



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Continuous Qualitative Data Collection of Canadians' Views – October 2022

Executive Summary

Prepared for the Privy Council Office

Supplier name: The Strategic Counsel

Contract number: 35035-182346/001/CY

Contract value: \$2,428,991.50

Award date: December 16, 2021

Delivery date: November 4, 2022

Registration number: POR-005-19

For more information on this report, please email por-rop@pco-bcp.ca

Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.

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 October 5th and 27th, 2022, in multiple locations across the country including Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario,

Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia. Details concerning the locations, recruitment, and composition of the groups are provided in the section below.

The research for this cycle of focus groups focused largely on the Government of Canada's priorities and performance as well as recent actions and announcements related to the federal government. Discussions concerning federal priorities and performance were held with all twelve focus groups and spanned across a wide range of subgroups and regions. These groups included the general population in the City of Toronto and the Bas-Saint-Laurent region of Quebec, agricultural sector workers in Southern Alberta, middle class Canadians in Quebec City, those experiencing climate anxiety on Vancouver Island, mental healthcare workers in mid-size and major centres in Manitoba, those working two jobs in Ontario-U.S. border cities, prospective homebuyers in Atlantic Canada, millennials (aged 25-40) in mid-size and major centres in Quebec, first responders in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), low-income parents of children under 12 in the British Columbia Interior, and those concerned about the rising cost of energy residing in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Topics discussed included participants' perception on the direction of the country, issues pertaining to middle class Canadians, and the environment and climate change.

The research also explored the Canadian economy and a series of related issues in depth, including federal government affordability measures and job creation. The group residing in the Bas-Saint-Laurent region of Quebec also discussed various economic terminology and concepts under development by the federal government. Several groups also discussed Internet pricing, accessibility, and connectivity, as well as the tourism industry in their respective areas. Four groups also engaged in an in-depth discussion on Canada's oil and gas sector and were asked for their views on federal plans to cap emissions from this sector.

Other topics discussed included participant awareness and opinions related to the ArriveCAN app, the federal government's plan to reduce emissions in the agriculture sector, current and potential federal government initiatives to combat climate change, healthcare priority areas and mental health services, housing affordability measures, firearms, and recent actions and initiatives related to child 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 agricultural sector workers, middle class Canadians, those experiencing climate anxiety, mental healthcare workers, those

working two jobs, prospective homebuyers, millennials (aged 25-40), first responders, low-income parents of children under 12, and those concerned about the rising cost of energy.

Detailed Approach

- Twelve focus groups across various regions in Canada.
- Two groups were conducted with the general population in the City of Toronto and the Bas-Saint-Laurent region of Quebec.
- The other ten groups were conducted with key subgroups including:
 - Agricultural sector workers residing in Southern Alberta;
 - Middle class Canadians residing in Quebec City;
 - Those experiencing climate anxiety residing on Vancouver Island;
 - Mental healthcare workers residing in mid-size and major centres in Manitoba;
 - Those working two jobs residing in Ontario-U.S. border cities;
 - Prospective homebuyers residing in Atlantic Canada;
 - Millennials, aged 25-40, residing in mid-size and major centres in Quebec;
 - First responders residing in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA);
 - Low-income parents of children under 12 residing in Interior British Columbia; and
 - Those concerned about the rising cost of energy residing in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
- 3 groups in Quebec were conducted in French. 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, 83 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
City of Toronto	1	English	October 5	6:00-8:00 pm	General Population	8
Southern Alberta	2	English	October 6	8:00-10:00 pm	Agricultural Sector Workers	6
Quebec City	3	French	October 11	6:00-8:00 pm	Middle Class Canadians	7
Vancouver Island	4	English	October 12	9:00-11:00 pm	Experiencing Climate Anxiety	8
Mid-size and Major Centres Manitoba	5	English	October 13	7:00-9:00 pm	Mental Healthcare Workers	5

Ontario-U.S. Border Cities	6	English	October 17	6:00-8:00 pm	Working Two Jobs	8
Bas-Saint-Laurent Region – Quebec	7	French	October 18	6:00-8:00 pm	General Population	7
Atlantic Canada	8	English	October 20	5:00-7:00 pm	Prospective Homebuyers	6
Mid-size and Major Centres Quebec	9	French	October 25	6:00-8:00 pm	Millennials, aged 25-40	7
Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA)	10	English	October 26	6:00-8:00 pm	First Responders	8
British Columbia Interior	11	English	October 26	9:00-11:00 pm	Low-Income Parents of Children under 12	7
Northwest Territories & Nunavut	12	English	October 27	8:00-10:00 pm	Concerned About Rising Cost of Energy	6
Total number of participants						83

Key Findings

Government of Canada in the News (City of Toronto, Southern Alberta Agricultural Sector Workers, Quebec City Middle Class Canadians, Vancouver Island Experiencing Climate Anxiety, Mid-size and Major Centres Manitoba Mental Healthcare Workers, Mid-size and Major Centres Quebec Millennials, Interior B.C. Low-Income Parents of Children under 12, Northwest Territories and Nunavut Concerned About Rising Energy Costs)

Participants in eight groups were asked what they had seen, read, or heard about the Government of Canada in recent days. A wide range of federal announcements and initiatives were recalled. Several mentioned issues related to the economy, including efforts by the federal government to address the high rate of inflation, including the recent decision by the Bank of Canada to increase its policy interest rate, as well as the announcement of additional supports for low-income Canadians to assist with the perceived high cost of living at present. Other items mentioned by participants included the federal government’s ongoing support for Ukraine, the lifting of remaining travel requirements related to the COVID-19 pandemic, encouragement from Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer for Canadians to receive a booster dose of the recently approved bivalent COVID-19 vaccine, and the response to Hurricane Fiona which made landfall in Atlantic Canada on September 24th, 2022. A few participants also mentioned hearing about investigations by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage into Hockey Canada and its handling of past sexual assault allegations, and inquiries by the Public Order Emergency Commission examining the federal government’s invocation of the *Emergencies Act* in

February 2022 as a response to the Convoy protests taking place in Ottawa and other parts of the country.

Government of Canada Priorities and Performance (All Locations)

All groups conducted in October engaged in discussions related to the federal government's handling of issues and priorities important to Canadians. These conversations focused on areas where the Government of Canada had been successful as well as those in which there was room for improvement.

