

## Wind Energy In Canada Market Research Briefing Document

In February 2005, CanWEA commissioned Ipsos-Reid to conduct public opinion research about wind energy in Canada to help support the development of a comprehensive public outreach and education communications plan. To develop this plan, it was important to understand and benchmark the attitudes and education of Canadians with respect to wind energy and this was a primary goal of the research.

### **Research Results – The Facts**

*Canadians care about how their electricity is generated.*

- In general Canadians are knowledgeable about the sources used to generate electricity in Canada.
- 84% of Canadians care about which source is used to generate electricity in Canada (41% care a great deal).
- Just under half of Canadians (46%) feel that Canadian companies should be investing in wind energy for the future. Wind energy ranked highest of all sources followed by hydro (31%) and solar (17%). Other fuels like nuclear (9%) and natural gas (4%) received much less support. It is also of interest to note that support levels for Canadian companies investing in wind energy is higher in areas of proposed (67%) and installed wind energy projects (73%).
- The most important electricity related issues to Canadians are:
  - Environmentally friendly generation
  - A safe and secure electricity system
  - Reducing health risks and impacts

*Awareness of wind energy is high.*

- In total, 93% of Canadians are aware of wind energy.

*Further education is required.*

- Canadians claim some knowledge of wind energy (59% are informed), but do not feel very informed about the topic (10% are very informed).
- Canadians that are informed about wind energy are more likely to:
  - Care about the sources used to generate electricity (+10%);
  - Support the continued development of wind energy (+6%);
  - Be interested in a home wind turbine (+14%);
  - Be interested in investing in a wind project for their community (+14%);
  - Think reducing pollution is worth something (+6%); and,
  - Have stronger attitudes toward wind energy in general.

*Very strong support for wind energy*

- 96% support (67% strongly support) the continued development of wind energy.
- 92% believe wind energy will play a significant role (43% very significant) in meeting Canada's future energy needs.
- 51% feel that wind energy is currently an important factor in addressing Canada's energy needs and will continue to be in 10 years.
- 92% support the development of a wind project for their community (54% strongly support).
- 71% are interested in investing in a wind project for their community (22% very interested).
- 74% are interested in the possibility of a home wind turbine (32% very interested).

*Perceived benefits of wind energy (unprompted)*

Cheaper than other sources / cheaper – 23%  
Environmentally friendly / safer for the environment – 23%  
Renewable / endless supply – 22%  
Reduction in pollution / no pollution – 16%  
Clean / clean energy – 15%  
Free / freely available – 8%  
Saves our natural resources – 6%  
Natural / using nature – 6%  
Other – 29%  
None – 1%  
Don't know / not sure – 6%

*Perceived drawbacks of wind energy (unprompted)*

Reliability / areas of low or no wind – 28%  
Aesthetics – 17%  
Not an efficient source of energy – 9%  
High capital investment – 7%  
Space required for the towers – 7%  
Cost – 6%  
Environmental impact of towers – 5%  
Depends on location – 4%  
Noise – 4%  
Other – 9%  
None – 15%  
Don't know / not sure – 11%

*Electric utilities should support wind energy*

- Supporting wind energy is very important to customers, and can positively impact impressions of the company:
  - 84% feel it is important for their electricity provider to give them the option of purchasing electricity generated from wind;
  - 88% feel it is important that their provider use wind energy as one of their energy sources; and,
  - Whereas only 15% of Canadians think their provider already includes wind among its sources, 78% report that if their provider made *further* investments in wind energy it would have a positive impact on their impressions of the company.
  - Importantly, Canadians are willing to pay more for electricity to help their electricity provider increase their investment in wind energy.

*Attitudes of wind energy are generally positive, but there are areas where further education is required. (responses to direct questions)*

- 92% of Canadians feel that wind energy will play an important role in helping Canada reduce air pollution.
- 87% of Canadians feel the benefits of wind energy far outweigh the drawbacks.
- 87% of Canadians feel wind energy is an effective means of replacing fossil-fuel sources of power.
- 89% of Canadians feel that wind energy will play an important role in reducing the health impacts associated with electricity generation.
- 88% of Canadians feel that wind energy can play a role in economic development and job creation.
- 83% believe wind energy is a reliable source of electricity

Although there are some negative perceptions, they are less significant (responses to direct questions):

- 29% believe wind turbines are unpleasant to look at;
- 22% believe wind farms are harmful to the bird population
- 20% think they use up too much land; and,
- 14% think they are noisy.