



Government
of Canada

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Continuous Qualitative Data Collection of Canadians' Views – June 2022

Executive Summary

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Canada 

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Communications and Consultation Secretariat of the Privy Council Office (PCO) commissioned The Strategic Counsel (TSC) to conduct continuous cycles of focus group research across the country with members of the public on key national issues, events, and policy initiatives related to the Government of Canada.

The broad purpose of this ongoing qualitative research program is three-fold: to explore the dimensions and drivers of public opinion on the most important issues facing the country; to assess perceptions and expectations of the federal government's actions and priorities; and, to inform the development of Government of Canada communications so that they continue to be aligned with the perspectives and information needs of Canadians, while remaining both clear and easy-to-understand.

The research is intended to be used by the Communications and Consultation Secretariat within PCO in order to fulfill its mandate of supporting the Prime Minister's Office in coordinating government communications. Specifically, the research will ensure that PCO has an ongoing understanding of Canadians' opinions on macro-level issues of interest to the Government of Canada, as well as emerging trends.

This report includes findings from 12 online focus groups which were conducted between June 1st and June 29th, 2022, in multiple locations across the country including Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. Details concerning the locations, recruitment, and composition of the groups are shown in the section below.

The research for this cycle of focus groups focused largely on the Government of Canada's priorities and performance on issues important to a wide range of subgroups and regions. These included Quebec Anglophones, the City of Toronto, Chinese diaspora in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), youth in Prince Edward Island (PEI), northern Ontario, Filipino Canadians, southwestern New Brunswick, and Indigenous peoples in Quebec.

The research explored a wide range of related issues in depth, including the Government of Canada's efforts to regulate firearms in Canada as well as discussions related to organizations such as the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD). Participants were also asked for their views on the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as topics related to the environment such as carbon pricing and the Incentives for Zero-Emission Vehicles (iZEV) program. Those residing in the Lower Mainland region of British Columbia discussed housing affordability in their area, while those in the City of Toronto engaged in an in-depth discussion on various announcements related to housing that were included as part of Budget 2022. These included federal initiatives related to the construction of a significant number of new homes, actions to address housing affordability, and measures to better support and protect Canadians in the housing market.

Other topics discussed included Canada's relationship with China, seniors' issues, universal basic income, immigration, foreign credential recognition, issues pertaining to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) such as veteran homelessness, housing, military benefits, and supports, as well as local issues in Prince Edward Island and northern Ontario. Indigenous peoples residing in mid-size and major centres in Quebec also engaged in a discussion regarding Indigenous youth in care.

As a note of caution when interpreting the results from this study, findings of qualitative research are directional in nature only and cannot be attributed quantitatively to the overall population under study with any degree of confidence.

Methodology

Overview of Groups

Target audience

- Canadian residents, 18 and older.
- Groups were split primarily by location.
- Some groups focused on specific cohorts of the population including Anglophones residing in Quebec, Chinese diaspora, those aged 35-54, individuals who have received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, youth aged 18-24, seniors aged 55 and older, Filipino diaspora, active military members and veterans, and Indigenous peoples.

Detailed Approach

- Twelve focus groups across various regions in Canada.

- Three groups were conducted with the general population in the City of Toronto, northern Ontario, and southwestern New Brunswick.
- The other nine groups were conducted with key subgroups including:
 - Anglophones residing in Quebec;
 - Chinese diaspora residing the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) (excluding the City of Toronto);
 - Those aged 35-54 residing in small and mid-size centres in Alberta;
 - Those who have received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine residing in the Lower Mainland region in British Columbia;
 - Youth, aged 18-24, residing in Prince Edward Island (PEI);
 - Seniors, aged 55 and up, residing in the Bas-Saint-Laurent region in Quebec;
 - Filipino diaspora residing in major centres in the Prairies;
 - Active military members and veterans residing in Vancouver Island; and
 - Indigenous peoples residing in mid-size and major centres in Quebec.
- 2 groups in Quebec were conducted in French. 1 group in Quebec was conducted in English. All other groups were conducted in English.
- All groups for this cycle were conducted online.
- A total of 8 participants were recruited for each group, assuming 6 to 8 participants would attend.
- Across all locations, 82 participants attended, in total. Details on attendance numbers by group can be found below.
- Each participant received an honorarium. The incentive ranged from \$100 to \$125 per participant, depending on the location and the composition of the group.

Group Locations and Composition

LOCATION	GROUP	LANGUAGE	DATE	TIME (EST)	GROUP COMPOSITION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Quebec	1	English	June 1	6:00-8:00 pm	Anglophones	6
City of Toronto	2	English	June 7	6:00-8:00 pm	General Population	8
Greater Toronto & Hamilton Area (GTHA) (excl. City of Toronto)	3	English	June 8	6:00-8:00 pm	Chinese Diaspora	8
Small/Mid-size Centres Alberta	4	English	June 9	8:00-10:00 pm	Aged 35-54	6
Lower Mainland – British Columbia	5	English	June 14	9:00-11:00 pm	Received 2 Doses of COVID-19 Vaccine	8
Prince Edward Island	6	English	June 15	5:00-7:00 pm	Youth, aged 18-24	7
Bas-Saint-Laurent Region – Quebec	7	French	June 16	6:00-8:00 pm	Seniors, aged 55+	6
Northern Ontario	8	English	June 21	6:00-8:00 pm	General Population	7

Major Centres Prairies	9	English	June 22	8:00-10:00 pm	Filipino Diaspora	7
Vancouver Island	10	English	June 23	9:00-11:00 pm	Active Military Members/Veterans	5
Southwestern New Brunswick	11	English	June 28	5:00-7:00 pm	General Population	6
Mid-size and Major Centres Quebec	12	French	June 29	6:00-8:00 pm	Indigenous Peoples	8
Total number of participants						82

Key Findings

Government of Canada in the News (All Locations)

At the beginning of each group participants were asked what they had seen, read, or heard about the Government of Canada in recent days. Participants recalled a wide range of announcements and initiatives, including actions to address the perceived high rate of inflation and rising cost of living, the announcement by the federal government of new legislation (Bill C-21) to further strengthen gun control in Canada, lengthy travel delays at a number of Canadian airports, continued delays for those attempting to obtain or renew their passports, the suspension of the federal COVID-19 vaccine requirement to board a plane or train in Canada, the announcement of a \$1.3 billion land claim settlement between the federal government and the Siksika First Nation, and an upcoming 10% increase to Old Age Security (OAS) pension amounts for all seniors over the age of 75.

In addition to these items, a number of participants also mentioned having heard about recent actions by the Government of Canada on the international front. These included the ongoing provision of financial and military support to Ukraine in support of its defence effort against invading Russian forces, and the attendance of the Prime Minister and other federal officials at the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles as well as the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Kigali, Rwanda.

Drug Decriminalization (GTHA (excluding City of Toronto) Chinese Diaspora, Lower Mainland British Columbia Received Two Doses of COVID-19 Vaccine, Northern Ontario)

Three groups discussed the issue of drug decriminalization, including the recent federal approval of a request from the Government of British Columbia (B.C.) to decriminalize the possession of small amounts of illicit drugs in the province. Regionally, while most in the group from the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) believed the federal government had made the right decision in approving this request, a large number in the group from British Columbia felt otherwise, believing it should not have been approved. Those in the group from northern Ontario were relatively mixed as to whether this represented a positive or negative development.

Among those in favour of this initiative, it was felt that by decriminalizing small amounts of these substances, drug users would face less stigma and may also be more likely to seek treatment with the knowledge that there would not be legal ramifications for doing so. It was also thought that by taking this action, British Columbia would be able to free up additional law enforcement resources as well as prevent recreational drug users from receiving criminal records for their drug use which may drastically limit their employment opportunities going forward.

For participants who felt the federal government should not have granted this request, many believed that in order for decriminalization to be effective, there needed to be a significant treatment component which was said to currently be missing. It was believed that while decriminalization may be helpful as one of many steps towards combating drug addiction, on its own it was likely to have little effect in curbing substance use and may actually increase the prevalence of this behaviour. A number of others were of the view that there was no 'safe' amount for highly potent substances (such as fentanyl and heroin) and believed the 2.5 gram threshold to be far too high.

