



Government
of Canada

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Continuous Qualitative Data Collection of Canadians' Views – November 2022

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 of Canada, as well as emerging trends.

This report includes findings from 12 online focus groups which were conducted between November 1st and 28th, 2022, in multiple locations across the country including Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario,

Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. Details concerning the locations, recruitment, and composition of the groups are provided in the section below.

The research for this cycle of focus groups focused largely on the Government of Canada's priorities and performance on various key issues of interest, such as healthcare and post-secondary education. Groups that engaged in this discussion included the general population in Prince Edward Island (PEI) and the Saguenay and Lac-Saint-Jean region in Quebec, post-secondary students in Eastern Ontario, Haitian diaspora in Quebec, Iranian Canadians in the City of Toronto, those nearing retirement in British Columbia, prospective vehicle buyers and lessees in mid-size and major centres in Alberta, and working mothers in mid-size and major centres in the Prairies. All groups also engaged in a brief discussion on recent news related to the federal government, with some who also discussed Canada's relations with Southeast Asia.

The research also explored the Canadian economy and a series of related issues in depth, including the 2022 Fall Economic Statement as well as the cost of living for parents, specifically with working mothers. Several groups also discussed the topic of climate change and the environment more generally, with particular attention to adaptation to climate change, the carbon pricing system, and zero-emission vehicles. Additionally, immigration and the federal government's efforts in this area were discussed among several groups. On this front, participants were asked about the current state of the immigration system and the overall immigration rate to Canada. The topics of COVID-19 vaccine booster doses, the Government of Canada wordmark, and misinformation were also discussed.

Other topics discussed included Hurricane Fiona with those in PEI, the situation in Haiti with Haitian diaspora in Quebec, the situation in Iran with Iranian Canadians in the City of Toronto, Government of Canada services, post-secondary issues, retirement issues, and firearms.

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 cohorts of the population including post-secondary students, young adults (aged 25-30, 18-30, and 18-24), Haitian diaspora, Iranian Canadians, people nearing retirement, prospective vehicle buyers/lessees, those who have not received a 4th dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, and working mothers.

Detailed Approach

- Twelve focus groups across various regions in Canada.
- Two groups were conducted with the general population in Prince Edward Island and the Saguenay – Lac-Saint-Jean region of Quebec.
- The other ten groups were conducted with key subgroups including:
 - Post-secondary students;
 - Young adults, aged 25-30, 18-30, and 18-24;
 - Haitian diaspora;
 - Iranian Canadians;
 - People nearing retirement;
 - Prospective vehicle buyers/lessees;
 - Those who have not received a 4th dose of a COVID-19 vaccine; and
 - Working mothers.
- 3 groups in Quebec were conducted in French. All other groups 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, 85 participants attended, in total. Details on attendance numbers by group can be found below.
- Each participant received an honorarium. The incentive ranged from \$100 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
Eastern Ontario	1	English	November 1	6:00-8:00 pm	Post-Secondary Students	7
Prince Edward Island	2	English	November 2	5:00-7:00 pm	General Population	7
Eastern Canada (Atlantic Region & Ontario)	3	English	November 8	6:00-8:00 pm	Young adults, aged 25-30	7
Quebec	4	French	November 9	6:00-8:00 pm	Haitian Diaspora	6
City of Toronto	5	English	November 10	6:00-8:00 pm	Iranian Canadians	8
British Columbia	6	English	November 15	9:00-11:00 pm	People Nearing Retirement	6
Mid-size and Major Centres Alberta	7	English	November 16	8:00-10:00 pm	Prospective Vehicle Buyers/Lessees	7
Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec Region	8	French	November 17	6:00-8:00 pm	Young adults, aged 18-30	7

Metro Vancouver	9	English	November 22	9:00-11:00 pm	Not Received 4 th Dose of COVID-19 Vaccine	8
Western Canada (BC, AB, SK, MB)	10	English	November 23	8:00-10:00 pm	Young adults, aged 18-24	7
Saguenay – Lac-Saint-Jean Region, Quebec	11	French	November 24	6:00-8:00 pm	General Population	7
Mid-size and Major Centres Prairies	12	English	November 28	8:00-10:00 pm	Working Mothers	8
Total number of participants						85

Key Findings

Government of Canada in the News (All Locations)

At the beginning of each group participants were asked what they had seen, read, or heard about the Government of Canada in recent days. A wide range of announcements and initiatives were recalled. These included actions to address a widespread shortage of children’s medication throughout Canada, the introduction of the Canada Dental Benefit (CDB), efforts to address the high rate of inflation including a recent decision by the Bank of Canada to raise interest rates by an addition 0.50%, and recent action by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to temporarily allow eligible study permit holders to work more than 20 hours off-campus per week. A number also reported closely following the ongoing inquiries by the Public Order Emergency Commission examining the federal government’s invocation of the *Emergencies Act* in February 2022.

Participants also recalled a number of actions and announcements related to the Government of Canada on the international stage. Initiatives mentioned included ongoing military and financial support for the Government of Ukraine, a recent official visit by the U.S. Secretary of State to Ottawa, actions by the Government of Canada in relation to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Haiti, and the implementation of new sanctions against numerous Iranian individuals and entities related to gross and systemic human rights violations by the Iranian regime. Several also recalled the attendance of the Prime Minister and other federal officials at the recent G20 Summit as well as the Government of Canada’s participation at the United Nations’ 27th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (COP27).

Ties with Southeast Asia (British Columbia People Nearing Retirement, Metro Vancouver BC Not Received 4th Dose of COVID-19 Vaccine, Western Canada Young Adults, Saguenay and Lac-Saint-Jean Regions Quebec)

Participants in four groups engaged in additional discussions regarding recent actions by the Government of Canada to strengthen ties in Southeast Asia. Asked whether they were aware of any

recent announcements or initiatives from the federal government on this front, only a small number were. For those who were aware, participants were largely of the impression that the Government of Canada had taken steps to strengthen economic ties with a number of countries in Southeast Asia. A few recalled that the Prime Minister had recently travelled to Phnom Penh, Cambodia to attend the leaders' summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and had announced the establishment of a number of strategic partnerships between the Government of Canada and ASEAN members.

Provided with information regarding the Government of Canada's objectives for Southeast Asia, almost all reacted positively, with many viewing it as an important region for the Government of Canada to focus on. It was felt by several that enhanced engagement with Southeast Asia would lead to greater diversification among Canada's trading partners and provide increased economic opportunities for Canadian businesses and consumers. It was also felt that this enhanced relationship could potentially assist in alleviating perceived supply chain issues at present.

