

# Manitobans' Views Regarding Boreal Forest Conservation

Prepared for

**International Institute for Sustainable Development**

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RESEARCH INC.

*...for what you need to know.*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Institute for Sustainable Development secured the services of Probe Research Inc. to conduct a survey of Manitobans regarding boreal conservation initiatives in the province, including the protection of one of the largest tracts of undeveloped forest in Canada. The purpose of this research was to gauge Manitobans' views regarding how development activities and conservation can be balanced in this region, which covers more than three-quarters of the province.

The research shows that Manitobans' knowledge of the ecological value of this region is relatively limited: although a majority of citizens know that Manitoba's portion of the boreal forest remains intact, smaller numbers are aware of the fact that this climactic zone stores a majority of the world's unfrozen freshwater and that it stores twice as much carbon than the Amazon rainforest. These results suggest that there is an opportunity to raise Manitobans' awareness of the intrinsic ecological benefits that this region provides.

In this vein, Manitobans are most likely to indicate that policies related to the development and/or conservation of the boreal forest should be geared towards providing clean air and water and preserving ecological habitats for wildlife. Among large-scale resource extraction activities, hydroelectric development is viewed as being the most "legitimate" when compared to mining and logging, although views are mixed on whether even this activity should be emphasized as part of provincial development policies. There is a similar level of support for eco-tourism that there is for promoting hunting and fishing and other recreational pursuits. When it comes to deciding which organizations to trust with respect to development and conservation policies in this region, Manitobans are most likely to view environmental organizations (and to a lesser extent First Nations) with credibility, with the majority expressing deep levels of skepticism about the intentions of various levels of government and industry.

Manitobans are most likely to support the idea of land-use policies striking a balance between development and conservation, as more than one-half of those surveyed (62%) agree that there should be equilibrium between these two activities. A significant proportion of Manitobans, however, are more adamant that the province should go further than the midway point in terms of protecting its boreal forests. These citizens – who are more likely to be urban, female, relatively affluent and supporters of the provincial NDP or Liberal parties – are also more likely to argue that most, if not all, of the boreal forest should be protected from industrial development and/or resource extraction. Indeed, nearly two-thirds of all Manitobans (63%) believe that the province should go further than the governments of Ontario and Quebec and protect more than 50 percent of its boreal forests. Those in rural areas (and those who prefer the Progressive Conservative party) tend to be more inclined to support policies that call for a relatively-even balance between development and conservation. These results suggest that the proportion of Manitobans who have a "development at all costs" mentality is notably low, and that the fulcrum point of debate on boreal policy will be between those who want to see total or near-total preservation of these ecological assets and those who are inclined to allow limited development in these areas.

Manitobans are also clearly inclined to reject the possibility of private companies being able to develop lands without appropriate permissions and oversight, with the firmest rejection being of the notion that firms can extract resources on private lands without landowners' permission. There is also significant support for the idea that companies should be required to share resources extracted from traditional lands with First Nations communities; however, this view is by no means universal among Manitobans, with one-in-five (20%) rejecting this policy idea.

These results clearly show that Manitobans across the political spectrum want their provincial government to protect and preserve the bulk of its untouched boreal forests. At the same time, a significant proportion of citizens in this province feel that there should be little to no development of these important ecological assets, and that they should be preserved for future generations to enjoy. With these two positions accounting for the majority of public opinion in Manitoba, it is likely that any message stressing the importance of protecting Manitoba's boreal forests will be widely received and generally accepted.

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY**

Probe Research was commissioned by the International Institute for Sustainable Development to conduct a survey of Manitoba adults regarding conservation initiatives in northern Manitoba's boreal region.

This survey was conducted by Probe Research Inc. via telephone interviews conducted between January 14<sup>th</sup> and January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 among a random and representative sampling of 1,015 Manitoba adults, including 601 residents of Winnipeg and 415 Manitobans living outside the provincial capital. With a sample of 1,015 one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results are within +/- 3.1 percentage points of what they would have been if the entire population of Manitoba adults had been interviewed.

Modified random digit dialing was used to ensure that all Manitoba adults would have an equal opportunity to participate in this Probe Research survey. Statistical weighting has been applied to ensure that the sample reflects the known age and gender characteristics of the province's population.

