

**Strathcona County**  
**WILDFIRE SURVEY – TOPLINE REPORT**  
*February 8, 2010 –Topline*

**Note: The following provides *preliminary* survey findings. Results are presented for close-ended questions only and are in the order addressed in the survey instrument. Unless otherwise stated, n=375. Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.**

**SECTION 1: WILDFIRE RISK**

We would like to start by asking you some questions about the risk wildfires and other hazards pose to yourself, your property and your community.

- I'd like to read some different types of hazards to you, and for each, I'd like you to tell me how much you feel each of the following could affect you and your property in the next 5 years.** We will use a 7 point scale, where a score of 1 means you think there would be no risk, while a score of 7 means you think there would be a great risk. There are no right or wrong answers.

What about \_\_\_\_\_? (*Read each item*)

	No Risk (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Great Risk (7)	No opinion	Mean
Drought	6	8	13	10	20	19	25	<1	4.9
Wildfires	12	11	17	12	24	8	17	-	4.2
Hail	10	16	19	17	21	8	9	2	3.9
Climate Change	21	15	19	13	9	10	10	3	3.6
Tornadoes	17	22	18	12	14	6	9	1	3.5
Mountain Pine Beetle	34	17	13	10	12	5	7	3	3.1
Flooding	57	20	10	7	3	2	2	-	1.9

In the next few questions we would ask some questions specifically referring to wildfires.

- Using the same scale as before, in the next 5 years, how much of a risk do you feel wildfires could pose to \_\_\_\_\_? (*Read each item*)**

	No Risk (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Great Risk (7)	No opinion	Mean
Your property	9	12	13	15	19	13	18	-	4.3
Your community	4	8	15	15	26	15	16	1	4.6
The natural environment	4	6	13	18	20	18	20	2	4.9

3. Using a 7 point scale, to what extent do you think people can control the impact that wildfires could have on \_\_\_\_\_, where 1 means not at all controllable and 7 means very controllable? *(Read each item)*

	Not controllable (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Very Controllable (7)	No opinion	Mean
Your property	5	4	9	14	27	22	21	<1	5.0
Your community	3	5	7	16	31	21	17	<1	5.0
The natural environment	5	9	10	17	26	19	13	1	4.6

4. Using a 7 point scale, we'd like to know to what extent you'd be willing to accept the impact of wildfires on your property, the community and the natural environment. A score of 1 means not at all acceptable and 7 means completely acceptable. What about \_\_\_\_\_? *(Read each item)*

	Not acceptable (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Very acceptable (7)	No opinion	Mean
Your property	55	13	12	4	6	4	4	3	2.4
Your community	51	14	13	6	8	3	2	4	2.4
The natural environment	41	15	12	11	9	5	4	5	2.9

5. Using a 7 point scale, how much negative emotion (i.e. anger, fear) do you feel when you think about wildfires and their impact? A score of 1 means none, while a score of 7 means a high negative emotion. (IF ASKED "IMPACT ON WHAT" – PAT RESPONSE – "on you, your family and/or your property")

None (1)	2	3	4	5	6	High (7)	No opinion	Mean
7	10	15	12	21	15	21	<1	4.6

6. What is the likelihood that a wildfire will occur near your community in the next year? Using a scale where 1 means not at all likely and 7 means very likely, would you say *(Read each category except the no opinion)*

None (1)	2	3	4	5	6	High (7)	No opinion	Mean
12	17	17	15	19	9	9	1	3.8

## SECTION 2: WILDFIRE AWARENESS

We are also interested in how familiar you are with wildfires.

**7. How often have you thought about wildfires in the past 12 months? Would you say**

Never (1)	Rarely (2)	A few times a year (3)	Once a month (4)	Once a week or more (5)	Not sure	Mean
11	20	43	14	12	<1	3.0

**8. How often have you talked about wildfires with other people in the past 12 months? Would you say..**

Never (1)	Rarely (2)	A few times a year (3)	Once a month (4)	Once a week or more (5)	Not sure	Mean
18	27	42	9	4	<1	2.5

**9. I'd now like to ask you for your opinion about different aspects of wildfires.  
(Read each statement, then ask – “In your opinion, would you say this is mostly true or mostly false?”)**