Most were of the opinion that the Government of Canada was currently headed in the right direction when it came to its overall handling of international relations. Many were of the impression that Canada had a strong reputation on the global stage and that Canadians were generally well thought of by much of the world. The view was added that the development of close diplomatic and economic ties with many countries and regions throughout the world had helped to make Canada more secure and resilient. Among the smaller number who were more uncertain or felt that the Government of Canada was on the wrong track when it came to international relations, it was thought by some that too much attention and financial resources were being devoted to international priorities rather than addressing domestic issues such as inflation and the high cost of living at present. Most believed that international relations had a significant impact on Canadians living in Canada and several were of the opinion that, given what they felt to be a tumultuous geopolitical climate at present, maintaining strong international relations needed to be a key focus of the Government of Canada going forward.

Government of Canada Priorities and Performance (Eastern Ontario Post-Secondary Students, Prince Edward Island, Quebec Haitian Diaspora, City of Toronto Iranian Canadians, British Columbia People Nearing Retirement, Mid-size and Major Centres Alberta Prospective Vehicle Buyers/Lessees, Saguenay and Lac-Saint-Jean Region Quebec, Mid-size and Major Centres Prairies Working Mothers)

Eight groups engaged in conversations related to a number of issues currently facing Canadians as well as their perspectives regarding the Government of Canada's performance in managing these priorities. Asked to identify the most important issues in need of further prioritization from the federal government, a number of areas emerged across all groups. These included inflation and the rising cost of living, housing affordability, healthcare, climate change and the environment, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and immigration.

Asked whether they felt the Government of Canada was currently on the right or wrong track when it came to addressing the priorities identified by participants, a far larger number were negative in their assessments compared to those who were more mixed or positive. For those who felt the Government

of Canada was on the right track, it was largely thought that while progress remained limited on key issues such as the economy, housing affordability, and healthcare, federal officials were mostly aware of the issues currently facing Canadians and were taking actions to address them. Among the larger number who felt that the federal government was on the wrong track, it was said that until major issues such as inflation and the rising cost of living abated, it was very difficult for them to provide a positive assessment. Several of these participants felt that there needed to be greater efforts on the part of the federal government to collaborate with its provincial/territorial counterparts as well as increased actions to reduce federal spending and maintain a balanced budget. Some also recommended that more work needed to be done by the federal government to communicate with and understand the needs of regular Canadians, believing this would go a long way towards developing effective solutions to the number of pressing economic and social issues at present.

The two groups composed of post-secondary students in Eastern Ontario and those residing in Prince Edward Island were asked a few additional questions regarding the direction of the country as a whole. In both groups participants were mixed in their evaluations, with a roughly equal number indicating that they thought the country was headed in the right direction as those who believed the opposite. Among those who felt more optimistic about the direction of the country, several spoke positively about the Government of Canada's recent pledge to increase immigration levels to up to 500,000 per year by 2025 as well as its efforts to address issues such as climate change and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. It was believed that these actions would likely lead to long-term benefits for future generations of Canadians. For those who thought that the country was headed in the wrong direction, many pointed to what they viewed as rising societal division. Among these participants, it was generally felt that there was a higher level of animosity amongst Canadians towards one another at present compared to in previous eras and that this issue seemed to be becoming increasingly prevalent with each passing year. It was hoped that in the coming years the country would be able to address the current issues facing healthcare and the economy and continue to work towards mitigating the impacts of climate change. A number also hoped to see greater societal unity and efforts by Canadians to find common ground with one another in the years to come.

Healthcare (British Columbia People Nearing Retirement, Saguenay and Lac-Saint-Jean Region Quebec, Mid-size and Major Centres Prairies Working Mothers)

Three groups engaged in extended discussions focusing on healthcare. All participants identified healthcare as a top priority for the Government of Canada, with a large number believing it to be the most important issue facing Canadians at present. Almost all felt that healthcare provision had gotten worse in their respective communities as of late, with many recalling having encountered long wait times at emergency rooms and walk-in clinics, as well as difficulties in accessing care from family doctors and specialists. Several believed that these issues had primarily been driven by an increased demand on the healthcare system during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as a widespread shortage of healthcare workers such as doctors and nurses.

Asked what actions they expected the federal government to take in order to strengthen the healthcare system, a large number believed that greater efforts needed to be taken to recruit non-Canadian healthcare professionals to practice in Canada. Related to this, several thought that more

could be done to expedite the foreign credential recognition process for non-Canadian workers as well as to provide financial assistance for those seeking to obtain the certifications required to practice in their fields of expertise in Canada. It was also thought that additional financial resources needed to be devoted towards increasing compensation for doctors and nurses as well as greater investments made into Canadian post-secondary medical and nursing programs. It was felt that by expanding the number of seats available in these programs and increasing the availability of financial supports for students the federal government could be instrumental in encouraging a larger number of younger Canadians to pursue careers in healthcare.

Almost all participants felt that the Government of Canada was currently headed in the wrong direction when it came to healthcare. Several expressed that while they believed the federal government was aware of the issues facing the healthcare system and was taking actions to address them, little in the way of tangible progress had been made. Asked whether they were aware of any recent actions by the Government of Canada related to healthcare, a small number mentioned the introduction of a national dental care program, believing this to be a positive step.

Discussing this issue further, participants residing in the Prairies and Quebec were provided with information regarding the Government of Canada potentially attaching conditions to increased Canada Health Transfer (CHT) payments to the provinces and territories. Almost all participants disagreed with this approach by the Government of Canada. While it was generally felt that it was important to understand the gaps that exist in the healthcare system as well as to provide Canadians with better access to their healthcare data, few felt these to be top priorities at present. Though some thought that implementing a high-quality health data system would be beneficial towards making individual personal health information more accessible and easily transferrable across different healthcare providers, a number of participants were also concerned about the security and privacy of their personal data. Generally, it was felt that healthcare should remain primarily under provincial/territorial jurisdiction, with many sharing the view that the individual provincial and territorial health authorities would likely have a better understanding of the unique needs of their constituents than officials at the federal level.

