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Spring 2019 Focus Groups (Third Cycle) **Final Report**

Prepared for the Privy Council Office of Canada

August 2019

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This public opinion research report presents the results of a series of focus groups conducted by Phoenix SPI on behalf of the Privy Council Office. The research study was conducted with Canadians aged 18 and older between June 6 and June 26, 2019. In total, 12 focus groups were conducted in six locations across the country: Surrey, Fredericton, Sorel, Belleville, Edmonton, and Victoria.

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Executive Summary

The Communications and Consultations Secretariat of the Privy Council Office (PCO) provides advice and support to the Government of Canada, the Clerk of the Privy Council, as well as federal departments and agencies on matters relating to communications and consultations. One tool used by PCO in order to fulfil this mandate is public opinion research. Phoenix Strategic Perspectives (Phoenix SPI) was commissioned by PCO to conduct a series of focus groups to explore the views of Canadians on current events of relevance to the federal government.

1. Research Objectives and Purpose

The main objective of the focus groups was to explore the perceptions of Canadians on the state of current events, which included their opinions on the environment, steel, pipelines, fisheries, and vaccines. This input was needed because complex issues are often difficult to communicate to the Canadian public in a manner that is easily and clearly understood. The target population for the focus groups was adult Canadians aged 18 and older. By carrying out this research, PCO was able to ensure a better understanding of the views and concerns of the public. This understanding will be used to develop effective communications strategies and products.

2. Methodology

Twelve focus groups were conducted with Canadians, with two groups conducted in each of the following locations: Surrey, Fredericton, Sorel, Belleville, Edmonton, and Victoria. The groups in Sorel were conducted in French and the groups in all other locations were conducted in English. In all locations except Surrey groups were segmented by gender (one group with men and one with women). In Surrey, groups were segmented by home ownership (one group with homeowners and one with renters). All groups included a mix of participants by age, employment status, and education. Groups in Surrey also included a mix by gender.

The following additional specifications applied to this research: eleven individuals were recruited by phone for each two-hour group; participants received an honorarium of \$100 in appreciation of their time. All groups were held in a facility that allowed observation of the sessions, either behind a one-way mirror, or via closed-circuit TV in a room adjacent to the meeting room where the focus groups took place.

In total, 109 Canadians took part in this research:

Location	Language	Audience	Number of Participants	Date and Local Time
Surrey, BC	English	Renters	7	June 6; 5:30 pm
Surrey, BC	English	Homeowners	10	June 6; 7:30 pm
Fredericton, NB	English	Male	9	June 11; 5:30 pm
Fredericton, NB	English	Female	10	June 11; 7:30 pm
Sorel, QC	French	Female	10	June 12; 5:30 pm
Sorel, QC	French	Male	9	June 12; 7:30 pm
Belleville, ON	English	Male	9	June 18; 5:30 pm

Belleville, ON	French	Female	9	June 18; 7:30 pm
Edmonton, AB	English	Female	9	June 25; 5:30 pm
Edmonton, AB	English	Male	9	June 25; 7:30 pm
Victoria, BC	English	Male	9	June 26; 5:30 pm
Victoria, BC	English	Female	9	June 26; 7:30 pm

All steps of the project complied with *The Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research*.

The investigators for this study were Philippe Azzie and Alethea Woods. Philippe moderated the groups in Fredericton and Sorel. Alethea moderated the groups in Surrey, Belleville, Edmonton and Victoria. Both moderators contributed to the final report.

3. Limitations and Use of the Research Results

This research was qualitative in nature, not quantitative. Qualitative research is designed to reveal a rich range of opinions and interpretations rather than to measure what percentage of the target population holds a given opinion. As such, the results provide an indication of participants' views about the issues explored, but they cannot be generalized to the full population of Canadians. Specifically, these results must not be used to estimate the numeric proportion or number of individuals in the population who hold a particular opinion because they are not statistically projectable.

4. Summary of Findings

Government of Canada News

Participants collectively identified a variety of things they had seen, read, or heard about the Government of Canada recently. The things identified most frequently were pipelines, including issues related to Canada's oil fields and oil production, as well as tension between China and Canada over the possible extradition of a Huawei executive. Other top-of mind issues were identified by smaller numbers. These included the following: the federal government plan to reduce/ban the use of some plastics; the price on carbon; the Phoenix payroll issue; the SNC Lavalin issue; federal government efforts to manage Canada-U.S. relations and federal-provincial relations; Canada's garbage dispute with the Philippines; reconciliation with Indigenous peoples; issues surrounding the resignation of two federal ministers; the creation of over one million jobs since 2015; the report on missing and murdered Indigenous women; lack of additional funding for the office of the auditor general; federal action/assistance related to floods; a national pharmacare program; and the upcoming federal election (Fall 2019).

Health Care¹

Asked to identify the biggest health care challenge in their community, participants routinely pointed to a shortage of physicians/difficulty finding general practitioners, a shortage of specialists, and long wait times for procedures, operations or treatments. A number of participants also

¹ Health care issues were explored with participants in all locations except Surrey.

identified issues related to older Canadians/seniors as a big health challenge in their community. This included an aging population, lack of home care services, and lack of retirement homes/wait times for senior' homes.

Awareness of federal initiatives in health care was relatively limited. A majority of participants said they were unaware or did not know of anything the federal government had done regarding health care over the past few years. Some participants added or specified that health care is predominantly a provincial jurisdiction and/or that the federal government's role is primarily to provide funding to the provinces.

Participants were given a handout identifying some possible priorities the federal government could address regarding health care. They were asked to rank the items they believe should be the first, second, and third priorities of the government. The item most often identified as the top priority was addressing doctor and nurse shortages, followed at a distance by making it easier for Canadians to eat healthy by making healthy food more affordable and providing all Canadians with fair/equal access to affordable prescription medications.

Drawing their attention to the item, 'providing all Canadians with fair and equal access to affordable prescription medications', participants were asked what they thought 'fair and equal access' would entail. In the minds of participants, this expression tended to be associated with one of three things: universal/uniform access (i.e. access applies to everyone, everywhere); basic coverage/minimum standards (i.e. a 'basic minimum' covered in terms of public funding of prescription medications); and means-tested coverage (i.e. coverage would be determined and provided according to one's income).

Participants were given a second handout identifying some possible names that could be used for a government strategy to improve access to affordable prescription medications. Two names led the way in terms of preferences: 'Canada Prescription Plan' and 'National Pharmacare Plan'. Both were preferred by similar numbers of participants and each was identified twice as often as their nearest competitor, 'Universal Prescription Plan'. Reasons for preferring these two names tended to be similar, namely their inclusiveness.

Environment

Participants collectively identified a variety of things they have seen, read or heard about the environment lately. Issues most often identified related to changes in the environment and/or their impact, including, for example, global warming proceeding at a faster rate in Canada than elsewhere, rising average temperatures, glaciers melting at a faster rate than before, and an increase in the number of species at risk of extinction.

Awareness of the issue of plastics pollution was widespread. Positive reaction to the government of Canada taking action to ban single use plastics and perceptions that such action is important were also widespread, though support was sometimes qualified by reference to the need to have effective and convenient alternatives in place in order for the ban to work effectively. Impressions of what such a ban would apply to included the following: water bottles, plastic grocery bags, re-sealable zipper storage bags, plastic wrap, disposable coffee cups, packaging wrap/bubble wrap, milk jugs, straws, plastic utensils, and agricultural plastics (e.g. plastic baling twine).

Food Safety

Participants were asked what benefits they see and concerns they might have with the Government of Canada relying more on technology in the future when it comes to monitoring low-risk food facilities. Participants had no difficulty identifying potential benefits to such an approach. Routinely identified benefits included more vigilant staff (because of the constant surveillance), cost-savings, data capture on a continuous basis, and the ability to track over time/long-term analysis, among others. Concerns about such an approach included cameras not being able to capture everything (e.g. smells/odors), unscrupulous operators finding ways to avoid cameras' field of vision, technical problems with cameras, potential privacy concerns, and redundancy issues, specifically the need for someone to review video footage.

Most participants were divided when asked what impact using technology in this way would have on their level of trust in Canada's food system. Some said they would have less trust and others said this would have no impact on their level of trust. A small number of participants felt that they would have more trust in Canada's food safety system if cameras were used in low-risk facilities.

Participants were informed that another potential future scenario could involve the Government of Canada using a third-party to review data captured by cameras installed in low-risk food facilities instead of Government of Canada analysts doing this. Here as well, participants were divided when asked what impact it would have on their level of trust in Canada's food system. Once again, nearly all participants were divided between ones who said they would have less trust and ones who said it would have no impact on their level of trust.

The contract value was \$249,535.19 (including HST).

Political Neutrality Certification

I hereby certify, as a Senior Officer of Phoenix Strategic Perspectives, that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Policy on Communications and Federal Identity of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not contain any reference to electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leader.

Signed:



Alethea Woods, President
Phoenix Strategic Perspectives

Detailed Findings

1. Government of Canada News

Things seen, read or heard about the Government of Canada

Participants collectively identified a variety of things they had seen, read, or heard about the Government of Canada recently. The things identified most frequently were pipelines/issues related to Canada's oil fields/oil production and tension between China and Canada over the possible extradition of a Huawei executive. Other issues included the following:

- federal government plan/announcement to reduce/ban the use of some plastics;
- the price on carbon;
- environmental issues (unspecified);
- the Phoenix payroll issue;
- the SNC Lavalin issue;
- federal government efforts to manage Canada-U.S. relations;
- federal government efforts to manage federal-provincial relations;
- Canada's garbage dispute with the Philippines;
- reconciliation with Indigenous peoples;
- issues surrounding the resignation of two federal ministers;
- the creation of over one million jobs since 2015;
- the report on missing and murdered Indigenous women;
- lack of additional funding for the office of the auditor general;
- federal action/assistance related to floods;
- a national pharmacare program; and
- the upcoming federal election (Fall 2019).

In the course of the discussion of current issues, participants in Surrey, Fredericton, and Belleville were asked if they had heard anything about certain specific issues. These included money laundering in Surrey, veterans' services in Fredericton, and the new trade agreement signed between Canada, the United States, and Mexico in Belleville.

Surrey – Money Laundering

Virtually all participants in Surrey said that they had heard something about money laundering, a problem they described as the process through which illicit money enters the sphere of legitimate cash flows and thereby loses all trace of its origins. Put more colloquially, the process is one through which money is 'cleaned' or 'washed' through various transactions, such as buying chips at casinos with illicit money and cashing out those chips for legitimate money, as well as cash real estate or car purchases.

There was widespread agreement that this is a serious problem in B.C., although some participants felt there were more serious problems facing the province. The seriousness of the problem was based on the impression that money laundering affects everything in the lower mainland of B.C., particularly the high cost of housing, which everyone identified as an issue in Surrey. A clear sense of unfairness was also evident – a feeling that it is unfair that money laundering activities adversely affect the lives of everyone by affecting the cost of living in the lower mainland.

There was no real sense or awareness among participants that the federal government has done anything on this issue, beyond looking into it.

Participants were then informed that the Government of Canada announced in its spring budget that \$70 million would be spent on anti-money laundering initiatives, including for the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to investigate these crimes, especially in the housing sector. Asked if they thought this was too much, enough, or whether the federal government needed to do more, nearly everyone felt that this was not enough. Some felt that the problem is too large for the federal government to do anything about and/or that the federal government should focus on closing ambiguities or inadequacies in existing laws that allow for money laundering.

Fredericton – Veterans’ Services

Most participants in Fredericton said they had not heard anything lately about veterans’ services. The few who recalled anything, or thought they did, referred to reductions in services for veterans, veterans having difficulty accessing programs, and changes to benefits related to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Asked if the Government of Canada has done anything on these issues, most said they did not know, while a few thought that new benefits had been introduced. Asked specifically if they had heard of ‘Pensions for Life’, most participants said they had not. Those who had heard of it, or thought they had, could not comment on it except to say that a pension for veterans is a good thing.

