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Final Report

Prepared for the Privy Council Office

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Canada 

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This public opinion research report presents the results of a series of focus groups conducted by The Strategic Counsel on behalf of the Privy Council Office. The first cycle of the second year of this study included a total of twelve focus groups with Canadian adults (18 years of age and older) conducted between May 7th, 2024, and May 30th, 2024.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Rapport final - Collecte continue de données qualitatives sur les opinions des Canadiens – mai 2024.

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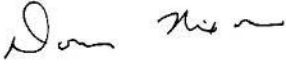
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Political Neutrality Certification

I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of The Strategic Counsel that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Policy on Communications and Federal Identity and the Directive on the Management of Communications – Appendix C – Mandatory Procedures for Public Opinion Research.

Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed:  _____

Date: June 20, 2024

Donna Nixon, Partner
The Strategic Counsel

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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 twelve online focus groups which were conducted between May 7th, 2024, and May 30th, 2024, in multiple locations across the country. Details concerning the locations, recruitment, and composition of the groups are provided in the section below.

The research for this cycle focused largely on climate change, carbon pricing, and concept testing for an informative video on carbon pricing created by the Government of Canada. Some groups also engaged in discussions regarding Budget 2024 and various initiatives that had been announced related to wildfires, capital gains, and housing.

Other topics for this cycle included what participants had seen, read, or heard about the Government of Canada recently as well as their impressions regarding the federal government's performance across a wide range of areas including housing, health care, the cost of living, and challenges facing their local communities. Participants also engaged in discussions related to jobs, electric vehicles (EVs), community safety, auto theft, opioids, and immigration. One group, comprised of individuals identifying as 2SLGBTQI+ residing in Montreal, discussed topics related to the 2SLGBTQI+ community, while participants in the Laurentides region of Quebec shared their thoughts regarding the protection and promotion of the French language in Canada.

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 millennials, members of Generation Z, those who are climate supportive or ambivalent, and members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community.

Detailed Approach

- Twelve groups were conducted across various regions in Canada.
- Six groups were conducted among the general population residing in Saskatchewan, the Montérégie region of Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Lower Mainland British Columbia (B.C.), the Laurentides region of Quebec, and Hamilton.
- The other six groups were conducted among key subgroups including:
 - Millennials residing in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.);
 - Members of Generation Z in Calgary;
 - Those who are climate supportive or ambivalent (three groups, respectively based in mid-size and major centres in Manitoba, major centres in Alberta, and Central Ontario); and
 - Members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community residing in Montreal
- The three groups based 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, 86 participants attended, in total. Details on attendance numbers by group can be found below.
- Each participant received an honorarium of \$125.

Group Locations and Composition

| LOCATION | GROUP | LANGUAGE | DATE | TIME (EDT) | GROUP COMPOSITION | NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS |
|-------------------------------------|-------|----------|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Saskatchewan | 1 | EN | Tues, May 7 th | 8:00-10:00 PM | General Population | 5 |
| New Brunswick, Nova Scotia & PEI | 2 | EN | Wed, May 8 th | 5:00-7:00 PM | Millennials, Ages 28-43 | 8 |
| Calgary | 3 | EN | Thurs, May 9 th | 8:00-10:00 PM | Generation Z, Ages 18-27 | 7 |
| Mid-Size & Major Centres Manitoba | 4 | EN | Tues, May 14 th | 7:00-9:00 PM | Climate Supportive & Ambivalent | 7 |
| Montréal Region Quebec | 5 | FR | Wed, May 15 th | 6:00-8:00 PM | General Population | 6 |
| Major Centres Alberta | 6 | EN | Thurs, May 16 th | 8:00-10:00 PM | Climate Supportive & Ambivalent | 7 |
| Central Ontario | 7 | EN | Tues, May 21 st | 6:00-8:00 PM | Climate Supportive & Ambivalent | 8 |
| Montreal | 7 | FR | Wed, May 22 nd | 6:00-8:00 PM | 2SLGBTQI+ | 7 |
| Newfoundland & Labrador | 8 | EN | Thurs, May 23 rd | 4:30-6:30 PM | General Population | 7 |
| Lower Mainland BC | 10 | EN | Tues, May 28 th | 9:00-11:00 PM | General Population | 8 |
| Laurentides Quebec | 11 | FR | Wed, May 29 th | 6:00-8:00 PM | General Population | 8 |
| Hamilton | 12 | EN | Thurs, May 30 th | 6:00-8:00 PM | General Population | 8 |
| Total number of participants | | | | | | 86 |

Key Findings

Government of Canada in the News (Montréal Region Quebec, Montreal Members of the 2SLGBTQI+ Community, Lower Mainland British Columbia, Laurentides Region Quebec, Hamilton)

Participants in four groups were asked to share what they had seen, read, or heard about the Government of Canada in recent days. A range of actions and initiatives were recalled, including an announcement by the federal government that it would be taking actions to increase the supply of affordable housing in Canadian communities, a proposal to increase the capital gains inclusion rate (also referred to as the capital gains tax) paid by the wealthiest Canadians, and actions to stabilize the cost of groceries, including taking steps to increase competition within the grocery sector. Participants also recalled an announcement by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) that it would be setting a two-year intake cap on international student study permit applications, and an

announcement by the Government of Canada that it would be increasing the number of temporary resident visa applications available to Palestinians with family members in Canada from 1,000 to 5,000.

