



Government  
of Canada

Gouvernement  
du Canada

# Continuous Qualitative Data Collection of Canadians' Views – February 2023

## Executive Summary

### **Prepared for the Privy Council Office**

Supplier name: The Strategic Counsel

Contract number: 35035-182346/001/CY

Contract value: \$2,428,991.50

Award date: December 16, 2021

Delivery date: March 10, 2023

Registration number: POR-005-19

For more information on this report, please email [por-rop@pco-bcp.ca](mailto:por-rop@pco-bcp.ca)

Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.

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 nine online focus groups which were conducted between February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, in multiple locations across the country including Ontario, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Quebec, Atlantic Canada, and Yukon. Details concerning the locations, recruitment, and composition of the groups are provided in the section below.

The research for this cycle of focus groups centred largely on recent initiatives and announcements from Government of Canada, the federal government's performance on addressing numerous

important priorities, and healthcare. The research also explored a series of topics focused on specific regions and populations. This included the upcoming 2023 Budget with low-income and middle-income participants from the Prairies and frequent healthcare users in Atlantic Canada, electric vehicles (EV) with prospective EV buyers in Southwestern Ontario, and outlook of residents of Calgary and Edmonton related to Alberta's energy sector. Participants residing in Atlantic Canada also shared their perspectives related to the federal government's carbon pricing system. Furthermore, the Government of Canada's responsibilities in relation to housing were examined by homeowners in Quebec. Members of the South Asian diaspora living in Vancouver and Interior British Columbia (B.C.) discussed the federal government's responsibilities relating to the opioid crisis and the Government of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy. Participants working in the technology sector and living in the Greater Montreal Area (GMA) engaged in a discussion concerning the current state of the technology sector as well as their views on community safety. Finally, participants in Yukon discussed a number of issues respective to their region.

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 those buying or considering buying electric vehicles, frequent healthcare users, homeowners, low-income and middle-income individuals, and those working in the tech sector.

### Detailed Approach

- Nine focus groups across various regions in Canada.
- One group was conducted with the general population in Yukon.
- The other eight groups were conducted with key subgroups including:
  - Prospective electric vehicle buyers;
  - Frequent healthcare users (in Ontario and Atlantic Canada);
  - Homeowners (in Edmonton and Calgary, and Quebec);
  - Low income and middle income Canadians;
  - South Asian diaspora; and
  - Canadians working in the technology sector.
- Two 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, 63 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 |
|---|-------|----------|-------------|---------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Southwestern Ontario                        | 1     | English  | February 7  | 6:00-8:00 pm  | Prospective EV Buyers        | 8                      |
| Ontario                                     | 2     | English  | February 8  | 6:00-8:00 pm  | Frequent Healthcare Users    | 7                      |
| Edmonton and Calgary                        | 3     | English  | February 9  | 8:00-10:00 pm | Homeowners                   | 8                      |
| Rural Prairies (SK/MB)                      | 4     | English  | February 14 | 8:00-10:00 pm | Low Income and Middle Income | 6                      |
| Interior British Columbia & Metro Vancouver | 5     | English  | February 15 | 9:00-11:00 pm | South Asian Diaspora         | 7                      |
| Quebec                                      | 6     | French   | February 16 | 6:00-8:00 pm  | Homeowners                   | 8                      |
| Atlantic Canada                             | 7     | English  | February 21 | 5:00-7:00 pm  | Frequent Healthcare Users    | 6                      |
| Greater Montreal Area, Quebec               | 8     | French   | February 22 | 6:00-8:00 pm  | Working in Technology Sector | 5                      |
| Yukon                                       | 9     | English  | February 23 | 8:00-10:00 pm | General Population           | 8                      |
| <b>Total number of participants</b>         |       |          |             |               |                              | <b>63</b>              |

## 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. Several mentioned having heard about recent negotiations between the federal and provincial/territorial governments related to healthcare funding as well as the subsequent announcement by the Government of Canada that it had reached an agreement with the provinces and territories to increase healthcare funding by \$196.1 billion over ten years, including \$46.2 billion in new funding. Other actions and initiatives mentioned by participants included the detection and eventual downing of multiple suspected high-altitude surveillance objects which had entered into Canadian airspace, the withdrawal by the Government of Canada of proposed amendments to Bill C-21: *An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms)*, the recent decision by the Bank of Canada on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, to raise interest rates by an additional 0.25%, and the introduction of numerous affordability measures by the federal government to assist Canadians currently struggling with the cost of living.

