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This Angus Reid Group/Globe and Mail Poll was conducted by telephone between June 17th and 23rd, 1998 among a representative cross-section of 1,504 Canadians.

These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 1996 Census data.

With a Canada-wide sample of 1,504, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results are within +/-2.5 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population.

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LIBERAL PARTY WOULD CAPTURE PLURALITY IF ELECTION HELD TOMORROW

The Liberal Party currently enjoys more electoral support among decided voters than it did in last year's federal election while the Reform and PC Parties continue to fall short of their election night support levels. Asked how they would vote in the event that an election were held tomorrow, this latest Angus Reid Group/Globe and Mail poll once again shows the Liberal Party ahead of the pack with 49 percent of popular support among decided voters (8% of the electorate are undecided or refused to answer). The Progressive Conservative Party (15%), the Reform Party (14%) the NDP (11%) and the Bloc Quebecois (10% (39% in Quebec)) continue to lag behind.

A reversal of fortunes in Western Canada has produced a decline in Reform support and a surge for the Liberals. In particular, on Election Day 41 percent of British Columbians cast a ballot for the Reform Party and 28 percent voted for the Liberal Party. Similarly, in Alberta the Reform Party captured majority support (54%) while the Liberal Party garnered 24 percent of the vote. Based on how the electorate feels today, the Liberal Party would overtake the Reform Party in British Columbia (44% versus 29% respectively) and enjoy increased support in Alberta (37% compared to 40% for the Reform Party) if an election were held tomorrow.

In addition, the Conservative Party has enjoyed a recent increase in vote-support in Atlantic Canada (25% today compared to 14% in early June).

CHRÉTIEN GARNERS FAVOUR OF MAJORITY

This latest poll also gauged the party leaders' performances by asking respondents whether they generally "approve" or "disapprove" of how the leader has performed.

- Prime Minister Chrétien enjoys the highest approval rating among the federal party leaders. Canadians approve of Chrétien's performance as Prime Minister by a two to one margin (65% approve; 32% disapprove). This is up from a 52 percent approval rating during the election campaign, but falls short of the 71 percent approval rating that Chrétien enjoyed in the early months of his first mandate. In Ontario, the Prime Minister is held in higher regard as 75 percent approve of his performance and only 23 percent disapprove.
- NDP leader Alexa McDonough continues to improve her popularity with Canadians. Her approval rating has climbed to 43 percent (up 18% since the election campaign). Public

approval of McDonough's performance is highest in her home region of Atlantic Canada (69%). A large proportion (32%) of the electorate is “unsure” of McDonough’s performance.

- Forty-one percent of Canadians approve of Preston Manning’s performance as leader of the Official Opposition Reform Party (49% disapprove). Manning enjoys majority approval in British Columbia (50%), his home province of Alberta (63%) and in Manitoba/Saskatchewan (55%).
- Forty percent of Quebecers approve of Gille Duceppe’s performance as Leader of the Bloc Quebecois.

CHRÉTIEN FARES WELL ON MOST BROADLY DEFINED PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND NATIONAL UNITY BUT CANADIANS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS MANAGEMENT OF HEALTHCARE PORTFOLIO

Respondents were read a series of issues/performance areas and asked to indicate whether they believe Prime Minister Chrétien is doing a very good, good, fair, poor or very poor job at managing them. Notably, appraisals of the Prime Minister are quite neutral. That is, large proportions of Canadians consider his performance to be “fair” – in many instances, the “fair” category captures the plurality.

Examining the Prime Minister’s net scores reveals that Canadians tend to consider Chrétien’s performance in broadly defined categories that traditionally drive public approval better than they do his management of some specific policy matters. The net scores are determined by subtracting the proportion of Canadians who consider his performance weak (“poor” or “very poor”) from those who view his performance as strong (“good” or “very good”).

STRENGTHS

- *Representing Canada in international affairs* (+53)
- *Managing the day-to-day affairs of Canada’s government* (+36)
- *Providing leadership that is right for the times* (+26)
- *Keeping Canada together* (+25)
- *Managing Canada’s economy* (+22)
- *Providing honest and trustworthy government* (+19)
- *Providing a vision for the future* (+4)

NEUTRAL

- *Being fair to all regions of the country (+1)*
- *Keeping in touch with the concerns of average Canadians (-1)*
- *Providing policies that are close to your own personal values (0)*

WEAKNESSES

- *Managing compensation for Hepatitis C victims (-26)*
- *Preserving our healthcare system (-25)*
- *Cleaning up the patronage system for public appointments (-17)*
- *Spending taxpayers' money wisely (-11)*
- *Helping those most in need (-10)*
- *Representing the interests of people from your province (-9)*

IN SPITE OF FAVOURABLE OPINION OF PRIME MINISTER, MAJORITY (58%) INDICATES HE SHOULD "STEP ASIDE SO SOMEONE ELSE CAN LEAD THE COUNTRY"

Respondents were told that Prime Minister Chrétien has to decide in the next couple of years if he wants to lead the Liberals in the next federal election and that the next election will likely take place after the year 2000. They were then asked if they think Prime Minister Chrétien should lead the Liberal Party in the next federal election, or should step aside so someone else can lead the country. While Canadians approve of Chrétien's performance as Prime Minister (65%) and would still vote for the Liberal Party if a federal election were held tomorrow, a slim majority (58%) believes he should step aside in the coming years so that someone else can lead the country. This view is driven by a strong sentiment that he leave the helm of the Party in his home province of Quebec (74%). In other provinces, the belief that he should step down is only supported by narrow majorities. Specifically, 55 percent of Albertans, 53 percent of Atlantic Canadians, 52 percent of Ontarians, and 51 percent of both British Columbians and residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba share the opinion that Prime Minister Chrétien should "step aside so someone else can lead the country".

In addition, two in five (38%) believe the Prime Minister should lead the Liberal Party in the next federal election.

Liberal Party supporters are the least likely to support his departure. A slim majority (51%) of Liberal supporters thinks he should lead the Liberal Party in the next federal election.

INTERPRETATION

Taken together, these data show that the Prime Minister remains in a very strong position with the Canadian public. This is because, in spite of a few performance weaknesses (most notably healthcare), his performance on the issues that traditionally drive leadership approval (competence, honesty, the economy and national unity) remains very strong.

Paradoxically, however, while Canadians remain satisfied with the Prime Minister's leadership, a slight majority believe he should step aside prior to the next election. Our interpretation at this apparent contradiction is that this represents Canadians providing permission rather than direction to the Prime Minister. In other words, just over half of the Canadian electorate think it is an appropriate time for the Prime Minister to be considering his future, but they are not demanding that he leaves.

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