Asked to identify areas where the Government of Canada had performed well in recent months, participants shared a range of responses. These included the introduction of measures to make life more affordable for Canadians, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, initiatives related to the environment and climate change, ensuring high safety standards of the goods and products consumed by Canadians, a prominent focus on social issues including the promotion of diversity throughout Canada, and ongoing assistance to Ukraine.

Prompted to consider areas where the federal government could improve upon its performance, participants provided a wide range of responses. Among the issues mentioned were inflation and the rising cost of living, healthcare accessibility, housing affordability, delays related to the provision of services to Canadians such as passport renewals and immigration applications, the need for greater domestic oil and gas production, further actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Direction of the Country (Ontario-U.S. Border Cities Working Two Jobs, Bas-Saint-Laurent Region Quebec, Atlantic Canada Prospective Homebuyers, Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area First Responders, Mid-size and Major Centres Quebec Millennials, Interior B.C. Low-Income Parents of Children under 12)

Six groups briefly discussed the direction of the country at present. Most were of the view that the country was currently headed in the wrong direction, while a smaller number were more undecided or uncertain as to how they felt. For those who believed Canada was currently heading in the wrong direction, many cited issues related to inflation and the rising cost of living, including price increases for essentials such as groceries, gasoline, and housing. A number of participants also identified issues such as homelessness, mental health, addiction, and a sense that the country as a whole had become more divided in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. A few expressed concerns about climate change as well as the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, which some worried might escalate further to the point that Canada would become directly involved in the fighting.

Among the participants who were more uncertain as to the direction they felt the country was headed, several expressed that while a number of actions had been taken by the federal government to address the economic and social challenges facing Canadians, this had only a minimal impact. Some believed that while there had been considerable progress made on social issues such as diversity and

reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, the economic situation for many Canadians had worsened in recent months.

For the small number who thought Canada was headed in the right direction, participants cited the federal government's efforts towards greater inclusiveness and its promotion of human rights in Canada and abroad. It was generally thought by these participants that while the country was facing a number of challenges, the Government of Canada had taken several actions to address these issues and was doing the best that it could.

Middle Class Canadians (Quebec City Middle Class Canadians)

Participants residing in Quebec City engaged in a brief discussion related to the issues currently impacting middle class Canadians. Focusing on their financial situation, several felt that it had been more difficult in recent years to make ends meet financially, with a number of participants citing increased household expenses related to groceries, energy costs, housing, and child care. Discussing ways in which the federal government could better support the middle class, several felt more could be done to make housing more affordable, with many commenting that even for those making middle-class salaries, the cost to purchase a home was becoming increasingly out of reach. Others felt that there should be a greater emphasis on increasing benefits and financial supports for middle-income Canadians. Participants were largely of the impression that most existing supports were primarily targeted towards lower-income Canadians, while those making higher incomes yet still struggling with the cost of living were provided with little in the way of assistance.

Asked whether they felt the federal government had been doing a better or worse job as of late when it came to supporting the middle class, most were of the view that its performance on this front had remained largely the same. It was felt that while some supports had been provided, especially during the pandemic through programs such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), the impact of these benefits had largely been mitigated by the rapid rise in the cost of living over the past year. In addition to efforts to increase the affordability of housing and child care, participants also thought more should be done to strengthen the provincial/territorial healthcare systems throughout Canada as well as pursue further actions to combat climate change.

Environment and Climate Change (Vancouver Island Experiencing Climate Anxiety)

One group, comprised of those residing on Vancouver Island who identified as experiencing anxiety related to climate change, discussed issues concerning the environment, including recent initiatives from the federal government on this front. All felt that addressing climate change needed to be a top priority for the federal government, though many acknowledged that it would likely have to balance this with other pressing issues such as inflation and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. The view was added that extreme weather events, such as the intense flooding which took place in southwestern British Columbia in the fall of 2021, had made the need for further action on climate change increasingly evident, with some expecting that these types of events would take place more frequently going forward. Asked which aspects of climate change they were most concerned about, a number of participants mentioned food production, believing that greater efforts needed to be taken to develop more sustainable agricultural practices going forward.

Participants were able to recall several actions recently taken by the federal government related to climate change. These included the establishment of the Canada Greener Homes Grant (though not mentioned by name), commitments that all new automobile sales by 2035 be zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs), and the implementation of a federal price on carbon. While aware of these actions, most were of the opinion that the Government of Canada had worsened in its handling of climate change and environmental issues as of late. It was felt that actions such as the introduction of a price on carbon, had placed too much of a financial burden on the individual and that not enough focus was being devoted to reducing the emissions of large businesses and corporations. For the smaller number who felt the Government of Canada was performing better in its handling of climate change in recent years, it was thought that the wide range of programs and initiatives recently implemented represented a step in the right direction, even if there had been few noticeable impacts thus far.

The Economy (City of Toronto, Southern Alberta Agricultural Sector Workers, Quebec City Middle Class Canadians, Vancouver Island Experiencing Climate Anxiety, Ontario-U.S. Border Cities Working Two Jobs, Bas-Saint-Laurent Region Quebec, Atlantic Canada Prospective Homebuyers, Mid-size and Major Centres Quebec Millennials, Interior B.C. Low-Income Parents of Children under 12)

Participants in nine groups discussed a number of issues related to the Canadian economy. Conversations included participant perspectives regarding recent affordability measures introduced by the federal government, job creation and the current employment market, and opinions on economic terminology and phrasing currently being developed by the Government of Canada.

Affordability Measures (City of Toronto, Quebec City Middle Class Canadians, Ontario-U.S. Border Cities Working Two Jobs, Atlantic Canada Prospective Homebuyers, Mid-size and Major Centres Quebec Millennials, Interior B.C. Low-Income Parents of Children under 12)

Six groups engaged in conversations related to a number of recent measures announced by the Government of Canada to help make life more affordable for Canadians. These included a 10% increase to Old Age Security (OAS) payments for those 75 and older, initiatives towards early learning and child care, the indexing of benefits to the rate of inflation, the introduction of a national dental care program, a doubling of the GST tax credit for six months, enhancements to the Canada Workers Benefit, and a one-time \$500 payment to assist low-income Canadians currently struggling to afford their rent.

