

INTO THE ELECTION WINDOW PART III:

Half (52%) Of Canadians Think Main Reason Election Being Held Now Is Liberals Are “Cynical Politicians” Want To Win Re-Election Now, Not Because Of New Mandate To Take On Tough Issues (45%)

Healthcare Tops List As Most Important Issue At Outset Of Federal Election Campaign

Martin’s Liberals Score Most Support On National Areas Of Responsibilities – But Support Is Soft

Majority (58%) Agree Martin Is Too Friendly With Big Business



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Toronto, ON: Half (52%) of Canadians believe that the main reason why the Federal Liberals are calling an election is because they’re just “cynical politicians” who think it will be harder to win re-election if they wait until later in their mandate – among decided Liberal voters, 30% believe this to be the case. This compares with 45% of Canadians who think that the Liberals are having the election now because they need a new mandate for the people to take on the tough issues confronting Canada.

And while 30% of Canadians offer healthcare as the most important issue for the federal election campaign, the federal Liberals have only a modest lead over their rivals in terms of how Canadians view them in fixing the healthcare system.

Further, Prime Minister Paul Martin and the federal Liberals score highest or tie in ten of fourteen national areas of responsibility to do the best job if elected – but they have only a clear advantage in three of these areas with the Liberals attracting only luke-warm support where they lead in other categories.

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Finally, six in ten agree that Paul Martin is “too friendly with big business to represent the interests of average Canadians” – 42% of decided Liberals also agreeing with that statement.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/CTV/Globe and Mail poll conducted between May 11th and 17th, 2004. For the telephone survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 2000 adult Canadians was interviewed. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within \pm 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, 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. These data were weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 2001 Census data.

Half (52%) Think Main Reason Election Being Held Is Because Cynical Politicians Want To Win Re-Election Now, Not Because Of New Mandate To Take On Tough Issues (45%)...

Half of Canadians (52%) think “the main reason the Liberals are having this election now is because they’re just cynical politicians who think it will be harder to win re-election if they wait until later in their mandate” compared with 45% who think “the Liberals are having this election now because they need a new mandate from the people to take on the tough issues confronting Canada”. The remaining 3% of Canadians “don’t know” why an election is being held now.

- The belief that the Liberals are having this election now because they think it will be hard to win re-election if they wait until later is highest among residents of Quebec (53%) and British Columbia (53%), followed by residents of Alberta (52%), Ontario (51%), and Atlantic Canada (50%), and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (47%).
- Belief that the Liberals are having this election because they “need a new mandate from the people” is highest in Saskatchewan/Manitoba (51%), followed by Atlantic



Canada (48%), Alberta (46%), Ontario (45%), Quebec (44%), and British Columbia (43%).

- Three in ten decided Liberal voters (30%) believe that the Liberals are having this election because “they’re just cynical politicians who think it will be harder to win re-election if they wait until later in their mandate”.

Healthcare Garners Most Attention As Most Important Issue In Federal Election Campaign...

When asked an open-ended question as to what they think is the most important issue in the federal election campaign, Canadians offered “healthcare” (30%) tops the list, with every other issue trailing distantly behind, including government/politics/political leadership” (11%), the “economy” (7%), “taxes/tax reform/GST” (6%), “education/schools/universities” (6%), “deficit/debt/government\ spending” (6%), “environment/pollution” (3%). All remaining issues were mentioned by less than 3% of Canadians, while 9% “don’t know”. Despite the poll having been taken during the week when gas pump prices rose significantly, Canadians did not offer up this particular issue as their most important election issue.

While healthcare may be the most important issue identified by Canadians for this election campaign it is instructive to note in the next section of this release that none of the major parties are chosen as the clear “fixer” of Canada’s healthcare system.

- Residents of Atlantic Canada (36%) and British Columbia (35%) are the most likely to mention healthcare as the most important issue, followed by residents of Ontario (31%), Quebec (29%), Alberta (24%), and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (23%).



- Decided Liberal supporters (36%) and NDP supporters (34%) are the most likely to mention healthcare as the most important issue, followed by decided supporters of the NDP (34%), and decided voters of the Conservative Party (23%).

