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Continuous Qualitative Data Collection of Canadians' Views – January 2021

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 online focus groups which were conducted between January 6th and 28th, 2021 in multiple locations across the country including Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. Details concerning the locations, recruitment, and composition of the groups are shown in the section below.

The research for this cycle of focus groups focused primarily on COVID-19, as the pandemic continued in Canada. The research explored a wide range of related issues in depth, including what Canadians were hearing about the Government of Canada in the news, their outlook on COVID-19 and how that has influenced their behaviours, as well as their views on the federal government's procurement of vaccines and expectations of timelines for vaccine roll-out. Some groups were also asked about the repayment of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and updates to the COVID Alert App.

Regarding vaccines, there were further discussions held among particular subgroups of the population – including former CERB recipients, seniors, those who were vaccine hesitant, racialized Canadians, parents with children in daycare or considering daycare and the general population – in response to advertisements aimed at informing Canadians about COVID-19 vaccines. Indigenous people, residing in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, were also asked to review potential messaging aimed at informing Canadians about COVID-19 vaccines.

In addition to the pandemic, non-COVID-19 related discussions broached other topics including the Canada Wordmark, the state of the French language, local issues in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Vancouver Island, and Indigenous issues. Other topics explored in more depth included small nuclear reactors, homelessness, online hate and childcare.

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 location.
- Some groups focused on specific subgroups of the population including former CERB recipients, those who were vaccine hesitant, Indigenous people, racialized Canadians, seniors (aged 55 and older) and parents with children in daycare or who were considering daycare within the next 12 months.

Detailed approach

- 12 focus groups across various regions in Canada.
- Four groups were conducted with the general population in major Francophone centres (in New Brunswick, Ontario and Manitoba), across the province of New Brunswick, mid-size and large centres in Saskatchewan, and the interior of British Columbia (B.C.).
- The other eight groups were conducted with key subgroups including:

- Former CERB recipients in Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec City;
 - Vaccine hesitant people residing in major centres in Ontario and in the Greater Montreal Area (GMA);
 - Indigenous people in Manitoba and Saskatchewan;
 - Racialized Canadians in mid-size and major centres in Alberta;
 - Seniors (aged 55 and older) residing on Vancouver Island; and
 - Parents with children in daycare or considering daycare in the next 12 months in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).
- Groups in Quebec and with Francophones in Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick were conducted in French, while all others were conducted in English.
 - All groups for this cycle were conducted online.
 - A total of 8 participants were recruited for each group, assuming 6 to 8 participants would attend.
 - Across all locations, 86 participants attended, in total. Details on attendance numbers by group can be found below.
 - Each participant received an honorarium. The incentive ranged from \$90 to \$125 per participant, depending on the location and the composition of the group.

Group Locations and Composition

LOCATION	GROUP	LANGUAGE	DATE	TIME (EST)	GROUP COMPOSITION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Newfoundland and Labrador	1	English	Jan. 6	4:30-6:30 pm	Former CERB Recipients	7
Quebec City	2	French	Jan. 7	6:00-8:00 pm	Former CERB Recipients	6
Ontario – Major Centres	3	English	Jan. 12	6:00-8:00 pm	Vaccine Hesitant	7
Manitoba/ Saskatchewan	4	English	Jan. 12	8:00-10:00 pm	Indigenous	7
Alberta – Mid-size and Major Centres	5	English	Jan. 13	8:00-10:00 pm	Racialized Canadians	8
Greater Montreal Area (GMA)	6	French	Jan. 14	6:00-8:00 pm	Vaccine Hesitant	6
Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick	7	French	Jan. 18	6:00-8:00 pm	Francophones – General Population	8
Vancouver Island	8	English	Jan. 20	9:00-11:00 pm	Seniors (aged 55+)	7
New Brunswick	9	English	Jan. 21	6:00-8:00 pm	General Population	7

Greater Toronto Area (GTA)	10	English	Jan. 25	6:00-8:00 pm	Parents – Children in daycare and/or considering daycare	7
Saskatchewan – Mid-size and Major Centres	11	English	Jan. 26	8:00-10:00 pm	General Population	8
Interior B.C.	12	English	Jan. 28	9:00-11:00 pm	General Population	8
Total number of participants						86

Key Findings

Part I: COVID-19 Related Findings

Government of Canada in the News (All Locations)

To begin each group in January, participants were asked what they had seen, heard or read about the Government of Canada in recent days. Overall, participants recall was somewhat limited on the wider range of activities of the federal government. Across the groups what most had heard about and were engaged on was the topic of COVID-19 vaccinations.

A few other issues were mentioned briefly and in limited detail. Several participants mentioned the fact that some government officials had travelled for personal reasons and there were also comments in a few groups about the resignation of the Governor General. Unrelated to COVID-19, the cancellation of the Keystone XL pipeline by the U.S. administration was also briefly referred to.

Greenhouse Gas Reductions (Newfoundland and Labrador Former CERB Recipients, Quebec City Former CERB Recipients, Major Centres Ontario Vaccine Hesitant, Manitoba and Saskatchewan Indigenous Peoples, Mid-size and Major Centres Alberta Racialized Canadians, GMA Vaccine Hesitant)

Unprompted, most participants had not heard anything about the Government of Canada's recent announcement to reduce greenhouse gases by 2030.

Following further clarification, participants expressed support of new greenhouse gas reduction measures and almost all participants indicated that they were more supportive of the idea of increasing the price on carbon, pending answers to a myriad of questions.

Two groups were asked if they had heard of the Climate Action Incentive Payment. Awareness across all groups was very low and participants were generally unfamiliar with this initiative.

Lastly, participants were asked if they thought that the carbon pricing payment that they would receive would be more or less, or roughly the same as what they would pay in costs associated with the price on pollution. Responses varied and were based on personal circumstances. Most thought that they would receive less but many said that they simply did not know.

COVID-19 Outlook (Newfoundland and Labrador Former CERB Recipients, Quebec City Former CERB Recipients, Major Francophone Centres, Vancouver Island Seniors, New Brunswick, GTA Parents with Kids in Daycare or Considering Daycare, Mid-size and Major Centres Saskatchewan, Interior B.C.)

In several groups participants discussed the evolving situation with respect to COVID-19 and the impact of the pandemic on their lives.

Behaviours (Newfoundland and Labrador Former CERB Recipients, Quebec City Former CERB Recipients, Major Francophone Centres, Vancouver Island Seniors, New Brunswick, GTA Parents with Kids in Daycare or Considering Daycare, Mid-size and Major Centres Saskatchewan, Interior B.C.)

