

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Public Wants More Dollars for Environment Says Environmental Commissioner**

Gord Miller, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO), released the results of a poll today showing that the people of Ontario put a much higher value on protecting the environment than is reflected in government budget allocations. The ECO poll asked Ontarians to estimate what percentage of the provincial operating budget they thought was assigned to the Ministry of the Environment, and then asked what percentage they thought should be allotted to the ministry.

“At the start of a new year, with the provincial budget cycle still in its final stages, I think it’s wise to compare the priorities of the public with the priorities of the government regarding environmental protection,” said Commissioner Miller, who monitors compliance by provincial ministries with the *Environmental Bill of Rights*.

The Ontarians sampled in the ECO poll thought, on average, that about 12 per cent of the budget would be slated for the Ministry of the Environment. More than 90 per cent of poll respondents assumed the ministry got at least 1 per cent – or much more – of the provincial budget.

In fact, the actual portion of the budget assigned to the Ministry of the Environment for the fiscal year 2006/2007 is closer to one-third of 1 per cent – 0.36 per cent. Once they learned the real budget allocation, more than 80 per cent of those polled thought it was too low.

The people responding to the ECO poll were then asked what percentage of the province’s annual budget they thought should be allotted to the Ministry of the Environment. Three-fourths of poll respondents, on average, said that the ideal allocation of the provincial budget assigned to the ministry should be 12 per cent.

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“Unfortunately, the one-third of 1 per cent allotted to the Ministry of the Environment is only a tiny sliver of the provincial budget,” said Commissioner Miller. “For too many years, the key ministries of the Environment and Natural Resources have simply not been given the human and financial resources that are realistically required to meet the broad expectations imposed by their mandates.”

Carried out by a professional polling agency, the ECO poll interviewed 300 adult Ontarians, sampled randomly; results are considered accurate to within plus or minus 5.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Poll respondents were asked to keep in mind that changing spending in one government area would cause an increase or decrease in spending in other areas.

Commissioner Miller also pointed to a Statistics Canada report that indicated that in 2004 Canadians directed about 2 per cent of their charitable donations toward environmental causes and 2 per cent of their total volunteer hours toward conservation and environmental protection. “It appears that by any measure – whether by opinion poll, voting by their wallets or by volunteer hours – Ontarians put a high priority on protecting the environment,” he said.

“I encourage the government, in its budget planning, to consider the priorities of the public, and to embark on a strategic, step-wise plan to gradually rebuild the agencies responsible for Ontario’s environment,” Commissioner Miller concluded.

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Visit the ECO Web site < [www.eco.on.ca](http://www.eco.on.ca) > to view the 2005/2006 ECO annual report, which contains the ECO Recommendations.

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