Government of Canada Priorities and Performance (Montérégie Region Quebec, Montreal Members of the 2SLGBTQI+ Community, Laurentides Region Quebec, Hamilton)

Four groups engaged in conversations related to the issues currently facing Canadians as well as their perspectives regarding the federal government's management of these priorities. Participants were asked to identify areas in which they felt the Government of Canada was performing well as well as areas where they felt there was room for improvement.

On a number of issues participants expressed a range of positive and negative views. These included health care, protecting and promoting vulnerable populations, and actions that had been taken to protect the environment and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Participants also mentioned areas in which they felt that the Government of Canada had been performing well, including providing a wide range of supports and benefits for Canadians as well as its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, participants identified a range of areas in which they believed the Government of Canada had room for improvement. These included the perceived high cost of groceries at present, a lack of affordable housing in many parts of the country, education and the need to hire more primary and secondary school teachers (proposed to be financed at least in part via federal funding), and the rising national debt.

Asked to identify what they viewed as the most important priorities for the federal government to be focusing on, many reiterated the need for a greater emphasis on making life more affordable for Canadians, including actions to stabilize the costs of essentials such as housing and groceries. A large number also mentioned the need for increased investments towards health care, including greater resources for issues related to mental health. Other priority areas mentioned by participants included protecting the environment and mitigating the impacts of climate change, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and the need to better support and protect the rights of vulnerable populations, such as racialized Canadians, persons living with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQI+ individuals.

Housing (Laurentides Region Quebec, Hamilton)

Participants in two groups, based in the Laurentides Region of Quebec and Hamilton respectively, were asked a few additional questions about recent actions from the federal government related to housing. Asked what they viewed as the biggest challenges related to housing that the federal government needed to be focusing on, many identified the affordability of housing as a major issue. It was widely felt that housing, both to purchase and to rent, had become increasingly expensive for Canadians in recent years and that this had made it difficult for many lower- and middle-income families to secure safe and affordable housing in their communities. Several believed that there was not enough housing available to meet the current demand in their respective areas and that far more needed to be done at all levels of government to build more homes.

Discussing whether they were aware of any recent actions from the federal government related to housing, several mentioned the introduction of the first home savings account (FHSA). While most believed that this initiative was a step in the right direction, a number were of the opinion that unless actions were taken by the Government of Canada to significantly reduce the overall cost of housing, programs such as this would have little impact on improving home ownership prospects for aspiring first-time home buyers.

Health Care (Laurentides Region Quebec)

Participants in the Laurentides region of Quebec also engaged in a brief conversation related to health care, both in their communities as well as across Canada more broadly. Almost all viewed health care as a major issue that required greater prioritization from the Government of Canada. While most felt that the quality of health care in their region was relatively high, all believed that there were significant challenges at present related to the ability of those in their area to access health care services in a timely fashion. Many recalled having experienced long wait times and other challenges in accessing primary and emergency care, while others described difficulties they had faced related to finding a family doctor, scheduling appointments and/or procedures with specialists, and receiving follow up appointments with medical professionals they had previously consulted. Several viewed a perceived widespread shortage of health workers (such as doctors and nurses) as having been a key factor contributing to many of the health care related challenges currently facing their region.

All thought that federal government was on the wrong track when it came to improving health care for Canadians. Discussing potential actions that could be taken on this front going forward, many felt that more needed to be done by the Government of Canada to encourage individuals to pursue careers in health care as well as to expand the number of seats available in medical and nursing programs across the country. It was also thought that additional actions needed to be taken to incentivize family doctors and specialists to practice in smaller, more rural communities, with a number of the impression that those in less populated regions often had far less access to care compared to major urban centres.

Cost of Living (Montreal 2SLGBTQI+)

The group comprised of members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community residing in Montreal took part in an additional discussion related to the cost of living. Many viewed the perceived high cost of living at present as a fundamental issue, believing that a large number of individuals (and especially those from vulnerable populations) were currently struggling to afford basic necessities, such as food and housing. The view was expressed that the increased cost of living had disproportionately impacted lower- and middle-income households compared to the wealthiest Canadians, and that, if left unaddressed, this issue would likely lead to increased economic and social inequity in the years to come.

Asked whether they expected the cost of living to increase, decrease, or stay the same over the next year, a roughly equal number believed that it would increase compared to those who thought it would remain relatively stable. Among those who believed that the cost of living would likely worsen, a number expressed concerns related to climate change and expected that if this issue were to continue to escalate, life in Canada would likely become increasingly expensive in the years to come. A few also worried about the potential for perceived rising geopolitical tensions in some parts of the world to

disrupt global trade and supply chains, believing this could ultimately lead to higher prices for consumers.

Local Issues (Montérégie Region Quebec)

Participants residing in the Montérégie region of Quebec engaged in a brief conversation related to the challenges currently facing their local communities. Discussing the most important sectors and industries for their respective communities, several identified agriculture and food production as being key industries in their areas. A number viewed transportation (of food products and other goods) as a major industry in their region, while a few also described electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing as being increasingly economically important to their communities.