Belleville – Trade Agreement

Most participants in Belleville said they had heard of the new trade agreement signed between Canada, the United States and Mexico. Opinion varied as to whether the new agreement, overall, is a good trade deal for Canada. Some said they did not know or did not have enough information to offer an opinion. Others said it was probably the best deal that Canada could get. Finally, some were critical of the trade deal, based on the impression that it could adversely affect Canadian dairy farmers.

Asked specifically if they had heard anything about dairy farmers, including compensation for Canadian dairy farmers, most participants in Belleville said they had not. Participants were then informed that the deal gives U.S. dairy farmers about 3.6 percent access to Canada’s dairy markets (slightly more than what had been given to other countries in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) trade deal signed earlier in the year), and that the Government of Canada has said it will provide compensation to Canadian dairy farmers who are impacted. Following receipt of this information, participants were asked how important the issue of compensation for Canadian dairy farmers is. In response, there was a widespread impression that this issue is important or very important for dairy farmers in Canada.

When asked more generally how important the Canada-U.S. trading relationship is when compared to all the issues facing Canada right now, there was near unanimity that this relationship is very important.

2. Health Care

Health care issues were explored with participants in all locations except Surrey.

Biggest health care challenges

Asked to identify the biggest health care challenge in their community, participants routinely pointed to a shortage of physicians/difficulty finding general practitioners/family doctors, a shortage of specialists, and long wait times for procedures, operations or treatments. A number of participants also identified issues related to older Canadians/seniors as a big health challenge in their community. This included an aging population, lack of home care services, and lack of retirement homes/wait times for senior' homes.

A host of other challenges was identified, including the following:

- lack of walk-in clinics;
- outdated equipment;
- lack of mental health care services;
- lack of front-line staff;
- overworked front-line staff;
- absence of coverage through the public health system for certain treatments, procedures and/or medications;
- cuts to health care;
- bed shortages/overcrowding in hospitals;
- credential recognition for physicians trained outside Canada; and
- fraudulent/uncertified practitioners.

Some challenges were identified in specific locations. In Sorel, air quality/air pollution and the centralization of health-related services in larger urban centers were identified as big challenges. In Fredericton, lack of transportation for the disabled and lack of affordable housing were identified as health care or health-related challenges. In Edmonton, opioid addiction and overdoses among youth and young adults, as well as neglect of childhood vaccination were identified as big challenges for the city.

Limited awareness of federal initiatives in health care

Awareness of federal initiatives or action in health care was relatively limited. Indeed, a majority of participants said they were unaware or did not know of anything the federal government had done regarding health care over the past few years. Some participants added or specified that health care is predominantly a provincial jurisdiction and/or that the federal government's role is primarily to provide funding to the provinces.

That being said, at least a few participants in most groups were able to identify something that the federal government has done over the past few years in health care. These included the following:

- medical assistance in dying legislation (Bill C-14);
- legalization of cannabis (Bill C-45);
- work on credential recognition for physicians trained outside North America;
- increased federal transfer payments for health care;
- establishing standards for making buildings accessible;

- creating various health-related helplines;
- revising Canada's food guide;
- approving supervised consumption sites;
- a proposal to provide free menstrual products in federally regulated workplaces; and
- a proposal for a national pharmacare program.

Reaction to potential health care priorities

Participants were given a handout identifying some possible priorities the federal government could address regarding health care. They were asked to rank the items they believe should be the first, second, and third priorities of the government, as well as identify anything they thought the federal government should not do. The list included the following items:

- *Addressing doctor and nurse shortages*
- *Ensuring everyone has access to affordable contraception*
- *Helping Canadians with the cost of equipment for their disabilities*
- *Making it easier for Canadians to eat healthy by making healthy food more affordable*
- *Making large investments into research to find new cures and treatments for diseases*
- *Making palliative care more available and affordable for those who need it*
- *Providing all Canadians with fair and equal access to affordable prescription medications*
- *Providing financial support to caregivers so more people can remain at home while dealing with medical issues*
- *Providing treatment to those addicted to opioids and other illicit drugs*
- *Reducing wait times for mental health services*
- *Taking steps to ensure all children are vaccinated with the exception of those with allergies or medical conditions that prohibit them from receiving a vaccine*

The item most often identified as the top priority was addressing doctor and nurse shortages. It was ranked first by half or more of the participants in all but one set of groups (those in Edmonton). In terms of the number one priority, addressing doctor and nurse shortages was followed at a distance by making it easier for Canadians to eat healthy by making healthy food more affordable and providing all Canadians with fair/equal access to affordable prescription medications. No more than a few participants identified any of the other items as the top priority for the federal government.

Reasons given to explain the importance of addressing doctor and nurse shortages focussed on the primary function they play in terms of health care. More specifically, participants routinely provided the following reasons to explain the priority that should be accorded to addressing doctor and nurse shortages:

- doctors and nurses represent the front-line in terms of health care (i.e. they are usually the first point of access to the health system);
- more doctors and nurses ensure greater access to primary health care, and therefore a greater likelihood of addressing health issues before they become serious;
- other aspects of the health care system are affected by the viability of care provided by doctors and nurses (i.e. it has a chain reaction or ripple effect elsewhere);
- providing more doctors and nurses is cost effective and helps lower the overall cost of health care by investing resources in the provision of primary care; and

- the tangible negative effects of a lack of doctors and nurses are evident wherever such shortages exist (e.g. shortages result in overwork and burnout for existing personnel, which results in poor quality health care).

The only item identified with any frequency as something the federal government should not do was ensuring everyone has access to affordable contraception. Reasons why the federal government should not do this were based on two assumptions: that use of contraception is a personal choice, as opposed to a medical need, so the State has no role to play here; and that lack of access to affordable contraception is not a major health issue or problem in Canada. A few participants were unsure whether the federal government should take steps to ensure all children are vaccinated with the exception of those with allergies or medical conditions that prohibit them from receiving a vaccine.

Understanding of ‘fair and equal access’ to affordable prescription medications

Drawing their attention to the item ‘providing all Canadians with fair and equal access to affordable prescription medications’, participants were asked what they thought ‘fair and equal access’ would entail. In the minds of participants, this expression tended to be associated with one of three things:

1. *Universal/uniform access*: Some participants associated ‘fair and equal access’ to affordable prescription medications with the idea of universality and/or uniformity of access. In other words, fair and equal access means access to prescription medications applies to everyone, everywhere.
2. *Basic coverage/minimum standards*: Some participants associated fair and equal access more with *what* is covered rather than *who* is covered. Specifically, fair and equal access means that there is ‘standard’ coverage or a ‘basic minimum’ covered in terms of public funding of prescription medications. It was suggested, for example, that this could mean that someone who requires two different drugs for cancer treatment is entitled to coverage for both, not one or the other. Another example was that someone who requires ‘life saving’ medications would receive coverage for such medications.
3. *Means-tested coverage*: For some participants ‘fair and equal access’ to affordable prescription medications suggested that coverage would be determined and provided according to one’s income. Although universal in the sense of being available to all, it would not be equal in the sense of everyone being covered equally. The more income one has, the lower the coverage one would be entitled to (and vice-versa). In other words, the main focus would be on making prescription medications affordable or more affordable to those less/least able to pay for them on their own. Participants in Sorel, especially women, were most likely to advance this interpretation of ‘fair and equal access’.²

² One possible explanation for the greater emphasis on this interpretation in Sorel might have to do with the fact that the French translation of ‘equal’ in the expression ‘fair and equal access’ is ‘équitable’ (equitable) rather than ‘égal’ (equal). By definition, treating people equitably does not mean treating them equally, so this may have had an impact on Francophone participants’ interpretation of the meaning of the expression.

Limited awareness of federal activity in ensuring access to prescription medications

Few participants recalled having heard anything in the news about the Government of Canada doing something to ensure access to affordable prescription medications. Those who did referred generally to the proposed national pharmacare program. Most participants identified this as an issue that they think would affect them personally, either now or in the future.

Widespread awareness of expression 'pharmacare'

There was widespread awareness of the expression 'pharmacare', with most or all participants in every group claiming to have heard of it. Asked what the expression means, participants routinely provided variations on the theme of publicly-funded coverage for medications. These variations emphasized the following things: 'subsidized medications', 'affordable medications', 'coverage of prescription medications', 'a national system', 'socialization of prescription medications', and 'universal coverage'.

Reaction to potential names for strategy to improve access to prescription medications

Participants were given a second handout identifying some possible names that could be used for a government strategy to improve access to affordable prescription medications. They were asked to identify any names that they liked, with a focus on the one name that they think would be the best name for this sort of strategy. The list included the following names:

- *Affordable Drug Strategy*
- *Affordable Prescriptions Program*
- *Canada Prescription Plan*
- *Canadian Drug Plan*
- *Comprehensive Drug Care*
- *Comprehensive Prescription Plan*
- *National Pharmacare Plan*
- *National Prescription Insurance*
- *Prescription Access Plan*
- *Universal Drug Care*
- *Universal Pharmacare Program*
- *Universal Prescription Plan*

Preferences varied within and across groups. Indeed, in only one group did a majority pronounce itself one way. Nor did most participants collectively (i.e. across all groups) identify a preference for one name. That being said, two names led the way in terms of preferences: 'Canada Prescription Plan' and 'National Pharmacare Plan'. Both were preferred by similar numbers of participants and each was identified twice as often as their nearest competitor, 'Universal Prescription Plan'.

Reasons for preferring these two names tended to be similar, namely their inclusiveness (captured by the respective terms 'Canada' and 'National'). It was also noted that the terms 'Canada' and 'National' are comprehensive without being too general or abstract, something that makes them preferable to the expression 'universal'.

There was a relatively widespread critical reaction in Anglophone groups to the set of names that include the term ‘drug’ because of negative connotations associated with the term.³ Beyond that, dislike for any specific names or terms was limited, and related to the following:

- the term ‘universal’ because it sounds American;
- ‘affordable prescriptions program’, because it does not sound inclusive;
- the term ‘program’ because it sounds too bureaucratic; and
- the term ‘insurance’ because it implies that there are conditions to meet.

3. Local Challenges

Local challenges were explored in Fredericton, Belleville, and Victoria, while in Surrey, participants were asked specifically about housing.

Local challenges in various locations

Perceptions of local challenges tended to vary by location.

Fredericton

Participants in Fredericton attributed importance to a variety of local issues, with men and women tending to emphasize different issues. The exception (i.e. the issue identified as important by both women and men) was homelessness. Beyond this, men tended to emphasize lack of jobs and unemployment, low wages, and limited accessibility for people with disabilities. Beyond homelessness, women tended to emphasize health-related challenges, including the need for home care, mental health care, physician shortages, and wait times for medical treatments. Women also emphasised a need for affordable housing, senior housing, and improvements to public transportation as local challenges.

When it came to what their city needs in terms of infrastructure, both men and women pointed to affordable housing and road repairs. Men also pointed to the need for flood plains and a new bridge over the St. John river to facilitate traffic flow. For their part, women also highlighted the need to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.⁴

Thinking back over the past year, both men and women pointed to military assistance with flooding as a federal government action that has had a positive impact on Fredericton. Beyond that the only thing mentioned was the suggestion by a few participants that the federal pollution pricing plan might have a positive impact on their city. Most participants could not think of any federal action that will have a negative impact on their city, though a few pointed to reductions in transfer payments and the price on pollution.

Asked what industry is most important to the local economy, both men and women pointed to technology and post-secondary education institutions. Some women also pointed to the provincial government and tourism, while some men pointed to small business in general and farming. Participants were unsure/uncertain about any federal support for local industry recently. Reference

³ Where the English names used the term ‘drug’, the corresponding French versions used the term ‘médicaments’.