	Mostly True	Mostly False	Not sure
Wildfires burn faster going up hill.	55	28	18
Houses only burn when the flames from a wildfire reach the house.	18	79	3
Wildfires can be an important force in controlling outbreaks of disease and insects in forests.	84	11	5
It takes decades before plants grow in a fire damaged forest	28	71	1
Wildfires usually result in the death of most of the animals in a burnt area	30	66	4
Wildfires help recycle minerals and nutrients needed by trees and other plants.	80	14	6

**10. Have you ever searched for information about wildfires in terms of their impacts or how to prepare your house and property for wildfires?**

21% Yes **Ask:** —→  
79% No – **Skip to Q- 11**

Q-10a. Did you search for this information: (**Read list, circle all that apply**) (n=80)

- 48% Strathcona County Emergency Services
- 43% The Internet
- 41% Provincial Forestry department
- 38% Friends or Relatives
- 25% Neighbours
- 36% Anything else (*please indicate*) (*Included in final report*)

**11. Have you ever heard of the term *FireSmart*?**

63% Yes **Ask:** —→  
37% No – **Skip to Q- 12**

Q-11a. Did you learn about this term: (**Read list, circle all that apply**) (n=238)

- 37% On television
- 29% Brochures or pamphlets
- 20% From the newspaper
- 18% From a relative, friend or neighbour
- 15% On the radio
- 8% Internet
- 22% Anything else (*please indicate*) (*Included in final report*)
- 8% Don't remember

### SECTION 3: YOUR PROPERTY AND WILDFIRES

12. We'd now like to ask you about different activities that you might have completed or are planning to complete to prepare homes and properties for wildfires.

**What about \_\_\_\_\_? Have you *(Read options for each, circle appropriate answer)***

	Done (1)	Plan to do in the next year (2)	Plan to do in the next 5 years (3)	Had not planned to do (4)	Does not apply
Remove shrubs, trees or fallen branches close to your house	84	5	<1	8	3
Remove needles, leaves and overhanging branches from the roof and gutters	82	5	1	4	9
Store firewood well away from your house	76	5	-	9	10
Keep grass short and water frequently during the spring, summer and fall	69	7	1	17	6
Remove debris or needle build up under balconies and porches	67	5	1	10	18
Install double/thermal pane or tempered glass in windows and exterior glass doors	66	3	8	21	2
Prune large trees by removing all branches that are close to the ground	62	5	3	24	6
Install fire resistant materials, such as metal, asphalt, slate, or tile on your roof	60	1	5	31	3
Landscape with fire resistant materials and vegetation (such as rocks, aspen, maple or poplar trees)	56	4	3	31	6
Thin shrubs or trees so that nearby plants and trees do not touch	52	5	4	32	7
Screen or enclose the undersides of decks and porches	40	6	4	36	15
Install fire resistant siding, such as stucco, metal, or brick on your house	36	2	6	54	2
Screen house vents, gutters and the underside of eaves with metal mesh	35	5	6	50	4

**13. There are different activities that people might do to their home to prevent or control the impact of wildfires. Thinking about the activities we discussed in the previous question, I'd like to read some general statements to you, and for each, please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each. There are no right or wrong answers.**

**What about \_\_\_\_\_ . Do you \_\_\_\_\_**

	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (5)</b>	<b>No opinion</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Preparing for wildfires will significantly reduce damage to my house should a wildfire occur.	3	13	12	50	20	1	3.8
If I made all or some of the suggested changes, my family or neighbours would like it.	6	17	28	32	13	4	3.5
It would be difficult to find the money to make some of these changes to my property.	7	24	11	38	20	<1	3.4
I need more information before I can complete some of these activities.	8	24	20	33	15	1	3.3
Implementing these activities is a priority for me.	7	33	25	28	8	<1	3.0
I do not consider the threat of wildfire significant enough to warrant some of the activities.	12	33	15	33	6	1	2.9
I do not have the skills or expertise to complete some of the recommended activities.	15	41	10	24	9	1	2.7
For physical reasons I am unable to complete some of the activities without assistance.	21	44	6	19	9	1	2.6
If I made these changes I would not feel as connected to nature.	22	58	9	7	2	1	2.2
Wildfires are too destructive to bother preparing for.	25	55	8	10	2	-	2.1

**14. In the event of an evacuation, do you have a plan prepared for yourself and other members of your household? (IF ASK FOR EXAMPLES – PAT RESPONSE – “such as a safe route away from the fire, a meeting location and a place to stay”)**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No, But Plan to do</b>	<b>Do not plan to do</b>
54	23	24