Asked which industries or sectors they felt required the most assistance in their region, a large number once again mentioned agriculture and transportation. Regarding the latter, it was felt that efforts needed to be taken by the federal government to build and repair vital transportation infrastructure such as highways and other roadways throughout the Montérégie region. Asked how the federal government could better support these industries (and the agriculture sector in particular), a number believed that more needed to be done to increase the amount of available farmland throughout Quebec (and Canada more broadly) as well as encourage more people to consider pursuing careers in the agriculture and food production sector.

Budget 2024 (Saskatchewan, Lower Mainland British Columbia)

Two groups, based in Saskatchewan and Lower Mainland British Columbia (B.C.) respectively, engaged in conversations related to Budget 2024, which was tabled by the federal government on April 16th, 2024. Those residing in Saskatchewan shared their overall impressions related to a range of measures announced as part of the budget, while participants in B.C. focused on initiatives specifically related to the Government of Canada's wildfire response and actions to increase taxes on capital gains above a certain threshold. Additionally, both groups discussed a range of housing initiatives that had been announced as part of the budget.

Overall Impressions (Saskatchewan)

Asked what came to mind when they thought about this year's budget, a large number expressed uncertainty, commenting that they did not know enough about the initiatives that had been announced to provide a proper evaluation. A few recalled hearing that the budget had placed a significant focus on improving the affordability of housing for Canadians, which many believed was an important area for the federal government to be focusing on.

Engaging in an exercise where they were provided with information related to a number of measures that had been announced as part of the budget and asked to identify which they felt would have the greatest impact, participants widely believed that stabilizing the cost of groceries would have a positive impact on the largest number of Canadians. Some also expressed support for the creation of a National School Food Program, believing that it was important for the federal government to be

focusing on ensuring that all children, and especially those from lower-income families, were able to access proper meals during their school day without having to worry about the cost. A number also selected the initiative to implement health care agreements with every province and territory to improve access to primary care and reduce wait times, believing that this would be beneficial to a large number of Canadians who were currently struggling to access health care services in their communities.

Focusing on the federal government's proposal to ask the wealthiest Canadians to pay their fair share in taxes, while most were supportive of the notion of increasing the taxes for the wealthiest Canadians, several were skeptical as to whether this measure would be effective. The view was expressed that, given the greater financial resources of wealthier Canadians and their ability to hire professionals such as accountants to assist them in reducing their taxable income, it was unlikely that the highest earners would pay their fair share in taxes, even with this measure in place. Discussing the potential uses for the additional tax revenues raised by the federal government through this initiative, a few thought that these funds should be directed towards initiatives focused on protecting the environment and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Wildfires (Lower Mainland British Columbia)

Participants residing in B.C.'s Lower Mainland engaged in an additional discussion related to the federal government's response to large-scale wildfires in their province in recent years as well as recently announced budget initiatives focusing on addressing this issue. Asked whether they were aware of any actions from the federal government related to preparing for and/or responding to wildfires, none indicated that they were.

Provided with information about recent measures announced as part of Budget 2024 related to wildfires, all reacted positively with several expressing that these initiatives represented a major step in assisting communities with preparing for and responding to wildfires. A number identified the initiatives to double the Volunteer Firefighter and Search and Rescue Volunteer Tax Credits as well as increase firefighting and emergency response partnerships with Indigenous peoples as being especially important. Discussing what more could be done by the federal government related to combatting wildfires, participants suggested increasing the use of fire prevention practices such as controlled burns as well as continuing to educate Canadians regarding how to best prepare for and respond to potential wildfires in their areas.

Capital Gains (Lower Mainland British Columbia)

The group based in Lower Mainland B.C. also took part in a brief conversation regarding initiatives from the budget related to capital gains. Asked whether they had heard anything about proposed changes to how capital gains are taxed, while a few reported that they had, none could recall any specific details.

Provided with information related to a proposal by the Government of Canada to increase the capital gains inclusion rate for capital gains over \$250,000, most responded positively, believing that this represented a fair approach that would likely benefit a large number of households. The view was

expressed that, given the perceived negative impact of real estate speculation on the supply of available housing in many parts of the country, increasing the capital gains tax on large transactions (such as the sale of a home) could help to discourage this type of practice. A few questioned whether the \$250,000 threshold was too low, with some expressing concern that this measure could also impact non-wealthy Canadians who may inherit property or who plan on selling investments in order to fund their retirements.

Housing Initiatives (Saskatchewan, Lower Mainland British Columbia)

Both groups discussed a wide range of housing initiatives that had been announced by the Government of Canada as part of Budget 2024. Participants were informed that, as part of its plan to address the housing crisis, the Government of Canada had announced a three-part housing strategy aimed at unlocking 3.87 million new homes by 2031.

Groups were next presented with information related to specific actions the Government of Canada was taking as part of this plan. The first set of initiatives, highlighting some of the actions the Government of Canada was proposing to help build more homes, received positive reactions from participants. Several expected that by working to increase the supply of affordable housing, both for purchase and to rent, the federal government would help to ensure more Canadians would be able to access housing while also being able to afford other important expenses in their lives. Focusing on the agreements reached through the Housing Accelerator Fund to encourage municipalities to cut red tape, a few questioned whether this would lead to reduced construction and safety standards, with lower quality homes being built as a result.