Participants were mostly positive in their initial reactions, with several expecting that these measures would be helpful, especially for younger Canadians who may be struggling disproportionately with the high cost of living at present. Though viewing these actions as a step in the right direction, however, many thought that they did not go far enough and would be unsuccessful in addressing what they viewed as systemic affordability issues being felt by much of the country at present. It was believed that there needed to be a greater sense of urgency on the part of the Government of Canada towards making life more affordable for Canadians. The opinion was also added that more needed to be done

for middle-income households who did not qualify for the assistance programs currently available to lower-income Canadians.

Asked to select which among these measures they felt were most important, a large number of participants selected those initiatives related to affordable child care and early learning, the introduction of a national dental care program, and the indexing of benefits to the rate of inflation. Participants expressed a more moderate level of support for other initiatives including enhancements to the Canada Workers Benefit (CWB), a six-month doubling of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) credit, and a 10% increase to OAS payments for those 75 and older. Many were critical of the measure to provide low-income Canadians with a one-time \$500 payment to assist with their rent. It was expressed by many that this amount was far too low to be impactful, with several of the opinion that given the vast affordability challenges faced by low-income Canadians, the \$500 offered was somewhat insulting. The view was expressed by many that the funding allocated towards this initiative could be better spent elsewhere.

Discussing other actions that the Government of Canada could take to address the cost of living, a number of participants suggested the provision of tax relief in the form of temporary reductions on the amount of income tax paid by low and middle-income Canadians. Focusing on housing affordability more specifically, some also believed there needed to be an increased focus on initiatives to increase the housing supply in Canada as well as actions to prohibit corporations and businesses from purchasing residential housing properties. A number were also of the view that actions should be taken to stabilize the price of essential goods such as groceries and gasoline. A few suggested that the Government of Canada should focus on developing greater energy self-sufficiency through the increased production of domestic oil and gas reserves. It was believed that such action would help considerably towards making fuel prices more affordable for Canadians.

Jobs (City of Toronto, Southern Alberta Agricultural Sector Workers, Quebec City Middle Class Canadians, Vancouver Island Experiencing Climate Anxiety, Ontario-U.S. Border Cities Working Two Jobs)

Five groups engaged in conversations related to the Canadian labour market as well as efforts by the Government of Canada to encourage job creation. Beginning by discussing the economy more broadly, all believed that the economy needed to be a top priority for the federal government, with many identifying it as the most important issue currently facing Canadians. It was widely felt that a strong economy served as the foundation for a well-functioning country and that the overall quality of life for Canadians was directly tied to their economic well-being. With this in mind, a number of participants shared concerns about what they viewed as a high likelihood of Canada entering into a recession within the next year. Asked what priorities specifically the Government of Canada should focus on going forward, several said that there needed to be a greater focus on economic self-sufficiency and less dependence on international trade, as well as an emphasis on reducing federal spending and maintaining a balanced budget.

Focusing on job creation more specifically, participants across all groups were widely of the impression that there were currently numerous jobs available in their respective communities and that many

sectors were suffering from a shortage of workers rather than a lack of open positions. Many, however, qualified their comments, explaining that while a large number of jobs were available, these did not all necessarily offer sufficient compensation to provide workers with a living wage. Furthermore, it was said that in many cases these positions did not provide benefits and were often part-time or seasonal as opposed to providing full-time employment. It was thought by several that employers were currently not offering high enough wages and that as a result many Canadians were not incentivized to work. Discussing what actions, if any, should be taken by the federal government related to job creation, it was felt that a greater emphasis needed to be placed on creating well-paying jobs as well as those in which employees found personal fulfillment. It was believed that these were necessary components for long-term happiness and satisfaction among Canadian workers.

Economic Terminology (Bas-Saint-Laurent Region Quebec)

Participants residing in the Bas-Saint-Laurent region of Quebec shared their perspectives related to a range of economic terminology and messaging currently being developed by the federal government. To begin, participants were presented with a list of terms and asked whether they all conveyed the same message or if there were any differences between them. These included:

- *An economy which benefits all Canadians;*
- *An economy focused on the welfare of Canadians;*
- *An economy that is working for all Canadians;*
- *An economy that delivers for all Canadians;*
- *An economy that is doing the job for all Canadians;*
- *An economy which provides results for all Canadians; and*
- *An economy which includes all Canadians.*

While most felt the terms to be quite similar, many believed there to be minor differences among them. Asked to select the phrase that they most preferred, many identified *an economy which focuses on the welfare of all Canadians*. Several reacted positively to the incorporation of the concept of welfare into the messaging, believing this spoke to a more holistic quality of life that involved both economic and personal considerations. A smaller number indicated support for other terms such as *an economy which benefits all Canadians* and *an economy that is working for all Canadians*.

Engaging in an additional exercise, participants were shown a pair of statements related to the economy and asked to select which of them they preferred:

- *We continue our work so that all Canadians can benefit from the economy; and*
- *We continue our work so that all Canadians can be at the centre.*

While more participants preferred the second of the two terms, several expressed reservations about both statements. In particular, a number viewed the aspect of *continuing our work* as an implication that the status quo would be maintained, and that little change would be made in how the Canadian economy operates. It was largely felt both statements could be improved by the inclusion of a more all-encompassing focus on improving the standard of living for Canadians and a greater focus on innovation and developing new economic strategies.

Tourism (City of Toronto, Ontario-U.S. Border Cities Working Two Jobs, Bas-Saint-Laurent Region Quebec, Atlantic Canada Prospective Homebuyers, Mid-size and Major Centres Quebec Millennials)

Participants in five groups engaged in conversations related to tourism and the level of importance of this sector to their respective local economies. Regionally, almost all participants in the groups from the City of Toronto, Atlantic Canada, and both groups based in Quebec viewed tourism as very important to their communities while those in the group comprised of participants residing in cities near the Ontario-U.S. border were more mixed in their views. Questioned whether they had noticed any noticeable change in tourism in their region during the summer, all in the group based in Toronto felt there had been a noticeable uptick in the number of tourists visiting the city compared to recent years. Those residing in mid-size and major centres in Quebec also largely felt tourism had increased, particularly in larger cities such as Montreal. Comparatively, participants in the groups from the Bas-Saint-Laurent region of Quebec and Atlantic Canada were more varied in their opinions as to whether tourism had increased. While some felt there had been more tourists this summer compared to the previous year, a number of participants believed the number of visitors had fallen short of expectations, especially given the loosening of public health and travel requirements related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was speculated by some that increased transportation costs and rising inflation had played a role in the number of tourists not being as high as they expected. Few in the group based in Ontario/U.S. border cities felt tourism had increased over the past summer.