⁴ Improving accessibility for people with a disability was identified as an issue by both women and men, though men identified it as an important local issue and women identified it as a need in terms of infrastructure.

was made to a grant for entrepreneurial activity but there was uncertainty as to whether this was provided by the federal or provincial government.

Participants identified a range of services for Canadians provided by the Government of Canada:

- Canada Pension Plan
- Employment Insurance
- Health care
- The military
- Passports
- Coast Guard
- Service Canada
- RCMP
- Canada Revenue Agency
- Services for Veterans
- Statistics Canada
- Student loans
- The Homelessness Partnering Strategy.

Generally-speaking, participants tended to be neutral or moderately positive when asked how satisfied they are with Government of Canada services. Most of the rest were uncertain, with some noting that they have no standard to compare it to.

Belleville

Participants in Belleville identified unemployment/the need for jobs as a key local issue, with some emphasizing the need to attract more businesses to the area. Women also tended to emphasize a need for housing/affordable housing, with some adding that people from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) are moving to Belleville, something that is driving up housing prices. For their part, men also drew attention to flooding as an important local challenge, some noting that it is happening more frequently than before, and to the need to revitalize the downtown core of the city.

When it came to what their city needs in terms of infrastructure, both men and women pointed to road repairs/new roads and the sewage system. Women also pointed to public transit issues and high speed rail (using existing tracks), while men mentioned a need for homeless shelters and mixed-income housing developments.

Thinking back over the past year, both men and women pointed to the legalization of cannabis as federal government action that has had a positive impact on Belleville. Some suggested that it has freed up the police force to focus on different local issues, while others suggested that it has created spin-off industries and businesses. Beyond that, participants could not think of any recent federal action that has had a positive impact on their city. Most participants could not think of any federal action that will have a negative impact on their city, though a few pointed to the potential for negative effects of legalizing cannabis.

Asked what industry is the most important to the local economy, both men and women pointed to manufacturing and some women also pointed to tourism. Most participants felt that the federal government has been somewhat supportive of manufacturing in the area, though a few pointed to the need to focus more on artificial intelligence methods.

Participants identified a relatively narrow range of services for Canadians provided by the Government of Canada:

- Passports
- Service Canada
- Employment Insurance
- services for Veterans
- Canada Revenue Agency/taxation
- Indigenous Affairs tax exemption.

Asked how satisfied they are with government of Canada services, participants generally responded favourably.

Victoria

Participants in Victoria identified housing/affordable housing and transportation as key local issues. One consequence seen to result from the lack of affordable housing was a labour shortage because people are unable to find suitable housing on the wages they earn working in the city. Measures proposed to deal with this issue included the provincial government providing incentives to renters, limiting property speculation, and re-zoning unused public property. Women also tended to emphasize lack of infrastructure/aging infrastructure, lack of resources for mental health, and wildlife encroachment as issues. Some men also referenced municipal political issues.

When it came to what their city needs in terms of infrastructure, participants pointed to more roads and/or light rail transit. Women also mentioned schools, hospitals, public transit as well as more park and ride facilities. Men also emphasized the need for a new bridge, passenger ferries, and/or high-speed rail to connect the West Shore communities to Victoria. It was noted by the men that an alternative to the Malahat Highway is needed. The Malahat is the main commuter route between Victoria and the rest of the Vancouver Island, and when there is an accident or weather that shuts down this highway, residents cannot access Victoria or must take a lengthy detour to do so. There was widespread agreement that sewage and sewage treatment plants is a local problem. By contrast, modernizing the Royal B.C. museum was not seen as a major local issue. No-one felt that this should be a priority.

Thinking back over the past year, women pointed to the legalization of cannabis as federal government action that has had a positive impact on Victoria. Beyond that, women could not think of any recent federal action that has had a positive impact on their city. Federal assistance for first-time homebuyers was described as a good measure in general, but not one that will help people in Victoria. For their part, men pointed to the following federal government actions as having had a positive impact on Victoria: the Mackenzie Interchange project, new lighthouses and Coast Guard search and rescue stations, shipbuilding, and continuing support for health care services. Most participants could not think of any federal action that will have a negative impact on their city, though a few women suggested that legalizing cannabis can/has had negative effects.

Asked what industry is the most important to the local economy, both men and women pointed to tourism. Women also identified technology, education, and government. For their part, men did not think it was the role of the federal government to support local industry (i.e. this was the responsibility of local and provincial governments).

Participants identified various services for Canadians provided by the Government of Canada:

- passports
- Service Canada
- Employment Insurance
- Old Age Security
- Canada Pension Plan
- The Canada Revenue Agency
- Armed forces
- RCMP

Asked how satisfied they are with government of Canada services, participants generally responded favourably.

Surrey

Homeowners' main concerns when it comes to housing in their city included affordability, a perceived increase in the number of single-family homes with secondary rental suites (e.g. a basement or in-law suite)⁵, a perceived lack of regulations for developers, and infrastructure not keeping up with new housing developments. Renters' main concern was affordability. Homeowners felt that it is important to be able to own a home if one wants to, and most renters said they would want to own a home if they could.

Most renters said they would be comfortable taking on a mortgage now because they already pay monthly rent, which is not very different from having a mortgage. Those who would not be comfortable taking on a mortgage explained that they are concerned about the volatility of the housing market and whether their purchase would be worth it in the long run (i.e. would the home maintain its value over time).

All homeowners and most renters had heard of the Government of Canada's First-Time Home Buyers Incentive. The following description of the incentive was read to participants:

The Government of Canada created the First Time Home Buyers Incentive. Under this plan, you can get an interest-free loan from CMHC to cover 5% of the cost of your first home – or 10% if it's a new build, so as to encourage developers to build more homes. This means First-Time Buyers would not need as large of a mortgage, reducing their payments. For example, on a \$500,000 home, this could drop your monthly mortgage payments by over \$225 a month. When you sold your house, CMHC would collect 5% of the sale price of the house back, as repayment for this loan.

Reaction to the incentive was similar among renters and homeowners. There was a relatively widespread impression that the premise is good, but that houses are too expensive in the lower mainland for this to be very helpful. It was suggested that the incentive might be good for a young person buying a condominium, but that the threshold is too low for purchasing a single-family detached house.

Most participants had also heard of the mortgage stress test, which was described to participants as follows:

⁵ The concern with secondary suites is the densification of neighbourhoods (more vehicles, more people, etc.) which were originally designed to accommodate single-family dwellings.

The Government of Canada introduced a stress test in late 2017 that is applied to all new insured mortgages – including those where the buyer has more than 20% for a down payment. The stress test is aimed at assuring the lender that the home buyer could still afford the mortgage if interest rates were to rise. The home buyer would need to qualify for a loan at the negotiated rate in the mortgage contract, but also at the Bank of Canada’s five-year fixed posted mortgage rate, which is an average of the posted rates of the big six banks in Canada.

Reaction to the test among renters was that the premise is good (i.e. it will help to prevent a housing crash similar to what occurred in the U.S.), but that the effect is it prevents a proportion of potential homebuyers from entering the housing market (when previously, this was possible). Homeowners tended to be more critical, suggesting that the test is designed primarily to protect banks from homeowners defaulting on their mortgage when/if interest rates go up as opposed to helping homeowners minimize the financial risks associated with homeownership.

4. Environment

Things seen, read or heard lately about the environment

Participants in Surrey, Victoria, and Edmonton collectively identified a variety of things they have seen, read or heard about the environment lately. Issues most often identified related to changes in the environment and/or their impact, including the following:

- global warming proceeding at a faster rate in Canada than elsewhere;
- rising average temperatures;
- rising ocean temperatures;
- glaciers melting at a faster rate than before;
- an increase in the number of species at risk of extinction;
- the effects of climate change on orca/killer whales;
- dry weather resulting in death of western cedars; and
- forest fires.

The following issues were also identified:

- issues related to pipeline construction;
- garbage from Canada sent to the Philippines;
- the release of ammonia into the Fraser river;
- concerns over water pollution in general;
- issues related to genetically modified foods and the use of pesticides;
- recycling programs not working effectively;
- water restrictions in Victoria;
- problems with gypsy moths; and
- restrictions on salmon fishing in B.C.

Issues related specifically to the Government of Canada and the environment included the following, most of which were identified in Edmonton:

- a proposed ban by the federal government on single-use plastics;
- a proposed ‘green fund’, funded by money generated through oil production;

- communications related to the importance of both the economy and the environment;
- the federal price on pollution;
- subsidies for electric cars; and
- links between geopolitics and the environment, specifically monitoring environmental changes in the arctic and asserting Canadian sovereignty over the area.

Most important environmental challenges

Participants in Fredericton, Sorel, and Belleville identified the following as the biggest environmental challenges facing Canada today:

- climate change/global warming/restricting carbon emissions;
- water pollution/clean water;
- air quality/air pollution;
- transitioning to environmentally friendly sources of energy;
- reducing use of plastics/single use plastics;
- reducing garbage, including at landfill sites and/or sent to other countries;
- recycling;
- addressing species extinction (identified only in Sorel); and
- improving federal-provincial relations/cooperation on environmental issues (identified only in Belleville).

When it came to local environmental concerns that the federal government should be paying attention to, the following issues were raised in these locations:

- Participants in Sorel focussed on air quality and water quality. Concern over the former was linked to pollution caused by mining operations in the region, and concern over the latter was linked to pollution of the Saint Lawrence River, specifically wastewater originating upstream (i.e. from Montreal). The only other local issue identified was use of pesticides.
- Participants in Fredericton focussed on flooding, but men also mentioned recycling while women mentioned clear-cutting.
- Participants in Belleville focussed on water-related issues, including quality/water pollution, water management in the Great lakes, and flooding. Promoting solar and wind power projects in the region were also identified as something that the federal government should be paying attention to.

Government of Canada action on the environment

Participants in these same locations most often identified banning single-use plastics and pollution pricing when asked about anything the Government of Canada is doing in regard to the environment. Other things identified included controlling/regulating fishing, reviewing the construction/expansion of pipelines, monitoring climate change in the arctic, and monitoring the effects of climate change on whales.

Widespread awareness of issue of plastic pollution

Awareness of the issue of plastics pollution was widespread.⁶ Positive reaction to the government of Canada taking action to ban single use plastics and perceptions that such action is important were also widespread, though support was sometimes qualified by reference to the need to have effective and convenient alternatives in place in order for the ban to work effectively.

Items considered to be single-use plastics

Impressions of what such a ban would apply to included the following: water bottles, plastic grocery bags, re-sealable zipper storage bags, plastic wrap, disposable coffee cups, packaging wrap/bubble wrap, milk jugs, straws, plastic utensils, and agricultural plastics (e.g. baling twine). Participants in Surrey and Victoria were asked specifically if certain types of single use plastics should be prioritized in terms of being banned or not be banned.⁷ Items from this list identified as priorities in terms of being banned included straws, stir sticks, and plastic bottles. Items not on the list but also identified as priorities in terms of banning included yogurt containers and any unnecessary plastic packaging (unspecified). A few participants felt that straws should not be banned but no other items were identified as ones that should be exempted from a ban.

Perceived benefits and disadvantages of banning single-use plastics

Participants identified potential positives and negatives to banning single-use plastics. Perceived benefits included the following:

- positive economic spin-offs (e.g. growth of new industries, job creation, spur to research and development (R&D), tax breaks for companies that create environmentally-friendly technologies);
- banning single-use plastics will have a major impact on reducing plastics pollution in general;
- impact on landfill sites (i.e. less garbage); and
- greater emphasis on/incentive for recycling.