Post-Secondary Education (Eastern Ontario Post-Secondary Students)

Participants in the group comprised of post-secondary students residing in Eastern Ontario engaged in a brief discussion regarding issues specific to post-secondary education in Canada. Identifying the top issues facing students that required greater prioritization from the federal government, a number of areas were identified. These included the need for additional financial assistance for tuition fees, subsidized housing options for students, and greater opportunities for students to gain professional work experience through internships and employment placements during their studies.

Most felt that the Government of Canada was currently on the right track when it came to assisting students. A few positively recalled recent actions such as the suspension of interest on federal student loans as well as temporarily allowing international students to work more than 20 hours off-campus per week. It was believed that these actions would likely be beneficial for students going forward. Discussing the federal government's outreach to post-secondary students most felt that there was

significant room for improvement, believing greater efforts needed to be taken to establish a dialogue with students and understand the challenges they face.

The Economy (Eastern Canada Young Adults, Quebec Haitian Diaspora, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec Young Adults, Mid-size and Major Centres Prairies Working Mothers)

Four groups engaged in discussions related to the Canadian economy. Three groups focused on the recent Fall Economic Statement released by the federal government while the group of working mothers residing in the Prairies discussed issues related to the rising cost of living for parents.

Fall Economic Statement (Eastern Canada Young Adults, Quebec Haitian Diaspora, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec Young Adults)

Awareness of the Government of Canada's 2022 Fall Economic Statement (FES) was low among participants, with very few having heard of it. To aid in conversation, participants were provided with information regarding a number of initiatives contained within the FES. These included permanently eliminating interest on federal student and apprentice loans, the introduction of a new, quarterly Canada Workers Benefit (CWB), delivering on a plan to make housing more affordable for Canadians, lowering transaction fees for small businesses, and the creation of a Sustainable Jobs Training Centre.

Asked to select which initiative they felt to be most important, participants in all groups primarily focused on the plan to make housing more affordable for Canadians. Several described housing affordability as the most pressing issue facing Canadians at present and believed that a lack of safe and affordable housing was a major source of anxiety for many, particularly for low and middle-income Canadians already struggling amidst the rising cost of living. Among the other initiatives, lowering credit card transaction fees for small businesses, permanently eliminating interest on federal student and apprentice loans, and the creation of a Sustainable Jobs Training Centre received a small amount of attention, while very few participants selected the creation of a new quarterly CWB.

Focusing on the FES as a whole, almost all participants felt these initiatives represented a step in the right direction. Several reiterated their comments regarding the importance of the Government of Canada taking actions to address housing affordability, while a number of others also spoke positively about what they perceived to be the FES' focus on continuing the transition to a more sustainable and environmentally focused economy. While some raised concerns as to whether these initiatives were too ambitious and may require higher amounts of spending by the federal government, it was generally felt that so long as these initiatives were implemented in a careful and efficient manner they would be beneficial to a large number of Canadians.

Cost of Living for Parents (Mid-size and Major Centres Prairies Working Mothers)

Participants in the group comprised of working mothers residing in mid-size and major Prairie centres discussed a number of issues related to the cost of living for Canadian parents at present. To begin, participants were asked to select a single word to describe the current state of the Canadian economy. All participants chose words with highly negative connotations, including 'challenging', 'scary', and

'disaster'. Almost all felt that the economy would likely worsen in the next few years and believed that issues such as inflation and a perceived lack of housing affordability would continue to persist for the foreseeable future. Several thought that more needed to be done to limit federal spending going forward, believing that the high costs of pandemic-related programs and benefits such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) had served as a major driver of inflation and the rising cost of living throughout Canada. Describing what they believed to be behind the rising rate of inflation, participants pointed to factors such as increased transportation and shipping costs, supply chain interruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and geopolitical issues such as the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Almost all felt inflation to be a global issue rather than one that was just impacting Canadians.

Participants were next asked which economic issues they were particularly worried about as parents. A number of concerns were identified, including inflation and the rising cost of living, affordability of post-secondary education, growing issues related to mental health, and a perceived lack of opportunities for young people in their respective regions. Most did not believe that the Government of Canada understood the economic issues they were facing at present. Several were of the opinion that there was currently a disconnect between the federal government and the needs of Canadians living in the Prairie provinces and Western Canada more generally. A number spoke negatively of initiatives such as the federal price on carbon and what they viewed as an increased focus on transitioning away from oil and gas, believing this sector was essential to both the economic and energy needs of those living in the Prairie provinces. A number of participants expressed the view that a one-size-fits-all approach to the economic issues facing Canadians would not be effective, and that economic solutions from the federal government would need to be tailored to the unique needs of the different provinces/territories and regions throughout Canada.

Asked if they were aware of any policies, programs, services, or benefits from the Government of Canada that benefit parents, several mentioned the Canada Child Benefit (CCB). A number of participants also mentioned other initiatives such as Registered Education Savings Plans (RESPs), the Canada Dental Benefit (CDB), maternity and paternity leave programs for new parents, and the recent \$10 a day, on average, child care agreements recently reached between the federal government and the individual provinces and territories. Regarding the CCB, several felt this was an important component of the monthly income for many low and middle-income Canadian families and was especially important amidst the current period of high inflation. While also largely positive in their comments regarding the CDB, some felt the initial roll-out of the program should have included all children under 18. Discussing what more the Government of Canada could do to assist in supporting parents, participants mentioned increased investment into mental health resources and treatment, temporary tax relief for low and middle-income parents currently struggling with the cost of living, and promotion of more flexible working schedules (such as working from home) that allow parents to spend more time at home caring for their children.

Climate Change and Environment (Prince Edward Island, Mid-size and Major Centres Alberta Prospective Vehicle Buyers/Lessees, Mid-size and Major Centres Prairies Working Mothers)

Three groups engaged in conversations related to the environment and climate change. Topics discussed included the actions participants had taken to prepare for the impacts of climate change, perspectives regarding the federal government's carbon pricing system, and opinions regarding zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs).

Adaptation to Climate Change (Prince Edward Island)

All participants residing in Prince Edward Island were highly concerned about the future impacts of climate change with a large number believing that the impacts of climate change had already begun to be felt in their communities. Discussing the changes they had noticed, several pointed to what they perceived to be an increased prevalence of extreme weather events such as wildfires and floods, changing seasonal weather patterns, and a downturn in production in vital sectors such as agriculture and aquaculture. Regarding the latter issue, a few were concerned about the future viability of important crops such as potatoes, which they viewed as vital to the provincial economy. A number of participants also spoke about the devastation recently caused by Hurricane Fiona which made landfall in Atlantic Canada on September 24th, 2022.