Prime Minister Paul Martin And Liberals Score Highest In Ten Of Fourteen Areas To Do Best Job If Elected ... But Have Clear Advantage In Only Three Areas ... As They Lead And Split With Other Leaders And Parties In Another Seven, Including Healthcare...

When considering a series of fourteen national areas of responsibility and which of the major parties and leaders would do the best job with them if elected, Prime Minister Paul Martin and the Liberal Party receive clear top rated scores in three areas: “representing Canada in world affairs”; “effectively dealing with the United States”; and “managing the economy”.

In another seven areas however they often lead with a very slim margin or tie --- Canadians often split almost equally among the three leaders and their parties as to who would do the best job.

It should be noted that this is the case when the issue of fixing healthcare is raised – the main ballot issue touted by the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party.

Stephen Harper and the Conservatives lead in three categories -- reform our justice system so that it's tougher on criminals; reduce taxes; and run a scandal-free and ethical government. However it should be noted that on the issue of reducing taxes and running a scandal free government they match closely with the Liberals.

“Represent Canada In World Affairs”: A majority of Canadians (58%) believe that Paul Martin and the Liberal Party would do a better job of “representing Canada in world affairs” than Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party (21%), and Jack Layton and the NDP (9%). In Quebec, 19% think that Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Quebecois would do the best job of

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representing Canada internationally (vs. 51% Liberal). Almost one in ten Canadians (7%) “don’t know”.

“Effectively deal with the United States”: When it comes to “effectively dealing with the United States” half of (51%) Canadians believe that Paul Martin and the Liberals would do the best job compared with 24% who believe that Stephen Harper and the Conservatives would do the best job. Only one in ten Canadians (10%) believe Jack Layton and the NDP would best deal with the United States, while 15% of Quebec residents point to Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Quebecois (vs. 48% Liberal). One in ten Canadians (11%) “don’t know”.

“Manage the economy”: Half of all Canadians (48%) believe that Paul Martin and the Liberals would best “manage the economy”, compared with 27% for Stephen Harper and the Conservatives, and 10% for Jack Layton and the NDP. In Quebec, one-quarter (25%) think that Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Quebecois would do the best job of managing the economy (vs. 45% Liberal). The remaining 9% of Canadians “don’t know”.

“Provide government that is closest to my values”: More Canadians (35%) believe Paul Martin and the Liberals would do the best job at providing government that is closest to their values than Stephen Harper and the Conservatives (27%), followed by Jack Layton and the NDP (18%). Four in ten (39%) in Quebec believe Gilles Duceppe would provide government that is “closest to my values” (vs. 27% Liberal). One in ten Canadians (10%) “don’t know”.

“Represent the interests of my province in Ottawa”: One-third of Canadians (35%) believe that Paul Martin and the Liberals would do the best job of representing their province’s interest in Ottawa, compared with one-quarter (25%) who believe Stephen Harper and the Conservatives would, and one in seven who believe Jack Layton and the NDP (15%) would do so. In the province of Quebec, six in ten (61%) believe Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc



Quebecois would do the best job in “representing the interests of my province”(vs. 25% Liberal). One in ten (10%) Canadians “don’t know”.

“Manage our social programs in a way that is both compassionate and cost-effective”: One-third (34%) of Canadians believe that Paul Martin and the Liberals would do the best job of “managing our social programs in a way that is both compassionate and cost-effective”, compared with 24% of Canadians who believe that Stephen Harper and the Conservatives would do so, and 21% who believe Jack Layton and the NDP would be best to do so. In Quebec, one-third (35%) believes that Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Quebecois would best “manage our social programs in a way that is both compassionate and cost-effective” (vs. 29% Liberal). One in ten Canadians (11%) “don’t know”.

“Fix our healthcare system”: One-third of Canadians (34%) point to Paul Martin and the Liberals as the party that will do the best job of “fixing our healthcare system”, compared with 24% who choose Stephen Harper and the Conservatives as the party, and 21% who select Jack Layton and the NDP. In Quebec, 31% point to the Bloc Quebecois vs. 27% Liberal). One in ten Canadians (13%) “don’t know”.