Discussing this matter further, participants in the group in northern Ontario were asked whether they would support their province or municipality decriminalizing drug possession in a similar way. On balance, slightly more were against this idea than those who supported it. Asked what more could be done to address the issue of substance use and addiction in northern Ontario, many pointed to the need for more addictions and mental health resources, including the construction of new treatment facilities in the region. It was widely felt that there were not enough resources at present to accommodate the growing number of individuals seeking help for these issues, and that these challenges were even greater for those living in remote communities in Canada's North.

Open Net-Pen Salmon Farming (Lower Mainland British Columbia Received Two Doses of COVID-19 Vaccine)

The group based in B.C.'s Lower Mainland briefly discussed the issue of open net-pen salmon farming in the province. No participants reported being previously aware of this issue. To facilitate conversation, participants were informed that the Government of Canada was working with the province of British Columbia and Indigenous communities to create a responsible plan for the transition from open net-pen salmon farming in coastal British Columbia waters by 2025. Though many expressed having only limited knowledge regarding this issue, most felt this to be a positive development and represented an important priority for the federal government. It was thought by several that current fish farming and aquacultural practices were often environmentally damaging and/or restricted the movement and quality of life of the province's fishing stocks, such as salmon. With this in mind, many felt positively about this transition and hoped it would assist in revitalizing the salmon population in British Columbia, which some believed had diminished in recent decades.

Public Mood (Small and Mid-size Centres Alberta)

Participants residing in small and mid-size centres in Alberta discussed the current public mood in Canada as well as whether Canadians were more divided at present than in the past. While a small number felt Canadians were more or less united on the important issues facing the country, most believed the public had become considerably more divided as of late.

Asked which issues they felt Canadians remained mostly united on, participants identified areas such as healthcare, inflation and the high cost of living, housing affordability, gun control, and a greater focus on inclusivity and multiculturalism relative to other jurisdictions such as the United States. Discussing areas where the country was more divided, participants mentioned the COVID-19 pandemic and related public health requirements and vaccination mandates, issues concerning Canada's official languages, the regulation of online content (Bill C-11), climate change, and fundamental 'Charter values' such as the freedom of expression and the extent to which this needed to be balanced with reasonable limits regarding defamatory or obscene comments as well as those that could be considered 'hate speech'.

Discussing whether Canadians were more divided at present than in the past, most reiterated the belief that they were. While some were of the view that these divisions likely had always existed to some extent, it was felt they were far more salient in the minds of Canadians today and that social media had played a direct role in fostering this division.

Almost all participants were at least somewhat worried regarding these perceived increased divisions among Canadians. For some belonging to marginalized groups, increasingly negative rhetoric regarding social justice issues such as gender equality, racial equity, and sexual orientation was viewed as deeply concerning and not representative of what they believed Canada stood for. Discussing whether the Government of Canada should take action to address these divisions, participants were largely split in their views. While some believed more needed to be done to rein in hateful and derogatory speech as well as consider greater regulation of the content shared on social media platforms, a similar number felt differently, believing federal intervention would likely inflame tensions further.

Bill 96 (Quebec Bas-Saint-Laurent Region Seniors, Mid-size and Major Centres Quebec Indigenous Peoples)

Two groups briefly discussed Quebec's recently enacted Bill 96. Only a few had heard about the Bill, and none were able to recall any specific details apart from their understanding that the legislation focused on language laws within the province of Quebec. To clarify, participants were informed that the Bill had recently been adopted by the Government of Quebec and that it represented an amendment to the provincial constitution which recognized Quebec as a distinct nation and French as the province's sole official language. Participants were largely mixed in their reactions to this Bill. Regionally, many in the group from the Bas-Saint-Laurent region felt positively about the Bill and its aims, with several being of the view that the French language needed to be protected within Quebec, especially given the perceived dominance of English in most other provinces/territories. For those in the group comprised of Indigenous peoples, it was felt that the Bill did not do enough to recognize and support Indigenous languages and was solely focused on preserving French culture within the province.

Pre-Packaged Food Nutrition Warnings (Northern Ontario)

Participants in the group from northern Ontario discussed the Government of Canada's plan to require packaged foods high in sugar, salt, or saturated fat to display a warning label, alerting Canadians to

the potential health risks of consuming these products. Very few had heard about this. For those who were aware, it was recalled that these labels would be placed on certain products (such as ground meat) with high levels of saturated or trans-fat content. Discussing whether there should be an exemption for ground meat, a number of participants thought additional labelling was unnecessary, believing most were already aware of the associated health risks. It was widely felt that if the Government of Canada went forward with this plan that all products should be held to the same standard and that no specific food category should be exempted.

Access to Abortion (Southwestern New Brunswick)

This group briefly discussed the issue of abortion as well as the accessibility of abortion services within Canada. Asked whether they had recently heard anything related to abortion access in the United States, only a few participants had. For those who were aware, it was said that the landmark *Roe v. Wade* ruling had recently been overturned by the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS), meaning there was no longer a U.S. federal constitutional right to abortion. This ruling was thought to have been incredibly divisive among Americans and had led to a number of public protests and outcry.

Slightly more participants indicated being concerned about this ruling as those who were not. Some reported feeling saddened by this development, strongly believing all women should have the freedom to make whatever medical decisions regarding their own bodies they deemed appropriate. A few were also worried that this would lead to more women seeking out potentially dangerous methods of obtaining abortion services now that legal avenues had been closed to them in many U.S. states.

Focusing on the availability of abortion services in Canada, most believed these to be readily available for those requiring these procedures. Discussing what actions, if any, the Government of Canada should take in response to this ruling, most felt there was little that could be done apart from reassuring Canadians it would continue to protect these services in Canada.

Government of Canada Priorities and Performance (Quebec Anglophones, City of Toronto, GTHA (excluding City of Toronto) Chinese Diaspora, Prince Edward Island Youth, Northern Ontario, Major Centres Prairies Filipino Diaspora, Southwestern New Brunswick, Mid-size and Major Centres Quebec Indigenous Peoples)

Eight groups engaged in discussions focusing on issues specific to their respective age groups, backgrounds, and local regions. Participants shared their perspectives regarding what they viewed as the key factors driving these issues, as well as the degree to which the federal government had been successful in addressing them.

Anglophone Issues (Quebec Anglophones)

Participants in the group comprised of Anglophones residing in Quebec discussed issues related to English-speakers living in predominately French-speaking communities. It was felt by many that Anglophones in Quebec were currently facing a number of challenges, especially given recent changes

to language laws in the province. Many mentioned the provincial Bill 96, which was widely seen as further limiting the use of any language aside from French in Quebec. While a few participants reported feeling generally welcome in Quebec, several believed they were occasionally perceived in a negative light for primarily speaking English. For some, including recent immigrants to Quebec, their struggles to learn French had left them feeling isolated and separate from their larger local community.

Discussing whether challenges facing Anglophones had changed in recent years, several were of the view that it was easier now for Anglophones to get by compared to in the past. Given the widespread usage of English in the global business community, it was believed that many Quebec-based companies now sought to conduct their operations in English as well as French, increasing the opportunities for Anglophone workers in the province. In addition, it was felt that young Francophones today were more likely to communicate fluently in English, in part due to their exposure to a significant amount of English-language media.

Asked to identify the most significant issues currently facing Anglophones in Quebec, participants put forward a number of responses. These included the introduction of legislation such as Bill 96, a lack of English-language education options, difficulty receiving English-language healthcare services, and limited employment options for those who did not speak French.

Discussing the potential impacts of these issues, several worried about the potential of a mass exodus of Anglophones from Quebec if their ability to converse, work, and learn in English continued to be limited. Some were concerned in particular regarding younger Anglophones leaving the province, believing they would be more inclined to choose to work and study in other parts of Canada where English was more widely spoken. Many were also worried about the potential societal divide brought about by legislation such as Bill 96, reiterating the view that English-speakers were often unfairly stigmatized in communities where French was spoken by the vast majority of the population. Asked whether they felt the situation would improve or worsen over time, participants were mixed in their perspectives. While some expected the issue would continue to get worse given the perceived prioritization of the French-language by the provincial government, a roughly similar number of participants were more optimistic, believing that though this issue was contentious at present, the tensions surrounding it would likely recede in the years to come.

