



## Ontario voters back conservation!

Poll shows strong support for taxes and leadership in troubled times.

A poll commissioned by the Conservation Council of Ontario has turned up some interesting results: voters back conservation as a solution to our economic and financial woes.

“Not only are voters personally committed to living better while using less, they also understand how conservation can help solve economic, health and social concerns, and they want strong government leadership,” said Chris Winter, the Council’s Executive Director.

The polling found that:

1. conservation is a strong cultural value
2. people choose to conserve in their own lives
3. people understand how conservation addresses provincial priorities of the economy, the cost of living, the environment, healthy communities, and public health
4. people expect government leadership

“With so many people committed to saving energy, using green power, driving less, supporting local and organic farms, or supporting their local economy,” observed Winter, “it just makes sense that they want their government to help make conservation easy and affordable.”

The poll found that support for government leadership on conservation was strong across all parties and all regions.

- Although support for lower taxes was strongest among Tory voters, over 50% of their supporters want to see taxes maintained at the same level;
- In Toronto, there was no support for either smaller government or less taxes.

With the poll results in mind, the Council assessed the campaign platforms of the four major provincial parties for consistency of approach to conservation throughout the platform. Its conclusions:

- Every party should be able to integrate a conservator ethic with their political philosophies.
- The Greens start from an environmental ethic, and have integrated their party philosophy into provincial priorities of jobs, energy, health care and food.
- The Liberals have a strong and consistent conservator ethic throughout their energy, economic, health, and urban development platforms.
- The New Democrats present a strong platform on conservation issues, energy conservation in particular, while not fully reconciling conservation values with their pocketbook policies (HST rebates on energy).
- The Progressive Conservatives offer some nature-oriented initiatives, offsetting an agenda that fails to incorporate a conservation ethic.

“For me, this raises two questions,” said Winter, a 25 year veteran of the conservation movement in Ontario. “First, what happens to the Greens when mainstream parties make conservation a central theme? And second, will the growth of conservation as a dominant cultural value impact parties whose platforms are inconsistent or that fail to reflect a conservation ethic?”

The poll results are available in a report, “Conservation Trends 2011”, at [www.weconserve.ca](http://www.weconserve.ca).

- 30 -

For information: Chris Winter, Executive Director, the Conservation Council of Ontario  
Ph: 416-533-1635 ext. 1, or 647-393-5000  
e-mail: [cco@web.ca](mailto:cco@web.ca)

*The **Conservation Council of Ontario** is a sixty year old association of conservation leaders. Its membership includes organizations, businesses, municipalities and individuals.*

# Backgrounder - Conservation Poll Highlights

The poll was conducted in August, shortly before the election period, by Oracle Poll Research and included 1,000 people 18 years or older from across Ontario. It has a margin of error of  $\pm 3.1\%$ , 19/20 times. At that time the poll showed decided voter support at 42% for the Progressive Conservatives, 38% for the Liberals, 13% for the NDP, and 7% for the Greens

Key findings include:

- **Voters are concerned about our future**, including the cost of living (72%), public health and health care (71%), the economy (57%), the environment (50%), public education (50%) and crime and public safety (41%).
- **Most people see conservation (defined as “living better by using less”) as important in addressing those concerns**, including ensuring a healthy environment (86%), ensuring a healthy economy (78%), promoting public health and reducing health care costs (69%), lowering the cost of living (67%), and promoting safe communities and reducing crime (56%).
- **Almost everyone in Ontario practices conservation**, with 65% saying they conserve daily, and 26% saying they conserve most of the time.
  - 79% feel Ontarians need to do a better job of conserving electricity
  - 47% would ride bikes if there were safe bike routes
  - 68% want to live in a complete, walkable community
- **There is clear public support for strong government leadership** in legislation and programs to support a healthier and sustainable future for Ontario, with only 12% believing government should be smaller. This support is strong across supporters of all political parties.
- **Almost six in ten or 59% are of the opinion that taxes should be maintained** and a further 19% that they should be increased, while only 14% believe that they should be reduced. The greatest support to reduce taxes came from Tory supporters (30%), but the majority of Tory supporters believe taxation should remain at current levels (55%).

Full poll results can be found at [www.weconserve.ca](http://www.weconserve.ca).

- 30 -

For information: Chris Winter, Executive Director, the Conservation Council of Ontario  
Ph: 416-533-1635 ext. 1, or 647-393-5000  
e-mail: [cco@web.ca](mailto:cco@web.ca)