Almost all indicated that they had begun taking steps to prepare for the impacts of climate change. Several mentioned having begun to store extra food and water as well as taken actions to secure alternative power supplies in the event of long-term power outages and supply interruptions due to adverse weather. While confident in their own preparations, no participants felt their community was adequately prepared for climate change. It was thought that far more could be done by their communities to increase the resiliency of the electrical system as well as ensure that supply chains for essential goods such as fuel and groceries would not be interrupted in the event of another major storm. Most thought that the federal government had a role to play in assisting communities in their preparations for climate change. It was expressed that in addition to providing forecasts and guidance as to what to expect regarding the changing environment and how to prepare for it, the Government of Canada could work to establish and enforce more stringent national construction standards, ensuring that all new buildings and residences are built to be resilient in the face of climate change.

Carbon Pricing System (Mid-size and Major Centres Prairies Working Mothers)

One group, comprised of working mothers living in the Prairies, engaged in a short discussion related to the federal carbon pricing system. Asked whether they were aware of the Government of Canada's Climate Action Incentive, few were. Discussing their initial impressions when they heard the term 'Climate Action Incentive' most believed it was likely a program designed to provide financial incentives for Canadians to take part in more sustainable practices in their daily lives. Provided additional information regarding this program, several felt that they needed to know more about what the federal standard for carbon pollution was before being able to provide a proper evaluation of this initiative. At face value, some thought this system to be unfair, believing it disproportionately impacted provinces such as Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta which they believed may have higher energy needs (especially in the colder winter months) per capita than other provinces. A

number of participants also questioned why this price on carbon was being collected at all, given that 90% of all proceeds were ultimately returned to residents via Climate Action Incentive payments.

Zero-Emission Vehicles (Mid-size and Major Centres Alberta Prospective Vehicle Buyers/Lessees)

This group, comprised of participants residing in mid-size and major centres in Alberta, took part in a discussion regarding ZEVs and the transition to more sustainable methods of transportation. All participants had previously reported that they were planning on purchasing or leasing a vehicle in the next five years. Asked what their primary mode of transportation was at present, most reported using personal vehicles. Discussing their primary reasons for wanting to purchase or lease a vehicle, several commented that they were looking to transition to a more environmentally friendly form of transportation such as a hybrid or ZEV. Most indicated that affordability, reliability, and the ability to travel long distances were among their most important considerations when deciding what type of vehicle to purchase. Asked whether fuel efficiency was an important factor for them, almost all said that it was. A number of participants (and especially those living rurally and required to routinely drive long distances) expressed the view that gasoline prices were becoming increasingly unaffordable and wanted to ensure that their next vehicle was as fuel efficient as possible. While several felt that gasoline prices would likely stabilize in the near future, most were pessimistic that fuel costs would lower to previous levels, believing that oil and gas companies would likely continue to pursue the highest profit margins possible.

Asked whether they knew what a ZEV was, slightly more were familiar with this type of vehicle than those who were not. For those who were aware, it was generally thought that a ZEV was a category of vehicle that either produced no carbon emissions or included carbon offsets that served to balance out any emissions produced in the manufacturing or operation of the vehicle. No participants reported currently owning a ZEV. Among those who were actively considering purchasing a ZEV, it was thought that while a ZEV had always been attractive due to its perceived environmental benefits, the recent rise in gasoline prices had made this type of vehicle even more appealing. All participants indicated that they would consider purchasing a ZEV at some point in the future. Asked what factors were currently holding them back from making this purchase, a number cited the high upfront cost of these vehicles, a perceived lack of infrastructure (such as charging stations), questions as to whether a ZEV would be able to drive long distances without requiring a charge, and concerns about whether these types of vehicles would be able to perform in extreme weather conditions or could be depended on for heavy-duty work.

Discussing what, if anything, the Government of Canada should be doing to make ZEVs more accessible to Canadians, a number of participants felt that more could be done to provide subsidies and rebates to those looking to purchase a ZEV. Several reiterated the need for additional investments into infrastructure such as charging stations, especially in rural locations, while a few believed that more could be done at the federal level to educate and inform Canadians regarding the potential economic and environmental benefits of switching to a ZEV. Though most felt it would be a positive step to manufacture ZEVs and ZEV parts in Canada, only a small number identified this as a key factor that would influence their decision to purchase one of these vehicles. It was widely felt that while these types of vehicles represented the future, there were far more pressing economic issues facing

Canadians at present. The view was reiterated that before encouraging a large-scale transition to ZEVs there needed to be a long-term plan in place by the federal government as to how to accommodate this considerable shift.

Hurricane Fiona (Prince Edward Island)

Participants in the group from Prince Edward Island (PEI) engaged in a discussion regarding the federal government's response to Hurricane Fiona, which made landfall in Atlantic Canada on September 24th, 2022. To begin, participants were asked what, if anything, they had heard about the Government of Canada's response thus far. A number believed that the Government of Canada had committed financial support to assist those impacted by the storm but were unsure as to how or when these funds would be distributed. A few had also heard that members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) had been deployed to the region to assist with recovery and clean-up efforts. Nearly all felt that the federal government was on the wrong track in its approach to assisting those impacted by the storm. Participants cited a number of reasons for this position, including feeling that there had been little in the way of advance preparation, a perceived lack of information regarding the federal response to the disaster, and the impression that not enough assistance had been provided to the respective provincial governments in the aftermath of the hurricane.

Provided with information regarding the actions the federal government had taken as well as its establishment of financial supports for those impacted by the storm, many expressed confusion. Several indicated that they had not yet personally benefitted from any of these programs, and were unaware of anyone in their communities who had received these supports. A small number were doubtful that the Hurricane Fiona Recovery Fund (HFRF) initiative, which pledged up to \$300 million over two years to help those impacted by the storm and to support long-term recovery efforts, would be effectively utilized to support the rebuilding effort in their province. Provided additional information about the HFRF, participants continued to express mostly negative views. It was believed that its objectives were too vague and that there needed to be a greater focus on assisting the provincial government in repairing and fortifying vital infrastructure, such as the electrical grid. It was also thought that the funds committed through this program would be insufficient to repair the damage caused to small harbours, especially in time for the next fishing season. Asked what else the Government of Canada could do to assist in the recovery from Hurricane Fiona, participants shared concerns about the environmental impact of the disaster and the need for greater preparation for future events such as this going forward.