Almost all participants believed that the service industry, including the tourism sector, was currently facing a labour shortage. Describing why they felt this had occurred, a large number cited perceived low compensation, stressful working environments, and the seasonal nature of many tourism-related jobs as key potential factors. It was widely felt that employers needed to do more to attract employees to these positions, including taking actions such as increasing wages and providing full-time hours and benefits to their workers. Discussing actions the Government of Canada could take to address labour shortages, several suggested the creation of financial supports such as wage subsidies or targeted tax relief to assist employers with raising salaries. This was felt to be especially important for smaller businesses which may find raising wages difficult due to the high rate of inflation at present. It was also thought that more could be done to bring in workers from outside of Canada, including expediting the foreign credential recognition process for vital tourism-related sectors such as air travel which was viewed as currently facing staffing shortages.

Internet Connectivity (City of Toronto, Bas-Saint-Laurent Region Quebec, Atlantic Canada Prospective Homebuyers, Mid-size and Major Centres Quebec Millennials)

Participants in four groups discussed Internet connectivity in their respective regions. Asked how they would rate the quality and reliability of Internet service in their communities, participants were mixed in their responses. While most in the groups based in Toronto as well as mid-size and major centres in Quebec viewed their Internet as typically being of a high calibre and consistently reliable, those residing in Atlantic Canada and the Bas-Saint-Laurent region were more critical. For these participants,

it was felt that Internet service was somewhat inconsistent in their region, especially for those living more rurally and away from urban centres.

Almost all participants felt there to be a lack of options for Internet providers in their respective areas and believed this lack of competition in the sector placed customers at a disadvantage, especially in areas where only one or two providers were available. While all participants felt that cost was an important consideration when it came to the Internet provider they selected, many also mentioned reliability and speed as heavily factoring into their decision-making process. A number indicated that they would be willing to pay more for Internet that was guaranteed to be fast and reliable. This said, very few felt that the Internet in their area was fairly priced, with many expressing the view that Canadians in general often paid far more for these services relative to those living in other jurisdictions. This was thought to be the case both in terms of home Internet services as well as those provided through mobile data plans. All felt the Government of Canada should be doing more to ensure that all Canadians had access to affordable and reliable Internet services. It was strongly believed that high-speed Internet was a necessity for Canadians to be able to work, study, and communicate effectively and needed to be viewed as a basic right going forward.

Oil and Gas (Southern Alberta Agricultural Sector Workers, Quebec City Middle Class Canadians, Vancouver Island Experiencing Climate Anxiety, Bas-Saint-Laurent Region Quebec)

Participants in four groups engaged in conversations related to the oil and gas sector in Canada, focusing specifically on the issue of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions produced by oil and gas companies. Asked whether they supported the Government of Canada taking action to cap and reduce emissions from the oil and gas sector, a number of different viewpoints emerged among participants. Those in the two groups based in Quebec were largely in favour of these actions, believing they were likely necessary to fight climate change and promote greater sustainability going forward. Participants in the group based on Vancouver Island were more varied in their opinions. While most believed that the goal of reducing emissions was an important one, several were concerned that the financial costs of adhering to these measures would be passed on by oil and gas companies to the consumer. Few of those residing in Southern Alberta were supportive of these actions by the Government of Canada. Though most participants in this group believed that addressing climate change was an important priority, several were skeptical as to whether these actions would have any impact given what they viewed as the high levels of emissions continuing to be produced in larger jurisdictions such as China and India.

Almost all participants expected that these actions as well as any further regulation of the oil and gas sector would likely contribute to a rise in the price of gasoline, with many reiterating the view that any additional costs incurred by oil and gas companies would ultimately be passed on to the consumer. Several were of the impression that high fuel prices would likely become the norm going forward and did not anticipate that they would be reduced at any point in the near future. Asked whether they felt the ongoing crisis in Ukraine should impact the Government of Canada's decision to cap and regulate oil and gas emissions, participants were once again mixed in their views. A number believed the situation in Eastern Europe would likely not have any impact on the Canadian oil and gas supply and

should not influence the Government of Canada's actions related to this sector. Several others, however, thought that it would be prudent for the Government of Canada to consider increasing its oil and gas production, believing that European allies may be in dire need of Canadian energy resources during the winter months and that this represented an opportunity for Canada both from an economic as well as a humanitarian perspective.

Healthcare (Mid-size and Major Centres Manitoba Mental Healthcare Workers, Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area First Responders)

Two groups, comprised of mental healthcare workers residing in Manitoba and first responders from the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) respectively, engaged in discussions related to healthcare. These conversations focused on healthcare priority areas recently identified by the Government of Canada as well as perspectives related to mental health from those working in the healthcare field.

Almost all participants identified healthcare as a significant concern in their communities. A large number believed that the healthcare system as a whole was facing major challenges at present and that the sector required significant overhaul. While most participants felt the quality of healthcare workers and services in Canada to be among the best in the world, it was thought by several that there were significant problems related to the accessibility of these services. Asked to identify specific challenges related to healthcare, participants pointed to issues such as a lack of family doctors, limited access to specialists, long wait times at emergency rooms and walk-in clinics, and a growing prevalence of issues related to mental health and addiction.

Healthcare Priority Areas (Mid-size and Major Centres Manitoba Mental Healthcare Workers, Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area First Responders)

Asked if they were aware of any recent actions or announcements by the Government of Canada related to healthcare, few participants could recall any initiatives apart from the recent announcement of a national dental care program. To aid in conversation, participants were informed that the federal government had recently identified five priority areas related to healthcare. These included addressing health care worker shortages and wait times, increasing access to family health services, improving long-term care and home care, addressing mental health and substance use, and modernizing health data management and virtual care. Participants were largely positive in their reactions to this list, with many believing it did a strong job at addressing the most pressing healthcare issues facing Canadians, particularly those related to accessibility. Asked whether any of these priorities were of greater importance than the rest, it was generally thought that all were important and worth pursuing by the federal government.