Participants were next shown a second set of initiatives, this time focused on actions aimed at making it easier for Canadians to rent or own their own homes. Reactions were again resoundingly positive to these initiatives, with all believing that these actions would be helpful to renters and prospective first-time home buyers. A large number identified the action to encourage lenders to consider on-time rent payments when calculating credit scores as being especially impactful, believing this could be an effective way for young people and/or newcomers to Canada to build credit while saving towards the purchase of a home. The initiative to allow for 30-year mortgages for first-time home buyers who purchase newly built homes was also seen as potentially being very effective, with a number believing that this extended lending period would make the prospect of a mortgage far more affordable for many lower- and middle-income families. Several also commented positively on the measures to extend the ban on non-Canadians purchasing residential property as well restricting the purchase and acquisition of existing single-family homes by very large, corporate investors.

The final set of measures shown to participants focused on actions the federal government was proposing to assist those struggling with the cost of housing at present. A number reacted positively to the \$1 billion investment towards the Affordable Housing Fund and expressed that, going forward, they would rather see more funding provided to non-profit, co-operative, and public housing providers rather than for-profit developers. The initiative to create a Rental Protection Fund was also well-received by participants, with several believing that this would be an effective way to protect renters and ensure that affordable rental options remained available in Canadian communities.

Asked an additional question as to whether any of the measures they had discussed would be helpful to younger Canadians and future generations in ensuring they had access to a wide variety of affordable housing options, several in the group based in Saskatchewan believed that they would. A number, however, reiterated that unless action was taken to reduce the overall cost of housing and bring home prices down, it was unlikely that most younger Canadians would be able to realistically afford to purchase a home in the foreseeable future.

Jobs (Montérégie Region Quebec, Hamilton)

Two groups engaged in discussions related to the Canadian economy and the employment market at present. At the outset of their conversation, participants residing in Hamilton were asked how they would describe the Government of Canada's management of the economy. A large number felt that the Canadian economy had not been well managed in recent years, citing perceived issues such as high interest rates, the rising cost of living, a growing national debt, and continued deficit spending by the federal government. Asked whether they felt the Government of Canada was on the right track when it came to its management of the economy, very few believed that it was. Discussing what they felt to be the most important economic issues facing Canadians at present, participants mentioned the high cost of essentials such as groceries and gasoline, a lack of affordable housing, what was viewed as an over-dependence of the Canadian economy on housing, and what were perceived as the high rates of taxation paid by many Canadian households.

Both groups were asked to share their views on the current state of the employment market in Canada. Regionally, a number residing in Hamilton expressed a mixed opinion, believing that while it was easy to find part time and/or low-paying employment, it was often quite difficult to obtain a rewarding, well-paying job. Several of those in the group based in the Montérégie region of Quebec described the job market as being somewhat cyclical in their area. It was believed that many businesses, and especially those in the tourism and hospitality sector, were struggling to find workers at present and were dealing with significant labour shortages.

Asked to speculate what the state of the Canadian job market would be like in the next 5-10 years, most expected that it would remain relatively the same. Many expected that job growth would occur in industries related to technology, robotics and automation, artificial intelligence (AI), green technology and renewable energy, health care, and skilled trades (especially those related to the construction of homes). Several expressed concern regarding the potential for AI or automation to replace some jobs currently being performed by human beings.

Discussing whether they felt the Government of Canada was on the right track when it came to ensuring workers received the training they required to stay competitive, participants expressed a range of views. Regionally, most in the Montérégie region felt that the federal government was on the wrong track on this front, believing that it did not provide employers with sufficient funding to offer their workers additional skills training. A large number residing in Hamilton felt differently, with most believing that the federal government was on the right track in this area. Several were of the impression that the federal government had made significant investments towards skills training and assisting Canadian workers with upgrading their skills.

Asked whether they felt that the federal government was headed in the right direction when it came to creating good jobs in Canada, several participants across both groups felt that it was. Describing additional actions that it could take to encourage the creation of well-paying jobs for Canadians, participants provided a number of suggestions. These included the provision of subsidies for those training to work in high-demand sectors, skills training programs for new immigrants to Canada, and incentives for companies to manufacture more products in Canada (as a way of increasing hiring in the manufacturing sector).

Climate Change (Maritimes Millennials, Calgary Generation Z, Mid-Size and Major Centres Manitoba Climate Supportive and Ambivalent, Major Centres Alberta Climate Supportive and Ambivalent, Central Ontario Climate Supportive and Ambivalent, Newfoundland and Labrador)

Six groups took part in conversations related to the impacts of climate change as well as actions that could be taken on an individual and/or societal level to help in addressing this issue. Asked whether they felt that climate change was among the top priorities for the Government of Canada to be focusing on, participants were mixed in their opinions. While most viewed climate change as an important issue and believed it was an area worth prioritizing, it was widely felt that other challenges such as the high cost of living, a lack of affordable housing, and issues related to health care (such as long wait times and health worker shortages) were more urgent priorities for the federal government.