Participants also recalled actions and initiatives related to the Government of Canada on the international stage. These included ongoing financial and military support for Ukraine, the provision of humanitarian assistance to Turkey and Syria following a series of massive earthquakes in the region, and the deployment of two Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) Kingston-class Vessels to Haiti in response to its request for assistance to address escalating gang violence in recent months.

The group based in the Greater Montreal Area (GMA) also briefly discussed the Roxham Road irregular border crossing. While few could recall any specific details, a number expressed concerns related to the financial costs of taking in and supporting these individuals as well as whether doing so would unfairly delay the applications of those seeking to immigrate to Canada via official channels.

### Government of Canada Priorities and Performance (All Locations)

All groups engaged in conversations related to numerous issues currently facing Canadians as well as their perspectives regarding the Government of Canada's performance in managing these priorities. Asked to identify areas in which they felt that the federal government had performed well as of late, participants provided a range of responses. These included actions to assist Canadians with the rising cost of living, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, increased investments into healthcare, support for marginalized and vulnerable communities, climate change and the environment, immigration, the introduction of stricter firearm regulations, and ongoing support for Ukraine.

Participants were also asked to identify areas in which they felt that the Government of Canada had room for improvement. Issues mentioned by participants included healthcare (especially long wait times at emergency rooms and walk-in clinics and perceived health worker shortages throughout

Canada), inflation and the rising cost of living, housing affordability, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, rising crime rates, and high energy costs at present.

Identifying the areas which they felt required further prioritization from the federal government going forward, many reiterated the need for an increased focus on healthcare, the rising cost of living, housing affordability, and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Additionally, a number believed that more could be done to make post-secondary tuition more affordable for Canadians. It was also said that more needed to be done to bolster Canada's national security capacity, especially in light of the recent discovery of numerous high-altitude surveillance objects which had made incursions into Canadian airspace in January and February 2023.

### **Cost of Living (Rural Centres Prairies Low to Middle Income)**

Participants residing in rural centres in the Prairies engaged in an additional discussion related to the cost of living at present. All participants had previously identified as low to middle income earners. Discussing whether they had changed their purchasing behaviours in recent months, many indicated that they were now paying far more attention to sales and had made efforts to buy non-brand name items whenever possible. A number also commented that they had scaled back on non-essential activities such as travel, entertainment, and recreational activities.

Discussing what they felt was contributing to inflation and the rising cost of living, many believed that it had at least in part been caused by economic disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Several were also of the impression that the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, including its impacts on global energy supplies, had led to rising transportation costs for imported goods, which had ultimately been passed on to the consumer. A small number also believed that large corporations such as major grocers and energy producers bore some responsibility for the rising cost of living. It was thought that in many instances these companies had raised prices more than necessary in response to rising inflation. Asked whether they felt the Government of Canada was currently headed in the right or wrong direction when it came to addressing the cost of living, all believed it to be on the wrong track.

Engaging in an exercise, participants were presented with several recent initiatives and announcements from the Government of Canada designed to support those currently struggling with the rising cost of living and asked to evaluate which they felt would be most impactful. Among these initiatives the measure to index benefits to the rate of inflation was met with the highest level of support among participants. It was felt that this would be especially helpful for those on fixed incomes who depended on these supports as their primary source of income and would otherwise see their purchasing power greatly diminished. Actions to make childcare more affordable and the one-time \$500 top up to the Canada Housing Benefit (CHB) were also met with a high level of support among participants.

Asked what more the federal government could do to help address inflation, a few suggested encouraging the Bank of Canada to pause its current trend of interest rate hikes, believing this was having a detrimental impact on the ability of Canadians to continue to afford their mortgage and other debt payments. A small number believed that greater efforts should also be taken to increase the domestic production of goods and natural resources within Canada. It was felt that this would go a long way towards making the country more self-sufficient in the long term.