**15. To what extent do you agree that \_\_\_\_\_ are responsible for reducing wildfire risks to your house and property, well before a wildfire occurs?  
Would you: (Read categories for each item)**

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	No opinion	Mean
Myself and my household members	2	2	9	50	36	1	4.2
Municipal government	8	25	18	37	10	2	3.3
Provincial government	10	28	18	36	8	2	3.1
The Strathcona County fire department	12	29	20	30	8	2	3.0
Federal government	13	32	22	26	5	3	3.0

**16. In your opinion, how likely is it that firefighters could protect your home if it was threatened by a wildfire?**

Very Unlikely (1)	Unlikely (2)	Not sure (3)	Somewhat Likely (4)	Very likely (5)	No opinion	Mean
9	14	18	31	29	1	3.6

**17. Has a wildfire hazard home and site assessment been completed for your home?**

8% Yes **Ask:** →

88% No – **Skip to Q- 18**

5% Not Sure – **Skip to Q.18**

Q-17a. Who conducted the assessment? Was it (**Read list, circle all that apply**) (n=29)

- 52% Strathcona County fire department
- 45% You or someone in your household
- 10% Private contractor
- 3% Provincial government
- 14% Someone else (*please indicate*) (*Included in final report*)

Q-17b. Have you completed any of the suggestions made during the assessment? (n=29)

- 76% Yes
- 24% No

**18. There are different strategies that Strathcona County could adopt to reduce the potential risk of wildfires. I'd like to read some options to you, and for each, I'd like you to tell me to what extent you support or oppose the option,**

**Read statement, then ask: Do you \_\_\_\_\_?**

	Strongly oppose (1)	Somewhat oppose (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat support (4)	Strongly support (5)	No opinion	Mean
Educate homeowners about ways to reduce wildfire risk on their properties	1	2	8	34	55	-	4.4
Create bylaws requiring homeowners to remove shrubs, trees and dead branches close to their house	19	22	14	26	19	-	3.0
Work to reduce insurance premiums if recommended activities are completed	3	3	12	37	43	1	4.2
Organize neighbourhood work bees to help people prepare homes and properties for wildfires	10	15	28	31	15	1	3.3
Provide free wildfire hazard assessments for residential properties	2	5	11	38	42	1	4.2
Create bylaws requiring new houses to use fire resistant building materials	5	7	8	28	52	<1	4.2
Restrict houses from being built in high risk areas	9	12	18	24	36	2	3.8

#### **SECTION 4: HOW SHOULD WILDFIRES BE MANAGED?**

Another aspect of our study is to understand our residents' opinions on management approaches that may be used to reduce the potential impacts of wildfires.

**19. Fireguards are areas of vegetation around communities that are cleared. To what extent do you support or oppose the use of fireguards around Strathcona County as a wildfire management approach?**

Strongly oppose (1)	Somewhat oppose (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat support (4)	Strongly support (5)	No opinion	Mean
5	7	16	40	31	2	3.9



**20. How effective do you feel fireguards would be at protecting Strathcona County?  
Would this be**

Very ineffective (1)	Ineffective (2)	Neutral (3)	Effective (4)	Very effective (5)	No opinion	Mean
4	9	29	37	18	2	3.7

**21. Thinning is the selected removal of trees in forested areas. To what extent do you support or oppose thinning as a wildfire management approach?**

Strongly oppose (1)	Somewhat oppose (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat support (4)	Strongly support (5)	No opinion	Mean
11	13	24	33	18	1	3.4

**22. How effective do you feel thinning would be at protecting your community?**

Very ineffective (1)	Ineffective (2)	Neutral (3)	Effective (4)	Very effective (5)	No opinion	Mean
8	20	26	32	12	2	3.3

**23. Prescribed burning is the intentional burning of vegetation under controlled conditions (such as firefighters on site to monitor the burning). To what extent do you favour or oppose the use of prescribed burning as a wildfire management approach?**

Strongly oppose (1)	Somewhat oppose (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat support (4)	Strongly support (5)	No opinion	Mean
6	8	12	39	34	1	3.9

**24. How effective do you feel prescribed burning would be at protecting Strathcona County?**

Very ineffective (1)	Ineffective (2)	Neutral (3)	Effective (4)	Very effective (5)	No opinion	Mean
2	10	21	41	25	2	3.9

**25. To the best of your knowledge, are any of these management approaches being done in or around Strathcona County? (IF ASKED “WHAT APPROACHES – PAT RESPONSE – “fireguards, thinning and prescribed burning”)**

