

# Energy Transition and Energy Affordability Perceptions Study

## Natural Resources Canada

Final Report

March 2024

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*Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.*

**Energy Transition and Energy Affordability Perceptions Study****Final Report**

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This report is based on 16 focus groups and one in-depth interview that Quorus completed between January 29 and February 10, 2024, with adults living in Canada. Of the 16 sessions, 12 groups were held online, and four groups and one in-depth interview were held in-facility. Focus groups spanned the country and lasted approximately 90 minutes. All participants were informed that the research was for the Government of Canada. A total of 104 individuals participated in this study.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Étude sur les perceptions à l'égard de la transition énergétique et de l'abordabilité de l'énergie

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Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Nadeau", is written over a light gray, textured rectangular background.

March 1, 2024

Rick Nadeau, President

Quorus Consulting Group Inc.

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## Executive summary

### Background and research objectives

In recent years, the development of a competitive, clean energy economy has become a priority for federal and provincial governments. Indeed, the clean energy transition and broader shift to a low-carbon economy represents an opportunity for Canada to expand its manufacturing base, create sustainable jobs in low-carbon industries and meet its climate objectives, while offering Canadians more secure and affordable energy.

Public opinion research has studied Canadians' opinions around the energy transition finding that Canadians are overwhelmingly supportive of clean energy, viewing it as a more affordable, sustainable, and reliable form of energy than fossil fuel-based energy. However, research<sup>1</sup> also shows that Canadians have some uncertainty about what the energy transition will involve, about the costs that will be involved in realizing it, and what it might mean for their livelihoods, including affordability and employment.

Previously, NRCan had conducted quantitative and qualitative studies which contained some questions focused on Canadians' opinions around the energy transition and energy affordability.

This study's approach aimed to better understand thought processes behind Canadians' perceptions to inform where there may be policy and communication blind spots that NRCan is not aware of.

The objective of the research was to explore energy-focused questions such as:

- How familiar are Canadians with the energy transition in Canada?
- How does the energy transition affect Canadians?
- What are the benefits and the inconveniences of the energy transition in Canada?
- What are the opportunities and the challenges of the energy transition in Canada?
- How is Canada currently managing the energy transition?
- What are Canadians views on energy affordability?
- How will the energy transition impact energy affordability?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://abacusdata.ca/clean-energy-affordable-secure/>

## Methodology

The research methodology consisted of 16 focus groups (12 online groups and four in-facility groups) and one in-depth interview with individuals in Canada. A mix of online and in-facility groups were conducted between January 29 and February 10, 2024, with sessions held in Manitoba, New Brunswick, Quebec, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Alberta. Focus groups were segmented by region and age. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes. All participants were informed that the research was for the Government of Canada and they each received an honorarium of \$125 for their participation. A total of 104 individuals participated in this study.

## Summary of research results

### *Awareness and familiarity with the discussion topic*

Most research participants were aware and familiar with the meaning of “transitioning to clean energy in Canada”, and some of them were even able to refer to relevant government initiatives.

There is a great deal of support for the broad idea of transitioning to clean energy, mostly on the basis of addressing climate change, to improve our health through reduced pollution and to improve the prospects for future generations. For many, the transition is seen as both important to them personally and considered a priority for Canada if not the world.

### *Concerns regarding clean energy transition*

As much as participants considered this transition important, a variety of drawbacks or concerns were also raised. The most common concerns pertained to costs of making this transition. More specifically, concerns with costs surfaced on three key fronts:

- The perceived costs of shifting energy production to renewable sources such as wind, solar, etc. Many felt that significant investments related to implementing new technologies to supply the energy grid would be required.
- The perceived costs for the average consumer who is, seemingly, being asked to shift to electric vehicles at a time when such vehicles are seen as quite expensive and have limited capacity to meet a broader Canadian demographic’s needs.
- The perceived cost to the consumer, who many believe will pay more for their energy if the energy supply is coming from new technologies, at least in the short-term.

Some participants were also concerned with the risk associated with transitioning energy production to what are considered unproven technologies. Many were concerned with the plan to transition to electric vehicles which are still seen as inadequate in many ways (e.g., long distance driving, cold temperatures, lack of charging stations, high cost of replacing a battery, the environmental impact of manufacturing batteries, etc.). A few were also concerned with the job losses associated with a transition away from fossil fuels, a concern that was more acute in regions such as Alberta and certain rural areas in the Prairies.

Finally, a few questioned the real impact that a country like Canada could make on global climate change by making this transition and were concerned that the country, and Canadians, might be taking on serious costs in vain.

#### *Views on pace and progress made*

Views on pace and progress made were mixed. Many felt that too little has been done by Canada to address climate change thus far. Feeling that they could not easily identify specific steps that had been taken, other than setting targets, this left many with the impression that Canada was not on the right track towards making the energy transition, or on any track for that matter, and that the pace of the transition was too slow.

Others were of the view that a lack of a clear path forward combined with aggressive targets are cause for concern. The most recent commitments to reaching net-zero emissions as well as headlines pertaining to phasing out new, gas-powered passenger vehicles by 2035, left many concerned that the transition to clean energy may be overly ambitious or aggressive. As much as they value a transition, there is a sense that it must be done correctly and at the right pace otherwise too many jobs will be lost too quickly, too much money spent too soon and too many risks taken with new technology. These participants also felt that the challenges they face in terms of cost of living do not set the right backdrop to these sorts of pressures.

There were also some concerns that across Canada, different provinces tend to be moving at a different rate and are not working together to create a cohesive plan. Provincial regulations limiting or prohibiting consumers from selling unused energy back to the grid was also seen as a challenge and even a disincentive for some participants to move forward with certain changes that would support the transition to clean energy. On the other hand, this research revealed that some participants were incentivized to adopt energy efficient technologies because their utility company offered free thermostats or rebates on energy audits. As well, some heard about these programs directly on their energy bills.

When asked what specific measures had been taken in Canada to support the transition to clean energy, some of the more common actions included:

- Canada has been setting emissions reduction targets, which, although seen as necessary, are useless if specific action plans are not developed.
- They are seeing more electric vehicles on the road.
- Some were aware of federal programs that help homeowners transition to clean energy (especially heat pumps) and to support efforts to retrofit their home to become more energy efficient.

While there was some awareness of certain measures, many felt that a lack of a clear action plan, or “roadmap”, that lays out the various measures and actions over time that will lead to the desired targets and outcomes left them unconvinced that targets will be reached, and that real progress will be made.

When asked about their own contribution to the transition to clean energy and efforts to improving energy efficiency, nearly all participants could identify at least a few measures or actions they had taken or were regularly practicing. A few in each group had done renovations to their home to make it more energy efficient, especially window replacements, more insulation, etc. A few across all sessions had also installed a heat pump. Most pointed to energy use “best practices” that they do on a regular basis such as temperature controls, turning off the lights when not needed, buying energy efficient appliances and light bulbs, etc. While some did undertake these renovations and behaviours because it is “good for the environment”, many were also motivated to do so to lower their energy bills in both the short and long-term. The notion that they were directly supporting a transition to clean energy did not seem to be a connection participants were making.

#### *Transitioning to clean energy and the government*

Most are in agreement that the federal government has a role to play regarding the transition to clean energy. Some of the roles most commonly proposed by participants included the following:

- Setting a vision and clear path forward in terms of reaching desired targets.
- Supporting and encouraging citizens through programs, rebates and incentives so that they can undertake changes to their homes and modes of transportation.
- Funding the majority of the transition, such as through carbon taxes (particularly by taxing the large companies who are the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions).



- Working with the global community.
- Coordinating with the provinces so that we are all moving forward.
- Communicating to and educating Canadians about the path forward, how they can be a part of the transition, and how progress can be measured overall.
- Supporting the development and installation of renewable energy infrastructure.
- Finding markets and uses for Canada's fossil fuels.

Participants were presented with a list of examples of some recent initiatives and programs the federal government has introduced to support the transition to clean energy. For the most part, all these types of initiatives and programs were well received by participants. That said, the types of initiatives and programs presented were not well known – awareness seemed the highest for the Canada Greener Homes Grant (especially as it pertains to installing heat pumps) and the rebates for zero-emission vehicles. There was also some awareness of the construction of battery factories and zero-emission vehicle factories.

The main concerns participants had with the list of initiatives were the following:

- There was no apparent support for renters.
- There was no apparent support for individuals who do not own a vehicle and who do not want to or cannot afford to own one.
- The initiatives seemed to favour higher-income households in general – in other words those who can afford a home, afford to pay upfront for renovations, and/or afford an electric vehicle.
- There was some concern for regional favouritism in the initiatives, such as the construction of factories seems to be only happening in Ontario, how certain forms of energy production, such as heat pumps, are not viable in certain parts of the country, and how electric vehicles are not seen as a viable option in many parts of the country (e.g., rural and remote areas, regions that get very cold, etc.).

Overall, cost tended to be the main concern participants had with many explaining that the rebates or incentives only cover a portion of the total cost, and consumers are expected to fund the rest. Some felt that the federal government should be taking on more of the cost to install heat pumps, solar panels, energy efficient windows, etc.

There was general agreement that public awareness of these types of programs and initiatives was lacking. Participants suggested that the federal government should make greater use of: social media, news announcements, mass media, advertising through home improvement/renovation retailers, sending information through the Canada Revenue Agency, and through local/regional energy providers.

A different kind of retrofitting loan was explored by the moderator. Participants were told that through this program, the energy cost savings could be used to pay back the loan. Some participants, especially younger homeowners, felt this could make it easier for them to undertake renovations. On the other hand, interest in this sort of program was dampened by those, especially older participants, who were less convinced of the amount of savings they could see on their energy bills, the prospect of significant investments up-front (which they cannot afford), and savings only materializing far into the future.

Finally, there was a discussion in a few groups about the pros and cons of the Government of Canada taking on greater debt to finance the energy transition to avoid greater costs that would be incurred by the effects of climate change. Some felt that these types of costs are difficult to ascertain or that it would be irresponsible for the government to incur any more debt for any reason. On the other hand, the argument that there is research that shows that the government would be spending more on the results of climate change if it doesn't do more to curb it, than on energy transition, convinced some that it made sense to have a long-term vision and incur short-term debt.