Virtually all participants believed the federal government had a role to play in addressing this issue. Several expressed the view that federal officials, including the Commissioner of Official Languages, should be more vocal in their support for bilingual services in Quebec and the protection of the language rights of Anglophones in the province.

City of Toronto (City of Toronto)

The group based in the City of Toronto discussed a number of issues currently affecting their local community. Asked which areas were in greatest need of attention from the federal government, a number of responses were provided. These included housing affordability, the rising cost of living, public transportation systems, education, and violence involving firearms.

Discussing whether they were aware of any recent federal announcements or initiatives related to these issues, few participants could recall anything. Related to housing affordability, while some were aware of recent announcements such as a temporary two-year ban on non-Canadians buying residential housing property within Canada, it was widely felt that little in the way of tangible progress had been made by the federal government towards making housing more affordable. Focusing on other issues such as public transportation and gun crime, a few participants also recalled actions such as federal investments into the new Eglinton Crosstown Light Rail Transit (LRT) project as well as the recently announced national freeze on the buying and selling of handguns.

Asked whether they thought the Government of Canada was currently on the right track regarding these issues, very few felt this to be the case. It was widely believed that while federal officials appeared to recognize the importance of issues such as housing affordability and the rising cost of living, very little progress had been made in these areas. A small number felt differently, believing there was only so much the federal government could do to address these issues and that it was doing the best that it could at present.

Chinese Canadians (GTHA (excluding City of Toronto) Chinese Diaspora)

Participants in the group from the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) comprising members of the Chinese diaspora discussed a number of issues related to their local region as well as those facing Chinese Canadians more broadly. Discussing the top concerns currently facing their community as well as actions taken by the Government of Canada to address these issues, participants provided a range of responses. These included rising inflation and the high cost of living, housing affordability, perceived increasing crime rates, and anti-Asian racism.

Focusing on anti-Asian racism in particular, participants hoped greater attention would be placed on increasing the representation of those from Asian backgrounds at all levels of government. Related to this, some expressed feeling proud that Canada's current Chief Public Health Officer was of Asian descent, believing this to be a position of significant importance and a step in the right direction towards greater representation. In addition, it was suggested that the federal government could work to educate Canadians regarding the contributions made by those of Asian backgrounds throughout Canada's history as well as the challenges these groups had historically faced. It was thought that a greater national understanding and dialogue regarding Asian Canadians would go a long way towards reducing the stigma they currently encountered.

Youth Issues (Prince Edward Island Youth)

Participants in this group (comprised of individuals aged 18 to 24 years old) discussed a number of issues of specific concern to younger Canadians. To begin, participants were asked to identify which issues facing young people the federal government should be prioritizing. A number of responses were provided, including housing affordability, a lack of access to healthcare professionals such as family doctors and mental health specialists, limited employment opportunities, and growing concerns related to climate change.

Discussing the federal government's current level of engagement with younger Canadians, while most believed there had been increased efforts on this front in recent years, few felt these had been effective. To this end, many suggested an increased focus on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, believing these to be the most effective platforms on which to reach out to and connect with younger Canadians. Asked to assess the Government of Canada's current performance in utilizing social media to engage with young people, most were of the impression that the federal presence on these platforms was quite limited and relatively ineffective at present.

Northern Ontario (Northern Ontario)

Participants residing in Northern Ontario discussed a number of issues specific to the region. Discussing the most pressing concerns currently facing their local communities, participants identified a number of responses. Many mentioned what they viewed as a drastic shortage of healthcare workers such as doctors, nurses, and other specialists. Stemming from this, several spoke of long wait times at emergency rooms and walk-in clinics as well as difficulties in finding a family doctor in their area. It was said that mental health challenges and addiction had become increasingly prominent in recent years and that further resources would need to be devoted towards this issue.

In addition to healthcare, a number of participants also mentioned issues related to housing affordability, high fuel costs, poor road conditions, and the high rate of inflation at present. Regarding this last issue, it was added that this increased cost of living would likely be especially difficult for seniors currently dependent on fixed-income pensions. Asked whether they were aware of any recent actions by the federal government related to these issues, few were. For those who had heard something, it was said that the Government of Canada had been working towards enhancing the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) in recent years, though no additional details could be recalled.

Discussing whether they had seen, read, or heard about any future initiatives proposed by the federal government towards addressing these issues, few participants had heard anything. Among those who were aware, it was believed that work was being done to expedite the foreign credential recognition process, making it easier for foreign workers to obtain the necessary certifications to practice in their fields of expertise in Canada. It was thought this would assist towards alleviating worker shortages, particularly in sectors such as healthcare which were believed to be in need of an influx of additional workers.

Very few felt the Government of Canada was currently on the right track in addressing the most pressing issues to their region. It was said that many Canadians, particularly those with middle-incomes, were currently falling behind due to rising prices while also being unable to access financial supports available to lower-income Canadians. It was felt not enough was being done at present to assist these individuals and that these challenges would likely continue to increase if action was not taken. Asked what the federal government could do to better address the needs of Canadians, several suggested it focus on developing programs to assist Canadians struggling with the rising cost of living and high rate of inflation at present.

Filipino Canadians (Major Centres Prairies Filipino Diaspora)

This group of individuals residing in the Prairies and part of the Filipino diaspora discussed a number of issues related to the Filipino community in Canada. Focusing on issues of importance to Filipino Canadians specifically, participants identified a number of areas which they believed required greater attention from the Government of Canada. Among participants, immigration was frequently pointed to as an area in which Filipinos faced a number of challenges. These included difficulties related to the process of obtaining permanent resident status, acquiring work or study visas, and challenges related to the recognition of their professional credentials. It was felt these processes could often be quite costly and time consuming.

Asked whether they were aware of any recent actions from the Government of Canada related to these issues, a number of participants mentioned initiatives related to immigration. These included a pledge to eliminate citizenship application fees, the development of a more expedient pathway from temporary residency to permanent residency, and reducing the backlog of immigration applications thought to be existing in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

New Brunswick (Southwestern New Brunswick)

Participants residing in New Brunswick briefly discussed issues related to their province. Asked to identify the most pressing issues facing New Brunswick that the federal government should be prioritizing, a wide range of areas were mentioned. These included housing affordability, the increasing cost of living, perceived shortages of healthcare workers, and challenges related to fuel prices, which were felt to be exceptionally high at present. Focusing on the economy more specifically, participants identified areas such as agriculture, forestry, transportation, and natural resource development as the key areas requiring greater assistance from the Government of Canada. Few could recall any recent federal actions related to these issues.

Discussing agriculture, a number of participants shared concerns that family farms in particular were disappearing, leading to a greater dependence on large-scale agricultural corporations and fewer opportunities for smaller farms to operate in the sector. It was felt more should be done by the federal government to incentivize workers, especially younger Canadians, to pursue careers in the agricultural sector. Several also expressed the desire to see a larger emphasis placed on domestic development of non-renewable energy sources such as oil and gas. This was believed to be an important priority, particularly given the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia and its impact on the global energy market.

Indigenous Peoples (Mid-size and Major Centres Quebec Indigenous Peoples)

Participants identifying as Indigenous and residing in Quebec shared their perspectives regarding actions taken by the Government of Canada related to Indigenous issues as well as potential future initiatives on this front.

To begin, participants were asked to share what they viewed as the top issues facing Indigenous peoples. A wide range of concerns were cited. These included a lack of access to clean drinking water in some Indigenous communities, issues related to the Indian Act, the need to resolve conflicts

amongst differing Indigenous groups, and increased supports towards the promotion of Indigenous language and culture.

Most were generally aware of efforts by the federal government related to Indigenous issues. These included initiatives such as Jordan's Principle, additional support for investigations into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), and the provision of financial support for cultural events (such as Pow Wows). While acknowledging these actions, most did not believe the federal government to be on the right track in addressing the priorities most important to Indigenous peoples. Though many believed that some progress had been made in recent years, it was thought that Indigenous issues needed to be made a higher priority by the federal government. This included issues urgently facing individual Indigenous communities (such as a lack of potable drinking water), as well as continuing to build an ongoing relationship with Indigenous peoples more generally.