Situation in Haiti (Quebec Haitian Diaspora)

One group, comprised of members of the Haitian diaspora residing in Quebec, discussed the humanitarian crisis currently unfolding in Haiti. All participants indicated that they were aware of this issue, and most had been following it closely. Asked if they had seen, read, or heard anything regarding this situation in recent days, a number of participants recalled hearing that vital seaports as well as the main fuel terminal road had been blocked by gangs, limiting the access of Haitians to fuel

supplies. Several also had heard accounts of clashes between armed gangs and the police and ongoing protests by the Haitian citizens regarding the situation. All participants felt personally impacted by this crisis. Many had family and friends in Haiti and were constantly worried that their loved ones may be caught up in the violence, be kidnapped by gangs, or negatively impacted in other ways. Several mentioned that they had been regularly following news related to Haiti and checking in with friends and family to ensure they were safe. It was said by many that this had taken a significant toll on their mental health in recent months.

Few were aware of any recent announcements or actions taken by the Government of Canada related to this situation. A small number recalled hearing that the Minister of Foreign Affairs had recently announced financial support for Haitian and international humanitarian organizations as well as the provision of supplies such as armoured vehicles to assist Haitian law enforcement in reining in the armed gangs currently disrupting the country. A few participants also mentioned having heard that sanctions had been imposed on Haitian political elites who provide illicit financial and operational support to armed gangs. No participants, however, thought that these actions would be effective in quelling this issue.

Presented with information regarding the actions the Government of Canada had taken to assist in addressing this issue, almost all reiterated the view that these actions were likely be insufficient towards helping the people of Haiti. Expanding upon this, many were of the view that any humanitarian financial support provided by the Government of Canada to the Haitian government would likely be misappropriated, believing that corruption was rife within Haiti's public sector and that elected officials would likely use these funds for personal enrichment rather than helping the Haitian people. Some, however, spoke positively of the imposition of sanctions against two Haitian political elites and suggested that these types of targeted sanctions should be more widely used and imposed on a wider number of Haitian individuals and entities currently engaging in corrupt or illegal behaviour.

Discussing what actions the Government of Canada should take to help address this situation, several expressed skepticism regarding sending an increased amount of arms and tactical equipment, believing this would likely only lead to more violence. Likewise, no participants felt the Government of Canada should have an active presence in the conflict by sending Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) or other personnel to assist Haitian law enforcement. Many suggested that economic investment, the building of hospitals and clinics, and funding to establish professional educational institutions would provide the most tangible benefits to the Haitian people. Several believed that much of the criminal activity in Haiti stemmed from desperation and a lack of economic opportunity, and that if more effort was taken to develop a stronger economy and well-paying jobs that the rate of crime would decrease substantially. With this in mind, it was largely felt that increasing the number of opportunities available to Haitians to develop professional skills and prosper economically would be the most beneficial action that the federal government could take.

Asked what they felt were likely to be the long-term impacts of this crisis, many expressed concern regarding how this situation would impact future generations of Haitians. It was largely thought that these ongoing internal conflicts and violence had already had a significant negative effect on the

education, mental health, and future economic prospects of younger Haitians and that this would only worsen the longer these issues persisted. It was felt that with support from countries such as Canada and international organizations such as the UN, especially in the form of investments into education and economic development, the situation in Haiti could be drastically improved over the long-term.

Situation in Iran (City of Toronto Iranian Canadians)

Participants in one group, comprised of Iranian Canadians residing in the City of Toronto, engaged in a conversation related to the current situation in Iran. All were aware of the ongoing nationwide protests taking place throughout the country, which had begun on September 16th, 2022, following the death of a young woman in police custody who been arrested for allegedly violating Iranian rules requiring women to cover their hair with a hijab, or head scarf. Asked what they had seen, read, or heard about these protests in recent weeks, many reported accounts of large-scale arrests of protestors (believing the number of those detained to be upwards of 10,000-15,000) as well as concerns that these individuals may eventually be executed by the Iranian regime. A large number also expressed worry about what would happen to those still protesting, believing it likely that the Iranian regime would escalate its violence against these individuals in the weeks and months to come.

Almost all participants reported having received first-hand updates regarding this situation from friends and family members still in Iran. Describing how this issue had impacted them personally, many reported feeling significant anxiety and fear regarding the safety of their loved ones in Iran. Several commented that, due to internet and other telecommunications restrictions imposed by the Iranian regime, they had been unable to communicate with friends and family in Iran for significant periods of time, further heightening their concern. Some expressed feeling somewhat helpless about the situation, believing there was little they could do while in Canada to assist those demonstrating against the regime.

Asked if they were aware of any actions taken by the Government of Canada related to this situation, a number of participants recalled hearing that it had imposed sanctions on numerous Iranian individuals and entities in response to the gross and systematic human rights violations occurring in Iran. While feeling this was a step in the right direction, several expressed frustrations due to their impression that a complete list of the sanctioned individuals had not been released as well as the view that these sanctions needed to be applied to a far larger number of individuals associated with the regime.

To aid in conversation, participants were provided additional information regarding the Government of Canada's response to this situation: While reiterating that it was encouraging to see the Government of Canada taking a stance against the Iranian regime and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), most felt that these actions did not go nearly far enough. A large number wanted to see the IRGC and other Iranian entities officially labelled as terrorist organizations by the federal government, believing this was an appropriate step given the violent actions perpetrated by the regime against those demonstrating for human rights. Several also wanted to see further action taken (including the freezing of financial assets) against any individuals currently living in Canada who were, or had previously been, associated with the Iranian regime and who may have played a role in past human rights abuses.

Discussing how they expected this situation to evolve in both the short and long-term, most felt it would be difficult for the citizens of Iran to return to the previous status quo. Many were of the impression that depending on which side prevailed, the situation would ultimately result in either a revolution and regime change or increased restrictions on human rights and freedoms by the Iranian government. Almost all believed that if the Iranian regime remained in power following the protests that there would be further oppression of Iranian citizens, especially women and younger Iranians.