“Understands the needs of people like you”: Three in ten (30%) Canadians think that Paul Martin and the Liberals would do the best job of “understanding the needs of people like you”, compared with 24% of Canadians who believe Stephen Harper and the Conservatives, and 21% who believe Jack Layton and the NDP would do the best job of understanding their needs. In Quebec, 44% believe Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Quebecois would do the best job of understanding their needs (vs. 22% Liberal). One in ten Canadians (13%) “don’t know”.

“Keep their promises”: One in four Canadians (27%) believe that Paul Martin and the Liberals are more likely to do a good job at “keeping their promises” virtually the same proportion as Stephen Harper and the Conservatives (24%). One in five Canadians (18%)



believe Jack Layton and the NDP would do the best job of “keeping their promises”. In Quebec, 33% believe Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Quebecois would do the best job of keeping promises (vs. 22% Liberal). One in five (22%) Canadians “don’t know”.

“Spend taxpayers’ money wisely”: Paul Martin and the Liberals (30%) and Stephen Harper and the Conservatives (29%) are virtually tied as the top choices for the party and leader Canadians think would do the best job of “spending taxpayers’ money wisely”. One in seven Canadians (16%) choose Jack Layton and the NDP as the party that would best spend taxpayers’ money. In Quebec, 34% choose Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Quebecois as the Party that would best spend taxpayers’ money (vs. 26% Liberal). One in seven Canadians (15%) “don’t know”.

Issues Which Tilt Towards The Conservatives...

“Reform our justice system so that it’s tougher on criminals”: Stephen Harper and the Conservatives are viewed as the leader and party that would do the best job of “reforming our justice system so that it’s tougher on criminals” by 38% of Canadians, compare to Paul Martin and the Liberals (28%), and 11% who select Jack Layton and NDP. In Quebec, one-quarter (24%) view Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Quebecois as the party and leader that would do the best job of “reforming our justice system so that it’s tougher on criminals” (vs. 28% Liberal). One in seven Canadians (16%) “don’t know”.

“Reduce taxes”: Stephen Harper and the Conservatives (33%) receive slightly more endorsement from Canadians than Paul Martin and the Liberals (29%) as the leader and party that would do the best job of “reducing taxes”. This compares with one in ten (13%) Canadians who endorse Jack Layton and the NDP as the leader and party that would best “reduce taxes”. In Quebec, 29% endorse Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Quebecois as the party



and leader that would best “reduce taxes” (vs. 31% for the Liberals). One in five Canadians (17%) “don’t know”.

“Run a scandal-free and ethical government”: One-quarter of Canadians (27%) believe that Stephen Harper and the Conservatives would do the best job of “running a scandal free government”, compared to 22% who feel Paul Martin and the Liberals would do the best job, and 21% who feel Jack Layton and the NDP would run a scandal free government. In Quebec, 36% feel Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Quebecois would do the best job of “running a scandal free government” (vs. 18% Liberal). One in five Canadians (19%) “don’t know”.

And The Issue That Tilts Toward The NDP...

“Protect the environment”: Jack Layton and the NDP receives the largest endorsement from Canadians (30%) as the party and leader that would do the best job of “protecting the environment”, followed by Paul Martin and the Liberals (25%) and Stephen Harper and the Conservatives (19%). In Quebec, 32% endorse the Bloc Quebecois as the party that would do the best job of “protecting the environment” (23% Liberal). One in ten Canadians (13%) “don’t know”.

Majority (58%) Agree Paul Martin Is Too Friendly With Big Business To Represent The Interests of Average Canadians... 42% Of Decided Liberals Also Agree...

Most Canadians (58%) agree that “Paul Martin is too friendly with big business to represent the interests of average Canadians” (26% “somewhat agree”, 32% “strongly agree”), with 38% who disagree with this statement (25% “somewhat disagree”, 13% “strongly disagree”). Only 4% of Canadians “don’t know”.



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- Residents in Quebec (67%) are the most inclined to agree with this statement, followed by residents of Alberta (62%), British Columbia (56%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (56%), Atlantic Canada (55%), and Ontario (53%).
- Decided NDP voters (80%) voters are the most likely to agree that Paul Martin is too friendly with big business to represent the interests of average Canadians, followed by decided Conservative voters (61%) and decided Liberal voters (42%).

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For more information on this news release, please contact:

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