Most participants were concerned about the rates of transmission of the virus and continued to adhere to public health measures such as mask wearing, hand sanitizing and physical distancing. They saw no change in the situation which would permit them to significantly alter their routine. A few participants acknowledged some changes, including: reducing outings/errands, isolation, stronger adherence to guidelines and stay-at-home orders and increased interest in COVID-19 related information on websites.

Impact of COVID-19 (GTA Parents with Kids in Daycare or Considering Daycare, Mid-sized and Major Centres Saskatchewan, Interior B.C.)

Participants were generally adapting to the routine of living through a pandemic and becoming more acclimatized to the various public health measures and guidelines. They felt that closer adherence to the guidelines would bring about a quicker end to the pandemic. Nevertheless, some were finding the restrictions wearing, particularly the inability to visit elderly relatives. Others spoke about frustrations given reduced social interaction and mandatory masks in the workplace as well as the cancellation of group activities.

Parents also found the situation frustrating and expressed concerns about work-life balance and the impact of confinement at home as well as the cancellation of sports, recreational activities, and programming on their children's behaviour. Many were missing interaction with grandparents and commented that they had less patience with their children. When asked how the situation compared to restrictions last spring, most parents commented that they were finding it harder. While initially, participants viewed spending more time with their children as an unanticipated benefit, almost a year later living in such close quarters was leading to increased friction.

Relatively few parents expressed concerns about sending children to daycare and were not overly-worried about their children passing COVID-19 on to them or other family members. The benefits of socialization seemed to outweigh the risks to the children's mental health associated with isolation or further confinement at home. Suggestions were put forward to provide assistance to daycare operators that would permit them to increase the staff to child ratio, allow for children to spread out and physically distance, permit more testing of daycare staff and more cleaning of facilities.

Performance of the Government of Canada (Major Francophone Centres, New Brunswick, GTA Parents with Children in Daycare or Considering Daycare, Mid-size and Major Centres Saskatchewan)

Participants in several groups were asked to comment on the Government of Canada's performance during the pandemic. On balance, most credited the Government of Canada with trying to do everything they could to keep people afloat during a challenging and unprecedented time. In particular, they felt the federal government had performed well in communicating with the public, as well as in providing financial support, and in closing the borders.

At the same time, some suggestions were made in terms of what they could do better. Some participants looked to the federal government to implement stronger restrictions and standardize guidelines across provinces. Others sought more support for businesses and a few participants commented that better preparation, especially in terms of vaccine readiness, would have been helpful in more quickly addressing the pandemic and reopening the economy.

Seniors, in particular, were complimentary of the federal government's support to seniors. That said, they felt there were obvious discrepancies and specifically pointed to the issues in long-term care facilities. They noted that the pandemic had revealed a number of weaknesses in this sector and felt there were opportunities for the Government of Canada to both provide more funding and implement a more robust regulatory regime to which provinces would be required to adhere.

Travel Restrictions (Newfoundland and Labrador Former CERB Recipients, Quebec City Former CERB Recipients)

Many participants were aware of the recently announced guidelines on international travel requiring travelers to produce a negative test result for COVID-19 prior to boarding and to quarantine following their arrival. Most were in favour of even stricter restrictions regarding non-essential travel and enforcement of testing and quarantining for travelers. Several participants expressed particular concerns about the new variants coming out of the United Kingdom and were of the view that travel should be halted for a period of at least three or four months. Suggestions as to what else the Government of Canada should do included: a total restriction on travel especially for those coming from high risk countries and more leniency on non-essential travel within Canada.

Vaccine Ads (Major Centres Ontario Vaccine Hesitant, Manitoba and Saskatchewan Indigenous Peoples, Mid-size and Major Centres Alberta Racialized Canadians, GMA Vaccine Hesitant, Vancouver Island Seniors)

Participants were shown a series of three concepts developed by the Government of Canada for possible advertising regarding the COVID-19 vaccine in social media and online platforms. In all groups, with the exception of Vancouver Island Seniors, participants were shown two versions of each concept. They were told that they were in the early stages of development and, as such, were not in the final, produced form. In one group among seniors (Vancouver Island), participants were shown only one version of each of the three concepts in banner format.

All participants viewed each concept individually and were asked their thoughts and reactions on each. At the conclusion of the discussion they were asked to select which one of the three they preferred. The three concepts were labeled as shown below, and each of the concepts can be found in the Detailed Findings as well as the Appendix:

- A dose of facts
- Vaccine and you
- Ask an expert

On balance, participants generally preferred 'Vaccine and you,' although there were some exceptions across the groups. This concept resonated with most given the more personal, engaging and authentic tone it struck with participants. Many indicated that the specific question posed regarding vaccine side-effects was highly pertinent, particularly among groups expressing some vaccine hesitancy. The images employed in this concept were described as inclusive and participants appreciated the upbeat and positive tone which was seen as a factor of the cartoon-style images, the colour palette and the content. A key positive of this concept was that it directly addressed what people were thinking and feeling about vaccines, as opposed to what they know.

Views ranged from mixed to more negative with respect to the other two concepts – 'A dose of facts' and 'Ask an expert.' The primary issue or critique of 'A dose of facts' was that it did not align with participants' expectations. Many felt that the content should have addressed a key fact related to vaccines and of interest to public. Rather, participants found the content somewhat lacking as it did not offer them any new information. They expected the ad to be more informative and to provide information which would prompt interest and enthusiasm in the prospect of vaccinations. This concept was viewed as somewhat generic and some took offense to what they described as the aggressive tone to be vaccinated. That said, this concept was the preference among seniors (Vancouver Island) as they liked the reminder contained in the initial phrase which emphasized that vaccines provide protection and felt that this concept offered specific, immediate information which tended to increase their comfort level. On balance, they felt it was important to reiterate the importance of being vaccinated in terms of allowing Canadians to resume visits with family or travel rather than to focus on how the vaccine works, how it was developed or potential side effects.

While some were drawn to 'Ask an expert' especially given the many queries that participants had about COVID-19 vaccines, the concept overall failed to deliver in terms of addressing key questions.

The tone was viewed by participants as somewhat dry and, like ‘A dose of facts,’ participants felt this concept was viewed as generic and didn’t really add much to their existing understanding of how vaccines work. Generally, it was viewed as vague, confusing and not particularly reassuring. The style or approach was also described as condescending and dismissive of public concerns and questions about the vaccine. Although Indigenous participants were split in terms of their preferred concept, they leaned towards ‘Ask an expert.’ They favoured hearing from a credible Indigenous expert and found that this approach helped to boost their sense of safety with respect to vaccinations.