Yes	No	Not Sure
24	45	31

**26. There are several approaches that can be taken once a wildfire starts. I'd like to read some options to you, and for each, please tell me the extent that you support or oppose them?**

*Read statement, then ask: Do you \_\_\_\_\_?*

	<b>Strongly oppose (1)</b>	<b>Somewhat oppose (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Somewhat support (4)</b>	<b>Strongly support (5)</b>	<b>No opinion</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Wildfires should be fought as soon as they start, no matter what the cost	12	24	16	20	26	3	3.4
Wildfires should be allowed to burn themselves out, as long as human safety and public and private structures are not in danger	16	18	17	30	19	1	3.2
Wildfires should only be fought if the fire is likely to be very intense and spread very quickly	20	20	10	27	22	1	3.2
Wildfires should only be fought if the fire is likely to burn large areas of land	22	23	14	27	12	1	2.9

## SECTION 5: YOU AND WILDFIRES

27. We are also interested in your personal experiences with wildfires and wildfire management. I'd like to read some scenarios to you, and for each, please tell me whether these apply to you.

***Read each statement Circle all that apply***

	Yes	No
I have read about or watched coverage of wildfires in the media (i.e. television, news).	96	4
I have felt fear or anxiety because of a wildfire.	45	55
I have personally seen smoke or flames from a wildfire near my house.	38	62
I do not have any experience with wildfires.	37	63
Wildfire has come close to where I live.	29	71
I have experienced discomfort or health problems from smoke from a wildfire.	27	73
I have experience or training in fire management and/or as a firefighter.	15	85
Someone close to me has lost their house because of a wildfire	13	88
I have been placed on evacuation alert because of a wildfire.	7	93
I have been evacuated because of a wildfire.	3	97
I have lost my house or other structures on my property because of a wildfire	2	98

**28. Is there anything else you would like to share with us concerning your views about wildfires, wildfire management, wildfire risks or preparing homes and properties for wildfires?**

(To be included in final report)

## SECTION 6: YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY

Finally we would like to ask a few questions about you to help determine if there are connections between peoples' characteristics and their opinions. This information will be kept confidential.

**29. Many people encounter issues and problems in everyday life. I'm going to read some general issues to you, and for each, please indicate your level of agreement. There are no right or wrong answers.**

*Read statement, then ask: Do you \_\_\_\_\_?*

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	No opinion	Mean
I think about how I might best handle the problem.	-	1	3	56	41	-	4.4
I try to come up with a strategy about what to do.	<1	1	5	55	39	-	4.3
I have considerable control over what happens in my life.	3	4	11	38	43	1	4.2
I can solve most of my problems by myself.	3	8	13	52	25	1	3.9
I sometimes feel helpless when dealing with problems.	25	47	10	16	3	-	2.2

**30. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.**

*Read statement, then ask: Do you \_\_\_\_\_?*

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	No opinion	Mean
I feel like I belong in Strathcona County.	<1	3	7	51	39	-	4.2
I often interact with other residents living in Strathcona County	1	12	13	46	27	1	3.9
Even if I had the opportunity I would not move out of Strathcona County.	6	20	16	33	25	1	3.5

**31. Approximately how long have you lived in Strathcona County?**

10%	5 years or less
14%	6 to 10 years
12%	11 to 15 years
13%	16 to 20 years
11%	21 to 25 years
40%	25 years or more

Mean years = 23.7

**32. And as I read a list of age groups, please stop me when I mention the group that includes your age....**

2%	18 to 24
19%	25 to 34
14%	35 to 44
33%	45 to 54
27%	55 to 64
20%	65 years of age or older

**33. DO NOT READ - NOTE GENDER**

46%	Male
54%	Female

**34. Please indicate your highest level of education.**

7%	Some grade school or high school education
27%	High school graduate
13%	Some post-secondary education
28%	College or trades certificate or diploma
25%	University or post-graduate certificate, diploma or degree
1%	No answer

**35. Which category best describes your total household income before tax in 2009?**

- 1% Less than \$20,000
- 9% \$20,000 to just under \$40,000
- 11% \$40,000 to just under \$60,000
- 13% \$60,000 to just under \$80,000
- 12% \$80,000 to just under \$100,000
- 38% \$100,000 or greater
- 17% No answer

36. Could I please get your first name or initials in case my supervisor wants to verify that we completed this survey? \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your help in completing this survey, and have a very pleasant evening.

**DO NOT READ:** Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_