### *Energy affordability*

Energy costs are an ongoing concern for many participants, especially among lower income households. Many have adopted energy saving practices specifically to reduce their energy bills. Even though few know how affordability of energy in their province compares to other provinces, most would agree that it is expensive enough that they do not wish to see energy prices rise.

There is also limited understanding of the reasons that might explain why their energy bills are unaffordable or increasing. Many participants explained that “the cost of everything is going up” and so it was not surprising to them that their energy bill should also go up. Some also suspected that their energy bill is high because their use is high or higher than before. In certain regions, such as in New Brunswick, some felt that high bills were related to utility mismanagement while in other regions, participants attributed their high bills to fixed fees embedded into their bills

related to administration and/or transportation. A few blamed the “carbon tax” for their high or higher energy bills.

With a few exceptions, participants did not tend to associate how their energy was generated with the affordability of energy in their province. When specifically presented with a scenario where more energy in their province is generated from renewable sources, few seemed to believe that this would lead to lower energy bills. Some participants felt that new ways of generating energy, such as solar, wind, etc. are more expensive than current sources of energy. Some hypothesized that perhaps energy costs would be more expensive in the short term given the costs related to implementing these new technologies but that over time, energy bills should gradually decrease seeing as how the energy source is renewable. Another common view was that energy companies would not allow bills to go down since they need to make a profit.

Ultimately, there were many mixed views on whether a transition to clean energy would result in lower energy bills for Canadians.

### Key takeaways

- Participants were quite supportive of the idea of shifting to clean energy, especially on the basis on addressing climate change.
- The costs of this transition were a concern to participants who in many cases felt that they would take on a large burden of the associated costs (for example, increased energy costs) and would sooner see the federal government funding a larger portion of the transition.
- Other concerns related to the idea of “new technologies” such as electric cars, which many felt were not feasible in their region due to cold temperatures, lack of infrastructure and battery life.
- Many felt that Canada is taking steps in the right direction (for example, by setting targets), however they perceived actual changes to be too slow, and lacking a clear course of action.
- There was some interest and support for the rebates and incentives offered by the federal government however there were also some concerns including:
  - Lack of supports for low and middle-income households, renters and those who do not want to own a vehicle or cannot afford one.
  - Despite the rebates, individuals feel they would struggle with significant upfront costs for many home renovations and electric vehicles.

- Regional equity (for example, heat pumps and electric vehicles being less viable in colder regions).
- Low awareness of the various federal programs.
- There was a general perception that energy costs are increasing, which was a concern particularly for lower income households..
  - Participants were typically unsure of the reasons for these cost increases and typically associated them with general inflation.
  - Many were unsure whether clean energy sources would ultimately lead to higher or lower energy prices.

#### Qualitative research disclaimer

Qualitative research seeks to develop insight and direction rather than quantitatively projectable measures. The purpose is not to generate “statistics” but to hear the full range of opinions on a topic, understand the language participants use, gauge degrees of passion and engagement and to leverage the power of the group to inspire ideas. Participants are encouraged to voice their opinions, irrespective of whether or not that view is shared by others.

Due to the sample size, the special recruitment methods used, and the study objectives themselves, it is clearly understood that the work under discussion is exploratory in nature. The findings are not, nor were they intended to be, projectable to a larger population.

Specifically, it is inappropriate to suggest or to infer that few (or many) real world users would behave in one way simply because few (or many) participants behaved in this way during the sessions. This kind of projection is strictly the prerogative of quantitative research.

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## Research purpose and objectives

### Background

In recent years, the development of a competitive clean energy economy has become a priority for federal and provincial governments.

The clean energy transition and broader shift to a low-carbon economy specifically represents an opportunity for Canada to expand its manufacturing base, create sustainable jobs in low-carbon industries and meet its climate objectives, while offering Canadians more secure and affordable energy.

Public opinion research has studied Canadians' opinions around the energy transition finding that Canadians are overwhelmingly supportive of clean energy, viewing it as a more affordable, sustainable, and reliable form of energy than fossil fuel-based energy. But Canadians have some uncertainty about what the energy transition will involve, about the costs that will be involved in realizing it, and what it might mean for their livelihoods, including affordability and employment.

More research could be conducted on a deeper, qualitative level about Canadians' concerns around energy affordability and reliability, and the public perceptions of the energy transition to support climate action, including perceived monetary costs and access to safe and reliable energy.

### Research Rationale

There are global energy challenges as the world's demand for energy continues to grow, meanwhile there is pressure for countries to pursue low-carbon energy systems and economies, and geopolitical turmoil is complicating the availability of energy supplies. Countries are under pressure to try to balance the energy trilemma of securing secure/reliable, affordable, and sustainable sources of energy. Therefore, there is an energy transition taking place, as countries aim to shift towards lower-carbon energy systems that are deemed more reliable, sustainable, and affordable.

The Government of Canada is supporting a shift towards low-carbon energy systems to protect Canadians from these volatile energy challenges and enable access to reliable/secure, affordable, and sustainable energy.

In light of this transition, it is valuable to better understand Canadians' thoughts and concerns in order to better understand energy matters from their perspective, and how they perceive the

attitudes and motivations of other Canadians and the federal government. This study would aim to better understand thought processes behind Canadians' perceptions to inform where there may be policy and communication blind spots that NRCan is not aware of.

Accordingly, the results of this study will improve NRCan's understanding of Canadians' experiences with energy affordability and reliability, particularly in those regions of Canada that are facing energy affordability challenges and/or have difficult-to-decarbonize grids. This research can highlight communication gaps and opportunities and present an idea of the positive and negative public perceptions of the energy transition. These results would contribute to the development of departmental initiatives, programs, policies, regulations, and communications tools, and will help to inform future quantitative studies. They could also lead to insights as to how to influence behaviour change to support the energy transition, while being cognizant of energy affordability issues.

### **Research Objectives**

The key objectives of this research are to better understand Canadians' thoughts and experiences about the energy transition and energy affordability, to understand what they think that the government or other groups of Canadians think about the energy transition and energy affordability, and to understand their perceptions about the long-term possibilities of an energy transition.

Research explored energy-focused questions such as:

- How familiar are Canadians with the energy transition in Canada?
- How does the energy transition affect Canadians?
- What are the benefits and the inconveniences of the energy transition in Canada?
- What are the opportunities and the challenges of the energy transition in Canada?
- How is Canada currently managing the energy transition?

### **Methodology**

The research methodology consisted of 16 focus groups (12 online groups and four in-facility groups) and one in-depth interview with individuals in Canada. A mix of online and in-facility groups were conducted between January 29 and February 10, 2024, with sessions held in Manitoba, New Brunswick, Quebec, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Alberta. Focus groups were segmented by region and age. Each session lasted approximately 90

minutes. All participants were informed that the research was for the Government of Canada and they each received an honorarium of \$125 for their participation. A total of 104 individuals participated in this study.

A more detailed methodology can be found following the research results.

## Research results

### General views on transitioning to clean energy

To kick-off each focus group, participants were asked whether they had heard about “transitioning to clean energy in Canada” and what they think this might be referring to.

Most believed they had heard the term before although many explained that while the term sounded familiar, they were not particularly familiar with the concept and what this transition entailed. Many were aware of the impacts that non-renewable energy sources have on the climate, although a few admitted that they were not sure what made other sources of energy “not clean”.

Of the participants who were more familiar with the concept, references were commonly made to moving away from fossil fuels, an increased use of renewable energy (some mentioned wind, solar, hydro-electric, and geo-thermal energy), and greater use of electric vehicles.

After assessing top-of mind familiarity with the concept of “transitioning to clean energy in Canada”, participants were shown the following description of the topic:

*1. Transitioning to clean energy refers to a switch from conventional fossil-fuel based energy (for example, coal and oil) to clean energies produced from renewable energy sources (for example, hydrogen, hydroelectricity, wind, solar, geothermal, etc.), as well as greater use of energy efficient products and adopting energy efficient practices. This change impacts where our electricity comes from, how we heat our homes, and how we fuel our transportation.*

*2. CLEAN ENERGY – Refers to electricity produced from sources that produce no carbon pollution (i.e., “non-emitting”), such as hydro, wind, solar, nuclear, geothermal, and tidal.*

*Canada has committed to reaching net-zero emissions by 2050, along with more than 140 other countries, including all G7 countries. Canada is also committed to meeting its target of cutting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 40 – 45 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. Given*

*that energy production and use in Canada accounts for about 80% of emissions, a clean energy transition is a critical aspect of meeting Canada's climate change commitments.*

After participants had been given this information on Canada's transition to clean energy, they were asked about their overall thoughts and how important they felt this transition was for the country and for them personally.

Overall, there was a great deal of support for the broad idea of transitioning to clean energy. For many, the transition is seen as both important to them personally and considered a fairly high priority for Canada, if not the world.

Participants explained that this transition would have positive impacts in terms of addressing climate change, improving our health through reduced pollution, and improving the prospects for future generations. There were also some participants who believed that non-renewable resources were slowly running out and that power demands would only increase over time, leading to a need for renewable and more sustainable options.

Those who were less supportive of the transition to clean energy typically had concerns about government spending or increasing deficits and debt or had concerns and skepticism about the technology involved in the transition (Note: concerns with technology are discussed further in the report). A few also either did not believe in climate change or felt that climate change was a naturally evolving cycle for the planet and could or should not be reversed.

When asked specifically how Canada transitioning to clean energy could benefit their household, some felt that energy could become more affordable over time as clean energy sources become more mainstream. There was also a perception that renewable energy sources could create a larger supply of energy overall, which could result in cost savings. That said, a few participants felt that the greater good should be at the heart of or the main catalyst behind the transition rather than individual or household-level considerations. For instance, the overall benefit to the climate was, in their view, much more important than any individual or household benefit.

As much as participants considered this transition important, a variety of drawbacks or concerns were also raised.

The most common concerns pertained to the costs of making this transition, particularly the financial burden that could be placed on citizens. This concern was often shared with the sentiment that individuals tend to be the ones who are encouraged to make changes whereas they believe that a greater role should be played by governments and large businesses when it comes to addressing climate change and transitioning to clean and sustainable energy sources.



