



Most Ontarians say real trees are the “green” Christmas choice

Ontario-grown trees preferred by 7 in 10 poll respondents

(December 10, 2013) Ontarians selected real Christmas trees over artificial as the more environmentally-friendly option this holiday season. According to a recent poll*, commissioned by the Ontario Forestry Association (OFA), 41% of respondents consider a real tree to be the most eco-friendly, 25% chose artificial trees and 16% ranked both as equal.

This is a substantial shift in public opinion compared to a similar poll conducted by the OFA last year. In 2012, 46% of Ontarians polled stated that artificial trees were the green choice, while 42% said real trees were better for the environment.

“It is very encouraging to see this shift in awareness,” stated Carla Grant, Executive Director of Ontario Forestry Association. “Many of the real trees available are grown right here in Ontario by local farmers who have a vested interest in the long-term prosperity of our forests.”

Regardless of respondents’ intention to buy a tree, 56% of Ontarians polled said that the availability of Ontario-grown trees would strongly influence their purchasing decision. Almost 73% said they would be at least somewhat influenced by the option to buy a local tree.

The OFA and Trees Ontario are working in partnership with the Ontario Wood Program, an initiative of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources that encourages people to think about their wood purchases and buy local wood products.

More than 500 Ontario farmers produce more than one million Christmas trees each year. When trees are harvested, Christmas tree farmers plant new seedlings to grow trees for the future holiday season. Since trees are not all harvested at the same time, these farms provide continuous habitat for wildlife and retain soil and water, therefore preventing seasonal runoff.

Christmas tree farms are carbon sinks, soaking up carbon dioxide emitted by cars, planes and houses. One acre of planted Christmas trees provides the amount of oxygen required by 18 people every day. The trees are 100% biodegradable and, after the holidays, the trees are mulched for use in municipal parks. Pharmaceutical companies in Ontario also extract ingredients from tree needles for flu vaccines. For more information of the benefits of real Christmas trees, visit OFA’s [website](http://www.oforest.ca) (www.oforest.ca).

On the other hand, the manufacturing and transportation of imported artificial Christmas trees requires large amounts of fossil fuels. In addition, these trees are not biodegradable and will lead to an increase in landfill waste once people decide to discard them. In fact, sadly every artificial Christmas tree will eventually become a centuries-long resident of a municipal landfill.

Over 80% of respondents plan on putting up a tree during the upcoming holiday season.

Despite the green choice, the poll indicated that half of Ontarians (51%) will be putting up an artificial tree, compared to 42% who said they will use a real tree; 7% will put up both. The main reason cited for putting up an artificial tree was convenience (28%), whereas 47% of respondents said they put up a real tree because of family tradition.

Regions in Ontario with the largest number of real tree consumers were: Central (58.8%); Niagara/Hamilton (58.3%); and Eastern (58.1%).

Regions in Ontario with the largest number of people who use artificial trees were: GTA (70.7%); Metro Toronto (69.8%); and Northern (66.7%).

Trees Ontario will be selling trees until December 15th at the Toronto Christmas Market in the Distillery Historic District. Trees are selling fast, and the popular “mini-Kringle”, a 3-foot real tree complete with stand, has already sold out.

-30-

For more information, or to schedule interviews, please contact:

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*The **Ontario Forestry Association (OFA)** is a non-profit, registered charity. The OFA is dedicated to raising awareness and understanding of all aspects of Ontario's forests, and developing commitment to stewardship of forest ecosystems. Since 1949, the OFA has been involved in public education around forestry and environmental issues. To this day, they continue to increase public education and knowledge of forestry and environmental issues. Visit www.oforest.ca.*

***Ontario Wood** works in partnership with Ontario's wood products producers to communicate the benefits (economic, environmental and product characteristics) of Ontario wood products. It is designed to encourage Ontarians to “buy local” wood products and help them identify those products by looking for the Ontario Wood “leaf” brand. To find information on Ontario's forest industry and Ontario Wood's producer partners, please visit www.ontario.ca/wood.*

*The 850-person survey by Oraclepoll Research entitled “Holiday Tree Report” was conducted between November 20th and November 25th, 2013. The margin of error is +/- 3.4%, 19/20 times.



The Lieutenant Governor of Ontario's annual Christmas tree. Courtesy of Ontario Forestry Association.