## 2.0 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The following table outlines the demographic characteristics of those who responded to the survey:

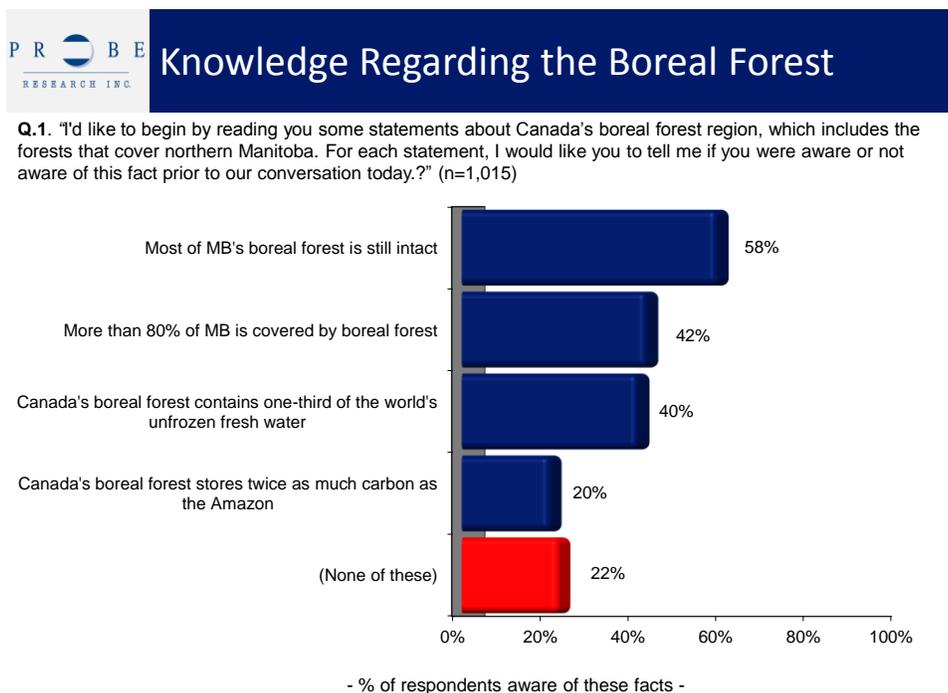
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS			
	Total (n=1,015)	Winnipeg (n=601)	Rural (n=414)
	( <i>%</i> )		
<b>Gender</b>			
Men	48	47	49
Women	52	53	51
<b>Age</b>			
18-34 years	34	31	36
35-54 years	37	40	33
55+ years	29	29	30
<b>Income</b>			
<\$30K	10	7	13
\$30-\$59K	24	24	23
\$60K-\$99K	41	38	44
\$100K+	26	31	20
<b>Education</b>			
High school or less	23	17	32
Some post-secondary	20	20	21
University or college graduate	57	63	47
<b>Home Ownership</b>			
Own	82	79	86
Rent/Other	18	21	14
<b>Region</b>			
Winnipeg	60	100	-
<i>Northwest</i>	12	21	-
<i>Northeast</i>	11	18	-
<i>Core</i>	11	18	-
<i>Southwest</i>	15	25	-
<i>Southeast</i>	11	18	-
Rural	40	-	100
<i>DK/NS removed</i>			

## 3.0 RESEARCH RESULTS

### 3.1 Knowledge Regarding the Boreal Forest

Manitobans were presented with a list of statements regarding the boreal forest and asked to indicate if they were previously aware of this fact.

As the following graph shows, nearly six-in-ten Manitoba adults (58%) reported knowing that most of the province's boreal forest is still intact. About four-in-ten Manitobans each knew that more than 80 percent of the province is covered by boreal forest (42%) and that the Canadian boreal forest contains one-third of the world's unfrozen fresh water supplies (40%). Only one-in-five Manitobans were aware that the Canadian boreal forest stores twice as much carbon emissions as the Amazon rainforest (20%). A similar proportion of Manitobans (22%) were not aware of any of these statements regarding boreal forests.