Perceived drawbacks or negatives included the following:

- the cost and convenience of alternatives for consumers;
- alternatives being less reliable;
- consumers having to bear the brunt of the consequences/implications of the regulations (e.g. companies passing on costs to the consumers);
- potential economic impact in the plastics industry (e.g. job loss, cost of re-tooling);
- economic impact on households (e.g. having to purchase garbage bags);
- potential environmental impact of alternatives (e.g. greater use of paper bags resulting in more trees being cut down/more deforestation);
- lack of public buy-in/support;
- potential impact on international trade (i.e. trade in goods that use single-use plastics); and

⁶ This issue was explored in all locations except Edmonton (though the issue was identified there in the context of exploring environmental issues). Participants in Surrey and Victoria were asked if they had heard anything about plastic pollution in general, while participants in Fredericton, Sorel, and Belleville were asked if they had heard anything specifically about the federal government addressing plastic pollution.

⁷ The items asked about included plastic bags, water bottles, coffee cup lids, packaging for snacks, straws, single serve baby formula packaging, and stir sticks.

- possible impact on health care (i.e. replacing single-use products like catheters with reusable ones).

Perceptions of holding companies responsible for damage caused by their disposal of plastics

Participants in Fredericton, Sorel, and Belleville reacted positively to the idea of the federal government introducing legislation that would make companies responsible for cleaning up the environmental damage caused by their disposal of plastic products. There was a virtual consensus in favour of such a measure and near unanimity that it was important, with a few adding that such a measure was long overdue.

Perceived benefits of such a measure included less pollution/waste, potential investment in new technologies to manage plastics pollution or find alternatives to plastics, the possibility of new jobs/employment, potentially enhancing/boosting tourism in communities where plastics pollution is an issue, and the likelihood that such a measure would reduce negative health effects associated with plastics pollution.

Perceived drawback or disadvantages included the possibility that some companies would try to circumvent the legislation, seek preferential treatment/exemptions, or find ways to limit their responsibility, the possibility that costs would be passed on to consumers, the possibility that such legislation would be more burdensome for smaller companies, and the possibility that some companies might close down operations or move their operations to countries with no such legislation.

Perceptions of reduced use of plastics products by federal government

Participants in these locations also reacted positively to the idea of the Government of Canada launching a strategy to reduce the use of plastics by government departments and agencies. Once again, there was a virtual consensus in favour of such a measure and near unanimity that it was important because it would show that the government takes the issue seriously and is leading by way of example.

Awareness of Oceans Protection Plan

Most participants in Victoria said they had heard about the Ocean Protection Plan. While many were aware of it by name only, some participants had heard that it is a movement for environmental clean-up, or specifically, a movement in which young people volunteer to clean up beaches.

Paris Agreement on climate change

Participants in Victoria and Edmonton were asked about the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Most participants in each group said they had heard about the agreement. Descriptions of the agreement included variations on the notion that it is an agreement, coalition, or effort between countries to work together to deal with climate change/pollution by reducing carbon emissions. Other perceptions of it included the following:

- it is an initiative of the G-7 countries;

- it is an aspirational agreement/document;
- it is the best attempt so far to deal with climate change;
- reduction targets/goals are set by each country;
- the goal is to meet these targets/goals by 2030;
- Canada is not meeting its reduction targets; and
- the United States has withdrawn from the agreement.

There was some uncertainty about whether certain countries were or were not part of the agreement (e.g. the United States, Russia, India, Saudi Arabia, Australia), and no one was aware of Canada's own target under the agreement (though the target was described as aggressive or ambitious).

After being informed that, under the Paris Agreement, Canada has committed to reducing its GHG emissions by 30 percent below 2005 levels by 2030, participants were asked if they thought Canada would meet its target. In response, most participants said they were doubtful that Canada would reach this target, though some felt it was possible. Participants collectively identified a variety of factors that could impact whether or not Canada meets this target. They included the following:

- public engagement/buy-in across the country;
- effective legislation (e.g. banning single-use plastics);
- uniformity of standards across the country;
- realistic incentives to transition to environmentally-friendly practices (e.g. incentives for R&D, subsidies/grants for purchase of e-cars, solar panels);
- increased education and awareness about what individuals can do to help;
- the state of the economy and the economic costs required to meet the target;
- political will;
- government investments in green technologies;
- cooperation on the part of industry/business; and
- the extent to which pipeline construction and oil sands development proceed.

Although most participants are doubtful that Canada will meet its target under the Paris Agreement, most (a majority in all groups) nonetheless think it is important for Canada to meet the target or at least try to do so. Reasons why this is considered important included the following:

- the importance of leading by example;
- the importance of international cooperation (i.e. each country doing its part to reduce emissions); and
- the importance of investing in R&D related to alternative sources of energy.

Participants who felt it was not important for Canada to meet its targets suggested that the impact of Canada meeting its target will be offset by other countries not doing their part, and that the goal for Canada is unrealistic/too ambitious because it ignores the realities of Canada's climate.

Price on pollution (Edmonton)

Asked explicitly if they had heard about the Government of Canada's plan to put a price on pollution, most participants in Edmonton said they had. Things participants had heard included the following:

- statements that pollution cannot be free;

- the federal government will implement pollution pricing in provinces that do not have their own system in place;
- the federal government will ensure national standards/oversee all provincial measures relating to pollution pricing; and
- criticisms of the federal government pollution pricing system.

Perception of federal carbon pollution pricing system (Edmonton)

Participants in Edmonton were provided the following explanation of the Government of Canada's carbon pricing plan and how it applies to Alberta:

In 2016 the Government of Canada announced a plan to put a price on pollution across the country, instructing each province to come up with their own plans before the end of 2018. The federal government announced that they will apply a price on pollution in the four provinces that still do not have a system in place: Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and New Brunswick.

A few weeks ago, Alberta repealed its carbon level, meaning that it now only partially meets federal requirements. Thus, the federal government has announced that it will apply a price on pollution in Alberta as of January 1, 2020.

Under this system, what businesses pay will be based on the amount of carbon emissions they produce. All revenue collected in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Alberta will stay in each of these provinces – 90% will be given directly to residents in the form of an incentive. In Alberta for example, the average household will receive about \$880 in early 2020. 10% will go to small businesses, hospitals, and schools.

Participants were then asked what they liked and disliked about this proposed system. Things they liked included the following:

- something is being done to address the problem of carbon emissions;
- it appears to be reasonable (i.e. businesses pay based on amount of emissions produced);
- it appears to be revenue neutral (i.e. money returned to communities/individuals); and
- everyone who pollutes is doing their part to address the problem.

Things they disliked or questioned included the following:

- why does everyone receive an incentive?;
- how will the effectiveness of the system be measured?;
- it appears to ask businesses to put more money into environmental policies; and
- how will it be enforced in terms of making companies pay?

Impact of the federal carbon pollution pricing system (Edmonton)

Participants in Edmonton were asked what impact they thought the federal pollution pricing system will have on the environment, on the economy, and on themselves personally. When it comes to the environment, there were mixed views on the impact of the system. Some felt the impact would be big, but that it would take time and would depend on the steady implementation and enforcement of the system. Some felt that the impact globally would be small, but that Canada needs to be seen as a leader in fighting climate change. Finally, some felt the impact would be small or that there would be no impact, based on the impression that many people will still need to buy things like gas, whatever the price, and because industry will find a way to work around the system.

Views on economic impacts also tended to be mixed. Some felt it could have a positive impact if done properly, but that there would almost inevitably be gains and losses in terms of economic effects. Specifically, it was suggested that there could be job losses and that some companies could be negatively impacted (primarily financially), but that other companies and new employment opportunities would emerge. It was also suggested that farmers would be adversely affected, but that they would gradually adapt over time. Some were of the opinion that the overall effect on the economy would be limited, though it might spur technological developments. It was also observed that partnerships between industry and government would help to facilitate the growth of new industries.

When asked what impact this approach will have on them personally, participants tended to think that it would have a limited impact. There was an impression that the approach would affect household budgets and spending (e.g. the price of food will increase), increase taxes, and that some personal habits might change, but beyond this there was no sense that their personal lives would be impacted in a serious way.

Environmental Assessment (Edmonton)

Participants were asked what they know about the environmental assessment process in Canada. While a few had heard about it, associating it generally with pipeline construction, no one claimed to know anything about the process itself, including any changes to these rules or processes.

Participants were asked what they thought of the environmental process after being given the following description of it:

Environmental assessment is the process where the environmental impact of major projects is studied, and then a decision is made to either approve or reject them. The Government of Canada indicated it would review environmental and regulatory processes to address concerns about previous reforms. The government put in place interim principles for project reviews in January 2016 and has introduced legislation that would put in new rules to protect Canada's environment and grow the economy.

Feedback from participants was relatively limited, some noting or re-iterating that they know little about the process. Given their limited knowledge, participants could not comment in a meaningful way on the current assessment process and whether or not new rules are needed. At the same time, it was suggested that any process had to be clear and transparent, fair or balanced in terms of taking into account both economic and environmental considerations, and efficient in the sense that decisions needed to be taken in a timely fashion.

5. Pipelines

Awareness of Trans Mountain Expansion project

Asked whether they had heard about the Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) project, all participants in Victoria and Edmonton indicated that they had. Things mentioned about the project included that the pipeline is owned/was purchased by the federal government, that the main problem or issue about the expansion was the dispute between the governments of Alberta and B.C. (the former supporting expansion and the latter opposing it), that the pipeline expansion will balance

environmental and economic concerns, that the goal of the expansion is to get more Alberta oil to markets, that Indigenous groups were not properly consulted, that the expansion is due to the fact that Alberta companies do not want to pay to use existing pipelines (mentioned in Victoria), and that there are concerns that the expansion will result in more tanker traffic on the B.C. coast (mentioned in Victoria).

Other things mentioned by participants included judgments or assessments of the issue, mostly by participants in Edmonton. This included the impression that the expansion has come at a huge cost, that the process has been frustrating, that there is too much pandering to environmental groups, that the expansion has fostered divisiveness in the country, and that pipelines are the safest way to transport oil.

Ownership of TMX

All participants in Victoria and Edmonton were aware the Government of Canada currently owns the TMX. When asked why the federal government purchased the TMX, participants tended to suggest that it was necessary for the government to do so. Explanations as to why it was necessary included the following:

- delays left the Government of Canada no choice;
- the project was considered too big to fail;
- to prevent economic hardship to Alberta;
- the private sector did not know what to do or was unwilling to assume the risk so the government had to step in; and
- to reassure the global community that Canada is still a good place to invest/concern over Canada's international reputation as a place to do business.

In addition to arguments based on necessity, it was suggested that the federal government purchased the pipeline in order to ensure that it had full control over the project (including revenues) and could more effectively deal with opposition to the project in B.C.

Feelings about the government's decision to purchase the pipeline varied by location, with participants in Edmonton tending to support the decision and participants in Victoria tending to be critical of it. In Edmonton, support for the decision tended to be based on its perceived necessity (see reasons above) but also on the belief that the project could be profitable. In Victoria, criticism of the decision was based on lack of public consultation prior to the purchase, on the impression that government does not have the expertise needed to own and operate a pipeline, and on the impression that this is outside government purview (i.e. these projects should be left to the private sector). At the same time, it was also noted in Victoria that there are precedents for government intervention in various sectors when the matter concerns issues of national interest.

Status of TMX

There was widespread impression that the TMX project has been approved but is still not moving forward in any meaningful way. Mention was also made of court challenges and Indigenous groups possibly becoming part owners of the pipeline.

Views of TMX

Participants were asked how they felt about the TMX project, on balance, after being told the following:

Last week the Government of Canada announced that it has approved TMX and that all the money the federal government earns from this project will be invested in Canada's clean energy transition.

In response, most participants said they would like to see the TMX expansion go ahead, although some described it as a bitter and divisive process and others noted their support was conditional on appropriate safeguards being in place to protect the environment. Reasons offered to explain why they want the TMX expansion to go ahead included the following: the need to capitalize on our natural resources, Alberta deserves to get better prices for its oil, to help ensure resource independence vis-à-vis the U.S., environmental effects/impacts will be taken into consideration, and the economic benefits will reverberate in other sectors of the economy.

