs and technologies. Many also felt that we simply have no choice, and that it was better to pay the economic price of progress than to pay the price for doing nothing and allowing environmental deterioration to harm the economy, our way of life, and human health.

### **Behaviour Change**

Asked if they would personally be willing to change their behaviour to help Canada achieve its net-zero goal, many said they would, without reservation, and a few said they already had to some degree. Some referenced the welfare of their children and grandchildren, or future generations, as big motivators. Most others said they would be willing to make changes if more tools and support were offered by government, including financial incentives, advice on what they could do, and more information about the benefits. Some said it depended on what was required and whether it was “doable” without sacrificing their wellbeing and the welfare of their families. Some wanted to know more about the government’s plan and be convinced that their own efforts would be worthwhile. Others were more resistant or opposed to making personal changes because they lacked confidence in

the ability of the government's plan to accomplish its stated goals and felt that the costs to them would be too high.

### **Evaluation**

Asked how they would evaluate progress toward the goal of net-zero, many were unsure. Among those with ideas, many said they would want to see scientific data from independent sources. They also wanted to see more actions from government, which included working together at all levels on a plan, making the investments required, supporting the public, implementing regulations, and taking the lead in reducing its own footprint. Others felt that the best evidence of progress would be seeing or hearing about broad societal changes taking place or about improvements to the environment, including less pollution, fewer disasters, more trees, and healthier fisheries and wildlife.

### **Nature-based Solutions**

Few had heard about nature-based solutions in the context of fighting climate change. After being provided with a description, most liked the idea and grasped it on a surface level, but few could expound on the examples or explanation provided in any meaningful way, beyond understanding the role that trees play in reducing carbon in the air. Few understood how wetlands and biodiversity play a role in climate change action as solutions.

That said, most supported investing in nature-based solutions as part of a larger plan to address climate change. However, many also cautioned that this should not be viewed as an alternative to harder to achieve and more fundamental solutions, such as reducing emissions and energy use, transitioning to cleaner energy sources and investing in new technology.

### **Frontier Mines (Trois-Rivières, Windsor, Edmonton)**

Most had not previously heard of the Frontier Mines.

Participants were provided with a brief description, then asked for their opinions about whether the federal government should approve the project, reject the project, or approve it only if commitments were made by the company to limit the environmental impact.

Response was mixed. There was widespread opposition in Trois-Rivières and wariness in Windsor, with many undecided and most offering only tepid acceptance, provided commitments and other safeguards were in place. With all participants in Edmonton supporting the project, however (all of the women stipulated conditions, and many of the men said it should go head no matter what), most participants, overall, said the federal government should approve the project. Economic benefits and jobs were the reasons given. Many felt that a balance between economic and environmental interests could be achieved, with sufficient effort and oversight.

Most felt that strict safety regulations should be put in place and overseen by government, however. Participants were concerned not just about emissions but safety, in general, including contamination of

the land and water. Many felt that the company should be required to invest in technology to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the project, and, some said, in offsets to achieve “net-zero”.

Among those who opposed the project or were undecided, most felt that such a large mine and the emissions it was expected to produce were a move in the wrong direction, and at odds with the federal government’s commitment to reduce greenhouse gases. In Trois-Rivières, some felt that if jobs were the issue, people should move to areas where labour is needed, and that it would be far better for investments to be made, and jobs created, in sustainable industries and technology that provide solutions to pollution, instead of adding to the problem.

Told that some experts have questioned whether the mine would be able to generate enough revenue to justify the costs of constructing it, support weakened, most notably in Windsor. Meanwhile others dismissed the concern, especially in Edmonton, feeling that the company would not go ahead if the project was not economically viable.

Many agreed, when asked, that it was possible for the federal government to reduce emissions and protect the environment, on the one hand, while also approving this project. The key, most said, was “balance”.

Participants in Trois-Rivières were the exception. They were strongly opposed to the government approving this mine.

### **Canada Wordmark (Sydney, Winnipeg, Abbotsford)**

Most said that Government of Canada communications were, in their experience, clearly identified and recognizable as such. Many mentioned a “logo” with a flag. Once shown the Canada Wordmark, everyone recognized it. Some commented, explicitly, on the “recognizable font”, in addition to the flag that many recalled unaided.

All had seen the symbol across a wide range of communications and media. Participants referenced signs in front of federal government buildings, army bases, and national parks, or in Service Canada and Canada Post offices, as well as at borders and in airports. They mentioned seeing the symbol in their passports, on employment insurance (EI) cheques, and tax returns, and on the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) website. Some said they had seen it on the sides of vehicles belonging to the departments of Correctional Service Canada or Forestry, and in emails and letters.

Asked what the symbol meant to them, in general, most said it stood for Canada and the institution of the federal government. Participants used words like official, authoritative, trusted and important to describe it.

Asked to describe the more personal meaning of the symbol, participants provided a wide range of extremely positive and emotional responses. The wordmark, most commonly, evoked feelings of pride and gratitude. It denoted home, “my country” and a sense of belonging. Many associated it with travel and positive recognition abroad. Participants offered up adjectives like beautiful, freedom, and

strength. Some referenced “true north, strong and free” from the Canadian anthem. For some, the symbol was associated with money received from government, or, more negatively, with money owed to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).

Most felt that the Government of Canada used this symbol in its communications and information to clearly identify the source, and convey that communications were official, sanctioned, and approved, as well as trustworthy and authoritative. Participants agreed that the wordmark belonged in all official Government of Canada communications and information channels, whether documents, signs, websites, advertising, or the sides of vehicles.

It was clear from most of the commentary that participants did place a great deal of trust in this wordmark and the communications in which it was included. Asked about it directly, many raised concerns about fraud and whether or not one can trust any information today, especially online and via texts and emails, when digital technology has made fraud so easy. A few also had negative comments about the Canada symbol being used to promote partisan policies and objectives although no examples were offered in terms of occasions where this had specifically occurred. That said, most participants indicated that they did, on balance, have confidence in the credibility of official information from the Government of Canada when they saw this symbol attached to it.

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#### **MORE INFORMATION**

The Strategic Counsel  
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