*“The focus of this should be mainly on industry and not on people like citizens. It should be industry led. We should be looking at industries to change the way they do manufacturing and processing, and then from there, then the people, because they are the ones who are using the possible fuels more than we do.”* – Female, 45, British Columbia, urban community

Many participants also considered the costs of shifting energy production to renewable sources such as wind, solar, etc. These individuals felt that significant costs related to implementing new technologies to supply the energy grid would be required. Many believed that much of the financial burden of this shift to new, clean energy technologies would fall on consumers, who would be required to pay more for their energy usage.

There were also concerns regarding the perceived costs for the average consumer who is, seemingly, being asked to shift to electric vehicles at a time when such vehicles are seen as quite expensive. Many also explained that not only do electric vehicles cost more than gasoline powered vehicles up-front, but the cost to replace the battery is also very costly, and the maintenance costs could also be much higher.

In addition to the costs associated with such a transition, some participants were also concerned with the risk associated with transitioning energy production to what are considered unproven technologies. For example, several discussed their concerns regarding the plan to transition to electric vehicles which they felt are still inadequate in many ways. Many of these participants did not believe that electric vehicles were as reliable as gasoline-powered vehicles and that they have a fairly low range when it comes to long distance driving, especially considering cold temperatures in Canada which can limit battery charges.

As well, many (especially those in Atlantic Canada and those living in smaller or more rural communities in other regions) felt that the infrastructure in Canada to support electric vehicles was lacking. For example, some explained that there are not enough charging stations, vehicle parts are difficult to replace when needed, and mechanics are not as experienced in servicing electric cars. There were also concerns regarding the environmental impact of manufacturing batteries for electric vehicles.

For many, further improvements to electric vehicles and the infrastructure in Canada to support them as well as more affordable prices would be needed for them to eagerly switch away from their current gasoline-powered car.

*“My only concern is... like battery technology, you know what sort of damage are batteries doing to the environment? [...] I wouldn't want to get into that situation [where] things are breaking down, or we're causing more pollution by generating batteries, or we can't recycle these, or, you know, just the long-term outlook of implementing these measures too early are going to have very negative consequences.” – Male, 31, British Columbia, urban community*

Additionally, a few were also concerned with the job losses or other impacts on industries associated with a transition away from fossil fuels, a concern that was more acute in regions such as Alberta and certain rural areas in the Prairies. For example, a participant in rural Manitoba recalled hearing that the government was trying to limit the use of nitrogen fertilizer by farmers in Saskatchewan and Alberta and had concerns about how this would impact the industry.

Finally, a few questioned the real impact that a country like Canada could make on climate change by making this transition and were concerned that the country and Canadians might be taking on serious costs in vain. Many of these participants believed that technologies involved in renewable energy and electric cars were fairly new and that it was risky to rush into deploying these technologies. As well, some participants argued that Canada produces a relatively small amount of greenhouse gases compared to other countries and that even if we make the transition to cleaner energy, it may not make a difference on climate change. This reasoning was countered by some who were encouraged by the fact that more than 140 countries shared a common goal. There was also a belief that climate change will definitely not be addressed if we maintain the current path so any effort towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions can only be beneficial. Some would also like to see Canada take a leadership role in the battle against climate change rather than follow what other countries are doing.

### Views on pace and progress made

After discussing perceptions, benefits and drawbacks of Canada transitioning to clean energy, the conversation shifted to discussing the progress that Canada has made thus far.

Overall, views on pace and progress made were mixed. A few explained that while they were familiar with the idea of transitioning to clean energy, they struggled to convincingly say whether true progress is being made, as they were not familiar with the specific plans and actions that Canada has undertaken.

The most common opinion was that too little has been done by Canada to address climate change thus far, especially since climate change and its effects have been known for quite some time, and the issue is becoming more and more urgent. Many felt that they could not easily identify specific steps that had been taken, other than setting targets. This gave them the impression that Canada was not on the right track towards making this transition, or on any track for that matter, and that the pace of the transition was too slow.

Some participants did feel that the Canadian government has taken steps to address climate change, such as providing rebates and programs to help Canadians make their home more energy efficient. However, while these initiatives were appreciated, many still felt that there did not seem to be any clear-cut plan or cohesiveness between these initiatives and the future targets.

*“It seems to me that there's a good deal of activity. But it's hard to tell if it's cohesive at all... Where's their project plan that shows all of the activities that they have to put in place? I mean, they're trying to head to a 2030 goal but what's going to get to them there? I mean, it's fine to have a goal, but your goal is just a dream if you don't have a plan.”* – Male, 66, New Brunswick, rural/smaller community

Some also discussed how different provinces seem to be progressing at different rates, with some seemingly more ahead (such as British Columbia, Ontario, Nova Scotia and PEI) and others very far behind (such as Alberta). Details behind these impressions tended to be sparse and usually based on one or two particular developments (e.g., hearing about heat pump incentives in Nova Scotia). This made some participants skeptical whether the government has made a strong cohesive national plan and is equipped to meet their targets.

This lack of a clear path forward combined with aggressive targets were seen as a cause for concern for many. The most recent commitments to reaching net-zero emissions as well as headlines pertaining to phasing out new, gas-powered passenger vehicles by 2035, left many concerned that the transition to clean energy may be overly ambitious or aggressive. As much as they value a transition, there is a sense that it must be done correctly and at the right pace otherwise too many jobs will be lost too quickly, too much money spent too soon and too many risks taken with what they perceived to be new technology. These participants also felt that the challenges they face in terms of cost of living do not set the right backdrop to these sorts of pressures.

When asked what specific measures had been taken in Canada to support the transition to clean energy, some of the more common actions included:

- Canada has been setting targets to transition to clean energy.
- Electric vehicles are becoming more common, as they are seeing more electric vehicles on the road. Many were also aware of the rebates offered by the government for those who purchase electric cars.
- While far from ubiquitous, participants mentioned noticing charging stations for electric vehicles are becoming more common. This was especially noted by individuals in certain regions such as British Columbia.
  - A few also mentioned that some companies are adding charging stations to their parking lots.
- Some were aware of federal programs that help homeowners transition to clean energy (especially heat pumps) and to support efforts to retrofit their home to become more energy efficient.
- Renewable energy sources are being used. Many specifically mentioned having seen wind turbine farms, for instance in rural Manitoba. One participant in New Brunswick also recalled hearing that the majority of PEI's energy comes from wind farms.
- In some areas, public transportation options use hybrid or fully electric vehicles.
- Some taxi companies have switched to electric vehicles.
- Public transportation is already viewed as more efficient since it takes cars off the road. In addition, some have noticed that, similar to taxis, these modes of transportation are becoming increasingly energy efficient (such as hydrogen-fueled buses in Winnipeg).
- Household appliances are becoming more energy efficient.
- Seeing more renewable sources of energy in their area or province, such as more wind turbines in the countryside and more solar panels.
- The government has banned the sale of incandescent lightbulbs to encourage the use of more energy efficient alternatives.

As mentioned, while there was some awareness of certain measures, many felt that a lack of a clear action plan, or “roadmap”, that lays out the various measures and actions over time that will lead to the desired targets and outcomes left them unconvinced that targets will be reached, and that real progress will be made. Many argued that the targets set by the government are useless if specific plans are not set so that these targets can be reached. A few also felt that a clear plan

could also help them understand general timelines as well as how different stakeholders (e.g., businesses, governments, etc.) will be contributing to the transition.

Participants were asked what Canada could do to get on the right track towards meeting the targets. For the most part, suggestions pertained to making clean energy more affordable for Canadians. Some felt that there should be more rebates and subsidies for energy efficient initiatives which would encourage Canadians to become more sustainable and help make the transition more affordable. Others simply felt that in addition to setting clear plans to reach the targets, the Canadian government needs to better communicate and educate Canadians on how and why these efforts are being made, which would in turn provide more encouragement for individual efforts and support for government initiatives.

When asked about their own contribution to the transition to clean energy and efforts to improving energy efficiency, nearly all participants could identify at least a few measures or actions they had taken or were regularly practicing.

A few homeowners in each group had done renovations to their home to make it more energy efficient. These renovations mainly consisted of window replacements or improving insulation while a few had also improved the seal of their home. A few across all sessions had also installed a heat pump. Some discussed how they were motivated to do these renovations by government rebates. That said, a few others expressed interest in renovations such as installing a heat pump but did not feel that they could afford to do so, even with the rebates offered.

Rather than large changes or renovations, most pointed to energy use “best practices” that they do on a regular basis to conserve energy as well as to cut back on energy costs. The various actions taken included:

- controlling the temperature at home, keeping the house a little colder during the winter (and wearing a sweater) or keeping the house a little warmer during summer months,
- turning off the lights when not needed,
- unplugging devices or small appliances when not in use,
- buying energy efficient appliances and light bulbs,
- doing laundry less frequently by doing larger loads of laundry rather than smaller loads more frequently,
- using less hot water (for example, by taking shorter showers),

- consuming less meat,
- walking to work,
- getting multiple errands done in one trip rather than making multiple trips, etc.

While some did undertake these renovations and behaviours because it is “good for the environment”, many were also motivated to do so to lower their energy bills in both the short and long-term. The notion that they were directly supporting a transition to clean energy did not seem to be connection participants were making.

### Transitioning to clean energy and the government

Participants were asked to discuss how the federal government plays a role in the transition to clean energy.

Most agree that the federal government has a role to play in this transition. While participants suggested a wide array of areas where the government could play a role, the most common themes tended to pertain to increased research and development and supporting Canadians in the transition through access to incentives and better communication.

Participants suggested that the government should set a vision and clear path forward in terms of reaching desired targets and provide communication and education to Canadians about the path forward, how they can be a part of the transition, and how progress can be measured overall.

*“Right now, we’re focusing on an endpoint and not really being too concerned with what is happening in the middle.” – Male, 53, Saskatchewan, rural/smaller community*

Supporting and encouraging citizens through programs, rebates and incentives so that they can undertake changes to their homes and modes of transportation was also deemed an important role, especially since these changes were viewed by many as cost prohibitive.