Asked whether they felt that climate change had affected the cost of living, most believed that it had. It was thought that the destruction caused by extreme weather events in recent years had been very costly for many Canadian communities and that the response to these natural disasters had required considerable financial assistance from both the federal and provincial/territorial governments. Several cited other negative impacts of climate change related to the cost of living, including increasing challenges for farmers to grow food due to issues such as drought and extreme heat, difficulties transporting goods and products due to the damage and disruption caused by natural disasters such as wildfires, and the increased costs that would likely be passed on to consumers as a result of these challenges.

Discussing the worst impacts (both at present and in the future) of climate change, participants identified a wide range of issues. These included decreased food production and potential food insecurity in some parts of the country, damage to public and private property from floods and wildfires, worsened air quality from wildfire smoke, and the potential for loss of life due to extreme temperatures and dangerous weather events, as well as irreversible damage to the environment and ecosystems across Canada.

Prompted to identify what they viewed as the most significant barriers to taking action against climate change, many expressed that, given other challenges such as inflation and the high cost of living, it was difficult to focus on larger issues such as climate change when trying to make ends meet financially each month. Related to this, a number identified what they perceived as the high costs of switching to more climate-friendly technology, such as purchasing an electric vehicle (EV), and/or making their homes more energy efficient by installing solar panels or heat pumps, as another major

barrier. Asked how important they felt it was for individuals as well as Canada as a whole to take action to address climate change, many believed that it was of greater importance for this fight to be a collective effort led by the Government of Canada, as opposed to primarily relying on actions being taken at the individual level.

Questioned how important they felt it was for Canada to be a global leader when it comes to taking climate action, most believed this to be an important reputation to maintain. It was felt by several that if combatting climate change was a major priority for the Government of Canada, it was important for it to lead by example on this front. Discussing how much responsibility they personally felt to take action to fight climate change and protect the environment, many reiterated the view that climate change was a significant issue and expressed that they were doing what they could on an individual level to engage in climate friendly behaviours such as recycling, reducing their energy use, and avoiding using single-use items.

Carbon Pricing (Saskatchewan, Maritimes Millennials, Calgary Generation Z, Mid-Size and Major Centres Manitoba Climate Supportive and Ambivalent, Major Centres Alberta Climate Supportive and Ambivalent, Central Ontario Climate Supportive and Ambivalent, Newfoundland and Labrador)

Seven groups engaged in conversations related to carbon pricing and recent actions that the Government of Canada had taken on this front. Almost all recalled having heard about pollution pricing (referred to by some as a carbon tax) with many aware that the federal carbon pricing system was currently in effect in their respective provinces. A number reported hearing that the price on carbon had recently increased, believing this would likely raise the cost of living further for many households. Asked whether they were familiar with the Canada Carbon Rebate (CCR), most indicated they were, with a number of the understanding that this was an amount paid by the federal government to Canadian households as a way to offset the increased costs that were thought to result from the price on carbon.

Provided with information related to the federal carbon pricing system and the amounts provided back to Canadians through CCR payments, several questioned why households were receiving money back. It was felt that providing the CCR contravened the primary aim of encouraging Canadians to reduce their emitting behaviours. The view was expressed that if most households knew they would eventually be receiving the amounts they paid under the carbon pricing system back in the form of rebates, few would feel any financial incentive to reduce their emissions. Several were uncertain as to whether the amounts provided would be sufficient to offset the financial impacts of the price on carbon, believing this initiative had served to significantly increase the cost of living and essentials such as gasoline and home heating.

While few were directly opposed to the implementation of a price on carbon pollution by the Government of Canada, several questioned whether this approach would actually be effective in combatting climate change. Focusing on the CCR, many were of the opinion that, rather than providing rebates back to Canadians, the funds collected via the carbon pricing system should instead

be invested towards projects aimed at promoting sustainability and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

All groups (with the exception of those in Saskatchewan) were asked how they felt about the revenues from the CCR being returned to individuals, businesses, and Indigenous groups and whether they felt this would help Canadians to afford the things they need. On balance, few believed that the amounts provided through CCR payments would be enough to make much of a difference for most Canadians who were currently struggling with the high cost of living. Sharing their reactions to the information that 8 out of 10 households receive more back than they spend on the price on carbon pollution, many reiterated the desire for further information as to how these figures were being calculated, including what metrics were being used in determining how much households were spending on the price on carbon pollution.

Overall, very few felt that the federal government's approach to carbon pollution pricing would be effective in reducing emissions. Asked whether they felt this approach was fair, participants were mixed in their opinions. A number believed that it was relatively fair in that equal CCR payments were sent out to all households. The view was also expressed, however, that due to the high cost of living at present, it was somewhat unfair for those households already struggling to make ends meet financially to also now have to accommodate the additional costs of a price on carbon pollution. This was felt to especially be the case for those residing in communities where there were fewer alternative options available (such as public transportation and renewable energy sources) that would assist them in reducing their personal emissions.

Carbon Pricing Video Testing (Maritimes Millennials, Calgary Generation Z, Mid-Size and Major Centres Manitoba Climate Supportive and Ambivalent, Major Centres Alberta Climate Supportive and Ambivalent, Central Ontario Climate Supportive and Ambivalent, Newfoundland and Labrador)

Six groups shared their perspectives related to a video advertisement produced by the federal government to inform Canadians about the carbon pricing system. Participants were shown the video twice, in succession.

