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Major New Study reveals Canadians care more about the Oceans, but feel less informed than Americans

Research confirms lack of understanding of critical ocean issues

VANCOUVER, BC – Data from the largest-ever environmental survey points to the importance of zoos and aquariums in education and driving conservation activation. The study of over 22,000 adults in 10 major metropolitan areas in the U.S. and 2 in Canada illuminates differences between Canadians and our American neighbours. This study is being released today on the eve of World Oceans Day celebration June 8th (formally declared by the United Nations earlier this year).

The Ocean and Climate Change: new Research Insights for Conservation, Awareness and Action study was commissioned by The Ocean Project (TOP) and the Canadian findings are being released today by the Vancouver Aquarium. The Vancouver Aquarium is a founding partner of The Ocean Project.

The study found Canadians in Toronto and Vancouver generally believe that the world's oceans are fragile and endangered. They are worried about climate change and global warming, the health of the world's ocean, and the future availability of healthy seafood—much more so than Americans. But, they are confused about what factors affect ocean health and what they can do about it. People are largely unaware, for example, of the impacts of factors such as pollution, overfishing and climate change.

Key Insights on Canadian Perspective

- **Canadians know they don't know.** The Canadians surveyed feel less informed about current environmental issues than Americans who feel they are very informed.
- **Whose responsibility is it, anyway?** Canadians in Toronto and Vancouver strongly agree that protecting the environment is the responsibility of the federal government. Canadians also indicated a high level of trust in non-profit organizations such as aquariums, working to protect the quality of our oceans.
- **Is the grass greener on the other side?** Americans believe strongly that their country is developing effective ocean conservation and environmental policies. Torontonians and Vancouverites do not agree, they feel Americans are negative contributors.
- **Listen to the children.** The Canadians surveyed feel strongly that their children are better informed about current environmental issues than they are.
- **We are concerned about future availability of healthy seafood; but aren't quite sure why.** Canadians surveyed are much more worried about the future availability of healthy seafood than Americans. However, Canadians identify pollution as the major threat, and don't fully make the connection between their purchases of

seafood and ocean health. They do not connect overfishing for example, as a significant challenge, which, in reality, has much greater impact on seafood stocks than pollution.

- **People are the problem—*other* people, that is.** Canadians believe human actions are the primary threat to climate change. However, when it comes to ocean health specifically, both Canadians and Americans tend to believe that their actions have little impact.

John Nightingale, President of the Vancouver Aquarium, says, "I think it's good news that, even though many Canadians do not believe as individuals they are part of the problem, they express a desire to make a positive difference through their actions. However, it's clear from these findings they don't necessarily know what those actions should be."

Vancouver Aquarium conservation expert Eric Solomon, who authored the summary report (attached) notes, "There's still much work to do for the Vancouver Aquarium and other conservation organizations. Canadians in the surveyed areas perceive ocean health as largely a coastal problem, characterizing the open ocean as relatively healthy, but with 90% of the large fish gone, there's no part of the ocean completely immune to our human impacts. This study reinforces the role organizations like ours can and should play. Our job is to help people understand some of these potentially confusing issues and give them some tools to make a difference."

[Click here to download pdf of Summary Report](#)

About The Survey

The Ocean Project surveyed over 22,000 people in 10 major population centres as well as Toronto and Vancouver on a comprehensive range of ocean and environment related topics. It is the largest environmental study ever conducted.

TOP founding partner, the Vancouver Aquarium, is releasing the Canadian findings. Canada is a country with diverse interests, opinions, attitudes and behaviours; this study is not intended to paint a picture of the "typical Canadian", but provides a snapshot of two major population centres. While limited in geographic scope, the findings are nonetheless robust and significant in their representation of those regions sampled. The Toronto and Vancouver study forms the basis on which the study will be expanded to other cities across Canada.

The Canadian survey, conducted by IMPACTS Research, bases its findings on data from a survey of over 1000 adults each in Toronto and Vancouver between August and November of 2008. The survey was conducted online, and respondents were paid, screened and certified. The sample accurately reflected the population in these metropolitan areas, and the overall confidence level in its findings is 95 percent.

About The Ocean Project

The Ocean Project advances ocean conservation in partnership with aquariums, zoos, and museums around the world. The Ocean Project is also the lead entity, working with the World Ocean Network, for coordinating June 8th as World Oceans Day, which was recently instituted by the United Nations as an official annual event. More information on World Oceans Day at www.worldoceansday.org Find more information about the survey including the summary report of The Ocean and Climate Change at: www.theoceanproject.org

About the Vancouver Aquarium

The Vancouver Aquarium is a self-supporting, non-profit association dedicated to effecting the conservation of aquatic life through display and interpretation, conservation practices, education, research and direct action. Please visit www.vanaqua.org

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- * **Full report available online at www.theoceanproject.org**
- * **Requests for interviews with Eric Solomon to:**

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