### **Healthcare (Ontario Frequent Healthcare Users, Quebec Homeowners, Atlantic Canada Frequent Healthcare Users, Yukon)**

Participants in four groups engaged in discussions related to healthcare and actions that could be taken to improve healthcare provision in Canada. Asked to describe the current healthcare system in Canada, almost all were of the impression that this sector was facing significant challenges. While a large number spoke positively of the quality of Canadian healthcare workers and technology, accessibility was viewed as a major issue at present. Several reported having personally encountered or heard accounts of long wait times at emergency rooms and walk-in clinics and were of the impression that many regions of the country were currently facing a pervasive shortage of healthcare workers such as doctors and nurses.

Almost all felt that major changes needed to be made to healthcare provision in Canada, and a large number believed that the federal government was currently headed in the wrong direction on this front. Several were of the view that immediate actions needed to be taken to alleviate perceived health worker shortages, including expediting the foreign credential recognition process to make it easier for non-Canadian health professionals to practice in Canada. Many also identified the need to build additional healthcare facilities and infrastructure to accommodate Canada's expanding population as well as the expected larger proportion of seniors (due to the country's aging population) that would likely require healthcare services over the next decade. Asked who they viewed as being responsible for making these changes, while many were of the impression that healthcare was primarily under the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories, most believed that improving the system was a joint responsibility between the federal and provincial/territorial governments.

Asked whether they were aware of any recent announcements or initiatives from the federal government related to healthcare, several mentioned having heard about recent negotiations between federal and provincial/territorial officials related to increased healthcare funding via Canada Health Transfer (CHT) payments. Provided further information about these negotiations and the eventual agreement reached between the federal and provincial/territorial governments, participants were largely positive in their reactions. Many felt that this represented a step in the right direction and were pleased that the Government of Canada had requested that the provinces and territories develop plans stipulating how this additional funding would be spent. Several also praised the emphasis on making it easier for health professionals educated outside of Canada to have their credentials recognized, believing this would help considerably towards addressing worker shortages.

Questioned whether they would still support these measures even in the event that they added to the national deficit, most felt that they would. A large number believed that healthcare needed to be a top priority for the Government of Canada and expressed that they would rather see federal expenses scaled back in other areas before reducing healthcare funding.

### **Budget 2023 (Rural Centres Prairies Low to Middle Income, Atlantic Canada Frequent Healthcare Users)**

Participants in two groups took part in a brief discussion related to the upcoming 2023 federal budget. Asked to share their expectations regarding what the upcoming budget would focus on, participants mentioned a number of areas. These included addressing inflation and the rising cost of living, providing additional resources towards key sectors such as healthcare and education, actions to encourage greater sustainability and mitigate the potential impacts of climate change, and further efforts towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Asked what they personally felt the Government of Canada should focus on, many expressed the need for further investments into healthcare with a particular focus on mental health. It was widely felt that mental health had become an increasing concern for Canadians in recent years and that there were too few resources available at present to accommodate the growing number of individuals suffering from these challenges. It was also thought that there needed to be a greater focus on assisting those suffering from addiction. Suggested actions included increasing funding for the hiring and training of addictions treatment professionals as well as the construction of more detox facilities across the country. Several also reiterated the need for significant investments towards improving the quality of life of Indigenous peoples, including ensuring all Indigenous communities had access to clean drinking water, affordable food and housing, and the same level of federal services as other Canadians.

### **Electric Vehicles (Southwestern Ontario Prospective EV Buyers)**

Participants in the group based in Southwestern Ontario engaged in a discussion related to electric vehicles (EVs) and EV manufacturing in Canada. All had previously indicated that they were interested in potentially purchasing an EV in the future. Asked to share their main reasons for wishing to purchase an EV, many cited what they viewed as the greater affordability of these vehicles compared to other automobiles. The opinion was shared that as gasoline becomes increasingly expensive, electricity would likely be a more cost-effective energy option. Several also identified the environmental benefits of EVs as an aspect that would likely influence their decision.

Discussing the largest barriers towards a potential EV purchase, many cited the high upfront cost of these vehicles. Additionally, several felt that there was not enough infrastructure currently in place to support EVs (such as charging stations), especially outside of urban centres. Other concerns mentioned included a perceived lack of range in colder weather, questions regarding the potential resale value of EVs, and the ability of the electrical grid to handle a widespread adoption of EVs.