Participants were mixed in their reactions to this video. While some believed that it had been clear, well produced, and had helped to increase their understanding of the workings of the carbon pricing system, a roughly equal number felt otherwise. Among these participants it was felt that the video had not effectively explained the benefits of a carbon pricing system for Canadians. Some also viewed the notion that Canada Carbon Rebate (CCR) payments would help households to purchase the things they need as being somewhat unrealistic, believing that the amounts returned would do little to offset the perceived high cost of essentials such as groceries and gasoline. A few thought that the runtime of the video was somewhat long, believing that many viewers, and especially those who encountered this video while scrolling on their mobile devices, would be unlikely to watch it for its full duration.

Asked whether the video had introduced new information related to carbon pricing that they had not heard before, several reported having previously been unaware that the amounts received through CCR payments varied depending on the province or territory one resided in. A number also expressed that they were unaware of which provinces/territories were operating under the federal carbon pricing system and which (such as British Columbia (B.C.) and Quebec) had their own system in place.

Participants in Central Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador were asked an additional question regarding whether they felt the climate-friendly alternatives highlighted in the video (such as cycling, driving an electric vehicle (EV), and heating one's home more efficiently) were effective examples regarding the actions that could be taken to reduce emissions, or whether different examples should be provided. While many believed that Canadians could reduce their emissions by adopting more climate-friendly alternatives, it was felt that activities such as cycling were unrealistic for those living in rural communities where one often had to travel far longer distances as part of their daily activities. Participants also viewed actions such as purchasing an EV and/or retrofitting one's home to be more energy efficient as being potentially prohibitively expensive for a large number of Canadians. Discussing alternative examples that could be used, participants mentioned actions such as growing one's own food, planting trees, utilizing public transit (for those living in communities where this was a realistic option), and switching to light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs.

All groups were asked whether, given everything they had discussed thus far, they felt the implementation of a price on carbon was effective in creating a financial incentive for Canadians to pollute less. On balance, only a small number felt that this approach would be effective, with most believing that it was unlikely that households would be willing or able to reduce their emissions. Discussing alternative actions that could be taken, participants suggested providing more financial incentives and rebates to those who purchase an EV or engage in projects such as installing solar panels or heat pumps in their homes. A number also believed that action should be taken to better educate Canadians on ways they can reduce their emissions and making it easier and/or more affordable for them to engage in these behaviours.

Asked whether they felt they could change their daily habits to lower their emissions and reduce the amount they are paying for carbon pollution, most believed that all Canadians could likely find ways to do their part in achieving this goal. Suggested actions included adjusting the thermostat less in the summer and winter months, purchasing locally sourced food, and installing more energy efficient appliances. Discussing whether they felt individuals would consider alternatives to driving, such as carpooling, utilizing public transportation, and/or cycling, in order to pay less into the price on pollution, most felt that this would likely vary on a person-by-person basis. It was thought that while some (and especially lower-income individuals) would be compelled to utilize these more affordable options if they were available to them, for others driving their own vehicles was a necessary part of their day-to-day activities and a habit that they would be unwilling or unable to change.

Discussing why they felt some provinces use their own system while others operated under the federal pollution pricing system, participants provided a variety of potential reasons. A number felt that some provinces, such as B.C. and Quebec, which used their own system, might already have more energy



efficient infrastructure in place and/or had already been pursuing actions to reduce their emissions prior to the Government of Canada introducing its own carbon pricing system. Some also thought that this might be a primarily financial decision, with some provinces (depending on how much they are emitting) finding it more financially efficient to use their own system rather than the one operated by the federal government.

Electric Vehicle Battery Manufacturing (Montérégie Region Quebec)

Participants residing in the Montérégie region of Quebec engaged in a brief discussion regarding a recent announcement from the federal government related to the construction of a new electric vehicle (EV) battery manufacturing plant in their area. Asked whether they had recently seen, read, or heard about any news related to the Government of Canada and EVs, several recalled hearing that it had made increased investments towards the building and manufacturing of EVs and EV parts in Canada.

Provided with information related to a combined \$7 billion investment from the Government of Canada and Government of Quebec towards the construction of a new EV battery manufacturing facility in Saint-Basile-le-Grand and McMasterville, Quebec operated by Northvolt Batteries North America, almost all reacted positively. Several expressed that the expected creation of 3,000 jobs would be greatly beneficial to the economic wellbeing of those living in these communities, as well as have a positive impact on the provincial and Canadian economies overall. A number, however, expressed concerns regarding the potential environmental issues they believed were associated with the mining of the raw materials required for EV batteries and the perceived difficulties in safely recycling these batteries once they reach the end of their lifespans. A few also worried about whether there would be enough housing in their region to support thousands of additional workers and questioned whether the construction of this facility would lead to an increase in housing costs in the future.

Immigration (Montérégie Region Quebec, Laurentides Region Quebec)

Participants in two groups, based in the Montérégie and Laurentides regions of Quebec respectively, engaged in a discussion regarding immigration. Asked to describe the current state of the immigration system in Canada, several believed that clearer processes and controls needed to be put into place to manage the flow of immigration and ensure that the communities in which new immigrants settle had the resources to sufficiently accommodate an increase to the population.