While virtually everyone expects or in some cases, hope, the TMX expansion project will go ahead, there was no real sense of when this will happen, with some noting that there are still no actual timelines in place and that further delays could hamper the project. It was also noted that strong leadership and maintaining good relations with Indigenous peoples are required in order to ensure that the project does go ahead now that it has been approved.

While there was widespread support for the idea of using the revenue from TMX to fund investments in renewable energy, there were also questions about what this actually means and what concrete measures in this direction would actually look like. In short, there was a sense that this is an appealing idea, but participants wanted to see results from these kinds of investments before endorsing fully. More broadly, participants tended to think that it was possible to fight climate change while still approving pipelines, and that one did not have to choose one or the other. That said, a few specified that while this balance could be maintained to a certain extent, the focus should shift towards alternative sources of energy.

Views of Government of Canada support for oil and gas sector

Most participants in Edmonton felt that the Government of Canada has not been supportive enough of the oil and gas sector. In Victoria, participants were unsure how to assess federal government support.

6. Vaping and Smoking

Issues in this section were explored with participants in Surrey, Fredericton, Sorel, and Belleville.

Smoking and vaping status

Most groups included a mix of smokers (daily and/or occasional smokers) and non-smokers. The exceptions were the group of women in Fredericton and homeowners in Surrey, all of whom were non-smokers. Among those who are non-smokers, many are former smokers. At least a few participants in most groups said they have tried vaping.

Experience and familiarity with vaping

Those who have tried vaping said they did so either out of curiosity, typically in a social setting (e.g. with friends), in order to try to quit smoking, or in order to try to reduce stress. A few added that they believe vaping is expensive and/or more expensive than smoking cigarettes. Those who have not tried vaping identified the following as things they feel they know or have heard about it:

- it is very popular among youth (i.e. trendy)/considered 'cool';
- there is a lack of knowledge about its long-term health effects;
- the vaping liquids come in a variety of flavours;
- one can vape with or without nicotine;
- smokers use it as a way to quit smoking;
- one can strengthen or weaken the intensity or dose of what is inhaled;
- it is not regulated/not as regulated as cigarettes;
- it has been linked to the condition known commonly as 'popcorn lung' (bronchiolitis obliterans);
- some vaping devices have exploded;
- big tobacco companies are involved in it;
- it looks silly;
- it is a gateway towards smoking;
- it is addictive; and
- it smells good.

Sources of information about vaping

Participants have learned about vaping from various sources which include the following:

- relatives/friends and acquaintances;
- social media;
- internet;
- news;
- seeing people vaping;
- vape shops (identified by some as increasing in number in their neighbourhoods); and
- advertising.

Perceived benefits and harms of vaping

Perceived benefits or potential benefits of vaping included the following:

- it can/might help people quit smoking;
- it may prevent young people from starting to smoke (i.e. an alternative to smoking);
- it is not as bad for one's health as smoking/contains fewer chemicals than cigarettes;
- it does not smell bad/make one's clothes smell bad;
- it does not create second-hand smoke; and
- the proliferation of vape shops creates employment.

Some said they could think of no benefits to vaping, while some others said they did not know or did not know enough about vaping to offer an opinion.

The most commonly identified harm or potential harm associated with vaping was lack of knowledge/studies about its possible long-term health effects. Other harms associated with vaping included the impression that it was a gateway/pathway to smoking for youth, the danger posed by exploding devices, and the possibility of becoming addicted to it.

Participants tended to express uncertainty when asked about the health effects of vaping, and specifically the harmfulness of vaping compared to smoking tobacco cigarettes. This uncertainty was based on the previously mentioned widespread impression that there is a lack of knowledge/studies about the long-term health effects of vaping. Having said that, the uncertainty in question was often related to *how* harmful vaping is, not to whether vaping is harmful at all. Indeed, there was a relatively widespread impression that vaping is probably not good for one's health, even though it is as yet unclear what the health impacts are, and even though it might not be as bad as smoking. Participants made the following points in this regard:

- vaping liquids contain chemicals, and inhaling these chemicals into one's lungs cannot be good for one's health;
- inhaling any kind of smoke (whether produced by cigarettes or vaping devices) is not good for one's health;
- vaping with nicotine is no better than smoking a cigarette; and
- vaping may not be as harmful as smoking, but this could result in people vaping more frequently because they think it is not harmful to them, and this increased frequency of vaping could result in negative health effects or addiction.

Some participants were more categorical, suggesting that vaping is harmful (pointing to reports that vaping can cause conditions such as popcorn lung and water on the lungs) and/or dangerous (pointing to reports of malfunctioning of devices resulting in explosions).

Finally, some participants did suggest that in their opinion vaping is less harmful than smoking, but it was also observed that this does not mean that vaping is not harmful simply because it is less harmful than smoking.

Perceptions of smoking

Most participants in these locations interact with people who smoke. This includes friends, relatives, and colleagues, and the frequency of interaction ranges from rarely, to occasionally, to frequently (e.g. daily). Asked how they feel when people in their social circle smoke in their presence, most said they do not like it, with some going so far as to say they hate it. Other feelings elicited by people in their social circle smoking in their presence included disappointment, and a 'live and let live' attitude.

Reasons for critical or negative reactions to people smoking in their presence included the following: the smell of cigarettes, the odor it leaves in their clothes/feeling dirty, not wanting to be exposed to second-hand smoke/health concerns, difficulty breathing, allergies being triggered, the temptation to smoke themselves, not wanting their children exposed to smoking/smokers, and difficulty understanding how people can continue smoking given the dangers it poses to health. Participants who expressed a 'live and let live' attitude towards those smoking in their presence sometimes added that people in their circle who smoke do so outdoors (i.e. not in proximity to them in an enclosed space).

Perceptions of smoking as a health issue today

There was near unanimity among participants that smoking is a big health issue today. Reasons for this opinion included the following:

- the effects of smoking have not changed, and illnesses caused by/linked to smoking remain with us (e.g. cancer, emphysema). Related to this was the impression that many smokers and even former smokers are only now beginning to experience the health effects of years of smoking;
- dangers posed by smoking affect not only smokers but non-smokers (i.e. second-hand smoke);
- health care costs associated with smoking-related illnesses/the strain it poses on health care resources;
- smoking is an addiction and should be treated as an illness not just a “bad habit”;
- the impact it has on the more vulnerable members of society (i.e. lower income Canadians are more likely to smoke but least likely to be able to afford the smoking cessation devices that might work);
- youth/young people continue to smoke despite health warnings and scientific evidence of its impact on health;
- the environmental impact of smoking (e.g. cigarette butts and chemicals that remain in smoked cigarettes); and
- smoking/having smoked can adversely affect one’s insurance/insurance premiums.

Some participants added that smoking is an important issue to them personally, mainly because of personal health issues/concerns (e.g. asthma, allergies, effects of second-hand smoke) and/or because of the impact it has on relatives/loved ones (e.g. cancer).

While there was near unanimity that smoking is a big health issue today, there were differences of opinion about whether the health risks to Canadians generally that is posed by tobacco has increased, decreased or remained about the same over the past five years. Participants tended to be divided between those who think the risk has decreased and those who think it is about the same.

Reasons for the impression that the health risk has decreased tended to be variations on the assumption that the proportion of smokers has been decreasing over time. This decrease was ascribed to various factors which included the following:

- the increased cost of cigarettes;
- greater awareness of the health effects of smoking, especially among the young;
- smoking is no longer socially acceptable and no longer seen as ‘cool’;
- more and more people are quitting smoking as a result of successful cessation devices; and
- more and more people are turning from smoking to vaping.

Participants who think the risk posed by smoking is about the same as it was 5 years ago provided the following reasons to explain their point of view:

- they have not noticed any changes over the past 5 years in either health warnings or legislation related to cigarettes (which they noted have been in place for decades);

- youth/young people continue to smoke despite health warnings and scientific evidence of its impact on health;
- people can still be seen smoking in public places (e.g. on work breaks); and
- the risks posed by tobacco are similar for vaping, which is on the rise and appears to be supported by investment from the tobacco industry.

A few participants think the health risk posed by smoking may have increased compared to five years ago. Two reasons were given to explain why. One was the impression that the effects of smoking on health can take years to manifest themselves, the result being that more people may now be suffering from the effects of smoking than was the case five years ago. The other was the impression that e-cigarettes (viewed as a form of smoking) that contain nicotine can deliver higher concentrations of nicotine than regular cigarettes.

Impressions of smoking regulations and social acceptability of smoking

Participants were asked for their impressions of the opinion that smoking regulations have gone too far, and that those who smoke have no rights at all. The widespread impression among participants was that this was not the case. That being said, there was also a widespread impression that smoking is not (or no longer) socially acceptable. Reasons for this impression included the social censure that smokers often encounter (e.g. negative perceptions in general, 'dirty looks', critical comments), legislation limiting where smokers can smoke, and the impression that because smoking is harmful, non-smokers have a right to be protected from its effects. Participants who think it is socially acceptable to smoke, primarily men in Sorel, were of the opinion that there is a 'live and let live' attitude that still prevails when it comes to smoking and that smokers and non-smokers have reached a modus vivendi.

Impressions of smokers

Most participants said they have a 'live and let live' attitude when it comes to smokers, some adding that people have a right to take decisions regarding their own lives as long as it does not interfere with the rights of others. In some instances, participants said their feelings towards smokers vary by age. Specifically, some said they feel disappointment when they see younger people smoking or think that it is stupid for young people to start smoking given all that is known about the health effects of smoking. A few participants said they feel bad for smokers because smokers are often among the more vulnerable members of society (e.g. lower income, less formal education). Participants said their impressions about smokers have not changed considerably in the last 5-10 years. One participant said his impression of smokers changed over this period of time, specifying that after graduating from high school he no longer considered smoking 'cool'.

Reaction to the statement that those who smoke could quit if they really wanted to elicited nuanced reactions. There was a widespread impression that people have to really want to quit smoking in order to be successful. In other words, the decision to quit has to be a personal decision and the person in question has to be motivated. At the same time there was also widespread recognition that quitting is not as easy as simply taking the decision to do so, and that various factors come into play. For example, it was observed that smoking is an addiction, that many people need help to break the addiction (e.g. moral support, cessation resources), and that it may take numerous quit attempts before someone is successful.

Perceptions of smoking as a government priority

Most participants overestimated the percentage of the Canadian population aged 15 and older that smokes today (either daily or occasionally).⁸ Participants were then read the following statement and asked for their reaction:

Some people say that smoking rates in Canada are decreasing and public focus should now be on other issues such as other health care issues, climate change or balancing the budget. Others say that there are still 4.6 million smokers in Canada and so tobacco should continue to be a high priority. From your own point of view, should tobacco continue to be a high government priority?

Participants were divided in their opinions, though most felt that the public focus should now be on other issues. Reasons given included the following:

- enough has been done in this regard/efforts have been successful, and much has been achieved (e.g. smoking rates are declining, 15 percent of the population smoking is a good result/acceptable proportion, smoking will never be eliminated completely as long as it is legal);
- public awareness of the hazards of smoking is now widespread and generally accepted; and
- other important issues need to be addressed (e.g. opioids, the environment).

Those who think tobacco should continue to be a high priority observed the following:

- young people continue to start smoking, despite all the information and evidence about the hazards of smoking;
- smoking has important environmental consequences that should be addressed;
- the health-related consequences of smoking will still be with us for years (e.g. cancer rates among smokers); and
- a 15 percent smoking rate can realistically be reduced further (i.e. more progress can still be made).