COVID-19 Vaccine (Newfoundland and Labrador Former CERB Recipients, Quebec City Former CERB Recipients, Major Francophone Centres, Vancouver Island Seniors, New Brunswick, Major Centres Ontario Vaccine Hesitant, Mid-size and Major Centres Alberta Racialized Canadians, GMA Vaccine Hesitant, GTA Parents with Kids in Daycare or Considering Daycare, Mid-size and Major Centres Saskatchewan, Interior B.C.)

In various groups held during January, participants were asked about their views related to the COVID-19 vaccine, including what they had heard, impressions regarding the Government of Canada’s performance in procuring and distributing a vaccine, expectations with respect to the timing of the vaccine roll-out, and their personal stance on getting vaccinated.

Awareness of COVID-19 Vaccine (Newfoundland and Labrador Former CERB Recipients, Quebec City Former CERB Recipients, Major Francophone Centres, Vancouver Island Seniors, New Brunswick)

Participants in the above-noted groups had heard about varying announcements and reports regarding a COVID-19 vaccine, pertaining to the following aspects:

- Pacing of the vaccine distribution – While a few participants felt the distribution was occurring fairly quickly, others mentioned that the vaccine roll-out was taking place slower than had been originally anticipated.
- Side effects, effectiveness and safety – Several participants mentioned having heard about various reactions to the vaccine (e.g., allergic reactions). Others were aware of information circulating in various media which questioned the overall reliability, effectiveness and general safety of the vaccines.

Assessment of the Government of Canada’s Performance (GTA Parents with Kids in Daycare or Considering Daycare, Mid-Size and Major Centres Saskatchewan, Interior B.C.)

Procuring and Distributing the Vaccine

For the most part, participants believed the Government of Canada was doing reasonably well at procuring and distributing the vaccine to the provinces. Most credited the Government of Canada with procuring vaccines from multiple manufacturers and for efforts to ensure that health care workers were among the earliest groups to be fully vaccinated.

Some participants also acknowledged the challenges in working with the provinces and territories to coordinate a nationwide undertaking of this scope and scale, remarking positively on the substantial investment made by the federal government to purchase the vaccine. However, several participants commented on Canada's inability to produce the vaccine domestically resulting in a heavy reliance on offshore manufacturers.

Compared to Other Countries

When explicitly asked about how Canada was doing compared to other countries in getting Canadians vaccinated, most felt the roll-out was occurring at a slower pace and that Canada compared poorly in this regard. Based on several metrics, many felt that Canada was well behind other countries and a few questioned the Government of Canada's preparation and planning in advance of receiving the vaccine.

Government of Canada's Vaccine Plan (Mid-size and Major Centres Saskatchewan, Interior B.C.)

Participants were shown three statements about the Government of Canada's vaccine plan and asked how they felt about each.

While the statements were generally reassuring, some questioned their credibility or felt the Government of Canada was perhaps being overly-optimistic about the timing and its progress in vaccinating Canadians. Others felt the statements contradicted information they had heard from other sources and a few felt it was too early to be making bold claims.

When asked which, if any, of the statements made them feel better about Canada's vaccine plan, participants' views varied. A few participants preferred *Canada is on track to have everyone who wants a vaccine vaccinated by the end of September*. Others felt this was the least reassuring of the three statements as they were not optimistic this timeline could be met.

Some felt more reassured by *Canada is vaccinating its citizens at over double the global rate*. By contrast, others felt this statement was somewhat vague, specifically remarking that as a world leader and a member of the G7, measuring Canada's progress against the global rate of vaccinations was meaningless.

Participants were asked to review the statements again and specifically consider which one of the three was the worst or least helpful. Most focused on *Canada is vaccinating its citizens at over double the global rate* because it tended to prompt some skepticism for a number of reasons.

Timing of Vaccinations (Newfoundland and Labrador Former CERB Recipients, Quebec City Former CERB Recipients, Major Francophone Centres, Vancouver Island Seniors, New Brunswick)

A number of participants were aware of announcements by the Government of Canada targeting September 2021 as the date by which all those who were eligible to be vaccinated would be and felt this proposed timeline was reasonable. Otherwise, when asked what they felt was a reasonable target date to complete vaccinations across Canada, the timing varied.

Participants were subsequently asked when they thought they would be in a position to receive a vaccine. There was no strong consensus – ranging from spring through summer, to sometime in

September as per the information from the Government of Canada, during the fall or winter months, by the end of 2021 or into the following year. While participants' were hopeful that they would receive the vaccine as quickly as possible, their comments suggested they were not overly-anxious about the timelines.

Vaccine Intentions and Hesitancy

Plans to be Vaccinated (Newfoundland and Labrador Former CERB Recipients, Quebec City Former CERB Recipients, Major Francophone Centres, Vancouver Island Seniors, New Brunswick; GTA Parents with Kids in Daycare or Considering Daycare, Mid-Size and Major Centres Saskatchewan, Interior B.C.,)

In several of the groups, participants were asked if they planned to be vaccinated. Most participants responded affirmatively, while a few were unsure or indicated they would not.

Those few who expressed some reluctance or indicated they did not intend to be vaccinated raised many worries and possible issues. When asked what factors would influence their decision on whether to get vaccinated, they pointed to the following: success rates, waiting times to get the vaccine, increasing numbers being vaccinated and hearing more positive stories from those who have been vaccinated.

Exploring Vaccine Hesitancy (Major Centres Ontario Vaccine Hesitant, Mid-size and Major Centres Alberta Racialized Canadians, GMA Vaccine Hesitant)

In a select number of groups the issue of vaccine hesitancy was explored in more depth. Some felt they were not at a particularly high risk and, as a result, felt comfortable holding off and/or being part of the last group to be vaccinated.

Many expressed similar concerns as were noted above which tended to reinforce their position on the vaccine and a general tendency to seek alternative solutions outside of traditional medicine. Additionally, some expressed a lack of confidence and trust in how decisions regarding vaccine development had been made. A few others questioned the efficacy of the vaccine, specifically whether it would actually protect the recipient from becoming ill or prevent further spread. A number of participants also wondered how effective the vaccine was with respect to protection from new variants of COVID-19.

When asked whether the ad concepts they had just seen would cause them to re-consider and/or make them feel more inclined to get vaccinated, most said they would not. Additional information and hard data would help to increase levels of trust and ultimately sway them towards being vaccinated.