Some participants felt that the government should also do more to subsidize or incentivize activities that are beneficial for the environment and penalize activities that are not. For example, some suggested increased taxes on industries and large businesses who are the ones producing large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions and incentivizing those that make efforts to reduce these emissions. These participants felt that the taxes could then go towards upgrading things such as public transportation or funding rebates and incentives for consumers.

Additionally, some other roles mentioned by participants included the following:

- Working with the global community.
- Coordinating with the provinces so that we are all moving forward.
- Providing greater leadership and leading by example. This included demonstrating how federal buildings, operations and employees are being energy efficient and transitioning towards cleaner energy.
- Supporting the development and installation of renewable energy infrastructure.
- Finding markets and uses for Canada's fossil fuels if they are no longer going to be used to fuel vehicles and generate energy in Canada.
- Improving access to public transportation for those who are not able to afford a car, or do not want to own one.
- Educating and encouraging children to be more sustainable as well as encouraging them to consider careers in fields that could make an impact on the climate, such as science and engineering.

*“They should maybe be encouraging kids to look at careers in fields involving clean energy. Where I live, most kids want to work in the oil industry or farm.” – Female, 51, Manitoba, rural/smaller community*

Participants were presented with the following list of examples of some recent initiatives and programs the Government has introduced to support the transition to clean energy.

- The Government of Canada's Greener Homes Grant is providing \$5,000 for Canadians to retrofit their homes to be more energy efficient and to make energy more affordable, for example, through installing heat pumps.
  - The Oil to Heat Pump Affordability Program offers Canadians up to \$10,000 to change their heating source.
  - Canada Greener Homes Loan offers Canadians an interest-free \$40,000 loan to retrofit homes.
- The Government is providing \$5,000 rebates to make zero-emission vehicles (e.g., electric vehicles) more affordable. In addition, the Government is providing funding for the construction of public charging stations.
- The Government is providing research and development funding to support technologies that will decrease greenhouse gas emissions, such as carbon capture for the oil and gas sector.

- The Government is providing funding to improve and modernize the electricity grid.
- The Government is investing in construction of battery factories and zero-emission vehicle factories to establish a manufacturing supply chain within Canada to produce zero-emission vehicles domestically.

For the most part, all these types of initiatives and programs were well received by participants. Many liked the idea of incentivizing behaviours in order to create changes.

While support was strong, awareness of the types of initiatives and programs presented was fairly low. Awareness seemed the highest for the Canada Greener Homes Grant (especially as it pertains to installing heat pumps) and the rebates for zero-emission vehicles. There was also some awareness of the construction of battery factories and zero-emission vehicle factories, especially in Ontario. Some participants explained that the government should do more to communicate these incentives and the steps needed to take advantage of them.

There was high support for initiatives that were considered to benefit Canadians on a larger scale, such as research and development and the modernization of the electricity grid. This was deemed to be an important step to make other initiatives, such as the transition to electric vehicles more feasible.

*“What they should be looking at is definitely strengthening our power grid. Where I live, we are not allowed to put in a level 2 charger because it might overload our grid and tripping up everyone’s power out.”* – Female, 23, British Columbia, rural/smaller community

Overall, most participants felt that these programs were a good investment from the government. With that said, there were also several concerns discussed.

Many of these concerns were related to perceived relevance, especially from a financial standpoint. Point in case, many participants felt that these initiatives seemed to favour higher-income homeowners. As most of the programs that were discussed involve household upgrades, participants felt that they are geared towards those who are already homeowners and those who can afford to pay up-front for expensive renovations or invest in upgrades knowing that they will not start to see any cost-savings in the short-term. Thus, these programs did not appear to provide any support for renters or lower-income homeowners.

While many expressed that they would be interested in some of these upgrades, they simply could not afford it. The rebates were not seen as enough to make upgrades affordable as they would still need to invest a large amount overall. Additionally, the loans were not deemed as affordable



to some, even with zero interest as they did not feel that it was something they would be able to pay back. Some simply did not want to incur debt.

*“There is not a lot of affordability here. This is sort of targeted to people who have the funds to do the initial outlay or take loans.”* - Female, 55, Alberta, suburban/rural community

A different kind of retrofitting loan was explored by the moderator. Participants were told that through this program, the energy cost savings could be used to pay back the loan. Reactions to this type of program were mixed. Some participants, especially younger homeowners, felt this could make it easier for them to undertake renovations. On the other hand, interest in this sort of program was dampened by those who were less convinced of the amount of savings they could see on their energy bills. The idea also lacked appeal among those who were debt-averse in general. Finally, older homeowners were less inclined to a program that involved a long payback period since they would probably not live long enough or own the home for long enough to see the cost benefits. In fact, the prospect of significant investments up-front, which they cannot afford, and savings only materializing far into the future were reasons explaining the low appeal of most initiatives to older homeowners. Arguments that the renovations could increase the value of their home had some validity but did not seem to be sufficiently convincing.

*“At our age, it’s not practical for us.”* – Female, 69, Saskatchewan, rural/smaller community

Participants also widely agreed that the rebates for electric vehicles do not provide support for individuals who do not own a vehicle and who do not want to or cannot afford to own one. For these reasons, participants suggested how individuals who do not use a vehicle at all should be incentivized or rewarded through government programs. Improvements to public transportation were suggested in all urban areas as were public transit cost-support programs.

Although only noted by a few participants, skepticism was raised regarding whether rebates and incentives should be used to promote the adoption of various technologies in support of a transition. The argument here being that market forces should dictate their relevance and adoption rather than government policy.

In addition to financial concerns, there was also some concern for regional favouritism in the initiatives presented.

Firstly, those who lived in provinces that had lower population density such as Atlantic Canada, Manitoba and Saskatchewan or those living in rural settings and smaller communities did not feel that they could take advantage of the rebate on electric vehicles. These participants often

explained that the range on these vehicles is not sufficient for the distances they need to travel to work or other purposes and there was not enough infrastructure in place to support them.

*“I mean, if I lived in Toronto, an electric vehicle might be awesome [...] I have a GMC. I'm kind of in the market for a new truck. If I could get the same truck and never have to go to the gas station again, cool. Except I don't know that if I'm going from Winnipeg to Thompson, that's a 500-mile trip. Do we have the infrastructure in place where I can pull over part way, you know, zap my tank up to full charge and keep going or could I be in trouble? I think Manitoba is a little different with the population we have. We're spread out. So maybe some of these incentives don't really work for us.” – Male, 42, Manitoba, rural/smaller community*

Similar concerns about electric vehicles also came from participants living in provinces with colder temperatures including Alberta. As well, cleaner technologies such as heat pumps were not considered to be viable in certain parts of the country where the weather is colder.

Some also shared concerns regarding the construction of battery factories only happening in Ontario. For example, some participants in Alberta explained that this does not provide job opportunities for the industries that the government is trying to shift away from such as the oil and gas industries.

Finally, there was general agreement that public awareness of these types of programs and initiatives was lacking.

Participants suggested that the federal government should make greater use of the following: social media, news announcements, advertisements on public transportation, mass media, advertising through home improvement/renovation retailers, sending information through the Canada Revenue Agency, partnerships with municipalities and through local/regional energy providers.

*“The government should start promoting more of all these things, and like send messages [through] campaigns and social media ads about all these things. Because right now, we consume a lot of information on social media and that's the perfect way to approach people.” – Male, 23, Nova Scotia, urban community*

In a few groups, there was a discussion about the pros and cons of the Government of Canada taking on greater debt to finance the energy transition to avoid greater costs that would be incurred by the effects of climate change, for example as a result of having to deal with and pay for more and more natural disasters. While this gave many participants some pause and

something to consider, views were mixed. On the one hand, there were those who felt that it would be irresponsible for the government to incur any more debt for any reason, especially if it would make life even less affordable to Canadians in the short term, while there were also those who felt that there was really not much of a choice but to go ahead and invest in the energy transition as fast as possible, even if it would mean to take on more debt.

The argument that there is research that shows that the government would be spending more on the results of climate change if it doesn't do more to curb it, than on energy transition, convinced some that it made sense to have a long-term vision and incur short-term debt. Again, there were also those who said that Canada, and Canadians, simply cannot afford this now, and also some who felt that it was difficult to precisely link weather events to climate change, wondering where the proof was in this assertion.

### Energy affordability

Participants were asked to discuss their household's use of energy, and their perceptions of energy affordability in general.

Across the country, many participants felt that energy costs in their province are high and continue to rise, making it less and less affordable for some. The concern with affordability was especially noticeable among lower income participants. However, generally speaking, any comparison they made tended to be with their past bills, which they have mostly seen getting more expensive, particularly in the past few years. A few participants anecdotally compared prices in their province to other provinces where they had lived before, or where they had relatives or friends. However, for the most part, there was no general sense of how affordability or energy costs stacked up from province to province, or whether energy was more expensive or cheaper in certain provinces than others.

Energy costs are an ongoing concern for many participants, especially among lower income households. The rising costs are seen in the context of "everything" getting more expensive due to inflation, such as groceries, rent and mortgages. For many, it is seen as another budget line item to pay attention to that has an impact on their household's finances.

When asked to explain what options, if any, are available to them to reduce their energy-related costs, a variety of themes emerged.

As noted earlier in this report, many were aware of and have adopted energy saving practices specifically to reduce their energy bills. These changes ranged from more common smaller/cheaper actions to less common larger/more expensive ones.

Changes were often prompted by something. For example, participants mentioned utility companies offering free thermostats or rebates on energy audits as the reason why they made changes. Some heard about these programs directly, for example on their energy bills, through media or advertising, while others heard about them from friends or family. Some participants indicated they had gone online (often to the website of their energy supplier, or to do a general search) to find out more. Replacing appliances or furnaces was typically only done to replace broken ones or ones that had come to the end of their lifecycle.

Making substantive changes to homes was however seen as reserved for homeowners, while renters typically did not feel like they could make those changes. For the most part, renters were not overly concerned with their inability to make modifications to their home since their energy bills were part of their rent rather than a separate bill that could fluctuate from month to month. This in turn left many renters fairly indifferent towards the energy efficiency of their home – they felt like there was no particular incentive for them to be more efficient. Some even cautioned against incentives that could encourage their landlord to make renovations since this could result in an increase in their rent.

