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Tuesday, October 11, 2005

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## ONTARIANS SATISFIED WITH THEIR ROADS: POLL

By James Wallace  
Osprey News Network

Ontario drivers aren't overly fussed by the potholes, construction or the general road conditions they face on their daily drive to work, suggests an SES Research-Osprey Media poll.

"When we look at the province as a whole, Ontarians are more satisfied than unsatisfied with their roads," said Nik Nanos, president of SES Research.

The poll shows one out of every two voters province-wide – 52 percent – are either satisfied or very satisfied with the conditions of provincial highways.

However, the glaring exceptions are in the north and in Toronto.

Just four out of ten voters (42 percent) are happy with road conditions in the north while 54 per cent are either somewhat or very unsatisfied with highway conditions.

Highway approval ratings in traffic-clogged Toronto are just marginally higher at 44 percent while 41 per cent in the city expressed dissatisfaction with local highways.

"For the governing Liberals, that means they will have to pay more attention to road conditions in the north and the 416 area," Nanos said.

In eastern Ontario, the poll found 61 percent of respondents are happy with highway conditions while just 32 percent had complaints.

There were similar numbers in the west with 60 percent of those polled saying they were satisfied and 32 percent who were not.

In central Ontario, the geographic band surrounding Toronto, satisfaction was pegged at 51 percent and the number of unhappy motorists at 40 percent.

There was little difference between male and female drivers, with men being just slightly less satisfied than women.

Highway conditions are both a practical and expensive concern for Ontarians.

Grid-lock in urban areas and poor, narrow and needed highways in rural and northern areas are a billion-drain on the

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economy and economic development.

A 2005 federal-provincial task force on urban transportation estimated that Ontario needs to spend \$18 billion on repairs, upgrades and construction to provincial highways over the next 10 years.

The province already spends about \$1 billion annually expanding and rehabilitating its 16,500-kilometre network of highways.

For a trading province like Ontario, where we export the majority of the goods we produce and move \$1.2 trillion worth of goods on our roads, maintaining highway conditions is vital for the economy.

Politically, Ontario voters expect the provincial government to maintain public roads though in recent years, standards have slipped.

"Road conditions are one of the most visible signs of taxpayer's dollars at work," Nanos said.

According to a recently released provincial report, Ontario's roads and highways are the safest in North America when judged by the number of fatalities per 10,000 licensed drivers.

A 2003 (latest stats available) report just released shows a 4.8 per cent reduction in the number of fatalities on Ontario's roads, from 873 in 2002 to 831 in 2003 - the lowest level since 1950.

The telephone survey of 504 Ontario voters was conducted between Sept. 15 and Sept. 19. It is considered accurate within 4.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

A detailed breakdown of the poll can be obtained at [www.sesresearch.com](http://www.sesresearch.com)

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