Participants in the group based in Manitoba engaged in a slightly longer conversation, sharing their expectations related to these priorities as well as specific actions they believed the Government of Canada would take towards addressing them. Discussing the priority of addressing healthcare worker shortages and reducing wait times, many felt there would need to be greater funding allocated towards increasing worker salaries and encouraging healthcare professionals to continue practicing in

Canada rather than relocating to other jurisdictions such as the United States in pursuit of higher salaries. It was also suggested that more should be done to encourage younger Canadians to consider careers in the healthcare sector, including offering incentives to do so via study grants and/or assistance with course fees for the licensing and certification required to practice in Canada.

Focusing on increasing access to family healthcare services, in addition to recruiting more family doctors, a number of participants believed the Government of Canada should focus on promoting a more proactive approach to medicine. The view was expressed that many chronic injuries or illnesses often began as minor issues and that by providing more Canadians with access to primary care through family doctors, these issues would be able to be addressed before they had a chance to escalate further. It was felt this could take strain off the healthcare system in the long term as there would likely be fewer patients with chronic issues requiring ongoing treatment.

All participants felt improving long-term care (LTC) and home care to be an important priority for the federal government. In addition to addressing worker shortages, it was suggested that the Government of Canada could work to establish a national standard of care and implement regulations on all private LTC facilities ensuring they adhered to this standard.

Several identified a lack of resources as the most pressing issue concerning mental health and addiction at present and believed far more federal funding needed to be devoted to this area. It was suggested that rather than solely focusing on creating new programs to address this priority, the federal government should also expand its support for those treatment providers and facilities that were already in existence.

A number of participants were of the impression that actions were already being taken by some healthcare providers to digitize medical records and believed this trend would continue to increase going forward. While expecting this would make healthcare provision more efficient, some expressed concern about transitioning to a primarily digital model, believing it would be vulnerable to both data theft as well as potential Internet service interruptions. Several spoke positively of the potential of virtual care, believing it could have a sizeable impact on those living in rural areas or in remote communities who did not live in close proximity to a physician.

Mental Health (Mid-size and Major Centres Manitoba Mental Healthcare Workers, Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area First Responders)

Participants in both groups engaged in conversations related to mental health care in Canada. Those in the group comprised of mental health professionals residing in Manitoba shared their personal experiences working in the field as well as their impressions regarding recent initiatives related to mental health announced by the federal government. Participants in the group composed of first responders residing in the GTHA region took part in a slightly different discussion, focusing on their personal mental health, the strategies they used to cope with these challenges, and the mental health of first responders more generally.

Mental Health Initiatives (Mid-size and Major Centres Manitoba Mental Healthcare Workers)

Asked what they felt to be the most pressing challenges related to mental health in their respective communities, the group of mental healthcare workers based in Manitoba shared a range of concerns. These included the accessibility of mental health services, an increased prevalence of substance use and addiction among those suffering from mental health issues, and perceived stigma faced by those who seek treatment for these issues.

All in this group believed that the Government of Canada had a role to play in improving mental healthcare. In addition to increasing funding for provinces and territories to address these issues, it was also suggested by some that more could be done to develop a national standard for mental healthcare. It was felt that by doing so, the federal government could hold the provinces and territories to greater account, ensuring that all Canadians had access to the mental health treatment they required.

Asked if they had heard anything about the Wellness Together Canada (WTC) initiative, none had. Provided with information regarding this initiative, several believed it would be very helpful, especially for those currently without the means to access mental health care. While expecting the WTC platform would have a positive effect, a few participants were concerned that this may be used as a replacement for, rather than a companion to, one-to-one counselling. Speaking to their own experience as mental health professionals, these participants were of the opinion that no app or digital platform would be able to establish the same level of trust and candidness that one develops through an ongoing relationship with a therapist or counsellor.

Participants were next presented with information related to Talk Suicide Canada, an additional mental health initiative being implemented by the federal government. Almost all participants identified this as very promising and believed that could have life-saving implications for those suffering from mental health crises. It was expressed that having a three-digit number, akin to 911, that participants could call during mental health emergencies to receive immediate care would be an important step towards preventing serious outcomes such as overdoses and suicides.

The group were next presented with information related to a third initiative, this time focused on the creation of a national service standard for mental healthcare in Canada: While most participants believed this was an important step for the Government of Canada to take, many felt it was difficult to properly evaluate this initiative without a better understanding of what a national standard would entail and what steps would be taken to implement it. Some were also of the view that while it was important to establish a consistent level of care, mental health treatment would still need to be highly personalized to the individual and a one-size-fits-all approach would likely not work for everyone.

Mental Health Perspectives (Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area First Responders)

Participants in the group comprised of first responders from the GTHA took part in a conversation regarding the mental health of those working in their profession. All felt that first responders had faced considerable pressure and emotional strain during the COVID-19 pandemic and that the mental health of many in the profession had suffered as a result. Describing the supports available to them, many commented that there were now significantly more resources for first responders to turn to (and

less stigma for doing so) compared to previous eras. Despite this, however, it was widely felt that these were not enough to address the magnitude of the challenges currently facing those in their line of work.

Asked to identify the signs or symptoms that someone in their profession suffering from mental health challenges might present, participants mentioned actions such as withdrawing from colleagues and loved ones, a lack of interest in their work, changes in personality and/or attitude, and self-medication with alcohol and other substances. Discussing where they would turn to if they were facing mental health issues themselves, many indicated that they were already utilizing therapists and counsellors to talk through the issues they were facing. A number also mentioned that they would likely turn to trusted colleagues or supervisors who would have a more intimate understanding of the lived experiences of first responders and what they were going through.

No participants identified the Government of Canada as a place they would turn to when facing challenges related to their mental health. Asked if they were aware of the Wellness Together Canada program, while a few were familiar with the name, no participants could recall any details. Few participants indicated that they would be likely to seek out information and tips related to mental health online, with most expressing a preference to instead speak with loved ones, colleagues, and/or mental health professionals who would have a better understanding of them as individuals.

Housing (Atlantic Canada Prospective Homebuyers, Northwest Territories and Nunavut Concerned About Rising Energy Costs)

Two groups discussed matters related to housing in Canada. Those in the group based in Atlantic Canada comprised of prospective homebuyers shared their perspectives regarding a number of housing initiatives recently announced by the federal government while the group based in the Northwest Territories (NT) and Nunavut discussed a number of housing issues specific to Canada's North.