Participants also mentioned that Canadians could move to more physically active transportation rather than relying on cars (such as walking and using a bicycle), get smaller cars, purchase electric vehicles, or use more public transit. However, these ideas often lead to discussions of how realistic these types of changes were for many, given for example the costs of cars, especially new ones, the Canadian weather in many areas, and the lack of reliable or convenient public transit in many locations, but especially in rural and remote areas.

There is a limited understanding of the reasons that might explain why their energy bills are increasing. Many participants explained that “the cost of everything is going up” and so it was not surprising to them that their energy bill should also go up. Some also suspected that their energy bill is high because their use is high or higher than before, for example because their children are older and using more, or because they have more electronics than they did in the past.

In certain regions, such as in New Brunswick, some felt that high bills were related to utility mismanagement while in other regions, participants attributed their high bills to fixed fees embedded into their bills related to administration and/or transportation. This sometimes led to a belief that even if consumers would change their behaviour or would make their homes more

energy efficient, the cost savings to them would be minimal since a large part of their bills were these fixed costs that they did not have any influence on. There was no general sense that specific government policies at any level have an impact on energy affordability. Only a few blamed the “carbon tax” for their high or higher energy bills. In Manitoba, there was a suspicion that selling energy to other jurisdictions may drive up prices locally.

With a few exceptions, participants did not tend to associate how their energy was generated with the affordability of energy in their province. In regions such as British Columbia, Quebec and Manitoba, some participants knew that most of their energy was generated by renewable sources such as hydro power, which made them assume that there would not be any changes for them in terms of how their energy would be generated in the future. This did not mean that they assumed that their energy costs would not be going up in the future.

When specifically presented with a scenario where more energy in their province is generated from renewable sources, few seemed to believe that this would lead to lower energy bills. In fact, many participants felt that new ways of generating energy, such as solar, wind, etc. are more expensive than current sources of energy because in their opinion, they are new technologies that have not yet been adopted by the masses. Often, participants expected that energy costs would be more expensive in the short term given the costs related to implementing these new technologies, however some felt that the costs might “level out” over time.

*“I feel like realistically it’s going to be less affordable to start, but chances are it will probably swing back and forth here and there over the next couple of decades as things have stabilized and as more new technology becomes available” – Female, 41, Manitoba, urban community*

Many who felt that the transition to clean energy would be more expensive felt that capital costs for new energy infrastructure would be pushed down to consumers and did not believe that either energy providers or governments would be bearing the brunt of these costs – even though they often felt that this was not the right or fair thing to do.

While some discussed the cost of system-wide changes related to the energy transition, others mentioned they would expect there to be potential direct costs to consumers. For example, some suspected they might be forced to pay for solar panels on their homes or that they would have to switch from gas to electric appliances. That said, the costs of purchasing and installing certain types of technologies, such as solar panels, could become more palatable to homeowners if there was a way to make the initial cost more affordable and there was a way for them to not only generate all their electricity (in other words, become off-grid) but also potentially sell back into

the grid. This was a point of contention for some participants who, having explored the potential for this type of transition, were ultimately discouraged by the upfront costs and the provincial regulator's inflexible approach to generating and sourcing energy from households. This issue was raised in a few regions, notably in Alberta and in Nova Scotia. As a way of example, a participant in Nova Scotia noted that the government was punishing people for trying to use clean energy. Further questioning revealed that Nova Scotia Power had had plans to charge Nova Scotians money if they installed solar panels on their homes to make up for lost revenues for the utility company.

While some believed that over time, cost for energy would gradually decrease seeing as how the energy source is renewable and the hard up-front costs would be "paid off," others were more skeptical that energy companies would allow bills to go down since they would be out to make as much profit as possible. These views were generally held because there was not much evidence that any corporation is looking out for consumers first over their own bottom line, stock price or shareholders' interests, or that historically, prices on anything really come down substantially. The fixed rates discussed earlier, which were largely seen as immovable objects, also left some feeling that there are limits to how much their energy bills could come down. Some also mentioned that prices and affordability would depend on whether there would be government incentives or subsidies.

Ultimately, there were many mixed views, and uncertainty, on whether a transition to clean energy would result in lower energy bills for Canadians.

### Energy reliability

In a few groups, particularly with rural participants, energy reliability was discussed. A few participants spoke of power outages due to weather events and how they dealt with those. Some had back-up generators while others spoke of expecting this to happen once in a while. However, for the most part, participants feel that energy in their area, province, or in Canada, is quite reliable. It is worth noting that the recent emergency power "alerts" in Alberta during which the Alberta Electric System Operator requested residents to reduce their energy use to essentials only left an impression on focus group participants in that province. For the most part, residents seemed to feel that this was an exceptional situation rather than a sign of the times or the beginning of a pattern. As such, participants still felt that energy in their province was reliable. What residents did notice however is that while they were asked to reduce their energy use, they

also noticed how large office buildings still had their lights on for no apparent reason. This compelled some participants to argue that energy efficiency efforts are being pushed down to consumers when in fact businesses and governments should be leading the way.

### Summary views on aspects of the transition that may appear oversimplified

When prompted whether they believed that a certain aspect of the transition to clean energy in Canada is in some ways oversimplified, many said that this was the case. Some felt that the overall transition is easier said than done, mainly due to the many unknowns or questions participants had, for example about the way this would be implemented, who would be leading the way, how long it would take, and the cost to society and to individuals.

Market influences and willingness on the part of corporations and governments to put their money where their mouths are was also sometimes mentioned as making energy transition easier said than done.

Some felt that getting all provinces and territories aligned is easier said than done, especially since some provinces are more reliant on fossil fuels than others, not just in terms of their energy production but also in terms of their local economies.

Some also felt that the transition to electric vehicles was also something that is easier said than done given the many concerns they had with the costs of these vehicles, the lack of charging infrastructure and the limitations of the technology in a Canadian context.

Finally, making incentives available to Canadians was also seen as easier said than done. Many felt that government websites and programs were not well promoted, they are generally challenging to navigate, and becoming eligible was also considered difficult leaving many with the impression that just making incentives available is not going to be enough to support Canadians through the transition.

Some also pondered the actual positive impact that energy transition in Canada would have on climate change overall when looking at this as a global problem.

## Detailed Methodology

The research methodology consisted of 16 focus groups and one in-depth interview with individuals from various regions across the country. Research was conducted between January 29 and February 10, 2024. A total of 104 individuals participated across the focus groups.

Quorus was responsible for coordinating all aspects of the research project including designing and translating the recruitment screener and the moderation guide, coordinating all aspects of participant recruitment, coordinating the online focus group platform, in-facility arrangements and related logistics, moderating all sessions, and delivering required reports at the end of data collection.

### Target audience and sample frame

The target audience consisted of the adults aged 18 or older, living in Canada.

Groups were segmented based on community size, in order to achieve a mix of opinions from those living in urban, sub-urban, rural and smaller communities.

In the design of the recruitment screener, specific questions were inserted to clearly identify whether participants qualified for the research program, and to ensure, where applicable, a good representation of age and gender, and educational background. Efforts were made to recruit members of visible minorities in all groups. Additionally, recruitment ensured that more than half of participants were considered low income (a personal income of less than \$40,000 or a household income of less than \$60,000) in order to understand energy affordability issues.

In addition to the general participant profiling criteria noted above, additional screening measures to ensure quality respondents include the following:

- No participant (nor anyone in their immediate family or household) was recruited who worked in the government, whether federal, provincial or municipal, nor in advertising or graphic design, marketing research, public relations, or the media (radio, television, newspaper, film/video production, etc.).
- No participant acquainted with another participant was knowingly recruited for the same study, unless they were recruited into separately scheduled sessions.



- No participant was recruited who had attended a qualitative research session within the past six months.
- No participant was recruited who had attended five or more qualitative research sessions in the past five years.
- No participant was recruited who had attended a qualitative research session on the same general topic as defined by the research team in the past two years.

### Description of data collection procedures

Data collection consisted of 16 focus groups and one in-depth interview\*. Focus groups lasted approximately 90 minutes in duration while the interview lasted approximately 70 minutes.

For each session, Quorus recruited eight participants to achieve six to eight participants per focus group. Recruited participants were offered an honorarium of \$125 for their participation.

Participants invited to participate in the focus groups were recruited by telephone from the through random digit dialing of the general public as well as through the use of a proprietary opt-in database.

The recruitment of focus group participants followed the screening, recruiting and privacy considerations as set out in the *Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research—Qualitative Research*. Furthermore, recruitment respected the following requirements:

- All recruitment was conducted in the participant's official language of choice, English and French, as appropriate.
- Upon request, participants were informed on how they can access the research findings.
- Recruitment confirmed each participant had the ability to speak, understand, read and write in the language in which the session was to be conducted.
- Participants were informed of their rights under the *Privacy and Access to Information Acts* and ensure that those rights were protected throughout the research process. This included: informing participants of the purpose of the research, identifying both the sponsoring department or agency and research supplier, informing participants that the

study will be made available to the public in 6 months after field completion through Library and Archives Canada, and informing participants that their participation in the study is voluntary and the information provided will be administered according to the requirements of the *Privacy Act*.

At the recruitment stage and at the beginning of each focus group, participants were informed that the research was for the Government of Canada/Natural Resources Canada. Participants were also informed of audio/video recording of the focus group sessions, in addition to the presence of NRCan observers. Quorus ensured that prior consent was obtained at the recruitment stage and before participants participated in the groups.

The online focus groups were held using the Zoom online platform that allowed the client team to observe the sessions. Across all focus groups, a total of 104 individuals participated. All focus groups were moderated by senior Quorus researchers.

