



Canada Revenue
Agency

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Climate Action Incentive Advertising Campaign: Concept Testing

Executive Summary

Prepared for Canada Revenue Agency

Supplier Name: The Strategic Counsel
Contract Number: 46558-195330/001/CY
Contract Value: \$39,194.05 (including HST)
Award Date: December 11, 2018
Delivery Date: February 21, 2019
Registration Number: POR 096-18

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Canada 

Climate Action Incentive Advertising Campaign: Concept Testing

Executive Summary

Prepared for the Canada Revenue Agency by The Strategic Counsel
February 2019

This public opinion research report presents the results of an online survey conducted by The Strategic Counsel on behalf of Canada Revenue Agency. The research study was conducted with 1100 Canadian residents in New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan in January 2019.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Test de concepts pour la campagne publicitaire sur l'Incitatif à agir pour le climat – Sommaire

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Catalogue Number:

Rv4-132/2019E-PDF

International Standard Book Number (ISBN):

978-0-660-31206-4

Related Publication (Registration Number: POR 096-18)

Catalogue Number Rv4-132/2019F-PDF (Executive Summary, French)
ISBN 978-0-660-08694-1

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Executive Summary

A. Background and Research Objectives

As part of the Government of Canada's carbon pollution pricing system, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) is responsible for the delivery of the Climate Action Incentive (CAI) payment to residents of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and New Brunswick, through their respective income tax and benefit returns.

Canada Revenue Agency is launching an advertising campaign in March 2019, utilizing radio and print advertising to encourage residents in these four provinces to file their income tax and benefit returns to claim the CAI payment, and to drive target audiences to the web page where more information can be found. A direct mail postcard will also be sent to residents of the four provinces at the end of March.

The key objective of this research study was to test a series of advertising concepts, specifically to evaluate:

- Preference for and likeability of each concept, by format and overall
- Performance of each concept against key diagnostics, including memorability, ability to attract audience attention, clarity, credibility, and relevance; and
- Effectiveness of messaging and the call to action.

B. Intended Use of the Research

The results of this research study offer CRA and the creative agency valuable guidance with respect to the creative approach and messaging which will be most effective in encouraging residents in the four provinces to claim the climate action incentive payment at the time they complete and submit their income tax and benefit return. In particular, results for the key ad diagnostics, combined with respondents' answers to open-ended questions regarding what they liked and disliked about the concepts, by format, and what they perceived to be the call-to-action, reveal the relative strengths and weaknesses of each concept and provide some direction in terms of improving their overall effectiveness.

C. Methodology

The Strategic Counsel undertook a 20-minute survey online with a total of 1100 residents of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and New Brunswick, drawn from an online panel. The fieldwork took place from January 22-30, 2019. Because the sample for this survey is based on those who opted-in to participate in the panel, no estimates of sampling error can be calculated. Therefore, the results cannot be considered to be statistically projectable to the target population in the four provinces in which the survey was undertaken.

Quotas were set to ensure the final sample reflected a 50/50 gender split overall, and in each of the four provinces, and reasonable representation across age groups (aged 18 and older). Regionally, a disproportionate sample design of n=1100 was employed to provide a minimum number of completions to analyze each of the four provinces sampled: Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario and New Brunswick.

Further details on the methodology, including the response rate calculation as well as the English and French survey instruments can be found in the Appendix.

The survey was designed so that each respondent evaluated:

- 3 print and 3 direct mail concepts (direct mail concepts were specific to each province) – these concepts are referred to throughout the report as **Eligibility**, **Incentive** and **Future**. Copies of the creative for both print and direct mail can be found in Section B of the Appendix.
- 2 concepts for a radio ad – these concepts are referred to as **Eligibility** and **Future**. The scripts for these concepts are included in Section B of the Appendix.

The order in which respondents saw each format was rotated. Half saw print/direct mail first and the other half listened to the radio ads first. Additionally, within each format the concepts were rotated based on least fill.