Discussing what they perceived as the primary benefits of immigration, many highlighted the ability of Canada to attract skilled workers, particularly doctors and health care workers, from other countries to work in Canada. Several mentioned that while they were interested in increasing immigration levels for skilled workers, they hoped that the federal government would reduce immigration levels for unskilled and temporary foreign workers, believing that these individuals provided little in the way of positive impacts for the Canadian economy.

Participants were next asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement that “*Canada needs to welcome more new immigrants to fill labour shortages and grow the economy*”. While most agreed with this statement, a number felt that the federal government’s focus should be primarily on recruiting highly skilled immigrants to work in key sectors such as health care and agriculture, that were currently believed to be facing labour shortages. Among the smaller number who disagreed with the statement, it was felt that any economic benefits of immigration would be outweighed by the perceived exacerbation of existing challenges faced by Canadians in a number of other areas, such as the high cost of living, a lack of affordable housing, and the perceived strain it placed on existing infrastructure and services (such as health care, education and transportation). Related to this, some expressed concerns that if these resources were not available, it could lead to some new immigrants experiencing extreme poverty, placing them in a very precarious position as a result.

Asked what the Government of Canada should do to address concerns related to immigration, many reiterated the need for targeted immigration focusing on bringing in immigrants with skills that could immediately contribute to the Canadian economy. Related to this, a few felt that more could be done to streamline the foreign credential recognition process to ensure that new immigrants were able to work in their fields of expertise upon arriving in Canada. Questioned whether they felt the Government of Canada should increase, decrease, or keep the rate of immigration relatively the same, a slightly larger number felt it should be decreased as those who believed it should remain stable. Almost no participants felt the rate of immigration should be increased.

Issues Affecting the 2SLGBTQI+ Community (Montreal Members of the 2SLGBTQI+ Community)

Participants in the group based in Montreal, comprised of individuals who identified as 2SLGBTQI+, shared their perspectives related to issues currently facing the 2SLGBTQI+ community in Canada. Asked to identify what they viewed as the most pressing challenges currently facing 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, several believed that there needed to be greater education and acceptance of transgender people across Canada. A number also thought that greater investments needed to be made toward ensuring that 2SLGBTQI+ individuals had sufficient access to health care and mental health services as well as safe places they could go to feel protected from discrimination.

Describing the level of acceptance, support, and inclusion in Canadians society for the 2SLGBTQI+ community, most felt that Canadians were generally accepting of their community, especially compared to many other parts of the world. Discussing whether they felt the level of acceptance of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals had changed over time, several were of the impression that Canadians had generally become more accepting of these communities in recent decades. This being said, a few believed that with the advent of social media, it had become easier for anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate to be disseminated online, leading to 2SLGBTQI+ people likely encountering hateful opinions more frequently today relative to past eras.

Asked what additional actions they felt should be taken by the federal government to promote the acceptance, support, and inclusion of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals in Canada, many believed that it was important to promote more widespread education for Canadians regarding the issues facing their communities. Other suggestions included the provision of increased protections for 2SLGBTQI+ youth

and more active consultations with 2SLGBTQI+ people and organizations when designing initiatives for their communities.

While most believed that the state of 2SLGBTQI+ rights and freedoms had improved in recent decades, especially in terms of the legalization of same-sex marriage and allowing same-sex couples to adopt, it was felt by many that some challenges had persisted on this front. The view was expressed that 2SLGBTQI+ individuals continued to experience greater discrimination when accessing health care or interacting with law enforcement compared to other Canadians. Some also were of the impression that 2SLGBTQI+ individuals faced significant barriers in accessing various health services (including mental health supports), such as hormone therapy.

Discussing what actions the Government of Canada should take to better protect the rights and freedoms of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, several believed that there needed to be a greater emphasis on ensuring that the laws in place aimed at protecting their communities were being properly enforced in all parts of the country. Asked whether they felt the federal government was on the right track on protecting 2SLGBTQI+ rights, a larger number believed that it was compared to those who felt otherwise.

Describing actions that the Government of Canada could take to improve its relations with the 2SLGBTQI+ community, many felt that a greater focus should be placed on increasing the representation of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals across all facets of Canadian life. The view was also reiterated that there needed to be greater consultation by the federal government with 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and organizations, as well as ensuring that 2SLGBTQI+ voices were included on panels, boards, groups, and committees, particularly those pertaining to 2SLGBTQI+ affairs. Discussing whether they were optimistic about their future as an 2SLGBTQI+ person living in Canada, most reported that they were, believing that their communities were typically far safer and better supported in Canada compared to most other parts of the world.

Opioids (Lower Mainland British Columbia)

Participants residing in British Columbia (B.C.)'s Lower Mainland took part in a discussion related to opioid use and addiction in their communities. All viewed opioid addiction as a major concern at present and believed that this issue had worsened significantly in recent years. Questioned whether they were aware of any actions that the Government of Canada had taken to address opioid addiction in B.C., a number believed it had provided funding towards harm reduction initiatives such as supervised consumption sites.

Discussing what came to mind when they heard the terms 'safe supply' and 'supervised consumption site', most believed these phrases were connected to the overall goal of harm reduction and ensuring that drug users were using clean substances under the supervision of health care professionals. While most felt it was important for harm reduction initiatives such as these to be in place, it was widely thought that these needed to be accompanied by an increase in treatment resources for those suffering from addiction. It was felt that unless steps were taken to help these individuals permanently

stop using drugs, issues such as substance use and addiction would continue to proliferate in the years to come.

