



Canucks like being green ; Sustainable development makes sense to us

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Canadians wax enthusiastic about the environment, but when it comes to walking the walk, they're a bit more hesitant.

A survey of Canadian and American attitudes toward environmentally friendly development, by the global research company IFOP, shows almost 90% of Canadians believe the issue is important. Less than 60%, however, say their support for environmental sustainability guides their personal behaviour.

Still, Canadians are more aware of sustainability issues than Americans. And their individual acts, such as recycling and conservation, suggest more of an everyday commitment to the environment than that of their counterparts south of the border.

POSITIVE NUMBERS

"I think the numbers are fairly positive on both sides," said John Ball, chief operating officer for **IFOP North America**. But "Canadians are perhaps better schooled or trained in things such as recycling."

The survey of 1,592 Canadians and 1,600 Americans was originally done for corporate clients in August 2009 -- in the heat of the recession -- but is being released publicly in advance of Earth Day next week, Ball said.

To Canadians, the term "sustainability" includes economic development that doesn't hurt the environment; managing resources wisely; conservation; recycling; or use of renewable and alternative energy sources. It can also include promoting locally grown or "fair trade" products, and even fighting perceived injustice.

IFOP found 86% of Canadians thought sustainability was very important, and 78% believe citizens could make a difference. Two-thirds also thought sustainable environmental practices were "practical" and "attainable" and 61% felt "personally committed" to such practices.

But only 56% said a philosophy of environmental sustainability guided their everyday behaviour.

EVERYDAY HABITS

Among Americans, 48% said sustainability influenced their everyday habits.

Still, Canadians do indulge in green habits routinely. Topping the list is recycling, followed by attention to the health impact of products, an attempt to minimize waste, and buying locally grown goods. Six in 10 Canadians say they've made changes to their home to be more environmentally responsible.

In almost every category of personal behaviour, Canadians topped Americans.

According to the survey, last year's economic slowdown did nothing to dampen environmental convictions. Fifty per cent of Canadians -- and 43% of Americans -- said sustainability is just as important now as it was prior to the recession. One-quarter of Canadians -- and 40% of Americans -- thought it was even more important during the recession.

The data is based on an online panel sample that reflects census proportions and is not assumed to be a random sample. A purely random sample of 1,600 Canadians would have a margin of error of plus or minus 2.35%, 19 times out of 20.

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