

# Fresh water Canada's chief resource: poll

Tops oil and gas

Giuseppe Valiante, National Post

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Canada's leaders should develop a national strategy for the protection of fresh water as a major policy platform, according to a new poll.

By a margin of 3-1, the Nanos-Policy Options survey found that Canadians view fresh water as the most important key resource for the country's future -- over even oil and gas and forestry.

Sixty-two per cent of Canadians chose fresh water compared with 22% oil and gas, 11% forestry and 4% fishery.

"I was quite surprised at the result," said Nik Nanos, president of Nanos Research. "We have a self-image of ourselves as an oil superpower ... what the survey shows is that Canadians view water as a strategic resource going into the future.

"For any politician, this could represent a significant opportunity to say 'we might take it for granted that we can turn our taps on and drink the water, but we shouldn't,'" he said.

With the exception of Quebec, most Canadians want the federal government to take the lead on this issue. Seventy-seven per cent of Quebecers believe that all levels of government should work together to protect this resource.

Mr. Nanos said that any Canadian who visits Europe recognizes how precious fresh water is, and most Canadians are starting to view the oil and gas industry with a "short-term lens."

He said the results show that Canadians are starting to realize that fresh water "could be a competitive advantage, an advantage as of lifestyle, and long-term standard of living," he said.

1000 Canadians were polled between May 26 and June 1, 2009. The survey has a margin of error of 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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