Participants also discussed the prevalence of systemic racism towards Indigenous people in Canada. Most believed that racism towards Indigenous people was widespread, especially across areas related to employment, justice, and education. They believed this stemmed from a lack of understanding and knowledge of their people and culture. Most were unaware of any actions taken by the federal government towards addressing this issue and most felt that it was on the wrong track when it came to combatting racism towards Indigenous people. To get on the right track, participants felt that more education and understanding about Indigenous values and culture was needed across Canada.

Firearms (Quebec Anglophones, City of Toronto, GTHA (excluding City of Toronto) Chinese Diaspora, Small and Mid-size Centres Alberta, Lower Mainland British Columbia Received Two Doses of COVID-19 Vaccine, Quebec Bas-Saint-Laurent Region Seniors, Southwestern New Brunswick)

Seven groups discussed the subject of firearms and recent actions taken by the federal government related to gun crime in Canada. To begin, participants shared their impressions regarding the current level of gun crime and whether it had increased, decreased, or more or less remained the same in recent years. Most participants believed crimes involving firearms were generally quite low in Canada, especially compared to other jurisdictions such as the United States. It was thought by a number of participants that Canada had a far more rigorous screening and certification process for those seeking to become licenced to possess and use firearms and that this had played a major role in limiting the prevalence of gun crime in the country. Commenting further, some expressed the view that Canada was currently among the safest countries in the world when it came to firearms. A small number of participants felt differently, believing gun crime to have risen in recent years. It was said by these participants that crimes involving firearms had been covered in the media far more frequently as of late, providing the impression that these incidents were occurring on a more regular basis today than in the past.

Asked what they believed to be the primary factors contributing to gun crime in Canada, participants provided a number of responses. These included challenges related to mental health and addiction, as well as other factors such as poverty, homelessness, and gang activity.

Discussing the current laws in place regarding firearms in Canada, participants were asked if they felt these regulations were too strict, not strict enough, or sufficient at present. While most believed the current laws in place to be at an appropriate level, a smaller, yet still significant number felt these regulations should be increased. Very few felt gun laws in Canada were too strict at present. For many of those who desired to see stricter laws concerning firearms, it was believed that no person had a fundamental right to possess a firearm and that there needed to be greater consequences for those who committed crimes using these weapons. Among the larger number who felt Canadian gun regulations to be adequate at this time, many cited the perceived low incidence of firearms-related crimes as reasoning supporting their view. A number were also of the impression that most crimes involving guns were committed with illegally acquired firearms. Expanding upon this, it was said that further restrictions would unfairly impact those gun owners who were already abiding by the law.

Asked if they were aware of any recent actions by the federal government in this area, while most participants had not, a smaller number were able to recall the recent announcement of a freeze on the buying and selling of handguns in Canada. Informed that the Government of Canada had recently tabled firearm-control legislation on May 30th, 2022, participants were shown a number of initiatives included within this proposed legislation. On balance, participants across all groups reacted largely positively to these initiatives. A number of participants expressed surprise that components of this legislation, particularly the taking away of gun licenses for those involved in domestic violence or criminal harassment, were not already in place. Discussing the initiatives, several spoke positively about the introduction of 'red flag' laws for those involved in intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, or at risk of self-harm.

While most reacted positively to the implementation of a national freeze on handguns, some expressed a desire for further details on what this would specifically entail and how long it would be expected to remain in place. Expanding upon this, a number of participants speculated that this action represented the first step by the federal government toward an eventual permanent ban on handgun ownership in Canada. Some also worried this would have a counter-active effect in that it may spur a rush on handguns by those who were ambivalent about purchasing a handgun and would now be encouraged to do so before the freeze was officially in place.

Discussing what more could be done by the federal government related to handguns, some identified the need for a greater emphasis to be placed on addressing underlying issues such as mental health, addiction, gangs and other factors which were believed to be contributing to gun crime in Canada. It was felt by a number of participants that regulation alone would likely not work and that if one was truly committed to obtaining a firearm for criminal use that individual would likely be able to do so, no matter how strict the laws in place were.

NORAD (Quebec Anglophones, GTHA (excluding City of Toronto) Chinese Diaspora, Small and Mid-size Centres Alberta, Lower Mainland British Columbia Received Two Doses of COVID-19 Vaccine, Prince Edward Island Youth, Quebec Bas-Saint-Laurent Region Seniors, Vancouver Island Active Military Members and Veterans)

Seven groups engaged in brief discussions related to the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD). These included awareness and perspectives regarding the continued national security role of NORAD as well as recent investments by the Government of Canada into the organization.

NORAD Impressions (Quebec Anglophones, GTHA (excluding City of Toronto) Chinese Diaspora, Small and Mid-size Centres Alberta, Lower Mainland British Columbia Received Two Doses of COVID-19 Vaccine, Prince Edward Island Youth, Quebec Bas-Saint-Laurent Region Seniors)

Six groups shared their general perspectives on NORAD. Across all groups, participants reported a mixed awareness of NORAD, with roughly as many aware of the organization as those who were not. To aid in conversation, it was clarified that NORAD is a combined organization operated by Canada and the United States responsible for protecting the airspace above the two nations and providing warnings of any aerial threats targeting North America.

Upon receiving this clarification, almost all participants were of the view that NORAD played a role of critical importance to Canada's national security. It was felt that an ongoing partnership with the United States was necessary in order to protect Canadian airspace and that this relationship was an important component of Canada's overall security structure. In addition, several participants mentioned the ongoing hostilities between Ukraine and Russia and the potential of this conflict escalating further as additional reasons for NORAD's continued importance, believing Canada could not afford to leave its airspace undefended.

Discussing whether Canada should consider making changes to its management of air defence given the current global geopolitical environment, while none felt investments into NORAD should be scaled back, a number of participants put forward suggestions as to how Canada's national air defence could be enhanced going forward. These included increasing the amount spent on national defence, further research into newly emerging threats such as hypersonic missiles and drone technology, and a greater emphasis on defending Canada's North.

Recent NORAD Investments (Vancouver Island Active Military Members and Veterans)

This group, comprised of active military members and veterans, briefly discussed recent investments made by the Government of Canada towards NORAD. While all were aware of NORAD and its responsibilities, few recalled hearing about any recent federal announcements regarding the organization. To clarify, participants were informed that the federal government had recently announced that it would be allocating an additional \$4.9 billion over the next six years to bolster NORAD defence capabilities across the Arctic. Participants were mixed in their reactions to this information. While a number of participants felt this to be an important priority, many were pessimistic as to whether this amount was affordable for the federal government and/or believed this

funding could be better spent elsewhere. Several identified other issues related to Canada's defence such as equipment procurement and perceived shortages of CAF personnel. It was believed that these needed to be prioritized higher relative to increasing Canada's defence capacity in the Arctic. Asked what more the Government of Canada should do in terms of enhancing NORAD's defence capabilities, a number of participants suggested research into automated drone surveillance and missile defence systems. It was said these represented a viable option that would not require a massive influx of additional personnel to operate them.

COVID-19 Outlook and Vaccines (Small and Mid-size Centres Alberta, Lower Mainland British Columbia Received Two Doses of COVID-19 Vaccine, Prince Edward Island Youth, Quebec Bas-Saint-Laurent Region Seniors, Major Centres Prairies Filipino Diaspora)

Five groups discussed a range of issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These included participant outlooks on how the virus may progress going forward, perspectives regarding the Government of Canada's handling of the pandemic, views on past and present public health measures, and opinions related to the COVID-19 vaccine.

COVID-19 Forecast (Small and Mid-size Centres Alberta, Prince Edward Island Youth, Quebec Bas-Saint-Laurent Region Seniors)

Three groups shared their perspectives regarding how the COVID-19 virus would likely evolve in the months and years to come. While most expected there would likely be additional waves, it was widely felt that the worst of the pandemic had passed. Several believed that due to the additional protections provided by COVID-19 vaccines, Canadians were better prepared to live with the virus and move forward as best they could. While most were of the view that the virus would likely continue to spread, almost all felt it unlikely that any new public health requirements would be implemented at either the provincial/territorial or federal level. It was widely believed that additional measures were not necessary and that there would be little willingness among the general public to adhere to them.