The locations, attendance, language and dates for the online focus groups are presented in the grid below:

Date (2024)	Region	Location	Language	Participants
January 29	Manitoba - Urban	Online	English	6
January 29	Manitoba - Rural/smaller community	Online	English	6
January 30	New Brunswick - Urban	Online	French	7
January 30	Quebec - Urban	Online	French	6
January 30	Saskatchewan - Urban	Online	English	7
January 31	New Brunswick - Rural/smaller community	Online	English	6
January 31	Quebec - Rural/smaller community	Online	French	5
January 31	Saskatchewan - Rural/smaller community	Online	English	4
February 1	British Columbia - Urban	Online	English	7
February 1	British Columbia -Rural/smaller community	Online	English	7
February 3	Nova Scotia (Halifax) - Urban	In-facility*	English	1
February 3	Nova Scotia (Halifax) - Sub-urban/rural	In-facility*	English	0
February 7	Ontario (Toronto) - Urban	In-facility	English	6

February 7	Ontario (Toronto) - Sub-urban/rural	In-facility	English	6
February 8	Alberta (Calgary) - Urban	In-facility	English	8
February 8	Alberta (Calgary) - Sub-urban/rural	In-facility	English	7
February 10	Nova Scotia (Halifax) - Urban	Online	English	8
February 10	Nova Scotia (Halifax) - Sub-urban/rural	Online	English	7

\*Due to weather conditions, only 1 participant attended the in-facility focus groups on February 1 in Halifax. A one-on-one interview was conducted with the participant, and groups were rescheduled to online sessions on February 10.

### Qualitative research disclaimer

Qualitative research seeks to develop insight and direction rather than quantitatively projectable measures. The purpose is not to generate “statistics” but to hear the full range of opinions on a topic, understand the language participants use, gauge degrees of passion and engagement and to leverage the power of the group to inspire ideas. Participants are encouraged to voice their opinions, irrespective of whether or not that view is shared by others.

Due to the sample size, the special recruitment methods used, and the study objectives themselves, it is clearly understood that the work under discussion is exploratory in nature. The findings are not, nor were they intended to be, projectable to a larger population.

Specifically, it is inappropriate to suggest or to infer that few (or many) real world users would behave in one way simply because few (or many) participants behaved in this way during the sessions. This kind of projection is strictly the prerogative of quantitative research.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Recruitment screener

### Specifications

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- Recruit 8 participants per group, for 6 to 8 to show
- Participants to be paid \$125
- Efforts will be made to recruit a mix across age, gender, urban/rural/suburban settings, education, and income
- 16 focus groups (mix of online and in-facility) will be conducted with adults in the following locations:
  - Toronto, Ontario (In-facility)
  - New Brunswick (Online) (One English and one French)
  - Quebec (Online) (French)
  - Saskatchewan (Online)
  - British Columbia (Online)
  - Halifax, Nova Scotia (In-facility)
  - Manitoba (Online)
  - Calgary, Alberta (In-facility)

**All times are stated in local area time unless specified otherwise.**

<b>Group 1</b> <b>Manitoba</b>  January 29 5:00 pm CST Urban	<b>Group 2</b> <b>Manitoba</b>  January 29 7:00 pm CST Rural / smaller community	<b>Group 3</b> <b>New Brunswick (FRENCH)</b>  January 30 5:00 pm AST Urban	<b>Group 4</b> <b>Quebec (FRENCH)</b>  January 30 6:00 pm EST Urban
<b>Group 5</b> <b>Saskatchewan</b>  January 30 7:00 pm CST Urban	<b>Group 6</b> <b>New Brunswick</b>  January 31 5:00 pm AST Rural / smaller community	<b>Group 7</b> <b>Quebec (FRENCH)</b>  January 31 6:00 pm EST Rural / smaller community	<b>Group 8</b> <b>Saskatchewan</b>  January 31 7:00 pm CST Rural / smaller community
<b>Group 9</b> <b>British Columbia</b>  February 1 5:00 pm PST Urban	<b>Group 10</b> <b>British Columbia</b>  February 1 7:00 pm PST Rural / smaller community	<b>Group 11</b> <b>Nova Scotia (Halifax)</b>  February 3 1:00 pm AST Urban	<b>Group 12</b> <b>Nova Scotia (Halifax)</b>  February 3 3:00 pm AST Sub-urban and rural
<b>Group 13</b> <b>Ontario (Toronto)</b>  February 7 5:00 pm EST Urban	<b>Group 14</b> <b>Ontario (Toronto)</b>  February 7 7:00 pm EST Sub-urban and rural	<b>Group 15</b> <b>Alberta (Calgary)</b>  February 8 5:00 pm MST Urban	<b>Group 16</b> <b>Alberta (Calgary)</b>  February 8 7:00 pm MST Sub-urban and rural

## Questionnaire

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### A. Introduction

Hello/Bonjour, my name is [NAME] and I am with Quorus Consulting Group, a national public opinion research company. We're planning a series of discussion groups on behalf of the Government of Canada with people in your area. Would you prefer to continue in English or French? / Préférez-vous continuer en anglais ou en français?

**[INTERVIEWER NOTE: FOR ENGLISH GROUPS, IF PARTICIPANT WOULD PREFER TO CONTINUE IN FRENCH, PLEASE RESPOND WITH, "Malheureusement, nous recherchons des gens qui parlent anglais pour participer à ces groupes de discussion. Nous vous remercions de votre intérêt." FOR FRENCH GROUPS, IF PARTICIPANT WOULD PREFER TO CONTINUE IN ENGLISH, PLEASE RESPOND WITH, "Unfortunately, we are looking for people who speak French to participate in this discussion group. We thank you for your interest."]**

**[INTERVIEWER NOTE 2: IF SOMEONE IS ASKING TO PARTICIPATE IN FRENCH/ENGLISH BUT NO GROUP IN THIS LANGUAGE IS AVAILABLE IN THIS AREA, TALK TO YOUR SUPERVISOR. EFFORTS WILL BE MADE TO INCLUDE THEM IN A GROUP IN THEIR PREFERRED LANGUAGE IN THE NEAREST TIME ZONE TO WHERE THEY LIVE. ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS CAN ALSO BE ACCOMMODATED AS THE NEED ARISES.]**

As I was saying – we are planning a series of discussion groups on behalf of the Government of Canada with people in your area. The groups will last up to 90 minutes (one and a half hours) and people who take part will receive a cash gift to thank them for their time.

Participation is completely voluntary. We are interested in your opinions. No attempt will be made to sell you anything or change your point of view. The format is a group discussion led by a research professional and will include about five to seven other participants invited the same way I am inviting you. All opinions will remain anonymous and will be used for research purposes only in accordance with laws designed to protect your privacy.

**[INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF ASKED ABOUT PRIVACY LAWS, SAY: “The information collected through the research is subject to the provisions of the *Privacy Act*, legislation of the Government of Canada, and to the provisions of relevant provincial privacy legislation.”]**

1. Before we invite anyone to attend, we need to ask you a few questions to ensure that we get a good mix of people in each of the groups. This will take 5 minutes. May I continue?

Yes	1	<b>CONTINUE</b>
No	2	<b>THANK/DISCONTINUE</b>

## **B. Qualification**

2. In which province or territory do you live in?

Ontario	1
Quebec	2
Saskatchewan	3
Manitoba	4
Alberta	5
British Columbia	6
New Brunswick	7
Nova Scotia	8
Prince Edward Island	9 [THANK & TERMINATE.]
Newfoundland and Labrador	10 [THANK & TERMINATE.]
Yukon	11 [THANK & TERMINATE.]
Nunavut	12 [THANK & TERMINATE.]
Northwest Territories	13 [THANK & TERMINATE.]
Prefer not to say	99 [THANK & TERMINATE.]



3. **[IF Q2=1, LIVES IN ONTARIO]** Do you live in...
- |   |   |                                 |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
| Toronto   | 1 |                                 |
| A suburban area of Toronto  | 2 |                                 |
| Beyond suburban Toronto but still within an hour or so driving distance to downtown | 3 |                                 |
| None of the above   | 4 | <b>[THANK &amp; TERMINATE.]</b> |
4. **[IF Q2=8, LIVES IN NOVA SCOTIA]** Do you live in...
- |   |   |                                 |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
| Halifax   | 1 |                                 |
| A suburban area of Halifax  | 2 |                                 |
| Beyond suburban Halifax but still within an hour or so driving distance to downtown | 3 |                                 |
| None of the above   | 4 | <b>[THANK &amp; TERMINATE.]</b> |
5. **[IF Q2=5, LIVES IN ALBERTA]** Do you live in...
- |   |   |                                 |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
| Calgary   | 1 |                                 |
| A suburban area of Calgary  | 2 |                                 |
| Beyond suburban Calgary but still within an hour or so driving distance to downtown | 3 |                                 |
| None of the above   | 4 | <b>[THANK &amp; TERMINATE.]</b> |
6. **[IF Q2=2,3,4,6,7]** Do you currently live in... **[READ LIST]**
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| A city or metropolitan area with a population of at least 100,000 | 1 |
| A city with a population of 30,000 to 100,000                     | 2 |
| A city or town with a population of 10,000 to 30,000              | 3 |
| A town or rural area with a population under 10,000               | 4 |

**TAG AS "URBAN" IF Q6=1 OR 2 / TAG AS RURAL IF Q6>2**

**UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED ON PAGE 1, RECRUIT A MIX OF INDIVIDUALS WHO LIVE IN A CITY OR TOWN WITH A POPULATION OF AT LEAST 30,000 AND THOSE WHO LIVE IN SMALLER TOWNS/RURAL**

7. **[IF Q2=2,3,4,6,7]** What city do you live in?

**RECORD:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ENSURE A MIX IN EACH REGION (ONLINE GROUPS)**

8. We are looking to include people of various ages in the group discussion. May I have your age please? **RECORD AGE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**RECRUIT A MIX OF AGES AT LEAST 18 YEARS OLD**

9. What is your gender identity? [If you do not feel comfortable disclosing, you do not need to do so] **[DO NOT READ LIST]**

Male	1
Female	2
Prefer to self-describe, please specify: _____	3
Prefer not to say	4

**AIM FOR 50/50 SPLIT OF MALE AND FEMALE, WHILE RECRUITING OTHER GENDER IDENTITIES AS THEY FALL**

10. We want to make sure we speak to a diversity of people. Do you identify as any of the following? **[SELECT ONE]**

An Indigenous person from Canada (First Nations, Inuit or Métis)	1
A member of a racialized community (other than an Indigenous person)	2
None of the above	3

**RECRUIT MEMBERS OF INDIGENOUS AND RACIALIZED COMMUNITIES ACROSS ALL GROUPS**

11. **[ASK ONLY IF Q10=2]** What is your ethnic background?

