

## Shared Values, Canadians, and Sustainability Thought Leaders Study Hoggan and Associates 2009

Between April and June of this year, James Hoggan and Associates identified and surveyed more than 1,000 Canadian thought leaders for their views on social, environmental, and economic sustainability. The list included you, and we appreciate your participation in the research. Below, as promised, are highlights from the survey.

The findings—accurate to within 3 percentage points at 90 percent confidence—offer insight into the perspectives of those who lead the worlds of business, academia, government, NGOs, and media.

### Corporate Social Responsibility Policies

Almost three-quarters of thought leaders—and the organizations they work for—have established a corporate social responsibility policy. Most are in academia (78 percent), government (77 percent), and non-profit sector (68 percent). Of those that do not have such a policy, 30 percent plan to implement one.

### Is Sustainability Just for Show?

More than three-quarters (78 percent) of those surveyed believe that most companies' sustainability claims are more for public relations purposes than actual results. Meanwhile, 22 percent of respondents felt that most businesses that talk about sustainability are truly committed to achieving results.

### “Sustainability” Spells Uncertainty

Few were able to clearly define the term “sustainability.” 22 percent of respondents equated the term with “being environmentally responsible,” while 88 percent of those surveyed were familiar with the definition “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

### Sustainability is a National Priority

Almost all surveyed thought leaders (98 percent) regarded sustainability as a national priority. Of this group, 44 percent classified it as a “top” priority, 47 percent called it a “high” priority, and 7 percent called it a “medium” priority.

### What Would it Mean For Us?

What would happen if Canada adopted sustainability as a top priority? Just 33 percent of surveyed thought leaders felt that the move would yield a positive impact on the **cost of living**, while 40 percent felt that embracing sustainability would have a “very negative” cost-of-living impact. Meanwhile, most influencers (89 percent) felt that the move would have a positive impact on **quality of life**, 69 percent felt it would have a positive impact of **employment**, and 64 percent felt it would have a positive impact on

**international competitiveness.**

### **Impacts of Climate Change Very Serious**

A full 81 percent of surveyed influencers believe that the impacts of climate change will be very serious. Only 19 percent felt those impacts were exaggerated.

### **Human Activity is the Primary Cause**

About 79 percent of surveyed thought leaders believe that most scientists agree that human activity is the primary cause of climate change. Meanwhile, 22 percent say there is still much debate among scientists about whether human activity is causing global warming.

### **Economy and Environment are Not Mutually Exclusive**

Even in these challenging economic times, 87 percent of thought leaders felt that government and business should make both economic and environmental challenges, such as climate change, a top priority.

### **Canada's Climate Leadership is "Embarrassing"**

The majority of influencers (84 percent) believe that Canada should take a leadership position to reduce greenhouse gases because it is "embarrassing that we are not doing more to curb emissions." Just 16 percent felt that Canada has to accept high per-capita emissions because our country has a resource-based economy.

### **You Know What the Solutions Are**

Thought leaders overwhelmingly agreed that a variety of progressive policy solutions will help Canada achieve sustainability. Of 19 different government policies described in our survey, the three scoring the highest are: "develop renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, hydro, and tidal," "require the construction of all new homes to meet high energy efficiency and other environmental standards," and "increase vehicle efficiency standards." All three of these policies met with 95 percent agreement.

### **Willing To Pay More for Clean, Green Energy**

Most respondents (81 percent) would pay an additional 10 percent for clean, green, renewable energy.

### **The Most Credible Sources on the Sustainability**

Out of a list of 23 companies, energy utilities, politicians, groups, celebrities, and organizations, the top three most credible information sources on sustainability are university professors (85 percent), the David Suzuki Foundation (79 percent), and the scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (77 percent). The three least credible sources were "Bono from U2" (30 percent), "Stephen Harper" (15 percent), and "Oil and Gas Companies" (10 percent).

### **Sustainable Behavior: What Will You Make a Point Of Doing?**

Our survey asked thought leaders which of a wide range of suggested behaviors they would embrace in the year ahead. The three most likely moves were: “take your own bags to the grocery store,” (91 percent) “seek out products or services from companies that show leadership on sustainability issues,” (78 percent) and “buy local or organic food” (78 percent). The three behaviors that our influencers were least likely to embrace in the coming year were: “Take public transit to reduce your carbon footprint,” (49 percent), “pay 20 percent more for products that are certified as sustainable or environmentally responsible,” (48 percent), and “cycle to work to reduce your carbon footprint” (43 percent).