D. Key Findings

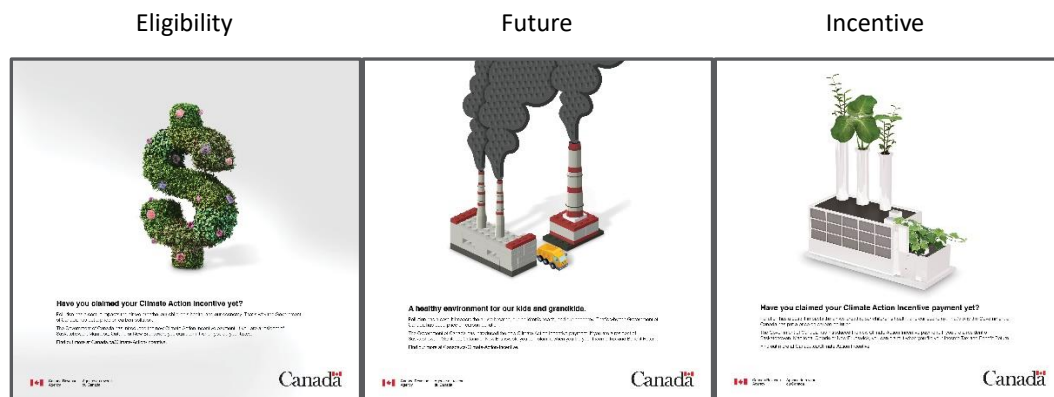
Awareness of the Climate Action Incentive (CAI) payment

Following the announcement in October, 2018, there are modest levels of awareness of the CAI payment (25% have heard of it), ranging from 21% in New Brunswick, to 23% in Ontario and Manitoba, and 35% in Saskatchewan.

Preferred Concept

Eligibility is the preferred concept, of the three concepts tested, for both the print and direct mail formats by over half of all respondents (59%). Respondents reacted positively to the clear message in the design (i.e., the dollar sign) and the text that mentioned an incentive or tax rebate. Unlike the other two concepts, Future (24%) and Incentive (17%), those who preferred the Eligibility concept found it to be more eye catching and the message to be clearer and more direct.

Examples of Print Ads Tested – 3 Concepts



The findings were not quite as clear-cut for the two radio concepts tested, although Eligibility (57%) was the preferred concept with a 14-point margin over Future (43%). Here again, respondents' preference for Eligibility was based on their perception that the message was clear and understandable. Notably, the use of children/children's voices as a creative element (in the Future concept) was seen as a somewhat divisive or polarizing feature. It worked as a positive for those who preferred the Future radio concept, but was also viewed negatively, and was explicitly stated as a reason why some chose Eligibility as their overall preference.

Likeability scores for each concept, by format, were in line with respondents' overall preference. Eligibility received the highest likeability scores for both the print (61% somewhat/strongly liked this concept) and direct mail (37% somewhat/strongly liked this concept). Likeability scores were, however, somewhat more competitive between the two radio concepts. Here again, Eligibility came out ahead, but only slightly by an 8-point margin (69% likeability for Eligibility; 61% for Future).

Message Takeaway

For the print and direct mail creative, the message to collect the CAI payment by filing your income tax and benefit return comes across reasonably clearly for many respondents regardless of the concept or the format, although it was somewhat more effective in the Eligibility and Incentive print ads compared to Future. For the latter concept, respondents were twice as likely to take away the message that pollution has a cost, rather than the key message about claiming the incentive. And, although most respondents felt that this phrase – *pollution has a cost* – was more meaningful and understandable than *Climate Action Incentive*, the combination of this phrase with the depiction of pollution in the graphic may be inadvertently overriding or diluting the call-to-action, which is to claim the incentive by filing an income tax return.

Regarding the radio advertisements, both concepts appear to relay a clear message around the Incentive. In addition, the phrase *pollution has a cost* is a key message takeaway for the Eligibility concept and is a phrase that respondents find quite memorable.

Key Diagnostics

Each concept was tested with respect to a number of key diagnostics, including: memorability, ability to grab audience attention, comprehension/clarity, believability, relevance and clarity of the call to action (to file taxes in order to claim the Incentive). Eligibility scored reasonably well, and typically higher than the other concepts, on most of these measures, regardless of the format. All concepts (in both print and radio formats) received strong scores for clarity of the call-to-action. This was the highest score of the six diagnostic metrics for which ratings were captured. Lower ratings were usually given for memorability and relevance, suggesting that these are areas that could be amplified through the creative and the messaging in all of the concepts, including Eligibility.

