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Environmental issues could swing election

VOTERS LOOKING FOR LEADERSHIP ON GREEN ISSUES – POLL

Toronto — With less than three months to election day, no political party has yet won the confidence of Ontario voters on their No. 1 concern – the state of our environment – says an Environics poll released today by a coalition of environmental organizations.

“Ontario voters are looking for leadership on environmental issues, creating an electorally significant swath of unclaimed green turf up for grabs if parties can distinguish themselves in the coming weeks” says Julia Langer of WWF-Canada. “Ontario voters want clear, non-partisan information on what constitutes a solid environment platform and we are ready to help on that front.”

In the poll conducted by Environics Research on behalf of 13 leading environmental organizations, the environment was identified by Ontario voters as the number one most important issue to them personally in determining who to vote for. But a third of all of those surveyed could not currently identify a party they felt was a clear overall leader in addressing environmental issues, such as smog, climate change, sustainable energy, or reducing waste.

“If an election were held today, it would be a very competitive race. Environmental issues will play an important role in the election and in light of the numbers, it may well be the deciding issue in the campaign,” says Derek Leebosh, Senior Associate of Environics.

“Support for strong environmental policies – whether it is phasing out coal and nuclear power, expanding the Greenbelt, protecting northern forests or getting toxics out of products – is wide and deep,” says Dr. Rick Smith of Environmental Defence, with voters surveyed in all parts of the province supporting strong action on these issues.

The groups are promising to make it clear in the lead up to the election that environment will be a top issue during the campaign and will be targeting their messages to key ridings in the province where they have strong collective support.

“We will give voters the information they need to identify candidates who support policies like clean energy, effective curbs on urban sprawl, and providing greater protection for the Great Lakes,” says Bruce Cox of Greenpeace.

The 13 environmental organizations that commissioned the poll are: Conservation Council of Ontario, Environmental Defence, Forest Ethics, Great Lakes United, Greenpeace, Ontario Clean Air Alliance, Ontario Nature, Pembina Institute, Pollution Probe, Sierra Club of Canada, Ontario Chapter, Toronto Environmental Alliance, Wildlands League, and World Wildlife Fund.

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The findings of the survey are based on a telephone survey of 1,160 Ontarians who are eligible to vote. The survey was conducted between July 3 and 7, 2007. The margin of error for a sample of this size is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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For further information on the six priorities visit **www.prioritiesforontario.ca**

Visit **www.voteformcleanenergy.ca** for the climate & energy blog, updates and regional campaign activities.

More information:

Rick Smith, Environmental Defence 416-670-9521

Julia Langer, World Wildlife Fund 416-484-7709

Bruce Cox, Greenpeace (416) 597-8408 ext. 3012

Gillian McEachern, ForestEthics 647-883-5983

Caroline Schultz, Ontario Nature 416-444-8419 ex. 237 cell: 416-768-9795

Ken Ogilvie, Pollution Probe (416) 926-1907 ext. 231

Janet Sumner, Wildlands League 416-971-9453 ext.39

Derek Stack, Great Lakes United 613-797-9532

Chris Winter, Conservation Council of Ontario 416-533-1635 ext. 1

Dan McDermott, Sierra Club of Canada, Ontario Chapter 416-960-6075

Jack Gibbons, Ontario Clean Air Alliance 416-926-1907 ext. 240

Cherise Burda, Pembina Institute 416-978-3486

Franz Hartmann, Toronto Environmental Alliance 416-596-0660