Vaccine Messages (Manitoba and Saskatchewan Indigenous Peoples)

Those identifying as Indigenous people residing in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan were shown multiple statements related to COVID-19 vaccines.

The most important message for many was *The COVID-19 vaccine is now available for Indigenous seniors over the age of 70. It will protect them and is safe even for those with underlying medical*

conditions. Participants noted this statement reassured them and emphasized the important role a COVID-19 vaccine played in keeping their loved ones safe.

Another fairly popular message was *COVID-19 can be devastating to those with underlying medical conditions, such as heart disease and diabetes. The new vaccines will protect them.* The death rate from the virus was top of mind for many participants, and given this reality, it was appreciated that this message addressed those most at risk and that a vaccine would help to protect these people.

Moreover, *COVID-19 vaccine trials included Indigenous Peoples and have proven to be safe and effective for them. Other groups, such as children and expecting moms were not tested which is why they are not recommended for the initial roll out of the vaccination* was also a well-received statement. Many felt it was an honest and genuine statement owing to the specificity of who the vaccine had and had not been tested on.

COVID Alert App (Mid-size and Major Centres Saskatchewan)

A discussion was held among a group in Saskatchewan on the topic of the COVID Alert app and its ongoing development. The conversation centered on participants' awareness of and reactions to the app as well as to recent updates to it.

Participants were asked whether they were aware of the Government of Canada's COVID Alert app and all commented that they had heard of the app, however, only a few had downloaded it. When asked to explain briefly how the app functions, participants were fairly well informed, noting various functionalities of the app.

To ensure that all participants had some basic information about the app, participants were provided with a brief overview (further details can be found in the detailed findings section of this report).

Prior to updating the COVID Alert app, the Government of Canada created messages to be shared with the public via social media, which detailed the various modifications to the app. To gauge participants' thoughts and concerns related to the ongoing development and the pending update, the messages were shared with participants. Details on these messages can be found in the detailed findings section of this report.

Overall, participants were supportive of the proposed modifications to the app however, a few expressed skepticism and felt that the collection of additional personal data could lead to more invasive infringement upon personal freedoms and sharing of personal data to third parties.

Some participants commented that the messages provided greater clarity on how the app collects data and offered a sense of reassurance with respect to privacy. Participants noted that as long as the app was not collecting personal data, improvements to the app and its general effectiveness were positive.

Among participants who had already downloaded the COVID Alert app, all stated that the messaging did not make them any more or less likely to retain the app on their phone. Participants who had not

downloaded the app were generally indifferent when asked if they were any more or less likely to download the app given the messaging and modifications.

To conclude the discussion, participants were asked whether they had any concerns about privacy issues related to the COVID Alert app. Overall, most were not overly concerned about any incursion on their privacy. However, a few comments focused on the potential loss of personal freedom when registering for any app but were not specific to the COVID Alert app.

CERB Repayment (Newfoundland and Labrador Former CERB Recipients, Quebec City Former CERB Recipients, Major Centres Ontario Vaccine Hesitant, Mid-size and Major Centres Alberta Racialized Canadians)

Government of Canada's Performance in Providing COVID-19 Financial Support

Overall, participants thought that the Government of Canada had done an adequate to good job in providing financial support during the pandemic to people affected by COVID-19. On the positive side, the CERB and its rapid roll-out were seen as being a vital support for many people that would otherwise have faced challenging personal circumstances. It was stated several times both that the intentions behind the CERB were good and that Canada had done a better job of providing financial assistance compared to other countries (especially the U.S.). The most significant area of concern was the issue of financing financial supports in terms of other social services that may be cut in the future to help pay for this expenditure or that the debt incurred would be a major burden for the next generation of taxpayers. Some additional comments included that the CERB could have been better targeted (possibly allowing the original CERB program to have been extended) and about challenges in implementation and support (specifically difficulties dealing with the Canada Revenue Agency).

Asked whether the Government of Canada's performance in the area of financial supports had gotten better or worse, on balance, most participants thought it was about the same. Participants felt that those who needed help as a result of COVID-19 were able to get this support and that the Government of Canada still had good intentions with the current supports offered. Those who thought that performance had improved felt that the federal government had access to more information and as a result were tailoring the programs more accurately, they had become more effective at screening applicants and there was much more explanation available to potential recipients. Those who thought that performance had become worse held the view that the criteria had become too strict and although individual financial support was helpful, the real issues that need to be addressed regarding the pandemic were elsewhere.

CERB Repayment

Most of the participants had heard, through conventional media sources and word-of-mouth, that those who had received CERB payments for which they were not eligible would have to repay them. They had heard that not only was there an obligation to repay, but that in many cases formal letters requesting repayment had already been sent. Participants believed that some individuals would have to make repayments because they were initially unsure about the parameters or were confused about

terminology, but also there would also be cases of fraud (e.g., deliberate double applying through both the CRA and through EI).

The following clarification was then provided to participants: *The Government of Canada recently announced that payments made to anyone who is later found to be ineligible will need to be returned. Any individuals who mistakenly received multiple payments or payments they did not qualify for should begin the repayment process, if they have not already done so.*

Asked for their reaction, most believed this was a reasonable position for the federal government to take and that it was clear that those who had received CERB payments which they were not entitled to would have to be repaid. However, it was felt that there were realistic situations that could make repayment very difficult including that it was often difficult to get repayments from some people under any circumstances, that the payment had likely already been spent on necessities, and/or that lower income Canadians may not be in a position to make any sort of repayment.

Participants were then asked, for those Canadians who received the CERB by mistake, which of the following three options made the most sense:

- that they all have to pay it back,
- that the repayment of the CERB should be done on a case-by-case basis, or
- that there should be exceptions for people who are living in poverty.

On balance, participants were slightly in favour of the second statement, *determining whether individuals should have to pay it back should be done on a case-by-case basis*, but there was also support for the other two statements as well. It was recognized that people in poverty would have trouble repaying any overpayments, but that this issue was captured in the second statement as well as other concerns. Others were still facing difficult circumstances as a result of the pandemic and also may face specific issues at the current time which could be determined on a case-by-case basis. One caveat about the second statement was that any policy based on individual situations would likely be more expensive to implement and that a cost-benefit analysis should be done when it came to deciding how to pursue repayments of the CERB.