Provided with information regarding actions the Government of Canada was taking through the Substance Use and Addictions Program (SUAP) to address this issue, while several viewed these as a step in the right direction, a large number reiterated the view that a greater focus needed to be placed on eliminating illicit substance use altogether and providing drug users with the tools and treatment they need to overcome addiction.

Many expressed support for the decision by the federal government to approve the Government of B.C.'s request to recriminalize the use of illicit drugs in public spaces. Several were of the impression that following the previous decision to decriminalize these substances, public drug use had become far more prevalent in the Lower Mainland. A number shared concerns regarding the impact that seeing open drug use would have on children and young people and did not believe that it was appropriate for drug users to be able to consume these substances in public spaces.

Asked what additional actions they would like to see from the Government of Canada related to addressing illicit substance use and addiction, all reiterated a desire for the greater prioritization of treatment and education, and the need for increased funding towards treatment centres and mental health resources. A small number felt there also needed to be a greater focus placed on preventing the influx of drugs into Canada from other parts of the world. Among these participants, it was believed that there was a disproportionate focus on working to change the behaviours of drug users rather than targeting those involved in trafficking and distributing these substances throughout Canada.

French Language Protection and Promotion (Laurentides Region Quebec)

One group, comprised of participants residing in the Laurentides region of Quebec, shared their perspectives regarding a range of initiatives that had been announced by the federal government related to protecting and promoting the French language in Canada. Asked how important they felt it was to protect and promote the use of French in Canada, several viewed this as a major priority, and expressed concern that if action was not taken the usage of French could diminish greatly among future generations. Discussing the current state of the French language in Canada, while most believed that it was widely spoken throughout Quebec and that there were numerous French language educational resources available within the province, it was thought that French was used very little in the rest of the country.

Asked whether they had heard anything about the Government of Canada's new Action Plan for Official Languages, none indicated that they had. Provided with information related to the key objectives of this plan and the specific measures that would be taken to achieve them, almost all reacted positively. Participants expressed particular praise for those initiatives focused on increasing investments towards Francophone child care centres across Canada, providing grants to French artists, the creation of a French-language centre within Heritage Canada, and encouraging increased rates of immigration from French-speaking countries. Regarding the latter, it was felt that this approach would



be far more effective towards increasing the prevalence of the French language compared to efforts to teach French to new immigrants after they arrive.

Community Safety (Hamilton)

Participants residing in Hamilton engaged in a discussion related to the level of crime in their area and their perceptions regarding the overall safety of their community. Asked how safe they felt Hamilton was at present, a roughly equal number viewed it as being relatively safe as those who felt otherwise. Among those who viewed their community as being unsafe, participants mentioned issues related to a perceived increase in criminal activities such as burglaries and break-ins, violent assaults (including shootings), illicit drug usage, property damage, and growing issues related to homelessness.

Almost all believed that the level of crime in their community had been increasing as of late. Asked what factors they felt might be contributing to this perceived rise in crime, participants described a number of issues. These included a perceived growing number of individuals suffering from addiction and mental health disorders and the difficulties they faced in accessing treatment for these issues, a proliferation of organized crime in Canada, what was viewed as a lack of consequences for those who engage in criminal actions, and the increased desperation of some individuals due to the high cost of living at present.

Asked who they felt was most responsible for dealing with crime, a large number viewed municipal law enforcement and officials as having the biggest role, specifically in regards to the funding and oversight municipalities provide for local police forces. Discussing what role they felt the Government of Canada should play when it came to addressing crime, participants felt it should primarily be responsible for ensuring the security of Canadian borders, preventing the trafficking of drugs into Canada, providing funding towards addiction and mental health programs, and imposing penalties for those who commit criminal offences. Questioned whether they felt that addressing crime was an important priority for the federal government to be focusing on, almost all believed that it was.

Auto Theft (Hamilton)

Participants residing in Hamilton engaged in a brief discussion related to auto theft and actions that had recently been taken by the federal government aimed at addressing this issue. Asked whether they had seen, read, or heard about any initiatives from the Government of Canada on this front, several mentioned the announcement of the National Action Plan on Combatting Auto Theft (though not specifically by name). A number also were of the impression that the federal government had taken steps to encourage the automotive industry to improve security features in the automobiles they manufacture in order to make them more difficult to steal.

Provided with information related to a range of measures the federal government had announced to combat auto theft, all reacted positively, with several identifying the measure to strengthen the ability of Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) officials to detect and search containers holding stolen vehicles as being particularly effective. Other initiatives mentioned positively by participants included



the allocation of \$15 million to provincial, territorial, and municipal police forces to assist them in addressing auto theft, as well as the introduction of additional criminal penalties related to auto theft, including a new aggravating factor at sentencing for offenders who involve a minor in the theft of an automobile.

Asked whether they felt these actions would have a major, minor, or no impact on combatting auto theft, all expected that they would have a minor impact. It was widely felt, however, that if properly implemented, these actions would provide a strong foundation for more comprehensive measures in the future aimed at addressing this issue.

MORE INFORMATION

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