Many felt that it was important for EVs and their components to be manufactured within Canada and thought that this would ensure that they would be safe, reliable, and of a high quality. Asked if they were aware of recent investments by the Government of Canada towards EV manufacturing in Southwestern Ontario, a large number reported that they were. All felt that the Government of Canada should continue to invest in this sector going forward. It was thought that continued investments into domestic EV manufacturing would increase the affordability of EVs as well as help Canadians meet emissions reduction targets. Several also believed that there would be an economic



benefit to these investments through the creation of numerous high-paying jobs, as well as the potential for Canada to become a leader in this sector and establish itself as a major exporter of EVs and their components.

Focusing on the Government of Canada's pledge to mandate that all personal vehicles sold in Canada be zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs) by 2035, most felt this timeline to be realistic. Several, however, felt that in order to accomplish this goal significant investments would need to be made towards making these vehicles more affordable and ensuring that the electrical grid would have the capacity to support a large-scale transition to ZEVs.

### **Energy Outlook (Calgary and Edmonton Homeowners)**

Participants residing in Calgary and Edmonton engaged in a brief discussion regarding clean energy and the oil and gas sector in Alberta. Asked to share their perspectives regarding the role of this sector in the province's economy, all felt it to be of critical importance, with a large number believing oil and gas to be the most important industry in Alberta. Discussing the current state of the oil and gas sector, many felt that it was quite strong at present, primarily due to high oil prices. Several, however, thought that it would be necessary for the province to diversify beyond this sector in order to create new economic opportunities in the future. A number were of the opinion that due to the finite lifespan of oil and gas resources, more should be done to increase the production of renewable energy sources in the province.

Asked if they had heard the term 'sustainable jobs', only a few had. It was generally thought that these jobs were typically those which were economically resilient and provided workers with long-term stability in their careers. Discussing the potential for sustainable job creation in the clean energy sector, many felt that this would be immensely beneficial for the Albertan economy and its workers. Several expressed the view that many of those currently employed in the oil and gas sector were facing uncertain futures and would benefit from increased opportunities to transition to sustainable jobs in the clean energy sector. Discussing the factors that were driving the development of clean energy in the province, participants identified recent investments from the Government of Canada as well as an increased desire amongst the public to take action in response to climate change.

### **Carbon Pricing (Atlantic Canada Frequent Healthcare Users)**

One group, comprised of those living in Atlantic Canada, engaged in a discussion related to carbon pricing. A roughly similar number of participants were familiar with this term as those who were not. A number spoke negatively of this program, believing that it had placed an increased financial burden on Canadians at a time when it was already increasingly difficult to make ends meet financially.

No participants were familiar with the term 'climate action incentive'. Asked what came to mind when they heard this phrase, most assumed it referred to a financial incentive for Canadian businesses and households to engage in more environmentally friendly behaviours such as transitioning to renewable energy sources or purchasing a zero-emission vehicle (ZEV). Provided further information related to

this initiative, many reacted with confusion. Several expressed feeling unsure as to what the implications of the carbon pricing system would be on their respective provinces as well as for them personally. A number were concerned that the implementation of a carbon pricing system for businesses and industrial activities would lead to companies passing these additional costs onto consumers. While some expected that receiving Climate Action Incentive payments could be helpful for them financially, several were still confused as to what the point of the carbon pricing program was if the majority of the funds collected were ultimately returned to Canadian households and businesses. Discussing the potential impacts of this initiative, most felt that it would have a minor impact on addressing climate change, while a small number expected that it would likely have no impact at all.

### **Housing (Quebec Homeowners)**

One group, comprised of homeowners residing in Quebec, took part in a brief conversation related to homeownership and the Canadian housing market. Asked what they viewed as the greatest challenges related to purchasing a home at present, participants identified a range of issues. These included the significant amounts required for a sufficient down payment, the difficulty in saving towards a home purchase while also dealing with rising inflation, and challenges faced by self-employed workers and independent contractors in being approved for a mortgage.

Most felt that home ownership had become less affordable in recent years, with several citing issues such as the rising costs of home maintenance and renovations, high energy prices, and increasing interest rates. While a large number were currently under fixed-rate mortgages, all indicated that their home insurance premiums and utility costs had risen over the past year. Several commented that this had led to them devoting a larger portion of their monthly budgets to housing expenses, and a scaling back on recreational and non-essential spending as a result.