Housing Initiatives (Atlantic Canada Prospective Homebuyers)

This group, comprised of prospective homebuyers, engaged in a discussion regarding a number of initiatives related to housing recently announced as part of the 2022 federal Budget. A large number were pessimistic about their current prospects for home ownership, believing they would likely struggle to afford to purchase a home in the foreseeable future due to challenges such as high housing prices, recent increases in interest rates by the Bank of Canada, and additional expenses in other areas such as groceries and gasoline.

Participants next engaged in an exercise where they were asked to evaluate sets of initiatives recently announced by the Government of Canada, related respectively to improving housing affordability and protecting Canadians in the housing market. No participants indicated being previously aware of any initiatives from the federal government on these fronts. Sharing their reactions to the first set of initiatives, related to housing affordability, participants were particularly supportive of those initiatives targeted at assisting first-time home buyers, such as the creation of a Tax-Free First Home Savings

Account (FHSA) allowing prospective first-time homebuyers to save up to \$40,000 tax-free to put towards their purchase. It was believed that this would incentivize individuals to save more money for their homes. Other initiatives targeting first-time home buyers, including the commitment to double the First-Time Home Buyers' Tax Credit (HBTC), and the expansion of the First Time Home Buyers' Incentive were also met with enthusiasm.

The allocation of an additional \$200 million towards increasing rent-to-own housing options also received a large amount of support among participants. Though it was thought that rent-to-own housing options would be beneficial to many Canadians, several were of the impression that they were difficult to obtain in the current housing market. A smaller number were supportive of the investment of \$562 million towards organizations addressing homelessness, as well as an additional \$62 million specifically addressing this issue among veterans. Among those who identified this initiative as important, it was thought that homelessness in Canada was becoming an issue of increasing urgency and required greater action on the part of the federal government to address. None were supportive of the provision of a one-time \$500 payment to Canadians facing housing affordability challenges. Many reacted negatively upon hearing about this initiative, expressing the opinion that the amount was too low to provide any tangible assistance to Canadians struggling with housing affordability.

Participants next concentrated on a second set of initiatives focused on protecting Canadians in the housing market. Among the measures shown, the initiative to impose taxation penalties as a method of deterring landlords from renovating existing tenants received the highest levels of support from participants. The commitment to end blind bidding also received high levels of support among participants. It was believed that this practice considerably increased the sale price of homes, placing potential homebuyers at a considerable disadvantage.

Two initiatives receiving moderate levels of support were the introduction of new taxation rules to deter house flipping as well as the implementation of a two-year ban on all non-Canadians from purchasing residential properties. Discussing the new taxation rules to deter house flipping, it was believed that those engaged in this practice often performed poor-quality renovations while driving up the prices of these properties as much as possible. Focusing on the temporary ban on non-Canadians from purchasing residential properties, a number believed this to be necessary, feeling that foreign investment had limited the housing available for those living in the country.

Northern Housing (Northwest Territories and Nunavut Concerned About Rising Energy Costs)

Participants in the group from the Northwest Territories (NT) and Nunavut engaged in a brief conversation related to the housing situation in Canada's North. Discussing the housing situation in their communities, participants identified three key areas in need of further attention. These included the supply of housing, the quality and safety of the housing that was available, and the increasing unaffordability of housing in the North.

Participants were next asked to identify which level of government they believed was responsible for housing in the North. While participants widely believed that the territorial governments were primarily responsible for housing, it was also felt the Government of Canada had a role to play on this front. It was thought that additional actions could be taken to provide increased grants and funding

to the territorial governments in order to increase the housing supply and the condition of housing. It was also suggested by some that municipal governments played a role in the planning of housing development. It was said by some that this at times had a negative impact, with perceived high levels of bureaucracy at the municipal level impeding the construction of new homes. Most were largely unaware of any recent initiatives undertaken by the federal government to address housing issues in their communities. Asked how the Government of Canada could most effectively assist in improving the housing situation, many reiterated the view that increased funding toward housing would likely have the greatest impact.

Climate Change (Vancouver Island Experiencing Climate Anxiety, Northwest Territories and Nunavut Concerned About Rising Energy Costs)

Two groups discussed a number of issues related to climate change. Those in the group based on Vancouver Island who identified as experiencing anxiety about climate change discussed a number of measures recently announced by the Government of Canada to address this issue. Participants residing in the Northwest Territories (NT) and Nunavut focused on the impacts they expected a changing climate would have on their local communities as well as what actions, if any, they had taken to prepare for climate change.

Climate Change Initiatives (Vancouver Island Experiencing Climate Anxiety)

To begin, participants in this group were asked to share their initial reactions upon hearing the phrase 'climate change'. Most largely expressed feelings of concern and pessimism, particularly regarding their expectations as to how this issue would impact future generations. A number of participants indicated that they were feeling less hopeful for the future due to their concerns about climate change.

Presented with information regarding a number of measures that the Government of Canada had recently implemented or was planning to put into place in the future to address the threat of climate change many expressed skepticism as to whether these actions would be achievable. A number of participants specifically questioned whether it was realistically possible to meet those measures which had fast-approaching deadlines, such as the 2030 targets related to Canada's commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement as well as the priorities put forward in the 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan.

Prompted to indicate which among these initiatives they felt were most important towards addressing the threat of climate change, almost all participants identified the Natural Adaptation Strategy as a particularly promising measure. Several commented upon what they viewed as a community-based approach to this initiative, believing that Canadians would likely be more willing to participate in sustainability programs that would directly impact their local communities and from which they could observe the potential benefits first-hand. Many also reacted positively to the creation of the Low Carbon Energy Fund (LCEF), focusing specifically on its goal of fostering innovative thinking as well as its incorporation of a diversity of voices and ideas in the effort to fight climate change. Several participants were also optimistic about the creation of the 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan as well as the federal government's commitment to meeting or exceeding the emissions reduction targets Paris

Agreement by 2030. Regarding the latter, a number reiterated the view that combatting climate change needed to be a global effort and that it was important for Canada to be a leader on this front.

Asked whether they felt the Government of Canada was taking sufficient steps to fight climate change, most did not believe this to be the case. A number felt greater efforts would have to be taken to limit the industrial activities of large corporations, believing these to be the primary drivers of GHG emissions. It was also thought that more could be done within the federal government to ensure its various agencies and departments worked collaboratively on this issue rather than each pursuing its own individual activities to fight climate change.