Focused Discussion (Newfoundland and Labrador Former CERB Recipients, Quebec City Former CERB Recipients)

Further discussion with participants from the two above-noted groups consisting of former CERB recipients, drilled down on several detailed issues surrounding CERB repayments. The first was whether or not participants thought that Canadians should have to pay what they owe by the end of the tax filing deadline (at the end of April) or be allowed to repay over a number of months or years. Most thought that extra time should be allowed in terms of months rather than years. In a similar line of questioning, participants were also asked if those who are self-employed and have mistakenly received the CERB because of confusion over eligibility should be treated the same as or differently from Canadians who work for an employer. Most participants thought that they should be treated the same, suggesting that there was no real difference as both needed the financial support for the same reasons and both groups were working Canadians.

The discussion then moved on to tax issues whereby participants were asked if they knew that CERB payments were taxable. Almost all former CERB recipients said they were aware that the benefit was taxable and they knew that they would have to address this on their upcoming tax returns. However, participants shared a wide range of concerns about this situation including some who mentioned that they had not been able to put this money aside for a range of reasons (such as family responsibilities or job insecurity). Most felt that CERB recipients should be given an extended period of time in which to pay their taxes as some may have been initially misinformed or because many were facing a more difficult financial situation or trying times as a result of the pandemic which required some leniency.

Part II: Other Issues

Canada Wordmark (Newfoundland and Labrador Former CERB Recipients, Quebec City Former CERB Recipients, New Brunswick)

Participants discussed how they identify information and communications as being from the federal government, as well as their awareness of and associations with the Canada wordmark.

On the first of these topics, participants' ability to identify Government of Canada communications varied to some extent across media. Visually, most participants looked for the Government of Canada logo (Canada flag), but also said they could generally tell by the use of a standard colour palette, template or style which they typically associated with federal government communications. Some also referenced websites and e-mail addresses utilizing a recognizable domain name (e.g., xxx.gc.ca). Several participants commented on the music or 'jingle' that accompanies all Government of Canada advertising or messaging, typically on TV, radio or social media and they also mentioned standard phrasing which is often included at the conclusion of Government of Canada communications to indicate the sponsor (e.g., 'a message from the Government of Canada').

When it was shown to them, all participants were familiar with the Canada wordmark. Views on the wordmark were generally positive and it was associated with pride (in Canada), and viewed as an official representation from the Government of Canada. Additionally, the symbol was viewed as lending legitimacy and authenticity to the accompanying products and information, providing verification of the source or sponsor.

When participants were asked why they thought the Government of Canada employed this symbol in its communications and information, most indicated that its use was intended to enhance recognition and reinforce federal government branding efforts in much the same way as corporations rely on their logos to build brand identity and equity. They expected the symbol to be shown on all Government of Canada property, advertising, communications and mail correspondence.

Overall, most participants trusted information which was accompanied by the Canada wordmark and noted that the wordmark itself inferred that they could have confidence in the legitimacy of this information. At the same time, some participants expressed concerns about an uptick in fraudulent e-

mails in particular, pointing out that it would not be difficult to replicate or to produce a digitally altered version of the Canada wordmark. They suggested it was a good practice to authenticate any information received from presumably legitimate sources, especially in the online environment.

French Language (Quebec City Former CERB Recipients, GMA Vaccine Hesitant, Major Francophone Centres, Vancouver Island Seniors, New Brunswick, GTA Parents with Kids in Daycare or Considering Daycare)

The discussions on the subject of the French language in Canada varied regionally. Overall, there were few strong feelings about this as a national issue.

Three of the groups where this issue was discussed were held among residents of Quebec (although one of them, Major Francophone Centres, also included individuals from Ontario, Manitoba and New Brunswick). Most of these participants were not positive about the state of the French language. It was thought that, despite measures that had been put in place to protect it, the French language remained threatened.

Participants in the Francophone groups were asked if they felt that the Government of Canada was doing enough to protect the French language. Most participants did not think that they were. They thought that the Government of Canada should be providing more programs across the country to help people learn French, including starting at a young age in the school system, especially for new Canadians.

It was thought that the main reason to take action to protect the French language was because French is one of Canada's two official languages and that this was a sufficient reason to convince more Canadians to participate in French language education. It was also thought that French is part of Canadian culture and therefore should be protected, and that Francophones should be able to move around the country and still be able to receive services in French.

Participants in the four groups that were not held among residents of Quebec were also asked for their opinions on the state of the French language in Canada. There was widespread support for use of the French language, for it being part of the Canadian identity and for French immersion schooling, but there was also an acknowledgement that very little was spoken west of Ottawa. Learning the French language was seen as a beneficial part of schooling and useful for applications and for some specific jobs but, overall, it was not seen as being deeply embedded in the national culture.

Some of those who thought that there was little opportunity to use French meant that not enough was being done to protect the language. Many participants in these groups did not think that the Government of Canada was doing enough to protect the French language. Some participants went beyond this and thought that efforts should be made to protect the French culture overall. Others thought that the current situation of regionalism was the more realistic approach.

Several specific possible actions were discussed with participants. The first was: *Ensuring that federally regulated workplaces (e.g., banks, telecoms, airlines) that operate in francophone or bilingual*

communities must have French as one of the languages of work. This means that employees are able to do their jobs in French and that their employers communicate to them in French.

This idea was uniformly supported by participants in the Francophone groups. One caveat was that perhaps it should be mandatory to provide service in French in Quebec, but optional in other provinces. Opinions differed somewhat in the Anglophone groups. There was no strong opposition to the idea, but there was a consensus that any decision on the availability of French should be driven more by demand than by fiat.

The next possible action that was presented was: *Increasing immigration from francophone countries.*

There was strong support for this measure from two of the Francophone groups, but not from participants in the Francophone Major Centres group. Participants in the latter group shared a feeling that there were already numerous Francophone immigrants, and the question should be more about finding sufficient resources to meet the current situation. There was little support for this measure amongst the Anglophone groups. It was seen as prioritizing some people over others for a specific cultural reason and this was viewed as giving unfair priority to a select group based on language over those who had or were currently working through the immigration system.

Prioritizing French teachers in the immigration stream, so that French immersion programs could be expanded outside Quebec.

The response to this proposed action was very similar to the response to the idea above of increasing immigration from Francophone countries, among all seven groups. There was support among the Francophones, outside of Major Centres, and a range of misgivings among participants in the four Anglophone groups. This proposed action was compared to increasing Francophone immigration. One new idea that was expressed among participants was that instead of doing this that perhaps more Canadians should be trained to be French teachers.