Base: All respondents

Notable variations among the surveyed sub-populations included:

- Older adults aged 55 years and over were more likely to know that Manitoba's boreal forest remains intact (68% versus 51% among those aged 18-34 years).
- Men were more likely to be aware that the boreal forest in Manitoba remains intact (63% versus 53% among women).
- Those with higher levels of education (47% of university and college graduates versus 33% among those with a high school diploma or less) and income (51% among those earning more than \$100,000 annually versus 34% among those earning less than \$60,000/year) were more likely to know that more than four-fifths of Manitoba is covered by boreal forest.
- Residents of Winnipeg were slightly more likely to be aware that the boreal forest stores twice as much carbon as the Amazon (23% versus 16% among those in rural and northern Manitoba).

### 3.2 Perceived Trustworthiness of Different Organizations

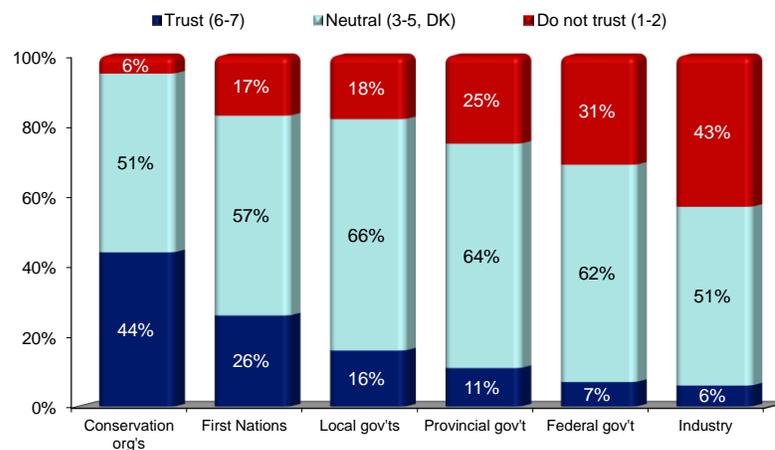
Manitoba adults were asked to evaluate the extent to which they trust different organizations to act in the best interests of Manitoba's boreal forests. This was expressed using a 1-7 scale where a 1 meant the organization was perceived to be "not at all trustworthy" and a 7 means that it is "very trustworthy."

The following graph shows that Manitobans are most likely to trust *conservation organizations* to act in the best interests of the boreal forest (44% offered a score of 6 or 7 out of 7), with an additional 51 percent offering a neutral score (3-5 or unsure) and just less than one-in-ten not trusting these organizations in this regard (6% offered a score of 1-2 out of 7).

One-quarter of Manitoba adults (26%) trust *First Nations* to work in the best interests of the boreal forests, with a smaller proportion (16%) placing this faith in *local governments*. Senior levels of government were not likely to be viewed as trustworthy in this regard, with just one-in-ten (11%) trusting the *provincial government* and only seven percent viewing the *federal government* as trustworthy stewards of the boreal forest. Six percent of respondents trusted *industry* to act in the best interests of the boreal forest, with more than four-in-ten (43%) indicating that industry cannot be trusted to act with this ecosystem's best interests in mind.



Q.4. "I am going to read you a list of organizations. For each one, I would like you to tell me how much you trust this organization to act in the best interests of the boreal forest in Manitoba. Let's use a 1-7 scale where a 1 means you do not trust this organization at all and a 7 means you completely trust this organization. ?" (n=1,015)



Base: All Respondents

Those who were more likely to view *conservation organizations* as being particularly trustworthy included:

- Residents of Winnipeg (48% versus 37% among those outside the provincial capital).
- Women (49% versus 38% among men).
- Younger adults aged 18-34 years (50% versus 37% among those aged 55 years and over).
- University and college graduates (46% versus 36% among those with a high school diploma or less).
- Higher income earners (50% among those earning more than \$100,000/year).

- Those who believe in greater amounts of conservation of the boreal forest (58% versus 37% among those who believe that there should be an even balance between conservation and development and 16% who believe in more development).
- Liberal and NDP supporters (56% and 52% respectively, versus just 42% among PC supporters).

Other notable variations included:

- Winnipeg residents were more likely to trust *First Nations* to act in the best interests of the boreal forest (29% versus 20% among those living in rural and northern Manitoba).
- Winnipeggers were also more likely to be skeptical of *industry* (47% do not trust industry to act in the best interests of the forests, compared to 37% among rural and northern Manitobans).