Turning to a slightly different topic concerning Iran, participants were presented with information regarding Ukrainian International Airlines Flight 752 which, on January 8th, 2020, was shot down by a surface-to-air missile minutes after taking off from Tehran, Iran. 55 Canadian citizens and 30 permanent residents were among those killed, and 138 individuals on the flight had ties to Canada. Asked whether they had seen, read, or heard anything about the Government of Canada's response in the years following this tragedy, a number recalled that it had been quick to provide support to the families of those who had been killed. All, however, were of the opinion that the response from the federal government had been limited in terms of bringing to justice those responsible for this action. Several expressed the view that given the large number of Canadian citizens and permanent residents killed in this incident, the Government of Canada should have been more aggressive in ensuring that the Iranian government be brought before the International Court of Justice to answer for what it had done.

To aid in conversation, participants were provided with information related to a number of actions the Government of Canada had taken specifically in response to this incident. While most believed the actions taken by the federal government had likely provided some benefit to the families of those who had perished, it was widely felt that much more needed to be done. Several were of the opinion that the downing of Flight 752 had not been an accident and that there needed to be greater accountability for what they viewed as the mass murder of a large number of Canadians. It was suggested that the Government of Canada should work to exert further economic and diplomatic pressure on Iran going forward and encourage key allies such as the United States to do the same.

Immigration (Quebec Haitian Diaspora, Metro Vancouver BC Not Received 4th Dose of COVID-19 Vaccine, Saguenay and Lac-Saint-Jean Region Quebec)

Three groups took part in conversations related to immigration in Canada as well as their perspectives regarding a potential rise in immigration levels in the next few years. Asked whether they felt the Government of Canada was currently headed in the right direction when it came to immigration, participants were mostly positive or neutral in their evaluations, with few believing it was on the wrong track. Among those who were mostly positive in their assessments, it was generally felt that immigration was highly beneficial to Canada and was especially important in terms of bolstering the workforce in several sectors (such as healthcare and education) currently believed to be facing labour shortages. For those who were more mixed in their opinions, several believed that the accessibility and effectiveness of the Canadian immigration system varied depending on which country one was emigrating from. The view was expressed by these participants that immigrants from other western countries as well as those belonging to the Commonwealth of Nations were often prioritized over

those from other jurisdictions. A number were also critical of the foreign credential recognition process. It was believed that many skilled workers from outside of Canada were currently unable to practice in their fields of expertise due to their credentials not being recognized as well as the high financial costs required to attaining the certifications they would need.

Participants in the groups based in Metro Vancouver and the Saguenay and Lac-Saint-Jean region of Quebec were asked a few additional questions related to the potential benefits of immigration as well as any concerns they may have. Participants identified a range of benefits related to immigration, including the potential to increase Canada's workforce, the strengthening of Canadian culture through added diversity, and the ability to provide humanitarian assistance to those seeking to flee dangerous situations. Discussing potential concerns they might have regarding immigration, a number of participants expressed worries that areas such as healthcare and education were currently overburdened and would not be able to keep up with present levels of immigration. A number of participants were also concerned about how immigration may impact housing affordability in Canada and questioned whether there were enough safe and accessible housing options available to accommodate those newly arriving to the country. Asked whether the Government of Canada should increase, decrease, or keep the rate of immigration at the present level, most residing in Metro Vancouver felt that the level of immigration should remain unchanged while a roughly equal number of those from the Saguenay and Lac-Saint-Jean region felt it should stay the same or decrease. No participants felt the rate of immigration should be increased.

All three groups were provided with the following information regarding the Government of Canada's recent announcement to increase the number of immigrants arriving to Canada in the next few years with the eventual goal of welcoming up to 500,000 new immigrants by 2025. While a few participants felt these proposed immigration levels to be a bit high, most thought that after seeing this information this represented a steady, gradual approach to immigration that would likely not put too much additional strain on Canada's economy and social infrastructure. Asked whether they felt more comfortable about this plan knowing that the proposed immigration rate was roughly equal to 1% of the Canadian population, a number of participants indicated that they did.

Asked a few additional questions pertaining to the economy and perceived labour shortages, almost all in the groups based in Metro Vancouver and the Saguenay and Lac-Saint-Jean region of the Quebec felt labour shortages to be a major issue at present. Questioned whether they agreed with the statement that *"Canada needs to welcome more new immigrants in order to fill job vacancies and grow the economy"* all in the group from Quebec indicated that they did, while a roughly equal number of those in the group from Metro Vancouver agreed compared to those who were more uncertain. For those who felt more unsure about this statement, it was believed that while immigration would likely be beneficial to the labour market, several believed a primary reason for many job vacancies in Canada at present was due to the low compensation offered rather than the jobs themselves. As such, these participants did not want to see immigrants brought to Canada primarily to serve as a source of cheap labour for employers and believed that more needed to be done to ensure that all Canadians, including immigrants, had access to jobs that paid a living wage.

COVID-19 Vaccines & Booster Doses (Eastern Ontario Post-Secondary Students, Prince Edward Island, Metro Vancouver BC Not Received 4th Dose of COVID-19 Vaccine)

Three groups engaged in conversations related to the COVID-19 vaccine, with a particular focus on the 'bivalent' booster dose recently approved by Health Canada. All had received their initial vaccinations and most had received at least one booster dose. Describing their reasons for getting vaccinated, many indicated having done so as a way to protect both themselves and immunocompromised loved ones from COVID-19 as well as to limit increased strain on the healthcare system. A smaller number described having gotten vaccinated primarily in response to workplace requirements, and/or out of a desire to travel, patronize bars and restaurants, and to take part in other activities and events where vaccination was required.

In the group based in Metro Vancouver, comprised of participants who had previously reported having not yet received a fourth dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, most expected that they would get a fourth dose at some point with a small number indicating that they had already done so in the days immediately prior to attending the focus group. For the several participants who were eligible to receive their next dose but had not yet made an appointment, a number expressed feeling a lack of urgency to do so given that proof of vaccination requirements had been lifted at both the provincial and federal level. While still planning on receiving another dose, a small number were of the impression that the COVID-19 vaccine did little to prevent transmission of the virus and thus felt that there was now less need from a public health perspective for them to receive another dose compared to earlier stages of the pandemic.