The final proposal that was presented for discussion was: *Mandating that all Supreme Court justices be bilingual.*

This idea was also strongly supported across all three Francophone groups. It was seen to be an action that would demonstrate national leadership on the subject of bilingualism. There was much more discussion of this idea in the Anglophone groups where there was consensus that this was not a good idea. There was support for French language capability at the Supreme Court, given the size of Canada's Francophone population, and of the fact that Canada has two official languages. It was thought however that such a rule would not be necessary given the multilingual nature of the country, the advent of some excellent relevant legal technologies, translating services and the strong staff at the Supreme Court. It was thought that such a mandate could unnecessarily narrow the pool of potential Justices, and a strong priority should be placed instead on their legal skills and judgement.

Local Issues (Newfoundland and Labrador Former CERB Recipients, Vancouver Island Seniors, New Brunswick, Mid-size and Major Centres Saskatchewan)

Local issues of concern were discussed in four groups to gauge participants' perspectives on their local economy, key sectors, the issues facing these sectors, as well as awareness of and the need for support from the federal government.

Newfoundland and Labrador Local Issues (Newfoundland and Labrador Former CERB Recipients)

Participants residing in Newfoundland and Labrador identified oil and gas, fishing, farming, tourism, and mining, as the most important economic sectors in the region.

The discussion then explored participants' awareness of federal government initiatives to support key economic sectors and projects, including:

- Fisheries – Most were unaware of any Government of Canada support for this sector although many participants advocated for a re-evaluation of assigned quotas in the sector and emphasized that policy decisions in this respect should be based on science and data.
- Oil and gas – Other than negative interest loans to corporations which a few participants expressed concerns about, most participants were unaware of Government of Canada supports aimed at the oil and gas sector. When asked what else the Government of Canada could do to support this sector, some argued for further safety precautions for those working on oil rigs, particularly in regards to COVID-19.
- Tourism – Participants acknowledged the significant contribution of tourism to the provincial economy but were not aware of any specific initiatives from the federal government to support the sector other than the promotion of staycations.

Finally, participants were prompted to recall any information they had heard lately on the Muskrat Falls hydroelectric project and relevant Government of Canada supports. While awareness of the project was high, comments on the project itself were mostly negative due to the mounting debt load taken on by the provincial government. No one was aware of a recent announcement by the federal government to defer millions of dollars in payments from Newfoundland and Labrador.

Vancouver Island Local Issues (Vancouver Island Seniors)

Participants were asked to think about the most important sectors on the Island and tourism was cited as the largest industry along with resource extraction, particularly the logging industry.

Participants were asked about their awareness of federal government support for two sectors:

- Fisheries and aquaculture – Few were aware of anything specific the federal government had undertaken to support this sector. Some felt there was little the federal government could do to support this industry.

- Tourism – Although they were not averse to federal government funding, they were generally unaware of any federal government initiatives other than support for the maintenance of heritage sites and national parks.

New Brunswick Local Issues (New Brunswick)

The key sector which was thought to drive the economy of New Brunswick was natural resources (e.g., oil, wood, forestry, mining and fishing). On balance, most felt the federal government could do more to support these sectors, specifically stronger environmental oversight and environmental policies.

As in other groups, participants were asked about federal government support to specific industries:

- Tourism – There was little awareness of anything the Government of Canada had done to support this sector, although many agreed that greater protection of the province's natural resources and natural environment would help to sustain and boost the industry.
- Farming and agriculture – Again, participants were unaware of any specific initiatives, although they acknowledged that the agricultural sector was generally heavily subsidized by the Government of Canada.
- Manufacturing and processing – There was little discussion of this sector although some participants continued to stress the importance of supporting smaller scale businesses over larger manufacturers and processors.

Saskatchewan Local Issues (Mid-size and Major Centres Saskatchewan)

The most important sectors and industries mentioned by participants in Saskatchewan included: agriculture, oil and gas, energy, mining, government, healthcare and education. Participants felt that all of these sectors were in need of further support.

Specific sectors were discussed in more detail:

- Oil and gas – Participants were aware of the federal government's purchase of the Trans Mountain pipeline. To further support the industry, participants recommended building refineries in Alberta and Saskatchewan, noting that this would generate additional jobs.
- Agriculture – Participants were aware of Government of Canada subsidies to support the province's agricultural sector as well as international marketing initiatives to sell canola, lentils and beef, among other agricultural goods, globally.
- Mining and power generation – Most were not aware of any federal government initiatives.

As a final question, participants in this group were asked what other issues in the province required federal government support, prompting a wide-ranging discussion about more support for steel-mills and potash mines and for mental health and suicide prevention. Several participants also mentioned the need to rebalance the existing equalization formula.

Indigenous Issues (Manitoba and Saskatchewan Indigenous Peoples)

Indigenous Priorities

When asked what important Indigenous issues warranted more federal government attention, participants generated a number of issues, including a need greater funding for education and healthcare, a lack of clean drinking water on reserves, access to more housing and a renewed emphasis on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls efforts.

In the same vein, participants then narrowed in on specific areas related to Indigenous affairs for the federal government to improve upon. The noted issues to be of particular concern to participants included unresolved land issues, including the sale of crown lands, greater Indigenous representation in government and how Canada's penal system which some felt was perpetuating the legacy of residential school.

When asked if the Government of Canada had made any positive progress on Indigenous issues, some noted that the federal government had done well in addressing and financially compensating for some treaty issues that had arisen in the far north.

UNDRIP (The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)

Unprompted, awareness of the UNDRIP was low. Upon learning more about the UNDRIP, many felt Canada's *Indian Act* would prevent any significant or meaningful change from happening. It was felt that until Indigenous people played a more important role in the federal government's decision making and the *Indian Act* was repealed, the UNDRIP would have little meaning and little impact on the issues that continue to plague their communities.

Further, it was assumed by most that even if the UNDRIP was fully implemented in Canada, it would not make any difference in the day to day life of Indigenous people, both on and off reserve.

Drinking Water Advisories on Reserves

Awareness of the Government of Canada efforts to eliminate drinking water advisories on reserves was relatively high. Participants were then shown an infographic that provided more information on the latest Government of Canada efforts, which did little to give participants confidence in the federal government's efforts.

While some participants mentioned there had been a significant change in the number of communities that still have boil advisories in effect, they still noted how the clean water in their communities still contained chemicals. Despite disappointment to the infographic as a whole, many participants did say the Government of Canada had made some progress on the issue.

Participants were disappointed with the revised timelines for lifting drinking water advisories. Many cited other projects, such as pandemic relief funds and a new road in Regina, which had received urgent funding which led participants to be frustrated and felt that their water issues were being treated with less urgency and importance in comparison.

