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EKOS Research Associates Inc.

Chemicals Management and Environmental Health Issues Campaign Focus Groups

Findings Report

Prepared for:
Health Canada

Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français

For more information on this report, please email:

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SUMMARY

Under the Chemicals Management Plan (CMP), a public education campaign is intended to reach Canadians with messages about potential environmental health risks posed in and around the home, including suggested action that may be taken to reduce risk. The current research garnered initial impressions and feedback to proposed materials designed to inform and educate Canadians. Participant feedback is intended to assist in determining the direction of any changes required to communicate the most effective and appropriate message possible.

A total of ten focus groups were held across five locations. Groups were held in Ottawa and Toronto in Ontario, Montreal in Quebec, St. John's in Newfoundland and Vancouver in British Columbia. In each centre, one session included predominantly parents of children six and under, while the other session was generally open to anyone in the general public. Eight of the ten groups were held in English and two were conducted in French in Montreal.

Highlights

Awareness and Concerns

Focus group participants were concerned about the health risks of various environmental factors or household products in and around their home. Cleaning products were among the items most frequently mentioned, along with mould in the home, pesticides, and carbon monoxide. The potential risks of radon, off-gassing from plastic products, allergenic or toxic particles in carpets, asbestos in older homes and spray insulation, or scented products are of concern to some participants. A plethora of other concerns were noted by a few such as drywall, cellular phones, smoke, animal feces, bristles from barbeque brushes, and window blinds with cords.

Almost all participants felt there is abundant information about the risks associated with environmental factors or household products. However, most stated that there is “too much” information, confusing and conflicting information, or a lack of trust in the source of the information.

Creative Concepts

The primary goal of the discussions was to garner reactions to four creative concepts. These were titled: **There's More Than, I'd Do Anything, Everyday Hero, and Healthy Home Toolbox**. Most participants favoured the **There's More Than** concept, appreciating the design of the material, the factual approach, and the idea that decisions at home affect the broader environment. For some, the tone of the

concept was somewhat fear-based, which was motivating for some to take action, but a negative aspect for others. The **I'd Do Anything** concept likewise garnered a positive impression by most participants. For this concept, the emotional connection was deemed motivating to take action to protect themselves and their families from environmental factors and household products in and around the home. A few participants without spouses or children reacted negatively, however, as they did not relate to the images of families. Some others felt the soft font, and less specific or explanatory information, weakened the approach.

Everyday Hero was favourable to many, but strongly negative to others. The playful approach, and boldness of images, were cited as positive features by many participants. Conversely, some felt that using the term "hero" is unwarranted by the simple actions, making light of true heroes. Finally, the **Healthy Home Toolbox** was the least preferred approach. While some participants felt the concept was straightforward and pragmatic, others did not connect to the approach as it was lacking in emotion, confusing in the details, or easy to dismiss.

Information Sheets

The majority of participants thought the inclusion of 5 Healthy Home Tips in the ads gave important context for the photos and tag-lines, regardless of the approach, and made the overall message of the ads more clear for the viewing audience. Upon examination of the specific content of these tips, respondents thought overall that the tips were a good starting point, and may stimulate some to look for more information, but were too vague to illicit direct action to mitigate risks around the home. Participants felt that for the Home Tips to be most effective, they should contain detailed information to educate people on these potential risks and the simple steps to take for protection in the home, while including all relevant safety precautions to avoid misleading the public.

The handout, **Your Healthy Home – How Your Environment Affects Your Health**, provided respondents with a better understanding of the potential health risks associated with chemicals in the home and the importance of mitigating those risks for the health of themselves and their loved ones. Participants noted the value of the information provided, and suggested that they would want to see more detail, a stronger connection to the individual sections of the tips sheet, **9 Healthy Home Messages**, and sources listed beside cited statistics and studies to increase the overall effectiveness of those messages.

Mobile App

The Mobile App initially intrigued some respondents; the calendar, checklists, and link to local resources being the most popular components. Following discussion of the proposed functions in the groups, most participants felt they would be better served by a website platform that individuals could access, as needed, without affecting the available storage of their mobile devices, given that use would likely not be frequent enough to warrant use as an app.

The contract value for the POR project is \$57,671.81 (including HST).

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POLITICAL NEUTRALITY CERTIFICATION

This certification is to be submitted with the final report submitted to the Project Authority.

I hereby certify as Senior Officer of EKOS Research Associates Inc. that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research.

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

Signed by: Susan Galley (Vice President)