### 3.3 Views Regarding Appropriate Activities

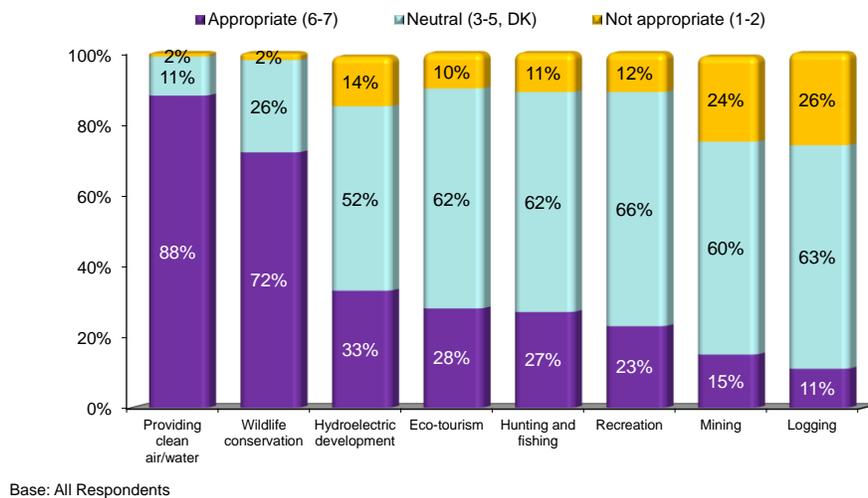
Using a similar 1-7 scale, respondents were asked to indicate which types of activities should be prioritized in development policies for northern Manitoba. On this scale, a 1 meant the activity was considered to be “not at all appropriate” and a 7 meant it was “very appropriate.”

Nearly nine-in-ten Manitobans (88%) indicated that is appropriate to pursue activities that result in *providing clean air and water*, with seven-in-ten (72%) believing that it is appropriate to engage in *wildlife conservation*. One-third of those surveyed (33%) believed that *hydroelectric development* is an appropriate activity, with slightly smaller numbers encouraging the development of *eco-tourism* (28%), *hunting and fishing* (27%) and other *recreational opportunities* (23%). Only fifteen percent of those surveyed, meanwhile, felt it was appropriate to promote *mining* (compared to 24% who felt this is inappropriate). One-in-ten (11%) felt that logging is an appropriate activity to promote, with one-quarter of those surveyed (26%) indicating that this is inappropriate.



## Views On Appropriate Activities To Take Place In Northern Manitoba

**Q.3.** “I am now going to read you a list of activities that are taking place in northern Manitoba’s boreal forests. Please tell me which of these activities you feel should be prioritized in policies for northern Manitoba, using a 1-7 scale where a 1 means this activity should “not be a priority at all” and a 7 means it should be a “very high priority?” (n=1,015)



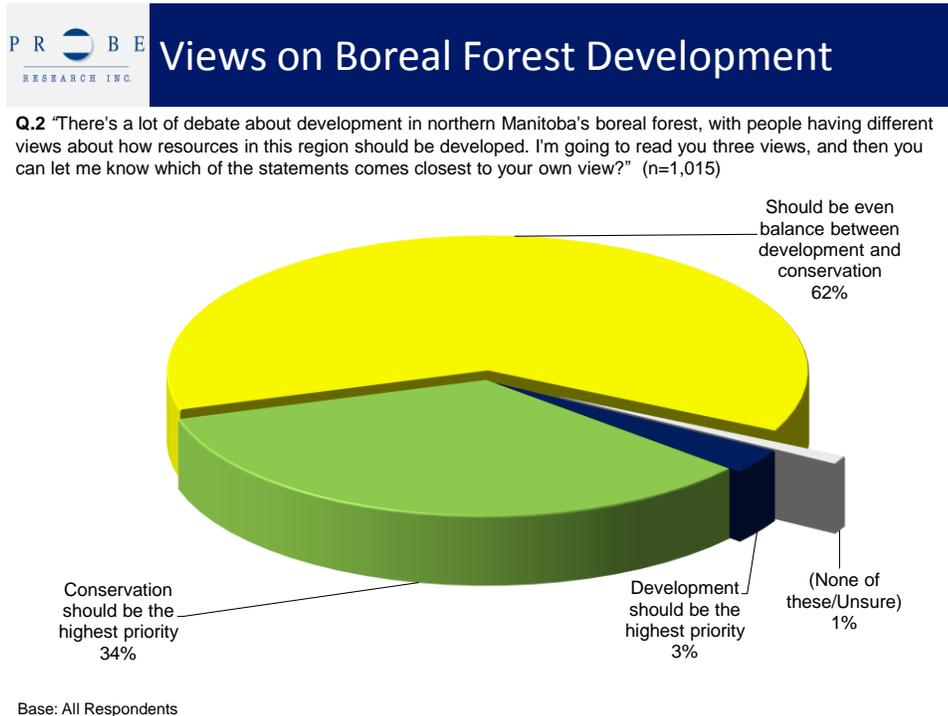
Notable variations included:

- *Wildlife conservation* is a higher priority for NDP and Liberal voters (82% each versus 60% among those who support the PC party).
- *Mining* is more likely to be regarded as appropriate among PC supporters (21% versus 7% among NDP supporters).
- Women were more likely than men to view *providing clean air and water* (93% versus 83% respectively) and *wildlife conservation* (81% versus 62% respectively) as appropriate activities to pursue.
- *Hunting and fishing* is more likely to be regarded as an appropriate development activity among rural and northern Manitobans (33% versus 23% among those living in Winnipeg).

### 3.4 Balance Between Development and Conservation

Manitobans were asked to consider the extent to which there should be a balance between development and conservation in Manitoba's boreal forest region.

More than six-in-ten citizens (62%) stated there should be a relatively-even balance between development and conservation in this area. One-third (34%) believed that environmental conservation is more important than development, while three percent of those surveyed indicated that they would prioritize development.



Those that were more likely to want governments to pursue a *balance between conservation and development* included:

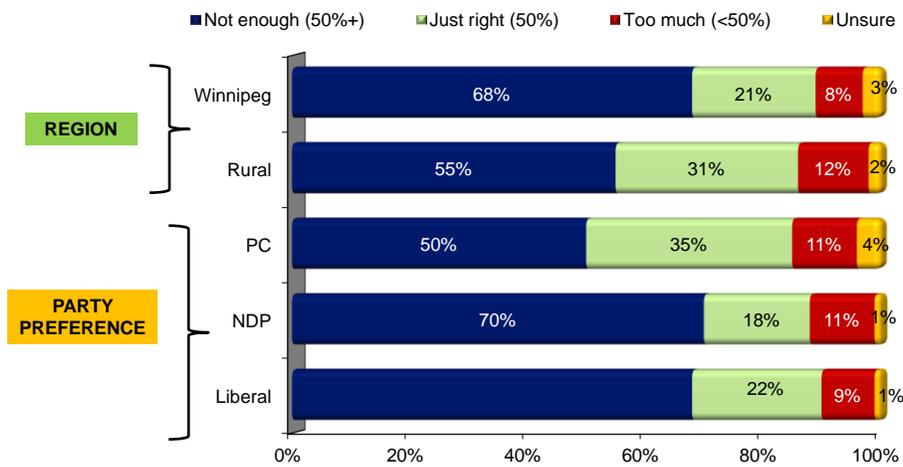
- Progressive Conservative party supporters (76% versus 53% each among Liberal and NDP supporters).
- Those who support the notion of conserving 50% of the boreal forest (81% versus 53% who say conserving one-half of the boreal forest is not enough).
- University and college graduates (64% versus 55% among those with a high school diploma or less).
- Those from higher income households (68% among those earning \$60,000-\$99,999/year and 64% among those earning more than \$100,000/year versus 51% among those earning less than \$30,000/year).

Those who were more likely to state that conservation should be prioritized included:

- Liberal and NDP supporters (46% and 45% respectively, versus 20% among PC supporters).
- Those who say 50% conservation of the boreal forest is inadequate (44% versus 14% who say this is the right amount to conserve).
- Manitobans with lower household incomes (43% among those earning less than \$30,000/year compared to 30% among those earning \$60,000-\$99,999 annually).