Small Nuclear Reactors (New Brunswick)

A brief discussion on the topic of nuclear energy was held in one group only. While a number of participants were proponents of nuclear power as an efficient and clean source of energy relative to most of the current alternatives, with the exception of wind and solar power, many expressed concerns related to safety and nuclear waste disposal. Although it was acknowledged that many other energy sources also have accompanying environmental challenges, participants commented specifically about the potential for radioactive leaks from nuclear waste sites. And, several participants agreed that if the choice was between pursuing renewable energy options and nuclear power, they would prefer the former.

The conversation focused on small nuclear reactors (SMRs) about which relatively few had heard anything. When told about this emerging area of nuclear energy innovation, including its smaller footprint and the fact that SMRs produce less waste than traditional nuclear reactors, most participants remained skeptical albeit intrigued by the concept. Some reiterated their concerns about the dangers of nuclear waste while others felt they did not know enough about the technology to comment. Those who were more knowledgeable were generally more supportive – they were aware that SMRs were under consideration in their home province of New Brunswick and favoured their smaller footprint, modular nature and the advantages for providing power to remote locations.

When considering both the environmental and economic benefits associated with SMRs, participants remained reticent to fully endorse the technology. Again, they expressed concerns about handling radioactive nuclear waste and the potential for damage to the environment. Moreover they were reluctant to prioritize the economic growth and job creation benefits over environmental risks and suggested that more would need to be done to ensure that investments in SMRs would not lead to more issues that would then have to be dealt with by future generations.

Homelessness (Major Centres Ontario Vaccine Hesitant, Mid-size and Major Centres Alberta Racialized Canadians, Major Francophone Centres, Vancouver Island Seniors, New Brunswick)

There was a strong consensus across all groups that homelessness is a problem in Canada. Even the few who were not convinced of this did recognise there was an issue but viewed it as more of a symptom of other underlying challenges rather than as a problem in its own right.

More detailed perceptions of the problem did vary from group to group. Most of the more detailed comments focused on the links between mental health, substance use and homelessness. There were also a range of comments which focused on the economic aspects of homelessness in terms of disconnects in many centres between the minimum wage (and the number of minimum wage jobs) and housing prices (also referred to as a living wage issue) or the lack of affordable housing.

Participants were asked if they thought that the issue of homelessness was getting better or worse. Again, there was a strong consensus that the problem was not only severe but getting worse. A linkage to the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic was made specifically by several

participants. The reduction in major centres of affordable housing and their replacement with more expensive condominiums was perceived to have exacerbated the issue of homelessness.

There were few dissenting views. It was mentioned that the issue may be one of personal responsibility and accountability. Some felt that existing support programs would be sufficient to assist affected individuals, assuming they were responsible with what they were being given.

The question was asked as to what the Government of Canada should do about homelessness. Many participants across the groups called for an increase in the availability of mental health supports, including for prevention and treatment. While this suggestion was put forward in many groups, few participants offered detailed advice other than a call for early access to social workers and in situ support. Education was also flagged as a key determinant to reduce or prevent homelessness. There was strong support for a focus on mental health. Participants agitated for more action on economic issues. Some focussed on addressing individual and/or household income issues. There were calls for the introduction of a universal basic income as well as for an income supplement tied to housing.

Discussion then centred on the possibility of the eradication of homelessness in Canada within the next ten years. While many felt this was a laudable goal, few thought it was realistic. Those who said that it would be possible cited the speed of the development of COVID-19 vaccines as an example of an agile response in a crisis situation and felt this practice could be translated to the issue of homelessness. Most were more measured in their comments. Some thought that further experimentation was required to see what measures may help with mental health and addiction issues. There was more of a consensus that a target of a 50% elimination of homelessness in ten years was realistic and achievable.

Participants were then shown three statements that could be used by the Government of Canada for general messaging on this subject.

The first phrase – *Every Canadian deserves a safe and affordable place to call home* – was favoured across all of the groups, well ahead of the other two. This was seen to focus on the basic necessities of life and captured the health, safety and financial aspects of life. It was seen as positive, accurate, and applicable to a wide range of circumstances that trigger homelessness. It captured the important issue of a livable wage, and many participants responded favourably to the words ‘safe’ and ‘affordable.’

The phrase – *In a country such as Canada, no one should live on the street* – had some resonance. It was viewed as having a positive, but also very realistic, emotional appeal, in that it recognized the following:

- The strong foundation of Canada;
- That Canadians should look after each other; and
- The intractable nature of homelessness and that while it should not be accepted, there is likely always going to be somewhat of an issue.

The second statement – *One homeless person in Canada is one too many* – was seen as short, punchy and to the point but, nevertheless, did not gain much traction from participants. Participants

commented that, while it was factual, it was somewhat vague and did not touch on the important context as the first statement had.

Online Hate (Major Francophone Centres, Interior B.C.)

An extensive conversation on the topic of online hate was held among two groups in January covering views on the need for limits as to what people can say online, priority areas for action and the role of the federal government versus social media companies.

To open the discussion, participants were asked whether people should be allowed to say whatever they want in online conversations (e.g., social media posts on Facebook or Twitter), or if there should be some limits. The consensus among those attending the group comprising Francophones residing outside of Quebec was that limits should be put in place, although a few participants in this group did not venture an opinion. By contrast, varying perspectives were put forward among participants from Interior British Columbia and the discussion was quite nuanced. While many acknowledged the dangers of unrestricted conversations on social media, there was a split between those who were comfortable with a requirement for limits and those who supported freedom of speech.

Participants were shown a list of several issues in terms of online activity and asked which, if any, they felt were major problems in Canada. Child exploitation was described as a 'big problem,' and many participants agreed that hate speech was a significant issue as well, citing concerns about racist behaviours but also viewing online bullying within this context. Indeed some participants commented that they would have expected to see online bullying flagged as a specific issue on the list that was presented.

When asked if there were any other issues that should be added to this list, some participants mentioned addiction to and dependency on social media as a problem.

Priorities for the Government of Canada and Social Media Companies

Participants' responses to a question as to whether more online regulation was needed reflected earlier comments as to whether limits should be placed on what people can say in online conversations. While the initial reaction for many participants was affirmative, suggesting that more regulation was required, additional commentary pointed to specific concerns regarding:

- The potential for infringements on freedom of speech and on personal privacy (e.g., tapping individuals' cellphones and monitoring people's online search patterns);
- The nature and scope of regulation; and
- The ability to regulate rapidly-evolving and widespread online platforms and technologies. Some felt it would be difficult at this point to rein in both the online platforms and users.