Ways to help Canadians quit using tobacco products

Participants were informed that Canada's Tobacco Strategy has committed to reducing tobacco use to 5 percent by 2035 and asked how the Government of Canada/Health Canada could best help Canadians quit using tobacco products, to meet this objective. The most frequently made suggestion in this regard was to subsidize/reduce the cost of smoking cessation resources/strategies (e.g. prescription medications). Other suggestions included the following:

- raise the price of cigarettes;
- prohibit smoking altogether;
- focus on rewarding quitters (e.g. competitions with prizes);
- focus information campaigns on positive sides of quitting/success stories (i.e. as opposed to scare tactics);
- focus efforts on young/youth smokers;
- promote non-smoking among new immigrant/new Canadian communities; and
- restrict the sale of cigarettes to specialty shops.

⁸ The current smoking rate in Canada is at 15% – roughly 11% smoke daily and 4% are occasional smokers.

Some participants in Belleville suggested addressing laws that facilitate access to cigarettes in certain circumstances, such as the selling of cigarettes on reserves.

7. Food Safety

Issues in this section were explored with participants in Surrey, Fredericton, Sorel, and Belleville.

Participants were provided the following contextual information about Canada's food safety system:

As part of Canada's food safety system, Government of Canada inspectors visit food facilities, such as food processing plants, to ensure compliance with Canada's federal food safety laws. How frequently a food facility is inspected is based on food safety risks. Risk is determined based on a number of factors, including past compliance and the type of facility (for example, plants that produce meat products are automatically considered high risk). In essence, low-risk food facilities are inspected less often than high risk ones.

Based on advances in computers and other technology, it may be possible in the future for the Government of Canada to rely more on technology when it comes to low-risk food facilities. For example, cameras could be installed at a low-risk facility, with computer programs using all of the footage captured by the cameras to determine if the facility is compliant. If the low-risk facility is compliant, no on-site visit by an inspector would occur. If the footage indicated that there is reason for concern, an inspector would visit the facility.

Benefits and concerns related to using cameras in low-risk food facilities

Participants were then asked what benefits they see and concerns they might have with such an approach to food inspection. Participants had no difficulty identifying potential benefits to such an approach. Routinely identified benefits included the following:

- staff in low-risk facilities would likely be more vigilant about compliance knowing that there was constant surveillance;
- installing cameras would be cost-effective/allow for cost-savings;
- data would be captured on a continuous basis, allowing for tracking over time/long-term analysis;
- cameras would provide 'hard' data/evidence of non-compliance, helping to ensure the accountability of those who violate standards; and
- cameras would allow Government inspectors to be re-allocated to high-risk facilities.

It was also suggested that installing cameras would be beneficial in high-risk facilities as well.

Routinely identified concerns about such an approach included the following:

- cameras may not be able to capture everything/may miss things an inspector would look for or notice (e.g. smells/odors);
- unscrupulous operators may find ways to avoid cameras' field of vision;
- there may be technical problems with cameras (e.g. power outages);
- depending on how often/frequently the data is analyzed, breaches of protocols may not be identified for a while;
- potential privacy issues; and

- redundancy issues, based on an assumption that the time required for analysts to review computer output would be similar to the time required for an on-site inspection (i.e. a sense that analysts will have to review all footage, in which case, inspectors might as well simply continue visiting food facilities).

In addition to these routinely identified concerns the following concerns were also voiced:

- camera systems might be more expensive to operate than sending inspectors periodically;
- who would bear the cost of installing the camera system, a cost that could be considerable for smaller facilities should they had to bear it; and
- concern about job losses because of technology replacing humans, specifically concern that the installation of cameras will be used as a rationale to cut back on inspectors or might be the first step in replacing inspectors with technology.

Impact of using cameras in low-risk food facilities on trust in Canada's food safety system

Participants were divided when asked what impact it would have on their level of trust in Canada's food system if the government were to use such an approach. Many said they would have less trust, a smaller number said it would have no impact on their level of trust, and a few felt that they would have more trust in Canada's food safety system if cameras were used in low-risk facilities. More women than men said they would have less trust in Canada's food system if the government were to use such an approach.

Impressions of using third party to review data

Participants were informed that another potential future scenario would involve the Government of Canada using a third party to review data captured by cameras installed in low-risk food facilities instead of Government of Canada analysts doing this. Participants were divided when asked about the benefits of using a third party to analyse the data. A number of participants, primarily males in Fredericton and females in Sorel, said they could think of no benefits in this scenario.

On the other hand, a number of participants identified benefits, which included objectivity/impartial analysis, independent expertise, job creation opportunities, and potential cost savings. Concerns about using a third party to review data included the following: the potential for facilities to influence (illegally) the review process, the potential for preferential treatment by government in awarding contracts/selecting third parties, difficulty ensuring standards/accountability as a result of increasing the number of actors involved, and competition between service providers driving them to cut/lower the wages of their analysts.

Here as well, participants were divided when asked what impact it would have on their level of trust in Canada's food system if the government were to use a third party to analyze the data. Once again, nearly all participants were divided between ones who said they would have less trust (a view most commonly held in both Sorel groups, as well as the men's group in Fredericton) and ones who said it would have no impact on their level of trust.

8. Seatbelts on School Buses

Issues in this section were explored with participants in Surrey and Sorel.

Awareness of issue

With one exception, most participants in Surrey and Sorel said they have not seen, read, or heard anything about seatbelts on school buses. The exception was in Sorel, where most women said they had heard about the issue, specifically that it was an important issue, that installing seatbelts would be costly, and that it would be difficult to ensure that children buckled up if seatbelts were installed. A few male participants in Sorel recalled hearing about the issue in a general way, noting that the issue is being debated and that there is no agreement about it. In Surrey, the reference to buses elicited recall of the tragic Humboldt Broncos bus crash in 2018, but no one recalled anything specifically about seatbelts on school buses.

Asked which level of government is responsible for regulations related to seatbelts on school buses, most participants in Sorel said they thought it was the provincial level. In Surrey, views were more mixed: many thought the federal government was responsible, some thought it was a provincial responsibility, and some thought responsibility was shared between both levels of government.

Widespread support for installing seatbelts on school buses

Most participants said they were in favour of outfitting school buses with seatbelts, and those who were not in favour were undecided rather than opposed to the idea. Some participants who were undecided added that the issue should be studied seriously. There was near unanimity that buses are safer with seatbelts than without, with just a few unsure as to whether this was true or not.

In the course of this discussion participants pointed to things that would need to be considered including the cost of installing seatbelts, who should pay the costs, what kind of seatbelts should be installed (i.e. shoulder straps or lap belts), and the issue of ensuring that children wear them. Most participants were uncertain or said they did not know when asked if this is a good use of funds given other costs facing schools. Some suggested that this is something that needs to be studied, and some pointed to other important issues that could be funded such as ensuring that kids have healthy food at school.

On the assumption that the decision is made to add seatbelts to school buses, there was near unanimity that the seatbelt rule should apply to all school buses (i.e. it should not depend on what a school bus is used for), but there were differences of opinion as to whether seatbelts should apply only to new buses or whether existing school buses should be retrofitted as well. Most participants favoured applying the rule to existing buses as well, but women in Sorel were unanimously in favour of limiting the installation to new buses. Perceived benefits of only adding seatbelts to new buses included the following:

- cost savings (the assumptions being that retrofitting existing school buses would be very expensive and that a number of existing school buses are old and close to being removed from circulation anyway);
- it would help ensure investment in new school buses (i.e. it would encourage the replacement of existing school buses with new ones in order to ensure the uniformity of the fleet); and
- it would ensure that there are enough school buses in circulation (i.e. no need to remove the existing busses from circulation in order to retrofit them).

The main perceived downside to only adding seatbelts to new buses is the lack of uniformity in school buses and the types of problems this would cause or issues this would raise. Examples of such problems included the following:

- the perception of a two-tiered system (i.e. some children being safer than others);
- debates over which schools get which buses (i.e. new or old); and
- logistical problems/issues (e.g. if an out of town school trip is planned and more buses are needed, what happens if only some of the available buses are equipped with seatbelts?)

Perceived cost of retrofits

There was virtual unanimity that there was a difference in cost between retrofitting all existing buses and only adding seatbelts to new buses (the assumption being that it would be more expensive to retrofit all existing buses). Moreover, there was a widespread impression that the difference in cost would be large, with some participants suggesting that the cost of retrofits would be as much as double the cost of outfitting new buses.

Appendix

1. Recruitment Screener

Specifications

- Recruit 11 participants.
- Participants to be paid \$100.
- Groups to last 2 hours.
- All groups to be in English, except for Sorel, which will be conducted in French.

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
Surrey	Surrey	Fredericton	Fredericton	Sorel	Sorel
June 6 5:30 pm RENTERS	June 6 7:30 pm HOMEOWNERS	June 11 5:30 pm MALE	June 11 7:30 pm FEMALE	June 12 5:30 pm FEMALE	June 12 7:30 pm MALE
Group 7	Group 8	Group 9	Group 10	Group 11	Group 12
Belleville	Belleville	Edmonton	Edmonton	Victoria	Victoria
June 18 5:30 pm MALE	June 18 7:30 pm FEMALE	June 25 5:30 pm FEMALE	June 25 7:30 pm MALE	June 26 5:30 pm MALE	June 26 7:30 pm FEMALE

- Groups in Surrey to be segmented by homeownership. In addition to segmenting the groups by homeownership, they will include a mix of participants by age, gender, employment status and education.
- Groups in all other locations to be segment by gender. In addition to segmenting the groups by gender (in all locations except Surrey), all groups will include a mix of participants by age, employment status and education.

Questionnaire

A. Introduction

Hello/Bonjour, my name is [INSERT]. Would you prefer to continue in English or French? / Préférez-vous continuer en français ou en anglais?

I'm calling from CRC Research, a Canadian research firm. We're organizing a series of discussion groups on behalf of the Government of Canada to explore current issues of interest to Canadians. The groups will last up to two hours and people who take part will receive a cash gift to thank them for their time.

[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. Désirez-vous participer à la discussion en français? ». IF YES, CONTINUE. IF NO, TERMINATE AND SAY: « Nous vous remercions de votre intérêt. » FOR FRENCH GROUP, 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. Would you be willing to participate in the discussion in English? IF YES, CONTINUE. IF NO, TERMINATE AND SAY: We thank you for your interest.]

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 "round table" discussion led by a research professional with up to eight participants. 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.”]

Before we invite you 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	CONTINUE
No	THANK/DISCONTINUE

B. Qualification

1. Do you, or any member of your household or immediate family, work in any of the following fields?
READ LIST

Marketing research, public relations firm, or advertising agency
The media (i.e., radio, television, newspapers, magazines, etc.)
A federal or provincial government department or agency
A political party

Yes	THANK/DISCONTINUE
No	CONTINUE

2. Record gender by observation. **50/50 SPLIT IN SURREY. GROUPS TO BE SEGMENTED BY GENDER EVERYWHERE ELSE.**

Female
Male

3. Are you a Canadian citizen at least 18 years old who normally resides in the [INSERT CITY] area?

Yes	CONTINUE
No	ASK Q3b
Don't know/Refused	THANK/TERMINATE

- 3b. Is there someone else in the household who is at least 18 years of age?