Call-to-Action

Two-thirds to three-quarters of respondents said they would be somewhat or very likely to claim the CAI payment when filing their return, after being exposed to any of these concepts, in print, direct mail or on the radio. Thus, the call-to-action is strong.

Notably, however, the direct mail version of Eligibility seemed to have the strongest impact on respondents, relative to other concepts and other formats, in terms of encouraging them to visit the Government of Canada website for more information or tell a family member or friend. Almost two-thirds (62%) said they would be somewhat or very likely to take these actions after seeing the direct mail version of this concept compared to half, or fewer, who said the same for the other two concepts tested.

Differences by Province

Across all four provinces, Eligibility was the clear 'winning' concept for print/direct mail. While, as noted, results were closer between the two concepts tested in radio format, respondents in Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan were more likely to favour Eligibility over Future. Only in New Brunswick were the results mixed (50% preferred Eligibility; 50% preferred Future).

It is important to note, however that respondents in Saskatchewan were less enthusiastic about any of the concepts – likeability scores for all concepts across all formats were typically lower in Saskatchewan compared to scores given by

respondents in the other three provinces. At the same time, diagnostic scores for each of the concepts were not significantly different across each of the formats.

With respect to the call-to-action, respondents in New Brunswick and Ontario are somewhat more likely to visit the Government of Canada website for more information about the CAI payment, compared to those in Manitoba or Saskatchewan. Otherwise, there were no significant differences in how the public could be expected to respond to the CAI payment campaign, across the four provinces in which it applies.

Finally, with respect to the phrase pollution has a cost – while almost two thirds in Saskatchewan agreed this phrase to be both meaningful (63%) and easy to understand (69%), this was much lower level of agreement as compared to Ontario (82% and 84%, respectively).

Demographic Differences

Women and younger respondents generally tended to respond more positively to all the concepts. Typically, women gave higher likeability ratings, compared to men and also stronger rates on all six diagnostics. The same pattern held for younger respondents, aged 18 to 24, compared to those in older age brackets.

Those aged 25 to 44 were more likely to say they would visit the Government of Canada website to get more information on the Incentive and to tell a friend, specifically in response to the Eligibility ad, but it was those aged 65 and older who were most likely to say they would claim the CAI payment when filing their income tax and benefit return (and this pattern held regardless of the concept or the format). By contrast, the direct mail version of Future seemed to have most impact on those aged 18 to 24 in terms of encouraging them to file their taxes and claim the CAI payment.

E. Conclusions

The findings from this research offer some clear direction in moving forward with the Climate Action Incentive payment campaign.

- The Eligibility concept appears to be the more effective concept in print and direct mail – the incorporation of a design feature which clearly reinforces the idea of an incentive or a refund effectively underpins and amplifies the key message and call-to-action;
- While Future has some merit with respect to the radio format, the use of children in the ad as a creative device may have a polarizing effect and, for some, may be confusing. While the children capture audience attention and connect them to the future/a cleaner future, they detract from the call-to-action which is to file taxes in order to collect the Incentive;
- Leading with the phrase *pollution has a cost* in print, but particularly in radio, does capture audience attention. It is something that respondents readily understand and has meaning for them; and
- There may be opportunities, both creatively and via messaging/content, to enhance the memorability and the relevance of each of the concepts. When asked what they liked or disliked about each of the concepts, participants' comments suggest that a short, concise and straightforward message is optimal.

F. Note to Reader

Unless otherwise noted, results shown in this report are expressed as percentages and may not add up to 100% due to rounding and/or multiple responses to a given question.

MORE INFORMATION

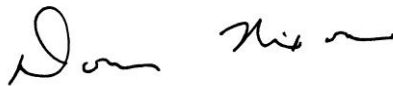
Supplier Name:	The Strategic Counsel
PWGSC Contract Number:	46558-195330/001/CY
Contract Award Date:	2018-12-11
Contract Budget:	\$39,194.05

To obtain more information on this study, please e-mail media.relations@cra-arc.gc.ca

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Signed:



Donna Nixon, Partner