



Paper or Plastic...or Neither? British Columbians Prefer Bio-Degradable Plastic Bags

Vancouver, BC, May 6, 2009 - Many retailers are rethinking their business practices as it relates to the environment, including their plastic bag policies. As such, a new Ipsos Reid study in British Columbia, examines consumers' points-of-views when it comes to retailers and their actions to help preserve and protect the environment.

Survey results reveal that retailers in BC should consider providing bio-degradable plastic bags for free as it garners the most support from consumers as the best option when it comes to plastic bag alternatives (given five alternatives, 39% most prefer bio-degradable plastic bags). Bio-degradable plastic bags receive nearly double the amount of support over providing no bags altogether (26%) and providing reusable bags (e.g., cloth bags) for a small fee (21%). Other options such as charging customers a small fee for each plastic bag that is donated to an eco-friendly organization (6%) and providing plastic bags for free, but contributing a small donation to an eco-friendly organization for each consumer who refuses one (5%) receive the least interest from BC consumers. The remaining 3% either do not support any of the above mentioned alternatives (2%) or are unsure (1%).

While 39% most prefer retailers to provide bio-degradable plastic bags, BC consumers do not dismiss other alternatives to plastic bags as they want retailers to take actions that will help preserve and protect the environment. For instance, there is also evidence of public support for an outright ban of plastic bags. A ban on plastic bags altogether continues to garner strong support from British Columbians (62% support in 2009 and 66% support in 2008). That said, alternative environmentally-friendly actions are also gaining support. Nearly an equal percentage support retailers charging customers a small fee for each plastic bag, the fee collected would later be donated to an eco-friendly organization (59% support in 2009 versus 54% support in 2008). A similar percentage support retailers providing plastic bags for free, but contributing a small donation to an eco-friendly organization for each customer who refuses one (58% support in 2009 versus 51% support in 2008). These results suggest that there are many options for retailers to consider when it comes to alternatives for the use of plastic bags and being more conscious of their environmental impact.

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid study fielded from April 10 to April 15, 2009. This online survey of 1,170 adult British Columbians was conducted using Ipsos Reid's proprietary "Voice of the West Interactive Forum" – an online panel of more than 5,000 British Columbians who have been randomly recruited to match the overall characteristics of the adult residents of the province. Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online



studies of this nature, however, an unweighted probability sample of this size, with a 100% response rate, would have an estimated margin of error of +/- 2.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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