Participants in all three groups were asked whether they were aware of the new bivalent boosters recently approved by Health Canada. Regionally, while almost all in Metro Vancouver and most in Eastern Ontario were aware of this booster, few in the group from Prince Edward Island had heard of it. For those who were aware, it was largely felt that the bivalent dose was different from previous boosters in that it had been updated to be more effective against newer variants such as Omicron. Few participants had any questions or concerns related to the bivalent booster dose. While some expressed concerns about the potential of undiscovered long-term side effects resulting from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, very few indicated that these worries would prevent them from getting another dose in the future. Asked whether they felt this bivalent COVID-19 vaccine would be effective in keeping themselves, their loved ones, and their communities safe, participants were mixed in their reactions. A large number expected that the vaccine would be at least somewhat effective in reducing the number of serious cases of COVID-19 and limiting the number of Canadians hospitalized due to the virus. A few, however, were more uncertain. These participants expressed the opinion that thus far the COVID-19 vaccine had been relatively ineffective in reducing transmission and preventing the contraction of the virus and, as a result, they did not believe the bivalent booster would be any more effective than previous versions of the vaccine.

Asked an additional question regarding whether they had heard anything about the flu season in Canada this year, several in the group based in Metro Vancouver were of the impression that it was more intense than usual and that increased prevalence of influenza as well as respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) had led to long wait times in emergency rooms and at walk-in clinics. Only one participant

reported having received a flu shot this year, with most others feeling somewhat ambivalent as to whether they would eventually get one.

Government of Canada Services (Western Canada Young Adults)

This group, comprised of young adults residing in Western Canada, briefly engaged in a discussion related to services provided by the Government of Canada. Asked to identify the most important services that the federal government delivers to Canadians, participant comments largely focused on healthcare and education. While acknowledging that these areas were primarily under the purview of provincial/territorial governments, many felt that there were ways the federal government could improve the quality and accessibility of these services.

Asked specifically about the Government of Canada's ability to provide passport services, process immigration applications, and manage airports and air travel, almost all felt there was significant room for improvement on these fronts. Several had heard accounts from loved ones who had experienced long wait times (often spanning many months) for important applications such as passport renewals, permanent residency (PR) applications, and work/study permits. It was felt this had caused significant anxiety for many, especially those who required these applications to be processed in order to continue living and working in Canada. A large number expressed frustration regarding what they viewed as a lack of communication from departments such as Service Canada and Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) regarding the status of these applications. A few were of the opinion that this increase in passport and immigration applications had been predictable and that the Government of Canada should have been better prepared for this increased workload in the wake of the lifting of pandemic-related travel requirements.

All participants were confident that it was possible for the Government of Canada to resolve these issues and improve service delivery for Canadians going forward. Discussing possible actions the Government of Canada could take, several felt more efforts could be made to increase staffing levels in departments such as Service Canada and IRCC as well as to develop online systems through which Canadians could more readily check the status of their applications and estimated processing times.

Canada Wordmark (Eastern Canada Young Adults, Mid-size and Major Centres Alberta Prospective Vehicle Buyers/Lessees, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec Region Young Adults)

Three groups discussed the methods by which they recognize information and messages from the federal government across various channels, including television, social media, print, and radio. Asked how they would typically determine whether information was emanating from the Government of Canada a large number of participants described a logo incorporating the word 'Canada' and the Canadian flag. Several also believed that when appearing in print or on television this type of information is often explicitly stated as being from the Government of Canada. Questioned how they would determine whether information they hear (on mediums such as radio) was from the Government of Canada, many recalled a distinct jingle, believed to be derived from the first few bars of the national anthem. Several were also of the impression that audio information from the federal

government was often accompanied by a message stating that it was a message from the Government of Canada. Almost all participants indicated that they felt it was typically quite clear when information was being officially communicated by the Government of Canada.

Shown an image of the Canada wordmark, all participants expressed familiarity with the symbol, with a number confirming that this was the symbol they had been describing earlier. Almost all associated the wordmark with the Government of Canada and many reported being very familiar with the image and had seen it on official correspondence, advertisements, and at federal buildings and service centres throughout their lives. Most indicated that they did not have a personal connection to the wordmark and that their feelings towards it were mostly neutral. Asked why they thought the Government of Canada used this symbol in its communications, most believed that the wordmark connoted legitimacy and served as an indicator that the information accompanying it was important to pay attention to. It was felt that the consistent use of the wordmark for many years had made it an immediately recognizable symbol, and many saw it as an important part of the federal government's branding. Questioned whether they would typically trust the information associated with the wordmark, most indicated that they would.

Participants were next asked to listen to the Government of Canada's official musical signature. Almost all participants were familiar with this sound bite. Several recalled having heard it on radio and television, on audio platforms such as Spotify, and accompanying advertisements and digital content on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. All felt that similar to the wordmark, the musical signature was primarily meant to be an instantly recognizable indicator that the information or content it accompanied was from the Government of Canada.

Misinformation (Eastern Canada Young Adults, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec Region Young Adults, Western Canada Young Adults)

Three groups comprised of young adults took part in conversations related to misinformation. To begin, participants were asked which social media platforms and apps they typically use. A range of platforms were mentioned including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Reddit. A significant number also reported frequently using digital media platforms such as YouTube and Spotify. Most indicated that they would typically access these platforms on at least a daily basis. Asked which platforms, if any, they would use to receive information on health-related questions, a few expected they might use YouTube or Facebook. Most, however, believed that they would most likely make use of a search engine such as Google or go directly to websites operated by the federal or provincial/territorial governments or official health organizations for health-related questions.

Discussing how they would go about verifying whether the information they encounter is true or false, several indicated that they would likely confirm the details through more authoritative sources such as federal and provincial/territorial websites, official organizations, and peer-reviewed academic studies. Asked what came to mind when they heard the term 'misinformation', it was widely felt that the term referred to misrepresented or false information that was presented as being legitimate. Many thought of the term 'fake news' and felt this type of information could often be conspiratorial in nature. A number associated Facebook in particular with misinformation, believing it to be more prevalent on

this platform than others. A large number of participants expressed feeling very concerned about the spread of misinformation at present. It was felt that false or misleading headlines and articles were being posted at an increasing rate on social media platforms and that a significant portion of the population now believed things that were not factually true. Some were particularly worried about how this perceived increasing wave of misinformation would impact younger Canadians who may not yet have developed the critical thinking skills to discern whether the information they came across is true or false.

Post-Secondary Issues (Eastern Ontario Post-Secondary Students)

Participants in the group from Eastern Ontario, all of whom were currently enrolled in a post-secondary program, engaged in a discussion regarding post-secondary education in Canada. To begin, participants were asked to explain how they went about choosing the post-secondary program they were currently enrolled in. A wide range of factors were cited, including future career opportunities, personal interest in a particular program of study, grants and scholarships, the cost of tuition and fees, parental influence, the location of the institution, and the academic performance in secondary school.