Yes	ASK TO SPEAK WITH THEM; GO BACK TO INTRODUCTION
-----	--

No **THANK/TERMINATE**
Don't know/Refused **THANK/TERMINATE**

4. How long have you lived in [INSERT CITY]?

Less than two years **THANK/TERMINATE**
Two years or more **CONTINUE**
Don't know/Refused **THANK/TERMINATE**

5. We have been asked to speak to participants from all different ages. May I have your age please? **RECORD AND CLASSIFY**

Under 18 **THANK/DISCONTINUE**
18 to 24 years
25 to 34 years
35 to 44 years
45 to 54 years
55 to 64 years
65 to 74 years
75 years or older **THANK/DISCONTINUE**

[ASK Q6. ONLY IN SURREY]

6. Which of the following best describes your housing arrangement? {READ LIST}

Own your home **HOMEOWNER GROUP**
Rent your home **RENTER GROUP**
Neither own nor rent your home **RENTER GROUP**

7. Including yourself, how many people 18 years of age and over are there in your household?

One
Two **SKIP TO Q9**
Three **SKIP TO Q9**
Four or more **SKIP TO Q9**

IF ONLY ONE PERSON IN HOUSEHOLD AT Q7, ASK:

8. Which of the following categories best corresponds to your total personal annual income, before taxes, for 2018? **GET MIX**

Under \$20,000
\$20,000 to just under \$40,000
\$40,000 to just under \$60,000
\$60,000 to just under \$75,000
\$75,000 to \$100,000
\$100,000 to \$150,000
More than \$150,000

REFUSE/DK

IF A MULTIPLE PERSON HOUSEHOLD AT Q7, ASK:

9. Which of the following categories best corresponds to the total annual income, before taxes, of all members of your household, for 2018? **GET MIX**

Under \$20,000
\$20,000 to just under \$40,000
\$40,000 to just under \$60,000
\$60,000 to just under \$75,000
\$75,000 to \$100,000
\$100,000 to \$150,000
More than \$150,000
REFUSE/DK

ASK ALL

10. Which of the following best describes your employment situation? **GET MIX**

Working full time (35 hrs. +)
Working part time (under 35 hrs.)
Homemaker
Student
Retired
Unemployed

11. What is your current occupation? **RECORD:**

Type of Job: _____
Type of Company: _____

12. Could you please tell me what is the last level of education that you completed? **GET MIX**

Some High School only
Completed High School
Registered Apprenticeship or other trades certificate or diploma
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma
University certificate or diploma below bachelor's level
Bachelor's degree
Post graduate degree above bachelor's level

13. Participants in group discussions are asked to voice their opinions and thoughts, how comfortable are you in voicing your opinions in front of others? Are you...

Very comfortable
Fairly comfortable

MINIMUM 5 PER GROUP

Not very comfortable **TERMINATE**
Very uncomfortable **TERMINATE**

14. Have you ever attended a discussion group on any topic that was arranged in advance and for which you received money for your participation?

Yes
No **GO Q17**

15. When did you last attend one of these discussion groups?

Within the last 6 months **TERMINATE**
Over 6 months ago

16. How many discussion groups have you attended in the past 5 years?

Fewer than 5
5 or more **TERMINATE**

17. The discussion group will be audio/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 **CONTINUE**
No **THANK/TERMINATE**

18. There may be some people from the Government of Canada who have been involved in this project observing the session. They will not take part in the discussion and they will not know your full name, or your first name. Is this acceptable?

Yes **CONTINUE**
No **THANK/TERMINATE**

C. INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

I would like to invite you to attend the focus group session where you will exchange your opinions in a moderated discussion with other Canadians from your community. The discussion will be led by a researcher from the national public opinion research firm, Phoenix SPI. The group will take place on **[DAY OF WEEK], [DATE], at [TIME]**. It will last two hours. People who attend will receive \$100 to thank them for their time. Would you be willing to attend?

Yes
No **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 **[INSERT FACILITY]**. I would like to remind you that the group is at **[TIME]** on **[DATE]**. We ask that you arrive 15 minutes early.

At the facility, you will be asked to produce photo identification, so please remember to bring something with you (for example, a driver's license). If you use glasses to read, please remember to bring them with you. Participants may be asked to review some materials in **[ENGLISH/FRENCH]** during the discussion.

As I mentioned, the session will be audio/video recorded for research purposes and representatives of the Government of Canada research team will be observing from an adjoining room. You will be asked to sign a waiver to acknowledge that you will be video recorded during the session. The recordings will be used only by the Phoenix SPI research team and will not be shared with others. All information collected in the group discussion will remain anonymous and be used for research purposes only in accordance with laws designed to protect your privacy.

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, 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]**.

Someone will call you the day before to remind you about the session.

So that we can call you to remind you about the focus group or contact you should there be any changes, can you please confirm your name and contact information for me?

First name: _____
Last Name: _____
Daytime phone number: _____
Evening phone number: _____

2. Moderator's Guide

INTRODUCTION (10 minutes)

GC NEWS (5 minutes)

- What have you seen, read or heard about the Government of Canada lately?

MONEY LAUNDERING (5 minutes) ASK IN SURREY

- Has anyone heard anything about money laundering lately?
- Is this a problem in BC?
 - Explain the concept to me. What specifically is the problem with money laundering?
- How big a problem is this compared to other issues?
- Has the Government of Canada done anything on this issue?

CLARIFY AS NEEDED

In the Government of Canada's budget this spring, they announced \$70 million to spend on anti-money laundering initiatives, including for the CRA and RCMP to investigate these crimes, especially in the housing sector.

- Is this too much, enough, or does the federal government need to do more?

VETERANS SERVICES (5 minutes) ASK IN FREDERICTON

- Has anyone heard anything about Veterans services?
- Has the Government of Canada done anything on this issue?
- Has anyone heard of Pensions for Life?
 - Based on what you've heard, what do you think of it?

ENVIRONMENT (15 minutes; 20 minutes in Victoria) ASK IN SURREY AND VICTORIA

- What have people heard about the environment lately?
 - Has anyone heard anything specifically about plastic pollution?
- How would you feel about the government of Canada taking steps to ban single-use plastics, in order to reduce plastic pollution?
 - Why is this important?

- What are the drawbacks?
- What are some possible economic positives or negatives from this?
- What comes to mind when you think of single use plastics that should be banned?
 - Some types of single use plastics that are often mentioned are plastic bags, water bottles, coffee cup lids, packaging for snacks, straws, single serve baby formula packaging, stir sticks.
 - From this list, are there types of things you think we should prioritize banning?
 - Are there any things (on this list or otherwise) that shouldn't be banned?

ASK IN VICTORIA

Now, moving away from single use plastics...

- Has anyone heard anything about the Ocean Protection Plan? What have you heard?

PARIS AGREEMENT (5 minutes) ASK IN VICTORIA AND EDMONTON

- Has anyone heard of the Paris Agreement on climate change? How would you explain it?
 - Which countries are part of the agreement? (or which are not?)
 - Do you know what Canada's target is?

CLARIFY AS NEEDED

Under the Paris Agreement, Canada has committed to reducing its GHG emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030.

- Do you think Canada will meet this target?
 - What are factors that could impact whether or not Canada meets this target?
- Do you think it's important for Canada meet its target, or not? Why/why not?

PRICE ON POLLUTION (30 minutes) ASK IN EDMONTON

- What have you seen, read or heard about the environment lately?
 - And have you seen, read or heard about anything related to the Government of Canada and the environment recently?
- (IF PRICE ON POLLUTION NOT MENTIONED: Have you heard; IF MENTIONED: How many of you have heard) of the Government of Canada's plan to put a price on pollution? (show of hands)
 - PROBE: What have you heard recently?

CLARIFY AS NEEDED

In 2016 the Government of Canada announced a plan to put a price on pollution across the country, instructing each province to come up with their own plans before the end of 2018.

The federal government announced that they will apply a price on pollution in the four provinces that still do not have a system in place: Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and New Brunswick.

READ FOR EDMONTON

A few weeks ago, Alberta repealed its carbon level, meaning that it now only partially meets federal requirements. Thus, the federal government has announced that it will apply a price on pollution in Alberta as of January 1, 2020.

Under this system, what businesses pay will be based on the amount of carbon emissions they produce. All revenue collected in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Alberta will stay in each of these provinces – 90% will be given directly to residents in the form of an incentive. In Alberta for example, the average household will receive about \$880 in early 2020. 10% will go to small businesses, hospitals, and schools.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE MODERATOR:

- The federal carbon pollution pricing system puts a price on every tonne of carbon dioxide equivalents produced, and is made of two parts:
 1. a trading system for large industry, known as the output-based pricing system; and
 2. a regulatory charge on fuel
- The government expects that although the price on pollution does not apply directly to individuals, some costs will be passed on to consumers through things like increases in the price of heating or electricity.
- For most families (in these 4 provinces), the value of the incentive will be higher than the costs associated with the price on pollution

- What do you like about this proposed system?
- What do you dislike about this proposed system?
- What impact do you think this will have on the environment?
- What impact do you think this will have on the economy?
- What impact do you think this will have on you personally?

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (10 minutes) ASK IN EDMONTON

- What do you know about the environmental assessment process in Canada?
 - Have you heard about any changes to the rules or process?
 - IF YES: what have you heard?

CLARIFY AS NEEDED:

Environmental assessment is the process where the environmental impact of major projects is studied, and then a decision is made to either approve or reject them. The Government of Canada indicated it would review environmental and regulatory processes to address concerns about previous reforms. The government put in place interim principles for project reviews in January

2016 and has introduced legislation that would put in new rules to protect Canada's environment and grow the economy.

- What do you think of the environmental assessment process?
 - Do you think new rules are needed?
 - Do you think the rules favour the economy more, favour the environment more or do you think they strike a good balance?
 - What do you think the new rules will mean for business investment and pipeline development?

PIPELINES (20 minutes) ASK IN VICTORIA AND EDMONTON

- Who has heard of the Trans-Mountain Expansion (or TMX) pipeline?
- Pretend I've been out of the country for the past few years. Explain to me what has been going on with this project.
 - (IF NO ONE KNOWS) The existing pipeline moves a mix of oil products from Edmonton to a terminal in Burnaby, B.C. where it is exported to markets overseas. The expansion project will "twin" the pipeline to increase capacity.
- Who currently owns TMX?
 - (IF NO ONE KNOWS) Does anyone remember the Government of Canada purchasing this pipeline last year?
 - What was their reason for doing this?
 - How do you feel about their decision to purchase it?
- What is the status of this project?
 - PROBE: Is anyone aware of a Government of Canada announcement last week on TMX? What did the government announce?

CLARIFY AS NEEDED

Last week the Government of Canada announced that it has approved TMX and that all the money the federal government earns from this project will be invested in Canada's clean energy transition.

- On balance, how do you feel about this project?
 - Would you rather it go ahead, or not? Why/Why not?
 - Do you expect this project will happen or not? Why/why not?
- How do you feel about this announcement?
- How do you feel about using the revenue from TMX to fund investments in renewable energy?

- More broadly, how do you feel about the government approving pipelines, and also doing things like putting a price on carbon pollution and phasing out coal power to fight emissions? Do you think it's possible to fight climate change while still approving pipelines?
- Overall, when it comes to supporting the oil and gas sector, do you think the Government of Canada has been too supportive, not supportive enough, or getting it about right?

CUSMA (5 minutes) ASK IN BELLEVILLE

- Who has heard of the new trade agreement signed between Canada, the United States and Mexico? (show of hands)
- Based on anything you may know about the new agreement, do you think overall it's a good trade deal for Canada, or not?
- Have you heard anything about dairy farmers?
 - PROMPT AS NECESSARY: Have you heard anything about compensation for Canadian dairy farmers?

CLARIFY AS NEEDED

The deal gives US dairy farmers about 3.6% access to Canada's dairy markets, which is slightly more than what had been giving to other countries in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) trade deal signed earlier this year. The Government of Canada has said it will provide compensation to Canadian dairy farmers who are impacted.

- Compared to all the issues facing Canada right now, how important is the Canada-US trading relationship?
- And now thinking specifically about compensation for Canadian dairy farmers, how important is this particular issue?

ENVIRONMENT (15 minutes) ASK IN FREDERICTON, SOREL, BELLEVILLE

- Thinking about the environment, what are the biggest environmental challenges facing Canada today?
- What about here in FREDERICTON/SOREL/BELLEVILLE? Are there local environmental concerns the federal government needs to pay attention to?
- Have you heard about anything the Government of Canada is doing in regards to the environment?
 - Has anyone heard anything specifically about the government addressing plastic pollution?