**RECORD ETHNICITY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**RECRUIT A MIX OF ETHNICITIES**

12. How many people, including yourself, earn an income in your household?

- |             |                      |
|-------------|----------------------|
| One         | 1                    |
| Two or more | 2 <b>SKIP TO Q14</b> |

13. Which of the following categories best corresponds to your total personal annual income, before taxes, for 2023? **[READ LIST]**

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Under \$40,000         | 1 |
| \$40,000 to \$60,000   | 2 |
| \$60,000 to \$80,000   | 3 |
| \$80,000 to \$100,000  | 4 |
| \$100,000 to \$150,000 | 5 |
| \$150,000 and over     | 6 |
| Prefer not to say      | 7 |

**IF < 40K, TAG AS LOW INCOME**

**IF ≥ 80K, TAG AS HIGH INCOME**

14. **[IF Q12=2]** Which of the following categories best corresponds to the total annual income, before taxes, of all members of your household, for 2023? **[READ LIST]**

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Under \$40,000         | 1 |
| \$40,000 to \$60,000   | 2 |
| \$60,000 to \$80,000   | 3 |
| \$80,000 to \$100,000  | 4 |
| \$100,000 to \$150,000 | 5 |
| \$150,000 and over     | 6 |
| Prefer not to say      | 7 |

**IF < 60K, TAG AS LOW INCOME**

**IF ≥ 100K, TAG AS HIGH INCOME**

**RECRUIT AT LEAST 5 PER GROUP THAT ARE CONSIDERED LOW INCOME**

15. What is the highest level of education that you have completed? **[READ LIST]**

Some high school	1
Completed high school	2
Some college	3
Graduated from college	4
Some university	5
Graduated from university	6
Prefer not to say	9

**RECRUIT A MIX**

16. Do you or does anyone in your immediate family or household work in any of the following areas? **[READ LIST]**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
A marketing research firm	1	2
A magazine or newspaper, online or print	1	2
A radio or television station	1	2
A public relations company	1	2
An online media company or as a blog writer	1	2
The government, whether federal, provincial or municipal	1	2
A company or organization in the energy sector such as hydro-electricity, oil and gas or renewable energy	1	2

**IF "YES" TO ANY OF THE ABOVE, THANK/DISCONTINUE**

17. Have you ever attended a discussion group or taken part in an interview on any topic that was arranged in advance and for which you received money for participating?

Yes	1	
No	2	<b>GO TO Q21</b>

18. When did you last attend one of these discussion groups or interviews?

Within the last 6 months	1	<b>THANK &amp; TERMINATE</b>
Over 6 months ago	2	

19. Thinking about the groups or interviews that you have taken part in, what were the main topics discussed?

**RECORD:** \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK/TERMINATE IF RELATED TO ENERGY / ENERGY AFFORDABILITY**

20. How many discussion groups or interviews have you attended in the past 5 years?

Fewer than 5	1	
Five or more	2	<b>THANK &amp; TERMINATE</b>

21. Participants in group discussions are asked to voice their opinions and thoughts, how comfortable are you in voicing your opinions in an online group discussion with others your age? Are you...

**READ OPTIONS**

Very comfortable	1	<b>MIN 5 PER GROUP</b>
Fairly comfortable	2	
Not very comfortable	3	<b>THANK &amp; TERMINATE</b>
Very uncomfortable	4	<b>THANK &amp; TERMINATE</b>

**C. INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE (ONLINE SESSIONS)**

22. I would like to invite you to participate in an online focus group session where you will exchange your opinions in a moderated discussion with other residents from your region. The discussion will be led by a researcher from the national public opinion research firm, Quorus Consulting. The session will be recorded but your participation will be confidential. The group will be hosted using an online web conferencing platform, taking place on [DAY OF WEEK], [DATE], at [TIME]. It will last 90 minutes (one and a half hours). People who attend will receive \$125 to thank them for their time.

Would you be interested in taking part in this study?

Yes 1

No 2 **THANK & TERMINATE**

23. Do you have access to a stable internet connection, capable of sustaining a 90-minute online video conference?

Yes 1

No 2 **THANK & TERMINATE**

24. Participants will be asked to provide their answers through an online web conferencing platform using a computer or a tablet or smartphone in a quiet room. Is there any reason why you could not participate? (No access to computer or tablet, internet, etc.) If you need glasses to read or a device for hearing, please remember to wear them.

Yes 1

No 2 **SKIP TO INVITATION**

25. Is there anything we could do to ensure that you can participate?

Yes 1

No 2 **THANK AND TERMINATE**

DK/NR 9 **THANK AND TERMINATE**

26. What specifically? [OPEN END]

**INTERVIEWER TO NOTE FOR POTENTIAL ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW**

**RECRUITER NOTE: WHEN TERMINATING AN INTERVIEW, SAY:** *“Thank you very much for your cooperation. We are unable to invite you to participate because we have enough participants who have a similar profile to yours.”*

27. The discussion group will be video-recorded. These recordings are used to help with analyzing the findings and writing the report. The results from the discussions will be grouped together in the research report, which means that individuals will not be identified in anyway. Neither your name nor your specific comments will appear in the research report. Is this acceptable?

Yes 1

No 2 **THANK & TERMINATE**

28. There will be some people from Natural Resources Canada and/or the Government of Canada, and other individuals involved in this project observing the session. They will not take part in the discussion and they will not know your name. Is this acceptable?

Yes 1

No 2 **THANK & TERMINATE**

29. Thank you. Just to make sure, the group will take place on [DAY OF WEEK], [DATE], at [TIME] and it will last 90 minutes (one and a half hours). Following your participation, you will receive \$125 to thank you for your time. Are you interested and available to attend?

Yes 1

No 2 **THANK & TERMINATE**

To conduct the session, we will be using a screen-sharing application called **Zoom**. **We will need to send you by email the instructions to connect.**

We recommend that you click on the link we will send you a few days prior to your session to make sure you can access the online meeting that has been setup and repeat these steps at least 10 to 15 minutes prior to your session.

As we are only inviting a small number of people to attend, your participation is very important to us. If for some reason you are unable to attend, **you cannot send someone to participate on your behalf** - please call us so that we can get someone to replace you. You can reach us at **[INSERT NUMBER]** at our office. Please ask for **[INSERT NAME]**.

So that we can contact you to remind you about the focus group or in case there are any changes, can you please confirm your name and contact information for me? **[READ INFO AND CHANGE AS NECESSARY.]**

First name \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Day time phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Night time phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you!

**If the respondent refuses to give his/her first or last name or phone number please assure them that this information will be kept strictly confidential in accordance with the privacy law and that it is used strictly to contact them to confirm their attendance and to inform them of any changes to the focus group. If they still refuse THANK & TERMINATE.**



**D. INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE (IN-FACILITY SESSIONS)**

30. I would like to invite you to participate in an in-person focus group session where you will exchange your opinions in a moderated discussion with other residents from your region. The discussion will be led by a researcher from the national public opinion research firm, Quorus Consulting. The session will be recorded but your participation will be confidential. The group will be taking place in-person on [DAY OF WEEK], [DATE], at [TIME]. It will last 90 minutes (one and a half hours). People who attend will receive \$125 to thank them for their time.

Would you be interested in taking part in this study?

Yes 1

No 2 **THANK & TERMINATE**

31. Participants may asked to write out their answers to a question or read material. Is there any reason why you could not participate? If you need glasses to read or a device for hearing, please remember to wear them.

Yes 1

No 2 **SKIP TO INVITATION**

32. Is there anything we could do to ensure that you can participate?

Yes 1

No 2 **THANK AND TERMINATE**

DK/NR 9 **THANK AND TERMINATE**

33. What specifically? [OPEN END]

**INTERVIEWER TO NOTE FOR POTENTIAL ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW**

**RECRUITER NOTE: WHEN TERMINATING AN INTERVIEW, SAY:** *“Thank you very much for your cooperation. We are unable to invite you to participate because we have enough participants who have a similar profile to yours.”*

34. The discussion group will be video-recorded. These recordings are used to help with analyzing the findings and writing the report. The results from the discussions will be grouped together in the research report, which means that individuals will not be identified in anyway. Neither your name nor your specific comments will appear in the research report. Is this acceptable?

Yes 1

No 2 **THANK & TERMINATE**

35. There will be some people from Natural Resources Canada and/or the Government of Canada, and other individuals involved in this project observing the session. They will not take part in the discussion and they will not know your name. Is this acceptable?

Yes 1

No 2 **THANK & TERMINATE**

36. Thank you. Just to make sure, the group will take place in-person on **[DAY OF WEEK], [DATE], at [TIME]** and it will last 90 minutes (one and a half hours). Following your participation, you will receive \$125 to thank you for your time. Are you interested and available to attend?

Yes 1

No 2 **THANK & TERMINATE**

Do you have a pen handy so that I can give you the address where the group will be held? It will be held at:

**Halifax**

Narrative Research

*7071 Bayers Road*

*Suite 5001*

*Halifax, Nova Scotia*

*B3L 2C2*

**Toronto**

CRC TORONTO

*121 Bloor ST. E – 2nd Floor**Toronto, ON**M4W 3M5***Calgary**

Stone Olafson

*Suite 500, 805 10 Ave SW**Calgary, Alberta**T2R 0B4*

We ask that you arrive fifteen minutes early to be sure you find parking, locate the facility and have time to check-in with the hosts. The hosts will be checking respondent's identification prior to the group, so please be sure to bring some personal identification with you (i.e. driver's license). Also, if you require glasses for reading, please bring them with you.

As we are only inviting a small number of people to attend, your participation is very important to us. If for some reason you are unable to attend, **you cannot send someone to participate on your behalf** - please call us so that we can get someone to replace you. You can reach us at **[INSERT NUMBER]** at our office. Please ask for **[INSERT NAME]**.

So that we can contact you to remind you about the focus group or in case there are any changes, can you please confirm your name and contact information for me? **[READ INFO AND CHANGE AS NECESSARY.]**

First name \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Day time phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Night time phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you!