### **Home Energy (Calgary and Edmonton Homeowners, Quebec Homeowners)**

Participants in two groups comprised of homeowners took part in a discussion related to home energy and ways to achieve greater energy efficiency. In each group, a roughly equal number of participants indicated having recently renovated their homes or were planning to do so in the future as those who had no plans to renovate at this time. Describing their reasons for undertaking these renovations, a large number indicated that they were seeking to make their homes more energy efficient, with some mentioning having added features such as solar panels, triple-paned windows, and improved insulation.

Asked whether they were planning on making changes such as updating their home heating or cooling system or installing a smart thermostat, a small number indicated that they were. For most this was seen as a way to make their homes more energy efficient and to potentially save on energy costs. A few reported having already installed a smart thermostat and were of the impression that this had saved them a considerable amount on their energy bills in the years since they had purchased it. Questioned whether they would take reasons such as reducing their monthly expenses, improving their property value, and/or environmental considerations (such as reducing carbon emissions from

their home) into account when considering switching to a smart thermostat, almost all indicated that they would.

In both groups, slightly fewer participants were aware of the Government of Canada's EnerGuide home energy level compared to those who were not. A few mentioned already having these labels on appliances in their homes such as their water heater, freezer, and washer and dryer. Discussing the types of information that they expected would be included on this label, participants provided a range of responses. These included the breakdown of their appliance's energy use compared to other models, the separation of energy use into distinct categories, and the colourful scale indicating the energy efficiency of that appliance.

It was further clarified for participants that the home EnerGuide label also provides information regarding customized retrofit recommendations to decrease their home's energy use. Shown an example of this Energy Efficiency Roadmap several spoke positively of the straightforwardness and easy-to-understand nature of this guide and believed it would be helpful in influencing their decisions as to which home energy retrofit projects to undertake. While many were interested in retrofitting their homes at some point, a number indicated that affordability would likely play a significant role in determining whether they would be able to embark upon these projects. With this in mind, it was hoped that the Government of Canada would continue to provide supports, such as the Canada Greener Homes Grant, to assist Canadians in making their homes more energy efficient.

### **Opioids (Metro Vancouver and Interior British Columbia (B.C.) South Asian Diaspora)**

Participants residing in Metro Vancouver and Interior British Columbia (B.C.), engaged in a conversation related to opioids and the prevalence of opioid addiction in their communities. All believed this to be a significant issue at present and many were of the view that rising rates of addiction had contributed to increased crime in their communities. Asked what the federal government had done to address opioid addiction in B.C., several were of the impression that it had funded numerous supervised consumption sites across the province with the aim of limiting overdose deaths.

Only a small number were aware of the Government of Canada's recent decision to grant an exemption to the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* to remove criminal penalties for the possession of up to 2.5 grams of certain illegal drugs in B.C. Participants were mostly negative in their reactions to this decision and believed that the federal government should instead be focused on discouraging opioid use, including implementing greater penalties for those using and distributing these substances. It was believed by many that this initiative would ultimately result in the increased usage of these substances, especially among younger individuals. Several also expressed concerns about the 2.5-gram limit, believing that this was far too high of an amount and that for substances such as fentanyl there was no safe amount for an individual to consume.

Sharing their perspectives regarding the proposal to divert individuals arrested for the possession of illicit drugs to drug treatment centres rather than sending them to prison, many felt positively about this initiative. A number were of the opinion that addiction should be regarded more as an illness

rather than a criminal behaviour and believed that it was more appropriate to provide treatment for these individuals rather than punishing them.

### **Indo-Pacific Strategy (Metro Vancouver and Interior B.C. South Asian Diaspora)**

Participants in one group, comprised of members of the South Asian diaspora in Canada, engaged in a conversation related to the Government of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy. Asked whether they felt that the federal government was currently on the right track when it came to managing its international relations with Asian countries, most believed that it was. It was largely thought that the Government of Canada had been successful in fostering closer ties with several Asian countries in recent years and that most in the region held a positive view towards Canadians.