**PRB E** Support for “50%” Boreal Protection Initiative in MB  
 RESEARCH INC. - By Region/Political Party Preference -

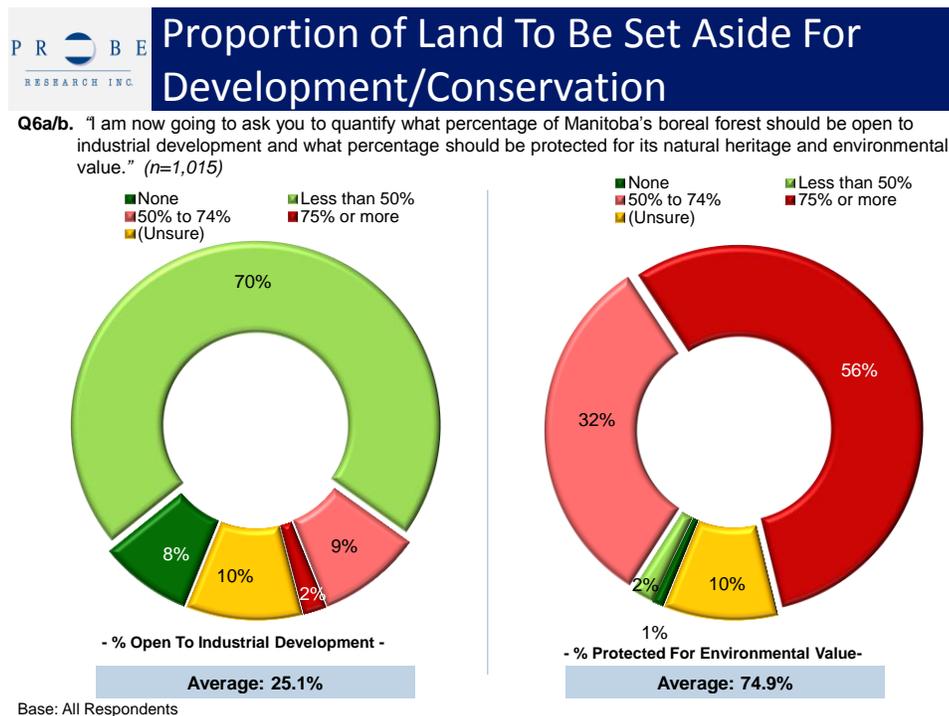
Q.7 “The governments of Ontario and Quebec have both called for protecting 50 percent of the Boreal Region in those provinces from industrial activity, and to have standards for sustainable development on the other 50 percent of the boreal forests. Do you think that protecting 50 percent of Manitoba’s boreal forests from industrial activity for the protection of biological diversity and the environment is ...” (n=1,015)



Base: All Respondents

When asked to identify how much of the boreal forest should be set aside for conservation and how much should be open to development, Manitobans were more likely to want a higher proportion to be preserved.

As the graph below shows, fully three-quarters of Manitobans indicated that less than one-half of the province's boreal forest should be developed (78%, including 8% who stated that none of the forest should be developed and an additional 70% who would be in favour of developing less than one-half of it). Only one-in-ten believe that more than half of this resource should be developed (11%, including 2% who think at least three-quarters of it should be open to industrial development). Similarly, more than one-half of those surveyed (56%) think that more than three-quarters of the boreal forest should be conserved, with an additional one-third (30%) stating that one-half to three-quarters of the forest should be conserved. Ten percent of all respondents were unsure or did not respond.



On average, Manitobans believed that 74.9 percent of the boreal forest should be protected and that 25.1 percent of it should be open to development. Those who were more likely to call for a higher proportion of this land to be conserved included:

- Liberal and NDP supporters (80.2% and 79.6%, compared to an average of 69.8% among PC supporters).
- Those who believe conservation should be a higher priority than development (85.7% versus 69.9% among those who believe there should be an even balance between development and conservation).