**If the respondent refuses to give his/her first or last name or phone number please assure them that this information will be kept strictly confidential in accordance with the privacy law and that it is used strictly to contact them to confirm their attendance and to inform them of any changes to the focus group. If they still refuse THANK & TERMINATE.**

## Appendix B: Moderation guide

### Introduction to Procedures (8 minutes)

Thank you all for joining this online focus group!

- Introduce moderator/firm and welcome participants to the focus group.
  - Thanks for attending.
  - My name is [INSERT MODERATOR NAME] and I work with Quorus Consulting, and we are conducting research on behalf of the Government of Canada, and more specifically Natural Resources Canada.
  - Today we will be talking about the energy that Canadians consume, the shift to clean energy, the pace of this shift, the government's role in this shift, and Canadians' experiences and perspectives on energy affordability.
  - The discussion will last approximately 90 minutes.
  - If you have a cell phone or other electronic device, please turn it off.
- Describe focus group.
  - A discussion group is a "round table" discussion, meaning we will discuss something and everyone has an equal chance to express an opinion. We may also be asking you to answer survey questions from time to time to help guide the discussion.
  - My job is to facilitate the discussion, keeping us on topic and on time.
  - Your job is to offer your opinions on the topics I'll be presenting to you tonight/today.
  - Your honest opinion is valued. There are no right or wrong answers. This is not a knowledge test.
  - Everyone's opinion is important and should be respected.
  - We want you to speak up even if you feel your opinion might be different from others. Your opinion may reflect that of other Canadians.

#### FOR ONLINE GROUPS:

- To participate in this session, please make sure your webcam and your microphone are on and that you can hear me clearly. If you are not speaking, I would encourage you to mute your line to keep background noise to a minimum...just remember to remove yourself from mute when you want to speak! [MODER]ATOR EXPLAINS HOW TO USE MIC]
- We might use the chat function. **[MODERATOR EXPLAINS HOW TO ACCESS THE ZOOM CHAT FEATURE DEPENDING ON THE DEVICE THE PARTICIPANT IS USING]**. Let's do a quick test right now - please open the chat window and send the group a short message (e.g., Hello everyone). If you have an answer to a question and I don't get to ask you specifically, please type your response in there. We will be reviewing all chat comments at the completion of this project.

● Explanations.

- Please note that anything you say during these groups will be held in the strictest confidence. We do not attribute comments to specific people. Our report summarizes the findings from the groups but does not mention anyone by name. Please do not provide any identifiable information about yourself.
  - The final report for this session, and others, can be accessed through the Library of Parliament or Library and Archives Canada's website once it's posted.
  - Your responses will in no way affect your dealings with the Government of Canada.
  - The session is being audio-video recorded for report writing purposes / verify feedback.
  - Some of my colleagues and members of the client team from NRCan involved in this project are watching this session and this is only so they can hear the comments first-hand.
- Please note that I am not an employee of the Government of Canada and may not be able to answer questions about what we will be discussing. If questions do come up over the course of the group, we will try to get answers for you before we wrap up the session.

Any questions?

### Introductions (5 minutes)

**INTRODUCTIONS:** Let's go around – please tell us your name and a little bit about yourself such as where you live, who lives with you, what you do for a living, etc. **MODERATOR TO PROVIDE EXAMPLE AS NEEDED**

## Section 1: General views on transitioning to clean energy (15 minutes)

The first topic I'd like to explore with you is transitioning to clean energy.

- Have any of you heard about transitioning to clean energy in Canada?
  - What do you think this is referring to?

Just so we are all on the same page: **[MODERATOR SHARES THEIR SCREEN/PROVIDES HANDOUT]**

*1. Transitioning to clean energy refers to a switch from conventional fossil-fuel based energy (for example, coal and oil) to clean energies produced from renewable energy sources (for example, hydrogen, hydroelectricity, wind, solar, geothermal, etc.), as well as greater use of energy efficient products and adopting energy efficient practices. This change impacts where our electricity comes from, how we heat our homes, and how we fuel our transportation.*

*2. CLEAN ENERGY – Refers to electricity produced from sources that produce no carbon pollution (i.e., “non-emitting”), such as hydro, wind, solar, nuclear, geothermal, and tidal.*

*Canada has committed to reaching net-zero emissions by 2050, along with more than 140 other countries, including all G7 countries. Canada is also committed to meeting its target of cutting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 40 – 45 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. Given that energy production and use in Canada accounts for about 80% of emissions, a clean energy transition is a critical aspect of meeting Canada’s climate change commitments.*

What are your overall thoughts on transitioning to clean energy?

- How important, if at all, is this transition to you personally? Help me understand that.
- All things considered, how much of a priority, if at all, should this be for Canada? Please explain a bit.
- What, if anything, are the potential benefits of transitioning to clean energy?
  - In what ways, if any, would you and your household benefit from Canada transitioning to clean energy?
  - Would there be any benefits to your community, province/territory or to Canada as a whole?

- What, if anything, are potential drawbacks of transitioning to clean energy?
  - In what ways, if any, could you and your household be disadvantaged or negatively impacted from Canada transitioning to clean energy?
  - Would there be any disadvantages to your community, province/territory or to Canada as a whole?

## Section 2: Views on pace and progress made (15 minutes)

I'd like to get your views on whether Canada is making progress regarding the transition to clean energy and whether Canada is on the right or wrong track.

- As far as you can tell, is Canada on the right track or the wrong track regarding transitioning to clean energy? Please explain.
- And do you feel Canada should speed up, slow down, pause or perhaps even take a few steps back? What makes you say that?

**IF RIGHT TRACK:** What, if anything, are you seeing around you or more broadly in Canada as signs that Canada is on the right track?

- What is Canada doing well?

**IF WRONG TRACK:** *What could Canada do to get on the right track?*

*Has your household done anything as part of the transition to clean energy or to improve energy efficiency? IF YES: What have you done?*

- What could help? What would make a difference?
- As far as you know, has the energy transition had any impact on your own energy consumption?



### Section 3: Transitioning to clean energy and the government (15 minutes)

Let's turn our attention to the role the Government of Canada is or should be playing regarding the transition to clean energy.

- First of all, what role, if any, should the Government of Canada be playing when it comes to transitioning to clean energy?
- How would you describe the Government of Canada's efforts when it comes to supporting the transition to clean energy?
  - Are you aware of any actions the Government of Canada has taken regarding transitioning to clean energy? What have you heard?
    - Where did you hear about these?

**[SCREEN SHARE/PROVIDE AS HANDOUT]** I am now showing you a few examples of some recent initiatives and programs the Government has introduced to support the transition to clean energy:

- The Government of Canada's Greener Homes Grant is providing \$5,000 for Canadians to retrofit their homes to be more energy efficient and to make energy more affordable, for example, through installing heat pumps.
  - The Oil to Heat Pump Affordability Program offers Canadians up to \$10,000 to change their heating source.
  - Canada Greener Homes Loan offers Canadians an interest-free \$40,000 loan to retrofit homes.
- The Government is providing \$5,000 rebates to make zero-emission vehicles (e.g., electric vehicles) more affordable. In addition, the Government is providing funding for the construction of public charging stations.
- The Government is providing research and development funding to support technologies that will decrease greenhouse gas emissions, such as carbon capture for the oil and gas sector.
- The Government is providing funding to improve and modernize the electricity grid.

- The Government is investing in construction of battery factories and zero-emission vehicle factories to establish a manufacturing supply chain within Canada to produce zero-emission vehicles domestically.

What are your general thoughts on these types of programs and initiatives?

- **AS NEEDED:** Support/oppose/neutral?
- **AS NEEDED:** Are these programs and policies a good investment or not?
- How would you like the government to inform you about these types of programs?

What are your general thoughts about the following potential financing options?

- Would you be interested in low-interest financing for home upgrades if it meant you could lower your utility bills?
- Would you be interested in a service that plans and installs energy efficiency upgrades that can be repaid over time using the savings on monthly energy bills?

Although the list I showed you is not complete, they do represent some of the most important federal initiatives and programs. All things considered...

- ...has the federal government forgotten or neglected to take into account the interests of part of the population or certain industries/types of businesses?
- ...is the federal government overly focused on the interests of part of the population or certain industries/types of businesses?

#### Section 4: Energy affordability (30 minutes)

I would now like to discuss your household's use of energy and energy affordability in general.

- Is energy affordable in [province]? What are your theories on why it is / it's not affordable?
  - How, if at all, has the affordability of energy had any impact on how much energy you use?

- Do you think government policies have an impact on energy affordability or are other factors at play?
- **[Low priority in urban communities]** Is energy reliable in [province]? What are your theories on why it is / it's not reliable?
  - Has the reliability of energy remained the same/increased/decreased in recent years? Please expand as needed.

Let's get back to energy affordability:

- Do you believe transitioning to clean energy will make energy more affordable or less affordable for your household?
- Do you think there will be different impacts in the short (1-3 years), medium (4-10 years) or long term (11+ years)? Help me understand that.
- Is energy affordability a significant concern for your household? How does it stack up against other household expenses?
- What options, if any, are available to you to reduce your energy-related costs?
  - Where would you find this information?
- How do you think [province] compares to the rest of Canada with regards to energy affordability?

So let's take a step back and consider all the points that have been raised throughout our discussion.

Do any of you feel transitioning to clean energy in Canada is in some ways oversimplified? ...that perhaps, certain aspects of this transition are easier said than done?

**TIME PERMITTING:** And in all the talk about transitioning to clean energy in Canada, do any of you feel some things are being overlooked or forgotten? Is there a question no one is asking? Or an issue related to the clean energy transition no one is addressing?

## Conclusion (2 min)

### [MODERATOR TO CONSULT CLIENT TEAM REGARDING ANY ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS]

- This concludes what we needed to cover tonight. Does anybody have any final thoughts or comments to pass along?

Those are all the questions we had for you.

**ONLINE SESSIONS:** The team that invited you to participate in this session will contact you regarding the manner in which you can receive the incentive we promised you.

**IN-FACILITY SESSIONS:** On your way out, we would ask that you stop by the reception desk to receive the incentive we promised you and to sign-out. This will serve as confirmation that you received the incentive we promised you.

We really appreciate you taking the time to share your views. Your input is very important.

**Have a good evening!**