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is Canada's Most Important Natural Resource**
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Saying They Use On Average 66 Litres Versus
Reality of 329 Litres*

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Majority (53%) of Canadians Believe Fresh Water is Canada's Most Important Natural Resource

*Yet Canadians Greatly Underestimate Their Daily Water Use
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Toronto, ON - A majority (53%) of Canadians believe fresh water is Canada's most important natural resource, according to a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of RBC and Unilever, placing it well ahead of forests (20%), agriculture and farmland (14%), oil (8%), and fisheries (2%).

But most (84%) Canadians 'agree' (33% strongly/50% somewhat) that 'without good conservations habits, Canada will have a fresh water shortage in the future'. Just 16% 'disagree' (3% strongly/13% somewhat) that this will be the case.

Despite valuing water as an important natural resource and appreciating the implications of overuse, Canadians appear to greatly underestimate the amount of water they use on a daily basis. While the average Canadian believes they use 66 litres a day, each Canadian actually uses on average 329 litres a day, according to the United Nations Environment Program - five times more than they thought. In some aspects, Canadians overall are becoming worse at conserving water, with the average length of shower increasing from 7.6 minutes to 8.1 minutes this year over last.

Conservation Habits...

Most (95%) Canadians believe that it is 'important' (57% strongly/38% somewhat) to 'conserve freshwater on an ongoing basis', and most (86%) 'agree' (31% strongly/55% somewhat) that they are 'making reasonable efforts to conserve fresh water, with Albertans (90%) being the most likely to say so, and Atlantic Canadians (83%) being least likely. In contrast, only 30% 'agree' (3% strongly/27% somewhat) that corporations are doing the same.

Nine in ten (89%) are of the opinion that there is a 'growing fresh water crisis on the planet', and two in three (66%) think that 'Canada is at risk of a fresh water supply shortage'.

And while most think it's important to conserve water, it appears that more put a great effort into conserving electricity (28%) than water (3%). The remainder says they put an equal (65%) amount of effort into conserving both. Moreover, one in three (34%) doesn't know how much they pay for water each month, compared to only 14% who don't know how much they pay for electricity each month.

Knowledge of one's water bill appears to be linked to whether or not one has a water meter, as those with a meter are much more likely (70%) to know how much they pay for water than those without (21%). All in all, four in ten (39%) Canadians' homes have a water meter, with those in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (72%) being most likely.

Concern for Supply of Water...

Despite using water in copious amounts, only six percent (6%) of Canadians believe that the wasteful use of water by consumers is the biggest threat to Canada's freshwater supply. Topping the list is run-off pollutants from land to water (19%), followed by mass export to

the U.S. (17%), illegal dumping of toxins (12%), mismanagement by all levels of government (12%), global warming and climate change (8%), wasteful use by industry (8%), a lack of knowledge (8%), and the legal release of toxins (7%). Others think that inadequate infrastructure (3%) or wasteful use by agriculture (1%) is the biggest threat.

Interestingly, just as many Canadians are 'concerned' (84%) with the long-term supply/quality of fresh water in Canada as are 'concerned' with the stability of the financial markets (85%). In fact, more Quebecers (80%) are concerned with the supply and quality of water than with the stability of the markets (72%).

Still, seven in ten (69%) are 'confident' (15% very/55% somewhat) that 'Canada as a whole has enough freshwater to meet our long-term needs', but this proportion has dropped 11 points in the last year. Similarly, confidence in their region's long-term supply of water has dropped 10 points to 74% who are now confident.

- Quebecers (58%) are by far the least confident that Canada has enough fresh water to meet its long-term needs.
- Quebecers (68%) and Albertans (67%) are least confident that their region has enough fresh water to meet their long-term needs.

Concern for Safety of Water...

Canadians are becoming less 'confident' in the 'safety and quality of Canada's drinking water', with 72% (17% very/55% somewhat) indicating that they are confident in this regard compared to 81% who said the same last year.



Quebecers (54%) are the least confident in the safety and quality of Canada's water supply, being much less confident than British Columbians (82%), residents of Saskatchewan and Manitoba (79%), Ontario (77%), Alberta (75%), and Atlantic Canada (74%).

Most Canadians (68%) typically drink their tap water at home, but 27% filter it first before drinking. This means that one in three (32%) Canadians typically do not drink the water that comes out of their taps at home.

These are the findings of a poll conducted on behalf of RBC and Unilever from February 5 to February 12, 2009. This online survey of 2,165 Canadian adults was conducted via the Ipsos I-Say Online Panel, Ipsos Reid's national online panel. The results of these polls are based on a sample where quota sampling and weighting are employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data. Quota samples with weighting from the Ipsos online panel provide results that are intended to approximate a probability sample. Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online polls, however, an unweighted probability sample of this size, with a 100% response rate, would have an estimated margin of error of +/- 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had the entire adult population of Canada been polled.

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