Government of Canada Performance (Prince Edward Island Youth, Major Centres Prairies Filipino Diaspora)

Two groups discussed the Government of Canada's management of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, most felt positively about the federal response, especially in terms of reassuring Canadians during the early months of the pandemic when little was known about the virus. It was added that given how often the virus had evolved over the past two years, the Government of Canada had done the best it could to adapt to and manage the pandemic. Some also mentioned what they viewed as the highly effective roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines, believing this had been an efficient process and had been a contributing factor to the relatively high rate of vaccination among Canadians compared to other countries such as the United States. A small number also said the federal government had done an effective job at working with governments at the provincial/territorial level. This was felt to be especially important given the wide range of approaches taken in these jurisdictions towards managing the pandemic.

While most felt the overall federal performance had been effective, several participants identified areas where they believed the response could have been improved. A number of participants were of the view that financial supports such as the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) should have been ended far earlier. It was said that the significant spending required for these assistance programs had been a contributing factor to the high rate of inflation and perceived labour shortage, both of which were seen as significant economic challenges at present.

Public Health Measures (Small and Mid-size Centres Alberta, Prince Edward Island Youth, Quebec Bas-Saint-Laurent Region Seniors, Major Centres Prairies Filipino Diaspora)

Four groups engaged in discussions regarding the various public health measures that had been implemented in their respective regions during the pandemic as well as those in place at the federal level. Overall, most viewed public health requirements as sufficient at present, though a smaller number of participants in areas where some restrictions remained hoped to see these measures removed as well; no participants expressed a desire for stricter public health requirements at present.

Regionally, many in the group based in Quebec felt it was reasonable to continue to have some measures (such as mask requirements) in place, especially under certain circumstances such as when riding public transit or in healthcare facilities. In the group from the Prairies (Saskatchewan and Manitoba), however, where provincial mask requirements in healthcare settings had been rescinded, no participants expressed concern regarding this decision. Among these participants, it was widely believed it was now a matter of personal responsibility when deciding whether to engage in public health measures such as mask-wearing and social distancing when ill. Several in the group comprised of younger Canadians residing in Prince Edward Island (PEI) shared the view that while some restrictions had likely been necessary at certain periods during the pandemic, they had also had negative consequences. These included growing mental health challenges, a lack of social opportunities for young people, economic struggles for small and medium-sized businesses, and a poorer quality of education for those who had been pursuing post-secondary studies. Among those residing in Alberta, most felt all restrictions should be removed, including those at the federal level requiring facemasks on airplanes and in airports, random testing for travellers entering Canada, and travel-related vaccine requirements.

COVID-19 Vaccine Perspectives (Small and Mid-size Centres Alberta)

Participants residing in small and mid-size centres in Alberta shared their experiences and perspectives regarding COVID-19 vaccines. To begin, participants were asked whether changing public health measures over the course of the pandemic had affected their opinions regarding the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination. No participants felt this to be the case, with many expressing the perception that knowledge regarding the virus was constantly being discovered and that it made sense that a public health response would adapt and evolve with these new developments.

Slightly more participants reported having gotten vaccinated than those who had not. Discussing whether they were worried about the potential long-term impacts of the COVID-19 vaccine, few participants were, with several believing that the benefits of receiving the vaccine outweighed any potential costs. A small number of participants expressed concerns about potential heart issues as well

as an overall weakening of their immune system due to the vaccine. While not concerned about their own health, a few were worried about the potential impacts the COVID-19 vaccine may have on their children, believing there were too many unknowns about the long-term impacts of the vaccine and how it may interact with their less-developed immune systems.

COVID-19 Vaccine ‘Booster Dose’ (Lower Mainland British Columbia Received Two Doses of COVID-19 Vaccine)

This group, comprised of participants who had only received two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, discussed their opinions related to the third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, sometimes referred to as a ‘booster dose’. Asked what had contributed to their initial decision to get vaccinated, participants put forward a number of responses. These included concerns regarding the health of immunocompromised relatives and loved ones, the impression that the vaccine would assist in reducing the spread of COVID-19, and for several, fears regarding the potential impacts to their health of contracting the virus. While most remained comfortable with their decision to get vaccinated, a small number expressed regret, feeling they should have done more research regarding what they viewed as the potential long-term impacts of the vaccine prior to receiving it. No participants had an appointment scheduled to get an additional dose of the vaccine. While a few were adamantly opposed to receiving another dose, now believing the vaccine to be potentially harmful, most were of the view that there was no real point to getting a booster dose, feeling it provided little protection and would not assist in reducing the transmissibility of the virus.

Asked whether they had any outstanding questions regarding COVID-19 vaccines, some questioned whether it was now expected that Canadians would need to receive boosters on an annual or semi-annual basis. Many believed this to be untenable and expressed a general unwillingness to adhere to a regular booster campaign, especially given their perception that the vaccine had been relatively ineffective at preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Climate Change and Environment (City of Toronto, Small and Mid-size Centres Alberta, Northern Ontario, Major Centres Prairies Filipino Diaspora)

Four groups engaged in discussions regarding initiatives and programs related to environmental sustainability and reducing the impacts of climate change. These included a focus on the federal government’s carbon pricing system as well as the Incentives for Zero-Emission Vehicles (iZEV) program.

Carbon Pricing (City of Toronto, Small and Mid-size Centres Alberta, Northern Ontario, Major Centres Prairies Filipino Diaspora)

All four groups discussed the carbon pricing system which had been implemented by the Government of Canada in recent years. Asked whether they had heard of this initiative, while many had, few could recall any specific details regarding what a price on carbon entailed. For those who could offer some specifics, it was believed that carbon pricing had been put in place for businesses as well as individual households, and was tied to the amount of greenhouse gas emissions these individuals/corporations

produced during their day-to-day activities. A number of participants were of the impression that this price on carbon had been implemented by way of increased taxes on non-renewable energy sources such as gasoline.

On balance, most were supportive of the implementation of a federal price on carbon. It was expressed by several that climate change represented a major issue and that it was important to have a plan in place to mitigate its effects. A few expressed disappointment that a number of provinces were currently not meeting the emission standards set out by the federal government. Participants were mixed in their opinions regarding the incentive payments being returned to Canadians in their provinces. A large number were of the view that these amounts should not be returned to citizens, believing this reduced the impact of this policy as a disincentive for carbon emitting behaviours. Among others who felt these payments represented a positive development, many were pleased that these amounts were redistributed directly to individual households rather than utilized by the federal government for its own operations.

Informed that the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) found that 80% of households in affected provinces would be receiving more money back in the form of incentive payments than they spent on carbon pricing through their household purchases, participants were varied in their reactions. While a number of participants saw this as a sign of good faith that the carbon pricing system would not be unfairly punitive to most Canadians, many others were more skeptical. Several, including a large number in the groups from Alberta and northern Ontario, felt this may disproportionately impact those living in rural areas who may need to spend more on energy and fuel and would likely emit more greenhouse gases as a result.

Incentives for Zero-Emission Vehicles (iZEV) Program (Northern Ontario, Major Centres Prairies Filipino Diaspora)

Participants in two groups discussed the Incentives for Zero-Emission Vehicles (iZEV) program. Asked whether they had heard of this program, though several had, few could recall any specific details. To aid in conversation, participants were informed that the iZEV Program offers point-of-sale incentives to consumers who buy or lease a ZEV that meets the program requirements. In addition, participants were informed that along with various other types of automobiles, this program also applies to pickup trucks where the base model Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price (MSRP) is less than \$60,000.

Asked for their perspectives on this program, specifically with respect to its inclusion of pickup trucks, many expressed a number of concerns related to the iZEV initiative. Even with the focus on larger classes of ZEVs such as pickups, few in northern Ontario felt the program was appealing while those in the group from the Prairies were more mixed in their opinions. A number of those in the group from northern Ontario were of the impression that ZEVs would not be able to operate in more rural or remote communities, especially given concerns regarding extreme snowfall in the winter months and the long distances those residing in these areas were frequently required to drive. Related to this, while a number of participants in both groups expressed interest in purchasing a ZEV, they did not believe these vehicles would be able to suit their needs at present. It was felt by several that prior to them purchasing a ZEV, there would need to be advancements towards ensuring longer battery life for these vehicles as well as greater investments into infrastructure such as charging stations.