Community Impacts and Adaptation (Northwest Territories and Nunavut Concerned About Rising Energy Costs)

Participants in this group engaged in a discussion about the impact of climate change on their communities, as well as the actions they had taken or were planning to take to adapt to its impacts. To begin, participants were asked to gauge the current impact of climate change on their respective areas. Though all felt that climate change was having some impact on their communities, a roughly similar number of participants felt these impacts to be minor as those who believed it had brought on major changes. Some cited extreme weather events and unpredictable weather as examples of the impact of climate change on the daily lives of those in their region, with a number specifically mentioning the severe flooding that had occurred in Hay River, NT in April 2022. Discussing potential future impacts of climate change, several expressed concerns related to the melting or collapse of the region's permafrost. If this occurred, it was expected by participants that the structural integrity of many homes in their communities would be damaged.

Focusing on their personal level of preparedness for the impacts of climate change, no participants believed that they had sufficiently prepared to confront this issue. Many were uncertain as to how they should personally prepare for climate change and voiced the need for greater communication from both local officials as well as the Government of Canada as to what steps they ought to be taking. Few could recall any recent initiatives implemented by the federal government towards mitigating the impacts of climate change in their areas. Suggestions for additional actions that could be taken included the development of climate change adaptation and readiness plan for Canada's North as well as further information regarding what those living in the region should expect in the years to come and how to best prepare their individual households.

Agriculture and Fertilizer (Southern Alberta Agricultural Sector Workers)

Participants residing in Southern Alberta and employed in the agricultural sector engaged in a conversation related to agriculture and the use of fertilizer on Canadian farms. To begin, participants were asked if they were aware of any recent activities undertaken by the Government of Canada related to the agricultural sector. Participants recalled a number of federal initiatives, including subsidies to reduce the use of nitrogen fertilizer in agriculture, the implementation of cover cropping programs, and commitments related to the On-Farm Climate Action Fund.

Several participants expressed dissatisfaction with the Government of Canada's plan to encourage farmers to voluntarily reduce their fertilizer emissions by 2030. Reasons for this lack of support included the view that the targets were unrealistic given the need to maintain or even increase the current levels of crop yields and food production for Canada's growing population. Though all participants were aware that the plan to reduce emissions from fertilizers was voluntary, concerns were expressed that the targets could become mandatory in the future if the federal government felt that too little progress was being made. Participants shared that the cost of fertilizer was one of the highest expenses for their farms and that for financial reasons they already did as much as they could to reduce their use of the product.

Asked whether they believed fertilizer usage on Canadian farms had increased or decreased over the past 15 years, most were of the view that it had gone down during this period as farmers developed more efficient usage practices. This reduction was felt to be especially prominent in recent years as a result of rising costs and supply limitations. Asked whether they believed increased fertilizer use was resulting in higher greenhouse gas emissions, many acknowledged that it was likely a contributing factor. Participants also believed, however, that emissions from other industries as well as household energy use should be targeted for reductions before fertilizer, given what was believed to be its fundamental importance to Canada's food supply.

It was widely felt that the federal government needed to provide further information on how it planned to balance reductions in fertilizer use while continuing to maintain or increasing current levels of food production. Some expressed concerns that low and middle-income Canadians may be negatively impacted by this plan, anticipating that a reduction in fertilizer use may result in food shortages and higher grocery prices.

Energy Issues (Northwest Territories and Nunavut Concerned About Rising Energy Costs)

Participants residing in the Northwest Territories (NT) and Nunavut who identified as being concerned about rising energy costs engaged in a discussion related to energy issues in their communities. Asked to identify the sources of energy they used for electricity generation most identified petroleum, specifically diesel, as the primary source for electricity in both territories. Some participants from the NT added that their communities also frequently made use of other energy sources such as liquefied natural gas (LNG) and hydroelectricity. Discussing the energy sources used to heat their homes many again mentioned diesel and natural gas, in addition to wood and heating pellets. While acknowledging concerns about the potential environmental impacts of sources such as diesel and LNG it was believed by most that these energy sources were generally reliable and had been capable of meeting the challenges presented by the cold climate and remoteness of many Northern communities.

Focusing on nuclear energy, many expressed a lack of knowledge regarding this type of power. Upon hearing the term and considering its use in the North, several immediately called to mind concerns related to the potential of a nuclear accident occurring in or near their community that could potentially release nuclear radiation and cause radioactive contamination of the environment. Asked if the federal government should seek to increase the use of nuclear energy in Canada, none felt comfortable with this notion and many reiterated concerns related to the potential contamination of

the environment and the possible impact of radiation on those in their community. A small number also expected that there might be prohibitive initial costs to constructing a nuclear power plant in the Northwest Territories or Nunavut, given the relative remoteness of these locations to the rest of Canada.

Very few indicated being previously aware of small modular reactors (SMRs). To aid in the discussion, participants were informed that these were advanced nuclear reactors that are more compact and have about one-third of the generating capacity of traditional nuclear power reactors. Upon hearing this information, participants were mostly positive in their reactions. It was thought by many that SMRs represented a compact, safe, and reliable source of power that could meet the needs of people living in Canada's North. A large number believed that SMRs could serve as a cheaper and more environmentally friendly alternative to the diesel and LNG that were currently being used. It was also expressed by some that the thought of an SMR was less intimidating than a full-sized reactor. While several felt that the description of SMRs sounded promising, a number of participants commented that they would like to see an SMR in person and learn more about how it functioned before fully supporting the adoption of this technology in their communities.

Firearms (Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area First Responders)

Participants in the group from the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) engaged in a discussion about local issues affecting their community, with a particular focus on firearms and firearm-related crime. Asked to identify the most important issues currently affecting their community participants offered a wide range of responses. These included the increasing cost of living, a lack of affordable housing, challenges related to the accessibility of healthcare and services for seniors, a lack of support for those experiencing challenges related to addiction and/or mental health and increasing rates of violent crime and firearms usage. Asked to evaluate the Government of Canada's response to these issues, many believed that while it was aware of these issues and working to address them, the COVID-19 pandemic had significantly complicated these efforts by consuming the majority of the federal government's attention over the past few years.