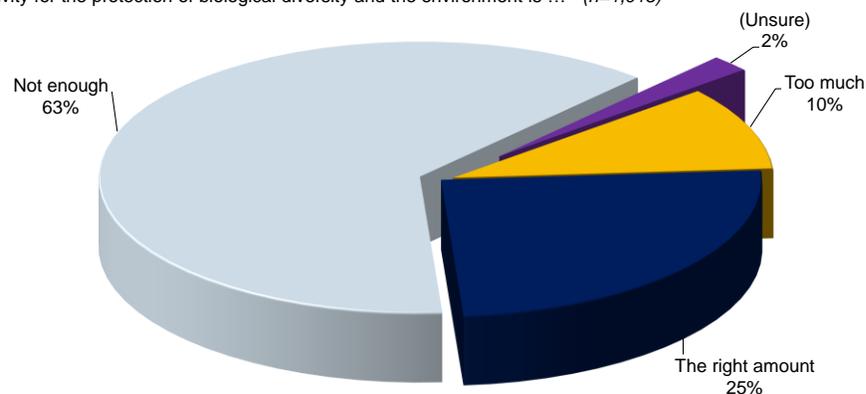
### 3.5 Views Regarding the “50 Percent Conservation” Rule

Citizens were presented with information regarding Ontario and Quebec’s policies of protecting one-half of the boreal forest and asked if this would be too much, too little or the right amount if a similar policy were to be developed in Manitoba.

Six-in-ten respondents (63%) feel that Manitoba should protect *more than one-half of the boreal forests*. One-quarter (25%), meanwhile, feel that conserving 50 percent of the boreal forest is the *right amount*, while one-in-ten (10%) stated that protecting one-half of the boreal forest is *excessive*.

#### Support for Ontario/Quebec Boreal Protection Initiative in Manitoba

Q.7 “The governments of Ontario and Quebec have both called for protecting 50 percent of the Boreal Region in those provinces from industrial activity, and to have standards for sustainable development on the other 50 percent of the boreal forests. Do you think that protecting 50 percent of Manitoba’s boreal forests from industrial activity for the protection of biological diversity and the environment is ...” (n=1,015)



Base: All Respondents

Those who were more likely to state that Manitoba should protect *more than 50 percent* of its boreal forests included:

- Residents of Winnipeg (68% versus 55% among those living in rural and northern Manitoba).
- Women (68% versus 57% among men).
- Higher-income earners (68% among those earning more than \$100,000 annually versus 52% among those earning less than \$60,000/year).
- NDP and Liberal supporters (70% and 68% respectively versus 50% among those who prefer the PC party).

Those who were more likely to state that conserving one-half of the boreal forest is the right amount included:

- Rural and northern Manitobans (31% versus 21% among Winnipeggers).
- PC party supporters (35% versus 18% among NDP supporters).

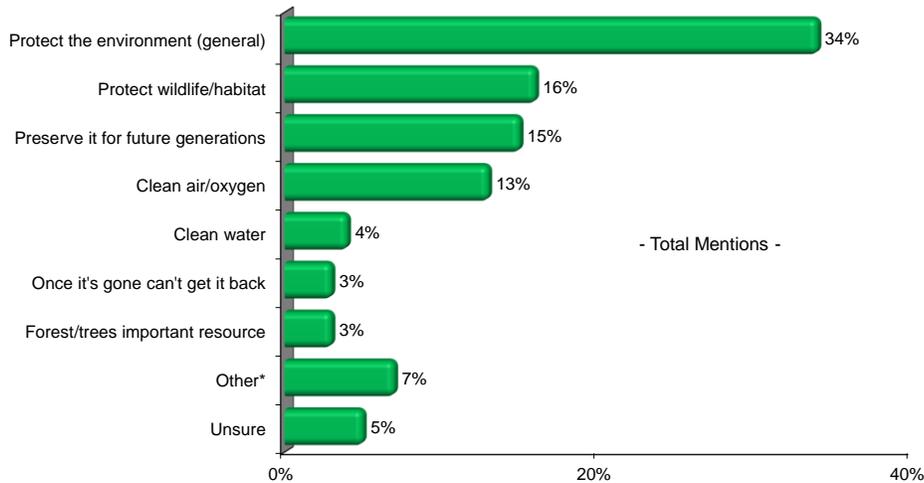
### 3.6 Rationale for Preserving the Boreal Forest

When asked to explain why the boreal forest should be protected, one-third of Manitobans (34%) suggested that it is simply important to *protect/conserv*e the environment. Other answers that were

offered by significant proportions of Manitobans included *protecting wildlife/habitat* (16%), *preserving forests for future generations* (15%) and supporting the role forests play to *provide oxygen and reduce carbon emissions* (13%). Other reasons offered by very small proportions of respondents included ensuring there are *clean water supplies* (4%), *the importance of trees/forests as a resource* and *ensuring that these forests are not permanently lost* (3% each). Five percent of respondents were unsure or did not respond.