Provided with information related to the objectives of the federal government's Indo-Pacific Strategy, all participants reacted positively. Several expected that this strategy would be immensely beneficial for the Government of Canada and the Canadian economy. Almost all felt that pursuing these objectives should be an important priority for the federal government, though most expected that building stronger relationships in this region would be a gradual process and would take several years to achieve. Given its closer proximity to the region relative to other provinces and territories, many expected that B.C. would especially benefit from this strategy and felt that this expanded trade activity would have a positive impact on the province's economy.

### **Technology Sector (Greater Montreal Area (GMA) Technology Sector Workers)**

Participants in this group, composed of individuals working in the technology sector, shared their perspectives related to the sector and its evolution in recent years. Almost all had a positive opinion of the Government of Canada's performance in supporting the technology sector and several were of the impression that there had been a considerable level of federal investment into Canadian technology companies as of late. Additionally, a number felt that the Government of Canada had been successful in growing the sector by encouraging skilled technology workers from other jurisdictions to immigrate to Canada as well as providing grants to Canadian companies to hire these new arrivals.

Discussing how the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted their sector, almost all indicated that they were now working from home. It was widely expected that this trend would continue long after the pandemic had ended. Asked whether rising inflation had impacted their industry, while some felt that technology components (such as computers and other equipment) had increased in price and that customers were being more cautious with their spending, few believed that inflation had made a significant impact on their careers.

Describing the greatest challenges facing workers in their industry, a number cited the growing presence of artificial intelligence (AI) programs such as ChatGPT. A few expressed concerns that as these types of services became more prevalent, potential clients may begin opting to use AI rather than hire human workers. Discussing actions the Government of Canada could take to better support technology workers and mitigate the impacts of potential downsizing, participants provided a range of

ideas. These included a greater focus by the federal government towards hiring more technology professionals to work in the public sector, investments and grants for retraining programs allowing workers to keep their knowledge and credentials up to date, and increasing the amounts provided through programs such as Employment Insurance (EI) for those workers who are laid off.

No participants were familiar with the Canada Innovation Corporation (CIC). Provided further information regarding this new Crown corporation most reacted positively and anticipated that this would likely increase the number of new workers hired in their sector as well as foster greater innovation across Canada. Participants were especially interested in aspects of the CIC such as its focus on consulting services, the provision of grants and contributions ranging from \$50,000 to \$5 million, and its focus on fostering innovation across all sectors and regions.

### **Community Safety (GMA Technology Sector Workers)**

Participants in one group engaged in a brief discussion related to community safety and the level of crime in their communities at present. All resided in the GMA. Asked whether they felt safe in their communities, while a few believed that improvements could be made, all indicated that they generally did not have concerns related to their personal safety. This said, a number indicated that they had become more concerned in recent years regarding gun violence, believing crimes involving firearms had been on the rise in the GMA. While several were of the impression that crime had risen in their community over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, none had experienced this personally. Asked what the Government of Canada could do to address crime in their community, it was thought that more could be done to detect and take action against gangs and organized crime, believing these to be a major driver of criminal activity both in the GMA and throughout Canada.

### **Local Issues (Yukon)**

One group, comprised of individuals residing in Yukon, engaged in a discussion related to the region and their respective communities. Asked to identify the greatest challenges in need of increased focus from the federal government, participants identified a range of issues. These included healthcare, mental health and addiction, and the rising cost of living.

Discussing the most important sectors and industries in their respective communities, many believed tourism to be the most important economic driver in the region. In addition to tourism, several felt that more action could be taken by the Government of Canada to support the development of agriculture in the region. It was believed that this would go a long way towards lowering food prices and increasing the ability of Northern communities to become more self sufficient. Asked whether food security was an issue in their communities all believed it to be a significant problem. Many were of the impression that due to the increased costs of transporting food to the region those in the North paid far higher prices for groceries relative to other parts of Canada.

Asked if they were aware of any recent actions by the Government of Canada related towards assisting those living in the region, no initiatives could be recalled. Provided information related to a number of

initiatives and investments from the federal government into the region, participants were largely positive in their reactions. It was felt, however, that greater efforts needed to be taken by the Government of Canada going forward to increase its communication with those in the region as for many this was the first time they had heard about any of these projects.

---

**MORE INFORMATION**

The Strategic Counsel  
Contract number: 35035-182346/001/CY  
Contract award date: December 16, 2021  
Contract value: \$2,428,991.50

---