Many also mentioned affordability as a primary concern related to this program. Several commented on what they perceived to be the general unaffordability of ZEVs at present, believing these vehicles to be prohibitively expensive for many lower and middle-income Canadians. Others also expressed that it would be difficult to find a pickup truck with an MSRP under \$60,000 and that the federal government may be underestimating the true cost of these vehicles. With this in mind, very few felt the pricing criteria outlined in this program would incentivize them.

Speaking about ZEVs more generally, participants were largely supportive of the environmental benefits these vehicles provided. While many expected a large number of Canadians would eventually make the transition to ZEVs it was said this may take a long time to achieve. Expanding upon this, it was felt that given concerns regarding affordability and a lack of charging stations, the current federal timeline requiring all car and passenger truck sales to be zero-emission by 2035 was generally seen as somewhat unrealistic.

Housing Affordability (City of Toronto, Lower Mainland British Columbia Received Two Doses of COVID-19 Vaccine)

Two groups discussed issues related to housing in Canada. These conversations focused both on housing affordability in general as well as specific initiatives related to housing that had been announced by the Government of Canada as part of the recent 2022 federal Budget.

Housing Perspectives (Lower Mainland British Columbia Received Two Doses of COVID-19 Vaccine)

This group, based in the Lower Mainland region of British Columbia (B.C.), engaged in a brief conversation regarding housing affordability in their region as well as on a national scale. Discussing the most pressing issues facing their region at present, almost all identified housing as a major problem. This was felt to be especially the case for low-income Canadians who struggled both to purchase a home as well as to find affordable rental options in their area. A number of participants were of the view that younger Canadians in particular were struggling with the current housing market. It was said that in most cases young people needed financial assistance from their parents to afford the high down payments necessary to purchase a home. Some also identified the difficulties faced by homeowners, indicating that amidst a trend of rising interest rates many would likely witness significantly higher mortgage payments in the months and years to come.

Asked what actions they felt the Government of Canada could take to assist those struggling to find affordable housing, a number of responses were provided. These included building more new homes, implementing a permanent ban on non-Canadian homebuyers, increased taxation on empty homes, enhanced public transit infrastructure to support new housing developments, and a greater focus on co-operative housing options.

Budget 2022 Housing Initiatives (City of Toronto)

Participants in this group engaged in a discussion regarding a number of recent housing-related initiatives announced as part of Budget 2022. All participants identified housing as an issue of critical importance at present.

Engaging in a number of exercises discussing recent announcements and initiatives from the Budget, participants were asked to identify which they felt would be most effective towards addressing housing affordability. To begin, participants were presented with a number of specific initiatives developed to provide additional housing options for Canadians.

Among these initiatives, those related to increasing the number of housing options for low-income Canadians and marginalized populations received the highest level of support. Almost all participants identified the investment of an additional \$1.5 billion (over two years) towards new affordable housing units for those experiencing homelessness or domestic violence as a particularly important initiative. It was said that in most cases, those experiencing these challenges had few places to go and that this often led to them remaining in dangerous situations. Some thought that homelessness in particular had become a more prevalent issue over the past two years, primarily due to the economic and mental health challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. A large number also reacted favourably to the announcement of an additional \$2.9 billion (over four years) for the National Housing Co-Investment Fund, focusing on creating new affordable housing options as well as repairing existing low-income housing. A number spoke positively regarding the commitment of an additional \$500 million towards expanding co-operative housing in Canada, including a pledge to provide an additional \$1 billion in loans for these types of projects. It was thought that co-operative housing represented a viable and realistic pathway towards home ownership for many as well as fostered a sense of community and shared responsibility among those living in these dwellings.

Participants next focused on a second set of priorities, this time specifically concerning the issue of housing affordability and creating additional pathways to homeownership for Canadians.

Of these initiatives, several focused on those initiatives related to first-time home buyers. A large number reacted positively to the creation of a new Tax-Free First Home Savings Account allowing prospective home buyers to save up to \$40,000 tax-free towards the purchase of their first home. In addition, many identified the expansion of the First-Time Home Buyers' Incentive which would allow for greater flexibility and easier access to the housing market for single Canadians.

A large number of participants also identified the allocation of an additional \$200 million towards rent-to-own housing options as a potentially helpful initiative. Many believed this represented a realistic pathway to homeownership, particularly for younger and low/middle income Canadians who may struggle to afford a down payment. It was said that this could provide greater autonomy for many Canadians, allowing the rent they pay to contribute towards the eventual goal of homeownership and giving them something to work towards. A number of participants felt this initiative could be potentially helpful to them personally. Several also mentioned the investment of \$562 million (over two years) towards funding organizations addressing homelessness, as well as an additional \$62 million specifically for veterans experiencing homelessness, as a positive initiative.

Participants were next shown an additional set of initiatives, this time focused on protecting Canadians in the housing market. On balance, all initiatives received a significant level of support, with a number of participants expressing that all of these actions would likely have a positive impact on helping Canadians navigate the housing market.

Almost all participants identified the creation of taxation penalties to prevent landlords from engaging in practices such as 'renovictions' as an important initiative. It was said that this was a frequent problem in many areas and represented a lack of fairness on the part of landlords. Some expressed having personally known individuals who had dealt with this issue. A large number also mentioned the pledge to end blind bidding as especially important. It was believed that in many cases this process had served to artificially drive up housing prices, with realtors exploiting the desperation of prospective home buyers to enter the housing market and encouraging higher bids than these individuals may be able to afford.

Several also reacted positively to the announcement of a two-year ban on all non-Canadians from buying residential properties in Canada, believing that foreign buyers had significantly contributed to the increase in Canadian home prices in recent decades. While almost all were in favour of this action, some clarified that they did not want to see those immigrating to Canada to live and work included in this ban, believing anyone seeking to contribute to the country should have the opportunity to purchase a home.

Seniors and Aging (Quebec Bas-Saint-Laurent Region Seniors, Southwestern New Brunswick)

Two groups engaged in discussions related to issues facing seniors as well as the impact of an aging population on Canada's economic and social future. Participants spoke about a number of concerns related to these issues, as well as potential actions the Government of Canada could take towards addressing them.

Seniors' Issues (Quebec Bas-Saint-Laurent Region Seniors)

Participants in the group comprised of seniors from the Bas-Saint-Laurent region of Quebec, discussed a number of issues of importance to seniors in Canada. To begin, participants identified what they felt to be the most important issues facing Canadians at present. A wide range of responses were provided, including climate change and the environment, inflation and the rising cost of living, education, and perceived labour shortages in many vital sectors such as healthcare and the trades.

Focusing on areas of concern specifically related to seniors, participants mentioned a number of issues they believed required greater attention from the federal government. Many reiterated the view that the rising cost of living was an issue of paramount importance. It was believed that a large number of seniors were already struggling to make ends meet and that this loss of purchasing power due to rising inflation had only exacerbated this issue. A large number felt the amounts provided through pensions and other financial supports were no longer sufficient to meet their everyday needs. In addition, several also identified healthcare as an important issue for seniors. Related to this, some

expressed the desire to see an increase in healthcare transfers from the Government of Canada to support provinces/territories in improving the quality and accessibility of care in their jurisdictions.

Discussing the performance of the federal government related to addressing those issues most important to seniors, no participants felt it was currently on the right track. A number of participants expressed the view that the federal government needed to be doing far more to provide them with assistance. Focusing on potential ways the Government of Canada could improve on this front, participants put forward a number of suggestions. These included greater communication with seniors, assistance towards allowing seniors to remain in their homes as long as possible (rather than moving to a long-term care facility), and the provision of greater financial resources to the provinces/territories targeted towards increasing the quality of care received by seniors.

Asked whether they receive the Old Age Security (OAS) pension, several participants indicated that they did. Additionally, a smaller number reported that they were recipients of the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS). Discussing these supports, many reiterated that these payments were not enough to meet their needs and needed to be adjusted to reflect rising costs and inflation. Discussing potential changes that could be made to the OAS or GIS, many were of the view that these supports should be indexed to inflation in order to account for the increased cost of living.

Focusing on potential actions that could be taken by the federal government related to seniors, participants evaluated a number of current and potential initiatives targeted towards addressing seniors' issues. Among these initiatives, the proposal to increase the GIS by \$500 for single seniors and \$750 for couples (beginning at age 65) received enthusiastic support from many participants. It was said this would help towards offsetting increased costs resulting from the present high rate of inflation.

