

Community conversations about taxes

FACILITATION GUIDE

Number of participants: up to 10

Total time: 2–2.5 hours

Agenda overview

5 min	Opening remarks
10-20 min	Introductions
5 min	Agenda review
5 min	Ground rules
20 min	Video slideshow
20 min	Video debrief
30 min	Storytelling
15 min	Values exploration
10 min	Closing remarks and survey

Start and opening remarks 5 minutes

PURPOSE: Kick things off by thanking everyone for coming, and outlining why you invited them.

SUGGESTED SCRIPT: Thanks so much for coming tonight. I've invited you here to have a conversation about taxes and inequality. This is one of many conversations being hosted this month in BC, through the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, an organization that does research and public education work. The purpose is to spark thoughtful discussions about why taxes matter and how we can support a healthier public debate about these issues.

Introductions 10-20 minutes

PURPOSE: Get to know each other and break the ice.

- ✓ You can start things off by introducing yourself first.

SUGGESTED SCRIPT: Let's go around the table. Everyone please say your name, one thing you **don't like** about taxes, and one thing you **do like** about taxes.

Agenda review 5 minutes Participant agenda

PURPOSE:

Let people know what to expect during the session.

- ✓ Hand out the participant agenda.

SUGGESTED SCRIPT: I'll say more about each item as we go. Are there any questions before we continue?

Ground rules



5 minutes

PURPOSE: Establish a safe environment to help the session run smoothly.

SUGGESTED SCRIPT: Before we get started, I want to go over a couple of important ground rules. We're here to have a conversation—and that means it's ok to have different points of view. But let's make sure we're respectful and listen openly to each other.

If you know you're someone who has lots to say, you might want to think about holding back at times, to make it easier for others to weigh in. If you're someone who tends to stay quiet, consider taking a risk to speak up when you have something to say.

Video slideshow



20 minutes



Powerpoint slides

PURPOSE: The video introduces some key ideas and facts about inequality and taxes in BC and Canada. This will provide food for thought and help the group have an informed discussion.

- ✓ Hand out the slide printouts
- ✓ Play the video

SUGGESTED SCRIPT: We're going to start by watching a short video slideshow from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives that gives an overview of inequality and tax issues. I'm going to give you a printout of the slides in case that makes it easier to follow along.

Video debrief



15 minutes

PURPOSE: Get reactions to what the participants hear in the video, and get them talking about the issues raised.

The suggested script includes questions you can use to prompt discussion. If the conversation gets going easily, you may not need them all. You may also use any of your own questions.

You don't need to be an expert!

If people have questions you aren't able to answer, tell people they may find answers in the handouts they'll get at the end of the session. You can also collect their questions and send them to us, and we'll do our best to send you back a concise answer or links to resources.

What if someone disagrees strongly with the material presented, or with others in the group?

- Remember it's fine for people to have different opinions—it's a discussion, you don't need to come to consensus or agree on any final conclusions.
- If someone is dominating the conversation, or gets heated, try using some of the techniques suggested during our facilitation phone call.

SUGGESTED SCRIPT:

The video covered a number of key facts and ideas. What's your reaction?

- How do you feel about what you heard in the video?
- Were you surprised by anything you heard?
- What was the most surprising thing you heard?
- What concerned you the most?

Storytelling



30 minutes

PURPOSE: Personal stories are a powerful way to remind ourselves and others of the services that our taxes pay for, and the effect this has on people's lives. It's also a way for people to relate complex information to something from their own experience.

Part 1: Think of a personal story

Option: Think about your own story ahead of time, and share it with the group at this stage, so they hear an example.

Part 2: Share story with a partner

- ✓ After 5 minutes, put the participants in pairs (if there are odd numbers, you can either join with the remaining person, or make one group of three).
- ✓ Partners should take notes while listening to the other person's story, as they will be summarizing it for the group next.
- ✓ Each person gets 5 minutes to tell their story to their partner, then they switch.
- ✓ Ask participants to keep time for their partner, warning them when they have only one minute left.

Part 3: Summarize partner's story to the full group

- ✓ For the last 15 minutes (1-2 minutes each max) have each person summarize their partner's story to the rest of the group.

INTRO SUGGESTED SCRIPT: One of the things that can help change the way people engage with issues are personal stories.

PART 1 SUGGESTED SCRIPT: Next let's shift gears a little and think about how taxes play a role in people's lives. Take 5 minutes to think of a time when a public service or program made a real difference in your own life or the life of someone else. Feel free to make some notes, so you can share your story. To get started, you may want to take another look at the list of examples of public services that taxes pay for from the video slideshow.

Values exploration



15 minutes



Values list

PURPOSE: This exercise helps people to go further with the stories—and link their experiences to the values at the heart of why we have taxes and public services.

- ✓ Hand out the values list.
- ✓ Ask people to say which ones they think are relevant to the stories they just heard. They can add ones that aren't on the list.

SUGGESTED SCRIPT: Thank you for sharing your stories—that was terrific. Let's spend the last bit of our time identifying what values are at the heart of these stories.

SUGGESTED SCRIPT: For example, in the story we heard about _____, which values do you think are most strongly represented in that story?

Turn over for final activity



PURPOSE: Wrap up and get feedback before people leave.

- ✓ Go around the table for a closing round.
- ✓ When done, hand out feedback forms to everyone.
- ✓ Have the participants' handbooks ready. When they give you their feedback form, give them their handbook.

If anyone in your group wants to organize their own tax conversation, or if your group is very engaged and wants to move forward with something that came up in the session, let them know that they can tick the "More information" box on the feedback form, and we will contact them to see what other support we can offer them. Also, feel free to let us know!

SUGGESTED SCRIPT: We are now at the end of our time for the discussion. I want to thank you again for coming, and I hope you found the time useful and stimulating. Let's do a closing round of comments—please share really briefly—in 30 seconds or less—one new idea or inspiration that you are taking away from tonight.

Checklist for the session

MATERIALS

Participant materials: hand out **during** session

- Participant agenda
- Printed Powerpoint slides to accompany the video
- Values list

Participant materials: hand out **after** session

- Feedback forms
- Tax facts sheet
- List of key terms

Paper and pen or pencil

Resources for the facilitator

- This guide
- Responding to the critics

MEETING SPACE PREPARATION

- Chairs for all participants
- Coffee, tea or other refreshments



CCPA

CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
BC Office

For more information or facilitation support email tax_training@policyalternatives.ca

For more tax resources and options for progressive tax reform, visit:

www.policyalternatives.ca/fair-taxes

www.policyalternatives.ca/bc-tax-options