A subsequent question as to whether the Government of Canada had a role to play to address these issues, or if it should be left to the social media companies themselves, again generated mixed responses. Some felt that the federal government should step in but others, however, were concerned

that government would find it challenging to impose regulations on privately held American corporations.

Participants were shown a number of actions which the Government of Canada could consider taking and asked which one should be its top priority. The option of asking social media companies to increase their own monitoring was roundly discounted. There was more support for law enforcement monitoring of things that are illegal under current laws and for regulating social media companies.

In the latter part of the discussion participants evaluated potential actions which could be taken by social media companies and were again asked to identify their top priority. Of the four potential actions shown to participants, most rallied around creating stricter penalties for repeat abusers, including denying access to the platform. There was also some support for getting rid of trolls and bots.

As a final question, participants were asked which one of two options more closely reflected their point of views:

- Most participants felt there should be increased regulation of social media companies, even if it meant that legitimate material may occasionally be flagged or removed. This approach aligned with most participants' perspective that there needed to be consequences for companies that participate in the proliferation of illegal online activities.
- Fewer participants said that there should not be increased regulation of social media platforms, even if it means that things like hate speech or incitement to violence may harm people.

Childcare (GTA Parents with Kids in Daycare or Considering Daycare, Mid-size and Major Centres Saskatchewan, Interior B.C.)

A discussion on the topic of childcare was held at the end of the month among the three groups in the above noted locations. The discussion centered on participants' perceptions of childcare services in their area, as well as awareness and opinions of the federal government plans regarding childcare.

Perceptions of Childcare Services

Asked about childcare services in their area, prior to the pandemic, perceptions were quite balanced. Positive comments from participants centered on two aspects –that there was a significant amount of daycares conveniently located in their own neighbourhoods and a good variety of options to choose from.

Areas for improvement stated by participants focused on affordability and availability. By far, the cost of childcare was the most cited by participants who discussed paying exorbitant rates and it simply being unaffordable, especially for those with multiple children in this age range. Some discussed how their family struggled to decide if, after maternity leave, a parent would go back to work (sometimes only to make enough to pay for daycare) or if they would instead stay home with their child/children. Due to a high demand for childcare services, many also suggested that spaces were limited and that waitlists made it fairly difficult to get a spot for their children unless they planned early.

Awareness and Perceptions of Federal Government's Plans Regarding Childcare

Relatively few participants were aware of any of the Government of Canada's plans related to childcare. However, after being prompted with additional information on the Government of Canada's childcare plans (see detailed findings), reactions to the statement were generally positive. Many participants were supportive of the plan, particularly in the GTA parents group, where they stated that this type of support would be very welcomed and highly appreciated. Some participants in the other groups spoke about the importance of investing in children's early education in order to create better opportunities for them in the future. However, several participants perceived the statement to be vague and left them asking more questions about the details of the plan.

Across all three groups, participants unanimously believed that investing in childcare was important and that it should be a high priority for the Government of Canada. A number of reasons were cited, including that:

- Childcare stimulates the economy by allowing more people to participate in the workforce;
- Allowing more parents to go back to work, may prove to be self-fulfilling and lead to more positive parenting and less strain overall on the healthcare system;
- Childcare is viewed as a 'net-positive', in that early investment in a child's care and education will result in positive returns in the long term; and
- That childcare would be a more successful investment for the Government of Canada, compared to some of its other ongoing priorities/initiatives.

Following this discussion, participants were then shown three potential reasons (outlined below) why the federal government should invest more in childcare and asked which one was the most compelling to them.

- *Childcare is important since it allows more women to enter the workforce*
- *Childcare grows the economy because it allows more people to work*
- *More childcare spaces mean less financial pressures on hard working middle class families*

Consistent with their previous commentary, most participants believed the second statement '*Childcare grows the economy because it allows more people to work*' to be the most compelling because it clearly explained that getting people back into the workforce would help to grow the economy. They felt that this statement would also do a good job counteracting opinions that the federal government should not be spending money on childcare while it is running a large deficit. Participants found the first statement - *Childcare is important since it allows more women to enter the workforce* - similar to the second and while a few participants liked that this version specifically spoke to women entering the workforce, most preferred the second statement as it was deemed more inclusive.

Message Testing

To conclude the discussion on this topic, participants were shown the following two messages regarding childcare and asked about their preference:

- *Investing in accessible, high-quality, affordable and inclusive child care is not only good for families, it makes good economic sense.*
- *High quality, affordable child care is not a luxury, it is a necessity. That is why we are creating a national system that will cut costs and create more spaces.*

Overall, there was no clear consensus from participants as to which of the two messages they preferred, as they liked each for different reasons. The first option was liked because it provided a rationale as to why childcare would be a good investment for all Canadians (not just families). The second option was also well liked because it was specific about what would be done as part of the plan (*cutting costs and creating more spaces*).

Phrasing on Cutting Costs (GTA Parents with Kids in Daycare or Considering Daycare)

In the above-noted group comprised of parents in the GTA, a final line of questioning was asked regarding the possible things the federal government could do as part of its plan for a Canada-wide early learning and childcare system. Given the following three choices, most selected the third option as the one they thought should be the Government of Canada's target.

- *Cutting the cost of childcare by \$5,000 a year by next year, and eventually cutting it by \$7,500.*
- *Cutting the cost of childcare in half to start, and eventually reducing it by 75%.*
- *Putting a cap of \$20 a day on childcare costs next year, and eventually lowering it to \$10 a day.*

Many suggested this statement was the most relatable and easiest to understand, as they were familiar with daycare costs being expressed in dollars per day, which made it easy for them to compare the reduced cost against what they are currently paying. Many perceived this option to also be the cheapest overall and liked that it provided a fair approach across the board, particularly in areas or regions of the country where childcare was known to be more expensive (upwards of \$60-\$70/day).

A couple of participants selected the second option because they believed it would provide those less familiar with of the costs of childcare a better understanding of how much the cost would actually be reduced.

Lastly, participants were least enthusiastic about the first option, mentioning that it appeared to provide the least deduction compared to the others. Regarding the first option, participants were asked that if the Government of Canada were to cut costs by \$5,000 if it would matter to them if it was sent as a rebate or if it were important to ensure that actual fees charged by daycares went down. Across the group, the latter – the reduction being directly applied to childcare costs - was preferred by more participants, but a few indicated they had no preference one way or the other.

MORE INFORMATION

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