**PRBE** RESEARCH INC. **Rationale for Protecting the Boreal Forest**

**Q8.** "In your opinion, what is the most important reason for protecting the boreal forest in Manitoba? Any other reason?" (n=1,015)



Base: All respondents  
\*Mentioned by 2% or less

### 3.7 Views Regarding Development Rights

Manitobans were presented with four different statements that described scenarios under which development could occur in northern Manitoba’s boreal forests.

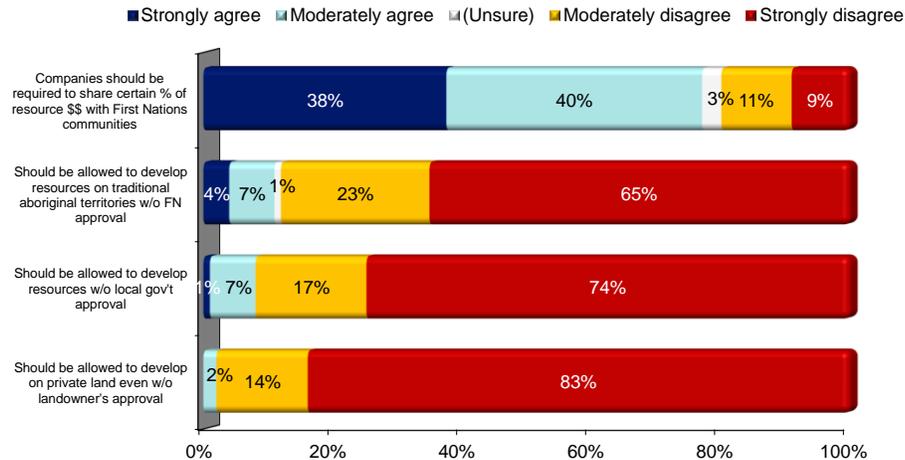
Three-quarters of Manitobans agreed that companies that develop resources on traditional First Nations lands should be required to provide a portion of these resource-generated revenues with indigenous communities (78% agree, including 38% who strongly agree and 40% who moderately agree). One-in-five respondents, on the other hand, disagreed with the idea that companies should be required to share resource revenues from development activities on First Nations lands (20%, including 9% who strongly disagree). Three percent were unsure or did not respond.

What is clear from this research is that Manitobans fundamentally reject the idea that private companies should be allowed to develop resources on lands without the approval of local governments, First Nations or private landowners. Nearly nine-in-ten Manitobans *disagreed* with the idea that companies can develop resources on First Nations’ lands without their consent (88%, including 65% who *strongly disagreed* and 23% who *moderately disagreed*) compared to one-in-ten who *strongly or moderately agreed* with this idea (11%, including 4% who *strongly agreed*).

Opposition to private development without consent was even more vehement when citizens were asked if it would be acceptable for companies to extract resources without the permission of local governments (91% *disagree*, including 74% who *strongly disagreed*) or private landowners (97% *disagree*, including 83% who *strongly disagreed*).

**PRBE RESEARCH INC.** Agreement With Selected Statements Regarding Boreal Forest Conservation

**Q.5.** “I am going to read you some statements. For each one, I would like you to tell me if you agree or disagree with each one” (n=1,015)



Base: All Respondents

- University and college graduates were more likely to *strongly or moderately agree* that companies should be required to share resources with First Nations (82% versus 73% among those with a high school diploma or less) and more likely to strongly/moderately disagree that these companies should be allowed to develop resources on traditional lands without permission (92% versus 81% respectively).
- NDP supporters were more likely to support the notion of corporations providing compensation to First Nations when resources are extracted from their lands (86% versus 74% among PC supporters).