

# SUMMIT: Poll finds Ontarians want government stimulus, but no tax hikes

## *Political, labour leaders gather to discuss economy at day-long summit*

By DAVID NICKLE

May 07, 2009 12:01 PM

Ontarians are anxious for government stimulus to help break the economic crisis. But they don't want to see their personal finances broken with tax increases to pay for it.

That was the word from pollster Nik Nanos Thursday morning, as he addressed a blue-chip crowd of business, labour and political leaders gathered for a day-long summit on the Greater Toronto Region's economic prospects.

The poll was conducted by Nanos Research to help set the framework for a ranging day of discussions on how to deal with the economic recession in Ontario.

The poll found that Ontarians were deeply concerned about short- and long-term economic prospects for the province – particularly as it related to jobs – and were strongly in favour of government spending to provide economic stimulus.

Fifty-nine per cent said that the provincial government should incur debt to stimulate the economy.

But 60 per cent were opposed to raising personal taxes.

"When we asked Ontarians how they felt about increasing personal taxes to pay for stimulus... you can see from these numbers, it was a resounding no," said Nanos, of the April 23-25 poll conducted of 501 adult Ontarians. "I think this is one of the key takeaways. When we look at things Ontarians would like to see and what we're willing to pay for, the message is, don't turn to us to foot the bill. It's this 'no' that is at the crux of our short- and long-term challenge."

The poll showed a certain amount of optimism that the economy was going to pick up – but Nanos said that optimism may not have been based on anything substantial, as Ontarians reported continuing to suffer from the effects of a slow economy.

Nanos told the assembled leaders to beware of too much unfounded optimism as they gathered to find ways to respond regionally.

It was a warning that echoed the call from the summit's co-chairs, Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion and Torstar chair John Honderich.

"This is a difficult one but it's one we must face together," said McCallion. "A perfect economic storm is taking its toll. The mayors here today will all agree with me we don't see the recession from a global perspective. We see it locally. These days we see it from our local streets. And these days they are pretty mean streets."

McCallion said the crisis ranges from boardrooms to living rooms.

She called the summit "a power house that can accomplish things together" and promised "a day of action" to come up with strong local recommendations.

Honderich professed "high hopes" for the summit.

"Here we are meeting as a single region to discuss our regional economy," he said. "We are not here to solve the world's economic crisis. We are here to solve those things that fall within our own circle of influence and control. We're here to take stock of our region (and) its talented highly skilled workforce. There is no doubt even in these hard times the Toronto region has the tools it needs to get beyond the recession."

Visit [insidetoronto.com](http://insidetoronto.com) later today for more from the summit.