A number of participants also reacted positively regarding initiatives that would allow seniors to remain in their homes as they age, including the initiative to assist community-based organizations in providing support assisting low-income and vulnerable seniors stay at home as long as possible. Many expressed a strong personal desire to remain in their own homes rather than transition to long-term care facilities, and felt this initiative would assist them in doing so. It was also suggested that these community organizations could develop more community-based programming and activities to help prevent seniors living alone from feeling isolated.

Ageing Population (Southwestern New Brunswick)

Participants in the group from New Brunswick engaged in a brief conversation regarding the potential impact of an aging population on their province. Many were of the view that this issue had become increasingly prevalent as of late and would likely worsen going forward. Some were of the impression that in addition to the province's own aging population, many retirees from other parts of Canada had been relocating to New Brunswick due to perceived lower housing prices and cost of living in the region.

Informed that New Brunswick has one of the oldest populations in the country and that the number of seniors in the province was expected to double within the next 20 years, it was felt by many that this

would lead to a further increase in housing prices. Related to this, some were concerned this would compel younger people to leave New Brunswick in search of more affordable housing, further decreasing the available working population. A number of others expressed worry about the potential economic disruption this might cause, with a lack of younger workers available to replace those who are retiring or would soon be doing so. Several were also concerned about the potential impact this would have on the healthcare system, which was perceived to already be significantly strained in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Asked how the Government of Canada might address these issues, participants put forward a range of suggestions. A number believed the federal government should increase targeted immigration initiatives, prioritizing the recruitment of skilled workers who could work in areas of need, such as healthcare and the trades. Others felt this issue could be solved without increasing immigration, believing that the federal government should prioritize incentivizing those already living in Canada (and young people in particular) to work in vital sectors. A few suggested that the training and certification process in sectors such as healthcare be made less onerous going forward. It was believed that there was presently a significant need for doctors, nurses, and specialists throughout much of the country and that the large investment of time and financial resources required for training for these positions represented a significant barrier for many interested in working in the sector.

Relationship with China (GTHA (excluding City of Toronto) Chinese Diaspora)

Participants in the group comprising members of the Chinese diaspora within Canada discussed the Government of Canada's current relationship with China as well as their perspectives regarding how this relationship had evolved in recent years. Many characterized the present relationship as tense and occasionally adversarial. A number of participants were of the opinion that China's rise as a major economic power in recent decades had been a primary factor contributing to these increased tensions. It was felt that as China asserted itself to a greater extent on the global stage, Canada and its allies (such as the United States) had been compelled to take a closer look at their economic ties with China as well as the reported human rights abuses taking place within China's borders. Regarding this latter issue, some participants expressed the view that Canada was not currently doing enough to speak out against human rights issues in China and was exhibiting too much caution in its willingness to be critical of the Chinese government.

Discussing how they expected Canada-China relations to evolve going forward, several expected China to continue to grow as a global economic power and believed this could potentially lead to increasing tensions, especially if the perceived rivalry between China and the United States continued to deepen. While most felt the Government of Canada should continue to maintain an economic and trade relationship with China, very few wanted to see the development of stronger ties. Several felt that by doing so Canada would run the risk of alienating crucial allies such as the United States as well as potentially expose itself to security risks, particularly those related to cybersecurity and espionage.

Universal Basic Income (Northern Ontario)

Participants in the group from Northern Ontario engaged in a brief discussion regarding their views on the potential introduction of a universal basic income (UBI) program in Canada. Many were familiar with the concept of UBI as well as its objective of providing individuals with a level of income ensuring they can meet their basic needs such as food, housing, and clothing. Discussing whether they felt UBI trial programs should be considered by the federal government, most were against such an initiative. Many expressed concern that some would take advantage of these programs, utilizing them as a way to meet their financial needs while also abstaining from working. It was suggested by some that the funds required to deliver a UBI program might be better directed toward economic development, job creation, or increasing the amount of affordable housing in their communities.

Focusing on potential implications of UBI programs, participants were informed that while some said this type of program would help Canadians struggling with the rising cost of living, others were worried that this additional influx of money into the economy would drive up prices and worsen inflation further. Asked which of these perspectives they felt was more realistic, all felt the introduction of a UBI would have a negative impact on Canada's economic situation. Some compared a UBI to pandemic-related financial supports such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), which they believed had been a major contributing factor towards rising inflation and overall price increases. It was suggested that a basic income program would likely be more impactful if, rather than being allocated universally, it was targeted primarily towards low-income Canadians, those living with disabilities, and other marginalized groups who may require additional assistance.

Immigration and Foreign Credential Recognition (Major Centres Prairies Filipino Diaspora)

Participants in this group, comprised of members of the Filipino diaspora in Canada, engaged in a discussion concerning immigration and the challenges frequently faced by immigrants upon their arrival to Canada. Participants were largely mixed as to whether the Government of Canada was currently on the right or wrong track when it came to immigration. For those who felt positively about the federal government's performance on this front, the view was expressed that Canada's immigration policy had been beneficial in addressing critical labour shortages which several believed had occurred in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of others said that the Government of Canada had been helpful in its implementation and funding of non-profit and settlement organizations targeted towards assisting immigrants upon their arrival in Canada. For those who felt more negatively regarding the Government of Canada's performance related to immigration, most criticisms focused on the perceived backlog and wait times for important documents such as work or student visas.

Asked what the most pressing issues were related to Canada's immigration system, participants identified a wide range of concerns. Unprompted, many mentioned the foreign credential recognition process and underemployment of newly arriving immigrants as significant problems. Several were of the impression that in many circumstances skilled immigrants were not being hired into their sectors of expertise due to lacking the necessary credentials. It was said by a few participants that there were currently insufficient resources available for immigrants to upgrade their skills and receive the training and certification required to work in their fields of choice. Discussing how the Government of Canada

might respond to these problems and improve the immigration system in Canada going forward, participants offered a wide range of suggestions. Many felt that more could be done to support settlement organizations and programs, both in terms of increased funding as well as directly advertising these opportunities to new immigrants. It was believed that these organizations could play a crucial role in assisting new immigrants in finding employment, connecting with other immigrants, and accessing services at the federal and provincial/territorial level.

Focusing specifically on the foreign credential recognition process, many reiterated the view that this represented a prominent issue for immigrants. Related to this, a large number of participants identified underemployment and de-professionalization as additional challenges for immigrants. Discussing how the Government of Canada might address these issues, many expressed the view that immigrant training programs were currently overburdened. It was suggested that by allocating increased resources toward these programs, the federal government would be able to more effectively meet the needs of newly arriving immigrants. A number of others thought that incentivizing employers to hire new immigrants may be an effective way of reducing underemployment for these individuals and ensuring they were not being overlooked in the labour market.

Canadian Armed Forces (Vancouver Island Active Military Members and Veterans)

In this group, conducted among veterans and active members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), participants engaged in a conversation about the role of the CAF, key issues it was facing, as well as supports provided by the federal government to current and former CAF members.

On balance, participants expressed a strong sense of pride towards the CAF and their own contributions as serving members of the Forces. Though it was felt that Canada's military was well regarded internationally, a number of participants also believed that its allies had become increasingly critical of perceived underfunding and under-resourcing. While acknowledging improvements in several areas within the CAF (e.g., the purchase of purpose-built military equipment such as large transport aircraft and light armoured vehicles (LAVs), and addressing mental health issues and sexual harassment in the Forces), participants identified equipment procurement as an area in need of improvement. Many believed the equipment provided to CAF personnel to be out of date, obsolete, or inadequate at present.

Asked which issues facing the CAF should be prioritized by the federal government, participants focused on increased funding, replacing outdated military equipment, enhancing the capacity of the military, ensuring competent senior leadership, and improving efficiencies by reviewing and/or replacing civilian contracts (for maintenance of military equipment) with CAF personnel. Views were mixed as to whether the federal government was on the right or the wrong track in addressing these priorities.