Participants next partook in an exercise where they evaluated a series of proposed initiatives from the Government of Canada related to post-secondary education. Several expressed enthusiasm regarding the initiative to allow new parents to pause repayment of their federal student loans until their youngest child reaches the age of five. It was thought that this would be effective towards allowing new parents to better focus their financial resources on raising their young children. Also receiving a considerable degree of support was the initiative to permanently eliminate federal interest on Canada Student Loans and Canada Apprentice Loans. Participants believed that this would help alleviate a considerable amount of stress and anxiety currently felt by many with high student debt loads.

Many also expressed positive feelings regarding the initiative to create a new stream of the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy for Canadians with disabilities. It was thought that existing supports for those living with disabilities were insufficient and that any increase in spending in this area represented a positive development. The initiative to expand pathways to Permanent Residence (PR) for international students through the Express Entry system also received support, with several of the view that international students who were already established in Canada should be seen as ideal candidates to obtain PR status.

Participants next engaged in a discussion regarding their expectations related to entering the workforce upon the completion of their current program. Asked what they hoped to do next after graduating, many expected to pursue a graduate degree or professional certification before entering into the workforce. A smaller number planned on working immediately after graduation, either finding a job on their own or working with a recruiter. Asked if they felt there were enough job opportunities in Eastern Ontario, most believed that there were. Discussing the factors they felt to be most important when applying for or accepting a new job, participants provided a wide range of responses. These included compensation, benefits, location, the ability to work from home, a fair work-life balance, a sense of meaning and importance, the ability to grow and learn new skills, and whether they

shared similar values with their employer and company. Participants were mostly mixed as to whether they would consider an employer's policies related to the environment and/or social responsibility when it came to deciding whether or not to accept a position. While for several these aspects were very important, for a roughly similar number it was felt that they would likely be secondary considerations to other factors such as compensation and the type of work they would be doing.

Participants then engaged in an exercise where they compared the terms *a good job* and *a good career*. Many believed that *a good job* represented a position that they would be excited about and enjoy doing, while a *good career* was likely more relevant to one's ability to enjoy financial stability over a period of time and achieve long-term goals. Asked how these terms were similar or different, it was suggested that *a good job* described positive conditions in the immediate term, whereas *a good career* focused more on long-term goals and a fulfilling life.

Retirement Issues (British Columbia People Nearing Retirement)

In one group, comprised of those nearing retirement in British Columbia, participants engaged in a discussion related to a number of issues concerning retirement. Asked to share their largest concerns regarding retirement, most comments were focused on the participants' ability to maintain financial security in the long-term. Most participants indicated that the high rate of inflation and perceived rising cost of living at present had complicated their lives to at least some extent. Some reported having made the decision to drive less due to rising gasoline prices as well as potentially postponing their retirement plans for a number of years in order to acquire enough savings to adapt to rising expenses. A few were concerned they would never be able to retire and would have to continue working in some capacity for the rest of their lives.

Discussing the steps they had taken to prepare for their retirement, participants mentioned a range of activities. These included long-term investments into programs such as the Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP), increasing mortgage payment amounts to pay off their mortgage quicker; searching for live-in tenants as a method of earning additional income; and seeking out part-time employment in addition to their current job.

Participants were next asked to share their perspectives regarding the importance of various federal government programs, such as the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Old Age Security (OAS), and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) to their respective retirement plans. While most generally agreed these benefits were important, many were of the view that they would not be enough on their own to meet their financial needs in retirement. Also asked about RRSPs, many felt these to be very important, though several individuals felt the usefulness of these programs was highly dependant on the amount of extra income one was able to devote towards investing into them.

Shown information regarding recent updates to reactions to the CPP, OAS, and GIS benefits, reactions varied among participants. For some, it was felt that while it was a positive development that these benefits would now be adjusted each year to keep up with the cost of living, they would still likely not be enough to survive off of. Participants were also informed that an enhancement to the CPP had begun being phased-in in 2019 and that it would provide higher benefits in retirement in exchange for

making higher CPP contributions. While some felt this may be beneficial, several thought it did little to address what they viewed to be the root issue in that many Canadians nearing retirement did not have additional income to devote to making higher contributions into this program. Participants were also informed that, as of July 2022, seniors who are 75 years old or older receive an automatic 10% increase of their Old Age Security pension. Most had heard about this and felt it would help seniors to some degree, though many thought this increase should be provided to all seniors 65 and older as opposed to setting the age threshold at 75.

Firearms (Western Canada Young Adults)

Participants in this group, comprised of young adults residing in Western Canada, took part in a brief discussion related to firearms and the planned federal buyback program for prohibited assault-style weapons in Canada. All participants felt that gun control was an important issue and needed to be a priority for the Government of Canada. Discussing current regulations concerning firearms, a roughly similar number of participants felt gun laws in Canada should be stricter as those who felt they were more or less at the right level. For those who felt further regulations should be introduced related to firearms, it was thought that gun crime in Canada was a growing issue and that there were few reasons for private citizens to own firearms and no reason that these weapons should not be prohibited to a higher degree. Among participants who believed the gun laws were sufficient at their present levels, it was commented that while firearm-related crimes were important to address, they did not wish to see any new measures introduced that would impact law-abiding gun owners and prevent them from partaking in activities such as hunting and/or recreational sport shooting. Most felt the federal government was currently on the right track when it came to gun control, with many of the impression that there had been a number of new measures introduced in recent years to curb the rate of crimes involving firearms in Canada. Though few were aware of the specific details concerning these measures, a number of participants recalled seeing headlines regarding the recent national freeze on the buying, selling, and transferring of handguns as well as a previous ban on numerous types of assault-style firearms.

Focusing specifically on regulations concerning assault-style firearms, participants were informed that as of May 1st, 2020, the Government of Canada had prohibited over 1,500 models of assault-style weapons, including the AR-15. Sharing their reactions, a number of participants questioned the effectiveness of this initiative, given their impression that crimes involving firearms had largely continued unabated in the over two years since this announcement. Informed that the federal government would be launching a buyback program for these types of firearms, most believed that so long as the amounts offered to gun owners and businesses represented a fair value for their property, this represented a positive step and would likely help to keep Canadians safer going forward. A few felt differently, believing that this action was unfair to law-abiding gun owners who had obtained all the necessary certifications and purchased their firearms legally.

MORE INFORMATION



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