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Survey says Ontarians support alternative financing for infrastructure

An SES Canada Research survey taken in late May reports that 61 per cent of Ontarians either strongly or somewhat support turning to pension funds and the private sector to build hospitals. Support dips slightly for infrastructure projects such as schools, roads and highways.

“There’s a consensus the government can’t do everything on its own and at this point needs to look at alternative funding models,” John Nanos, Senior Vice President of SES, said in a June 15 story that ran in several of Osprey Media’s 21 Ontario dailies. “Six out of ten people either strongly or somewhat support both, which is a very strong number.

“I think this is something that’s going to emerge as a front burner issue. It’s something to watch over the next couple of months to see how the government is going to respond.”

The McGuinty government has announced it will pursue alternative financing and procurement (AFP) strategies for about 10 per cent of the estimated \$30 billion worth of infrastructure projects on the books over the next five years. Ontario will access new financing sources for such projects through Infrastructure Renewal Bonds and from partnerships with financial institutions and pension funds. A new agency – the Ontario Infrastructure Projects Corporation (OIPC) – will ensure that the government delivers large-scale AFP projects successfully.

The government also pledged it would ensure projects like hospitals and water and sewage treatment plants, which may use AFP to build them, would remain firmly under public control.

SES Canada Research conducted its random telephone survey between May 24 and May 26. It asked 500 Ontarians, 18 years and older, the following question: “For each of the following areas, I would like you to tell me whether you support or oppose pension plans and/or the private sector helping to finance the costs of public infrastructure ...”

The firm says a random survey of 500 Ontarians is accurate ± 4.4 per cent, 19 times out of 20. The results, which the firm says may not add up to 100 per cent, are as follows:

	Support			Oppose		
	Strongly	Somewhat	Neither	SomeWhat	Strongly	Unsure
Hospitals	37%	24%	4%	14%	18%	3%
Schools	34%	24%	4%	14%	20%	4%
Roads & Highways	23%	31%	5%	16%	21%	5%
Public Transit	22%	32%	9%	17%	16%	5%
Water & Sewage Systems	23%	29%	8%	15%	21%	5%

The initiative was part of the SES Ontario Omnibus Survey and was registered with the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association, of which SES is a member. Established in 1987, SES is a full service public opinion research and management consulting firm whose clients come from the corporate, government and para-public sectors in Canada and the United States.



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