During the remainder of the discussion, a series of specific topics were raised with participants:

- Racism and misconduct in the Canadian military – Most did not see this as a pressing issue, believing that these behaviours were not overly common in the Forces and that the CAF was

holding members to a higher standard today than it had in previous decades. Participants felt that the federal government had actively and appropriately addressed the issue of racism in the military through various initiatives, including offering more options and channels for CAF members to report an incident of harassment or file a grievance;

- Postings and career progression – Participants were generally of the view that career progression in the military should not require a member to accept postings in various locations. They felt that some might view the opportunity to stay in one location for the duration of their military career as a positive;
- Post-traumatic stress injury (PTSI) – This was viewed as a significant issue by all participants, although they felt that the Department of National Defence (DND) had made significant progress in prioritizing the mental health of service members and veterans, and in providing needed treatment for those diagnosed with a mental health condition. Most also believed that the Government of Canada was generally on the right track when it came to addressing mental health challenges and PTSI among current and former CAF members;
- Housing and homelessness – The cost of housing was identified as a critical concern for service members based on Vancouver Island. Most felt that housing was well out of reach for the average member of the military, and that this issue should be a priority for the Government of Canada and CAF leadership. Homelessness among veterans was also seen as a serious issue and one that was getting worse. Several suggestions were put forward to address this issue more directly, including counselling to service members and veterans with a particular focus on their housing options, increasing the stock of private military/married quarters (PMQs), and implementing practical transition programs ahead of service members being released from the CAF;
- Benefits and services for veterans – Other than education grants and bursaries, participants were unaware of any federal government investments over the last five years in new benefits and services for veterans and their families. While some spoke positively regarding the perceived ease of access to benefits, others were more critical. These individuals cited challenges both in accessing information about programs and services, as well as financial hardship while awaiting approval for disability benefits; and
- Remembrance Day – Participants were asked for their views on commemorations which take place on Remembrance Day, and specifically whether they should be broadened to include greater focus on those who served after the Korean War (e.g., those who served during the Cold War, in Afghanistan, on peacekeeping missions, domestic missions, etc.). Most were comfortable with the current approach feeling that commemorations were broadly inclusive of those who had served in more recent missions as well as those having served in the first half of the 20th century.

Indigenous Youth in Care (Mid-size and Major Centres Quebec Indigenous Peoples)

One group, composed of Indigenous peoples in Quebec, discussed issues related to Indigenous youth in care, specifically relating to Bill C-92. When asked what they had seen, read, or heard about the Bill, few were aware of this legislation, and none were able to provide any specific details.

Upon receiving additional information, some expressed concern that, while a step in the right direction, the Bill did not recognize the individual realities of diverse Indigenous communities. Expanding upon this, it was felt that the federal government should develop laws in collaboration and continuous consultation with each Indigenous community in accordance with their specific needs. A number were also of the view that there would need to be greater collaboration between the federal and provincial governments as to how they could best support Indigenous communities going forward.

To further discussion, participants were informed of a number of possible outcomes that could be provided by this Bill. These included helping Indigenous children stay within their family and community, helping those currently in care return to their families, prioritizing the importance of Indigenous children staying connected to their language, culture, and community, and ensuring that children could not be removed from their families solely due to financial, health, or housing-related challenges.

Most participants reacted positively to the initiatives of assisting Indigenous children remaining with their family and in their community, as well as assisting those currently in care with returning to their families. Many felt that regardless of ethnic or cultural background, transferring a child from family to family causes unnecessary trauma and has lasting impacts that should not be taken lightly. Reactions to the prioritization of Indigenous children remaining connected to their language, culture, and community were more mixed. A number of participants believed this initiative to be somewhat vague, questioning how it would be carried out and what oversight would be provided to ensure it was occurring. While mostly positive regarding the commitment to not remove children from their families solely due to financial, health, or housing-related challenges, a number of participants were concerned that other reasons (such as substance abuse) often used to justify the removal of Indigenous children were not included in this list. Overall, most viewed the Bill's objectives as mostly positive, so long as the federal government followed through with its commitments to bring about meaningful legislative change and did so in a way that acknowledged the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples.

Participants next discussed a recent agreement related to support for child and family services reached by the federal government and Cowessess First Nation in southern Saskatchewan. None reported being previously aware of this agreement. To provide further clarification, participants were informed that as part of this agreement, the Government of Canada would be investing \$38.7 million over the next two years in support of the Cowessess First Nation implementing its own child and family services system. Participants reacted largely positively to this initiative, with several expressing that this was the type of specialized support they expected each Indigenous community to receive.

Discussing whether the Government of Canada should pursue similar agreements with other Indigenous communities, most reacted affirmatively. The view was added that Indigenous children represented the future and needed to be prioritized. Related to this, it was reiterated by some that the process for reaching these agreements would need to be equitable and that each negotiation be carried out in a respectful manner and with an aim towards identifying the unique needs of the specific community.

Local Issues (Prince Edward Island Youth, Northern Ontario)

Participants in two groups discussed a number of issues specific to their local areas. These conversations focused both on economic needs more generally, as well as specific concerns related to sectors such as agriculture and mining.

Prince Edward Island (Prince Edward Island Youth)

Participants in the group from Prince Edward Island (PEI), aged 18-24, discussed a number of issues relevant to their province. To begin, participants were asked to share which industries/sectors they worked or studied in. For those who were currently working, many were employed in the food service/hospitality industry, though several clarified that they aspired to eventually transition to different industries in the future, such as healthcare or the public sector. A large number were currently attending post-secondary education. Many believed that there were a lot of opportunities in PEI, and stated their desire to remain in the province.

Discussing the most important sectors/industries for their local communities, many identified tourism, fishing, and agriculture as important economic drivers within PEI. Focusing on the fishing industry specifically, a number of participants believed it to be essential to the province's economy. Expanding upon this, it was said that the fishing sector had shown adaptability in recent years, working towards introducing more sustainable practices as well as working to create partnerships and opportunities with Indigenous peoples in the region. No participants, however, indicated that they would personally be interested in working in this sector, believing there to be many barriers to entry.

Focusing on the agriculture industry, many expressed their concerns about potato farms and farmers. Specifically, it was said that recent issues related to the U.S. suspension of PEI potato imports had been extremely damaging to agriculture in the province. While most participants identified agriculture as a critical sector to PEI's future, none expressed an interest in pursuing a career in this area.

Asked which sectors/industries in PEI were the most in need of assistance from the federal government, agriculture was again mentioned by a number of participants. Several were of the impression that farmers and other agriculture workers in the province were currently retiring at a rate faster than they were being replaced. It was felt that young people were less interested in working at farms and preferred professional opportunities in other fields.

Participants were next asked whether they had seen, read, or heard any recent news related to the trade of PEI potatoes. Many had heard that the export of potatoes had been temporarily halted in late 2021 due to the discovery of potato wart in some crops. Participants were largely of the view that potato wart was primarily an aesthetic issue and not harmful, and that even if the potatoes could not be exported, they still could have been used domestically. All participants were of the opinion that the U.S. halting imports of PEI potatoes had negatively impacted the province's agriculture industry, and represented an issue of vital importance to the province.

Discussing the actions taken by the federal government towards addressing this issue, participants were mostly negative in their views. Many felt that the federal government should have provided

potato farmers with financial support to compensate for lost earnings as well as worked with U.S. officials to resume trade sooner.

Northern Ontario (Northern Ontario)

Participants residing in northern Ontario engaged in a brief discussion about important industries in their region, with a particular focus on mining and the Ring of Fire. Asked what the most important sectors/industries were in the region, many identified mining along with areas such as manufacturing, agriculture, and healthcare. Discussing what more the Government of Canada could do to support these industries, participants emphasized the need for a greater on-the-ground federal presence in northern Ontario as well as further financial assistance for these sectors.

Many were aware of the Ring of Fire, a mining opportunity located in the far northern region of the province. Though believing this to be a promising project from an economic perspective, several were of the impression that mining the Ring of Fire would require considerable costs, especially given the remoteness of the area. This being said, many believed that developing these resources could provide a number of important economic opportunities across the region's mining, construction, transportation, and manufacturing industries. Discussing concerns related to this project, participants identified a number of potential challenges. These included a perceived labour shortage in the region, the environmental impact of mining activity, the investment of funds into the project that might be better spent elsewhere, and the logistical difficulties and financial costs of infrastructure development in the region.

MORE INFORMATION

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