CLARIFY AS NECESSARY:

The Government of Canada recently announced that it wants to ban single-use plastic items as early as 2021 in order to reduce plastic pollution.

- How do you feel about the Government of Canada taking steps to ban single-use plastics?
 - What types of products do you think would be affected by this ban?
 - Is this important?
 - What are the drawbacks?
 - What are some possible economic positives or negatives from this?
- How would you feel about the government introducing legislation that would make companies responsible for cleaning up the environmental damage caused by their disposal of plastic products?
 - Is this important?
 - Can you think of any drawbacks to launching this strategy?
 - Would this have any possible economic positives or negatives?
- How would you feel about the Government of Canada launching a strategy to reduce the use of plastics by government departments and agencies?
 - Is this important?

HEALTH CARE (25 minutes) ASK IN FREDERICTON, SOREL, BELLEVILLE, EDMONTON, VICTORIA

- Thinking about health care, what are the biggest challenges facing your community?
- Have you heard anything that the federal government has done regarding health care over the past few years?

HANDOUT

The following is a list of possible priorities the federal government could address regarding health care. I want you to put the numbers 1, 2 and 3 beside the items that you think should be the first, second and third priority of the government out of everything on the list. If there are any items that you think the federal government should not do, put an 'x' beside those items.

- Addressing doctor and nurse shortages
- Ensuring everyone has access to affordable contraception
- Helping Canadians with the cost of equipment for their disabilities
- Making it easier for Canadians to eat healthy by making healthy food more affordable
- Making large investments into research to find new cures and treatments for diseases
- Making palliative care more available and affordable for those who need it
- Providing all Canadians with fair and equal access to affordable prescription medications
- Providing financial support to caregivers so more people can remain at home while dealing with medical issues
- Providing treatment to those addicted to opioids and other illicit drugs
- Reducing wait times for mental health services
- Taking steps to ensure all children are vaccinated with the exception of those with allergies or medical conditions that prohibit them from receiving a vaccine

- Thinking about the item you ranked as the top priority, why did you choose that item?
- Were there any items you said the government should not do? Why not?
- Looking specifically at this item, “providing all Canadians with fair and equal access to affordable prescription medications”, what do you think “fair and equal access” would entail?
 - Have you heard anything in the news about the government of Canada doing something to ensure access to affordable prescription medications?
 - Is this an issue that you think would affect you personally?
- Has anyone heard of the term “pharmacare”?
 - What does this word mean to you?

HANDOUT

The following are a list of names that could be used for a government strategy to improve access to affordable prescription medications. I want you to put a check mark beside any names that you like, and circle the one name that you think would be the best name for this sort of strategy:

- Affordable Drug Strategy
 - Affordable Prescriptions Program
 - Canada Prescription Plan
 - Canadian Drug Plan
 - Comprehensive Drug Care
 - Comprehensive Prescription Plan
 - National Pharmacare Plan
 - National Prescription Insurance
 - Prescription Access Plan
 - Universal Drug Care
 - Universal Pharmacare Program
 - Universal Prescription Plan
- Thinking about the name you ranked as the best option, why did you choose that name?
 - Were there any names you did not like? Why not?
 - Is there another name or a combination of these names that you think would be better than the options listed? Why?

LOCAL CHALLENGES (15 minutes; 20 minutes in Victoria) ASK IN FREDERICTON, BELLEVILLE AND VICTORIA

- What are the most important local issues in [LOCATION] ***LIST ON WHITE BOARD***

- **FOR EACH:** Why is it important? What needs to be done? **PROBE TO SEE IF OTHERS FEEL IT IS IMPORTANT**
- And what does [LOCATION] need in terms of infrastructure?
 - What are the biggest concerns/challenges? Is there anything that needs to be done?

ASK IN VICTORIA ONLY

- What about passenger ferries between Victoria and Westshore?
- What about sewage?
- What about modernizing the Royal BC Museum?

- Thinking about everything the federal government has done in the past year, what, if anything, do you think will have the most positive impact on [LOCATION]?

- Have they done anything that you think will have a negative impact on [LOCATION]?

- What industry is the most important to the local economy in your area?
 - And do you think the federal government has been supportive of this industry recently? Why or why not?

- What industry is the most important to the local economy in your area?

- Now thinking more broadly, what kinds of Government of Canada services for Canadians are you aware of?
 - And in broad strokes, how satisfied are you with Government of Canada services?

SEATBELTS ON SCHOOL BUSES (20 minutes) ASK IN SURREY & SOREL

- Have you seen, read or heard anything about seatbelts on school buses? What have you heard?

- Which level(s) of government do you think is responsible for regulations related to seatbelts on school buses?

CLARIFY AS NEEDED

Recently, the Government of Canada announced the creation of a task force to look into the possibility of outfitting school buses with seatbelts.

- What do you think of outfitting school buses with seatbelts?
 - Do you think it's safer to have seatbelts on school buses or do you think school buses are safer without them?
 - Given other costs facing schools, do you think this is a good use of funds?

Let's say the decision is made to add seatbelts to school buses...

- Do you think the seatbelt rule should apply to all school buses, or do you think it depends on what a school bus is used for? For example, do you think it makes a difference if a school bus is used for regular transit, like transporting children to and from school, vs. school buses used for travelling between cities?
- Do you think seatbelts should apply to new buses only, or do you think all existing school buses should be retrofitted as well?
 - What do you think the benefits are to only adding seatbelts to new buses?
 - What do you think the downsides are to only adding seatbelts to new buses?
 - What do you think the difference in cost would be for retrofitting all existing buses vs. only adding seatbelts to new buses (e.g. a lot more expensive? a little bit?)

HOUSING (20 minutes) ASK IN SURREY

- What are your main concerns when it comes to housing in this city?
 - **PROBE:** Affordable rent? Being able to afford to live in a safe neighbourhood that is close to work?
- Is it important that you own as opposed to rent your home? Why? Why not?
- If you were looking to buy your first home right now, how do you feel about taking on a mortgage and making the payments in the current environment?
- Has the Government of Canada done anything to support individuals who want to buy a home?
 - **PROMPT AS NECESSARY:** Has anyone heard of the First Time Home Buyers Incentive?
 - **IF YES:** How would you explain what this is?

CLARIFY AS NEEDED

The Government of Canada created the First Time Home Buyers Incentive. Under this plan, you can get an interest-free loan from CMHC to cover 5% of the cost of your first home – or 10% if it's a new build, so as to encourage developers to build more homes. This means First-Time Buyers would not need as large of a mortgage, reducing their payments. For example, on a \$500,000 home, this could drop your monthly mortgage payments by over \$225 a month. When you sold your house, CMHC would collect 5% of the sale price of the house back, as repayment for this loan.

- How do you feel about this plan?
- Will this make it easier for young people to buy their first home?

RENTERS GROUP:

- Is this something you would use?

HOMEOWNERS GROUP:

- Would this impact you at all?

- Has anyone heard of the mortgage stress test?
 - IF YES: How would you explain what this is?

CLARIFY AS NEEDED

The Government of Canada introduced a stress test in late 2017 that is applied to all new insured mortgages – including those where the buyer has more than 20% for a down payment. The stress test is aimed at assuring the lender that the home buyer could still afford the mortgage if interest rates were to rise. The home buyer would need to qualify for a loan at the negotiated rate in the mortgage contract, but also at the Bank of Canada’s five-year fixed posted mortgage rate, which is an average of the posted rates of the big six banks in Canada.

- What do you think of this?
 - What do you see as the key benefits?
 - What do you see as the key drawbacks?

VAPING/SMOKING (25 minutes) ASK IN SURREY, FREDERICTON, SOREL, BELLEVILLE

MODERATOR NOTE: WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT CANNABIS WHEN DISCUSSING VAPING

We are going to switch gears and talk briefly about vaping and smoking...

- To start, do any of you smoke daily, occasionally, or not at all?
 - IF NOT AT ALL: Have you ever smoked?
- And have any of you tried vaping?
 - IF YES: tell me about your experience with it.
 - IF NO: how familiar are you with vaping? What do you know about it? Anything else?
- Where did you learn about vaping?
- What benefits, if any, do you think there are to vaping?
 - IF NOT MENTIONED: What about for helping smokers quit tobacco?
- What harms, if any, do you think there are to vaping?
 - IF NOT MENTIONED: What about to the health of a user? How harmful, if at all, do you think vaping is? What about compared to tobacco cigarettes?

Let’s turn our attention to smoking cigarettes...

- Do many in your social circle (i.e. family, close friends, colleagues) smoke? How often do you interact with people who smoke? How do you feel if and when they smoke around you? Why do you say that?
- How big of a health issue do you think smoking is today? Why do you say that?
 - Is it an important issue to you personally? Why/why not?
- Would you say the health risk to Canadians generally that is posed by tobacco has increased, decreased or stayed about the same over the past 5 years? Why do you say that?

- Some people feel like smoking regulations have gone too far, and that those who smoke have no rights at all. What are your impressions of this?
- And do you think it socially acceptable to smoke? Why do you say that?
- What kind of impression do you have about people who smoke? What is it? Why do you think that? Has it changed in the last 5 to 10 years? How so?
- Some people say that those who smoke could quit if they really wanted to. What are your impressions of this? Why is that?
- If you had to guess, what percentage of the population (15+) smokes today (either daily or occasionally)?

CLARIFY AS NEEDED

The current smoking rate in Canada is at 15% (aged 15+) – roughly 11% smoke daily and 4% are occasional smokers. When thinking about it in terms of the number of Canadians, 15% translates to roughly 4.6 million Canadians who smoke cigarettes.

- Is this more, less, or about what you expected?
- Some people say that smoking rates in Canada are decreasing and public focus should now be on other issues such as other health care issues, climate change or balancing the budget. Others say that there are still 4.6 million smokers in Canada and so tobacco should continue to be a high priority. From your own point of view, should tobacco continue to be a high government priority? Why do you say that?
 - There are 45,000 deaths per year on average due to smoking⁹. What are your impressions of this?
- Canada's Tobacco Strategy has committed to reducing tobacco use to 5% by 2035. How, if at all, can the Government of Canada/Health Canada best help Canadians quit using tobacco products, to meet this objective?
- Do you have any other comments on what we have discussed before moving onto the next section?

FOOD SAFETY SYSTEM (15 minutes) ASK IN SURREY, FREDERICTON, SOREL, BELLEVILLE

I'd like to now turn to Canada's food safety system...

As part of Canada's food safety system, Government of Canada inspectors visit food facilities, such as food processing plants, to ensure compliance with Canada's federal food safety laws. How frequently a food facility is inspected is based on food safety risks. Risk is determined based on a number of factors, including past compliance and the type of facility (for example, plants that

⁹<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthy-living/canada-tobacco-strategy/overview-canada-tobacco-strategy.html>

produce meat products are automatically considered high risk). In essence, low-risk food facilities are inspected less often than high risk ones.

Based on advances in computers and other technology, it may be possible in the future for the Government of Canada to rely more on technology when it comes to low-risk food facilities. For example, cameras could be installed at a low-risk facility, with computer programs using all of the footage captured by the cameras to determine if the facility is compliant. If the low-risk facility is compliant, no on-site visit by an inspector would occur. If the footage indicated that there is reason for concern, an inspector would visit the facility.

- What benefits, if any, do you see to using this approach?
- What concerns, if any, do you have about this approach?
- If the Government used this kind of approach, would you be more likely to trust Canada's food safety system, less likely or would it have no impact on your level of trust?

Another potential future scenario is that rather than Government of Canada analysts reviewing the data, the government would use a third party to do this.

- What benefits, if any, do you see to using a third party to analyze the data?
- What concerns, if any, do you have about using a third party to analyze the data?
- Would using a third party to analyze the data change how you feel about Canada's food safety system?
 - Would you be more or less likely to trust Canada's food safety system?

Conclusion (5 minutes)