Many felt that safety was becoming an issue of considerable concern in their communities. A rise in violent crime was believed to be an issue in all areas of the GTHA, including suburban and smaller communities outside of urban centres which had traditionally seen only minimal criminal activity. Several believed that their communities were far more dangerous now than compared to previous decades. Asked about the level of gun violence in their own communities, many felt that it was increasing. Focusing on the potential causes of gun crime, participants identified a wide range of potential factors. Several believed that the ability of law enforcement to stop gun crime had been impeded by instructions to take a more hands-off approach in recent years, including no longer conducting physical checks of those suspected of illegally possessing firearms. It was believed by some that so-called catch-and-release policies had allowed repeat offenders to commit gun crimes with relative impunity. Poverty, gang activity, homelessness, addiction, and mental health issues were also cited as contributing factors for firearm-related crimes.

Asked if they were aware of anything the Government of Canada had done to address gun crime, several cited various past initiatives, such as the Canadian Firearms Registry, a ban on military-style assault weapons, and a recent national freeze on the purchase, sale, or transfer of handguns. It was believed by many, however, that those impacted by these measures had primarily been law-abiding gun owners and that these actions had little impact on deterring those who obtained their firearms illegally. Expanding upon this, several were of the view that the majority of the firearms used to commit crimes in Canada were illegally smuggled from the United States and that eliminating this firearm trafficking needed to be a key focus of the federal government's policy towards gun control.

Participants next took part in an exercise evaluating a number of measures recently implemented by the Government of Canada related to firearms. These included the implementation of a national freeze on handguns, taking away firearms licences of those involved in acts of domestic violence or criminal harassment, fighting gun smuggling and trafficking, introducing a red flag law to address intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, and potential self-harm, and requiring magazines for long guns to no longer be able to carry more than five rounds.

Discussing the national freeze on handguns, all participants expressed negative views. The view was reiterated that the vast majority of crime involving handguns in Canada was carried out via illegally sourced handguns and that this measure would have little impact in addressing the problem of gun violence. Focusing on the seizure of firearm licenses from the perpetrators of domestic violence or criminal incidents, many also expressed concerns. While several felt that the measure was well-intentioned, it was widely thought that an individual determined to commit domestic violence with a firearm would be able to find a way to source a weapon through illegal means if necessary and that this action would also only have a minimal impact. Discussing the implementation of a red flag law, participants offered mixed reactions. Though its efforts to prevent violence were supported, participants again stressed their perception that illegal firearms were easy to access and suggested that these laws could be easily circumvented.

Asked to evaluate the initiative related to the prevention of gun smuggling and trafficking, many felt that it sounded promising and would help address the prevalence of illegal firearms in Canada. It was believed by some that in order to enforce this initiative effectively, law enforcement officers would need to be provided with the ability to conduct searches on suspected criminals in a more comprehensive manner than what is currently permitted. Focusing on the ban on long-gun magazines with a capacity of greater than five rounds, participants expressed mostly negative views. It was believed that long guns were not typically used by criminals and this action would have little impact towards preventing gun crime.

Child Care and the Canada Child Benefit (Interior B.C. Low-Income Parents of Children under 12)

Participants residing in Interior British Columbia (B.C.), who were parents of children under the age of 12, engaged in a discussion related to child care and the Canada Child Benefit (CCB). Asked to identify the biggest challenges concerning child care in their province, participants offered a wide range of responses. Issues mentioned included a lack of availability of child care spots, the high costs of these services, the need to have significant trust in child care providers, and accessibility concerns for

children with intellectual disabilities. Asked if they were aware of any Government of Canada actions related to child care, a small number indicated awareness of recent agreements reached by the federal government and individual provinces and territories to provide affordable child care at a rate of \$10 a day, on average, per child. Provided with further information regarding these agreements, participant reactions were largely positive. It was expected that this plan would provide families with increased flexibility and allow both parents to work full-time. Several commented that they currently did not work due to the current high costs of child care, and that this initiative could be helpful in allowing them to return to the workplace. Asked if lowering the cost of child care was an important aspect of reducing the cost of living, all believed that it was.

Focusing on services and programs for parents more broadly, many identified the CCB as an important support for parents, and almost all indicated that they currently received it. Asked what they liked about the CCB, participants expressed enthusiasm about the consistency of payment, the fact that the benefit was recalculated each year to account for changes in income, and the assistance it provided in covering basic expenses. Discussing what they disliked about the CCB, participants pointed to the declining amount of the payment as their children grew older. The opinion was expressed that children only became more expensive to raise as they aged and that the benefit should increase in correspondence with their age, rather than decreasing. While several expressed appreciation for this benefit, participants generally felt that the amount they received was too little to have any significant impact on the cost of living, especially given the current level of inflation. Asked where they typically directed the amounts they received from the CCB, participants mentioned using it for basic expenses, including rent, monthly bills, gasoline, school supplies, youth recreation programs, and contributions to Registered Education Savings Plans (RESPs).

ArriveCAN (Ontario-U.S. Border Cities Working Two Jobs)

Participants residing in Ontario-U.S. border cities briefly engaged in a discussion regarding the ArriveCAN app. Asked about their awareness of this app, while many were aware of the existence of a mobile travel information app that had been developed by the Government of Canada, few could recall it specifically by name. A number of participants shared that they had yet to use the ArriveCAN app and mostly were aware of it through what they had heard in the news or word of mouth from friends and family.

Provided with further information about the app, participants were next asked to evaluate whether its name accurately represented the purpose for which the app was used. Most believed ArriveCAN to be an appropriate name for the app and thought that it accurately and succinctly described its use to travellers. It was also expected by some that the name ArriveCAN was distinctive enough to avoid confusion with other travel-related programs facilitated by the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), such as NEXUS.

When asked if they would personally use the ArriveCAN app to complete and submit CBSA declaration forms the next time they returned to Canada from international travel, all participants expected that they would not. The primary reason shared by many was that they were simply not interested in the ArriveCAN and did not feel they travelled frequently enough to justify downloading and keeping it on

their phone, given the limited space available on their devices. When asked, however, if their view might change if presented with evidence that using ArriveCAN would help them save time at the airport or going through customs, almost all believed that this to be an important consideration and would make them far more likely to use the app.

MORE INFORMATION

The Strategic Counsel

Contract number: 35035-182346/001/CY

Contract award date: December 16, 2021

Contract value: \$2,428,991.50
