

VIEWS ON THE FEDERAL BUDGET AND HOW TO ALLOCATE ANY BUDGET SURPLUS

***--Three in Four (73%) Canadians Support the Federal Government Plan For
Allocating Budget Surplus on a 50/50 Basis--***

--Healthcare Seen as Most Pressing Priority for Budget Surplus--

ANGUS REID
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As Finance Minister Paul Martin prepares to table the federal budget for the fiscal year 2000-2001, a new Angus Reid Poll finds a strong majority of Canadians (73%) support the government's plan to allocate 50 percent of any budget surplus to tax and debt reduction, and 50 percent to new program spending.

The survey also reveals that Canadians assign highest priority to investing any budget surplus in our healthcare system.

These findings are from an Angus Reid /CTV / Globe and Mail poll conducted between January 27th and February 2nd 2000. The poll includes a randomly selected sample of 1,500 Canadians and has an associated margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

***Three in Four (73%) Canadians Support the Federal Government Plan For
Allocating Budget Surplus on a 50/50 Basis***

Strong support exists for the federal government's plan to allocate 50 percent of any budget surplus to tax and debt reduction, and 50 percent to new program spending: three in four (73%) strongly or somewhat agree with this plan, one in four (25%) strongly or somewhat

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disagree with it. Support for the “50/50” plan is highest among those living east of Alberta, particularly Atlantic Province residents (80%) and Quebecers (79%), women (77%), those with less than high school education (82%), and Canadians earning less than \$30,000 (79%).

Among those who disagree with this “50/50” plan, the majority (73%) believe the federal government should allocate more of any budget surplus to tax and debt reduction, while 25 percent think the government should allocate more of any budget surplus to new program spending.

Healthcare Seen as Most Pressing Priority for Budget Surplus

Respondents were asked to select which of a range of paired priorities should be given precedence in the upcoming Federal Budget. Nine priorities were examined through a rigorous trade-off exercise. For example, respondents could choose between healthcare or taxes, taxes or education, support for the military or reducing the debt, etc. The following is a summary of how each of these priorities fared when matched against an aggregate of all other priorities.

- A clear majority (72%) of Canadians indicate spending on healthcare should be the top Budget priority for the federal government’s estimated \$95 billion surplus over the next five years.
- Increasing spending on education (58%), reducing income taxes (55%), and reducing government debt (53%) were also seen as important areas to allocate any budget surplus.
- Increasing support for Canadian farmers and fishermen (45%), increasing spending to encourage R&D in Canada (43%), and increasing spending on Canada’s infrastructure (37%) were seen as less important areas for government attention.

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- At the bottom of the list of tested priorities were increasing spending on arts and culture (16%) and increasing spending on Canada's military (16%).
- Healthcare is seen as a particularly pressing issue by Quebec residents (76%), those 55 years of age and older (77%), and those earning between \$30,000 and \$59,000 per year (75%).

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