

INTO THE WEEK OF THE BUDGET: THE FEDERAL POLITICAL LANDSCAPE AND WHAT CANADIANS WANT DONE WITH THE SURPLUS



Public Release Date: Monday, February 21st, 2005 at 6:00 a.m. (EST)

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INTO THE WEEK OF THE BUDGET: THE FEDERAL POLITICAL LANDSCAPE AND WHAT CANADIANS WANT DONE WITH THE SURPLUS

Toronto, ON – As Paul Martin's minority Liberals head into a potentially tumultuous month with a divisive debate on same sex marriage and an upcoming Federal budget that could trigger an election if not supported by the majority of Parliament, a new Ipsos-Reid/Globe and Mail/CTV poll shows that almost half of Canadians (47%) believe that the Federal Liberals deserve to be re-elected -- up 18 full points since the last election campaign (29% deserve to be re-elected) - with almost equally as many (49%) believing that Prime Minister Paul Martin has shown that he is the type of leader that Canada needs in these difficult times.

Further, a majority (56%) approve of the performance of the Prime Minister over the last while. And while it must also give solace to the Prime Minister and his party that only 38% indicate that Conservative leader Stephen Harper has shown that he is truly ready to be Canada's next Prime Minister, it should be noted that the Federal Liberals won their minority Parliament in the last election with only 37% of the vote.

As for the vote, if one were held tomorrow, the political parties would capture almost identical numbers to what they had at the end of the last election: the Liberals would garner 37% support, followed by the Conservatives at 26%, the NDP at 17%, and the Green Party at 7%. In the province of Quebec, the Bloc Quebecois would capture 39% of the eligible vote followed by the Liberals at 34%, the NDP at 11%, the Conservatives at 8%, and the Green Party at 4%. It is significant to note that this poll was taken during a week which witnessed the public signing of deal on offshore oil revenues for provinces in Atlantic Canada (with the intended vote in that region bouncing up to favour the Federal



Liberals), had the Auditor General's report and saw the commencement of the debate on same-sex marriage.

The momentum for the two major Federal parties also continue to drags: 39% of Canadians believe that their opinion of Mr. Martin has become "worse" since last June's election compared with 29% whose opinion has "improved" (a net -10). As for Mr. Harper, 31% say that their opinion has worsened of him compared with 27% whose opinion has apparently improved (a net -4). The other two major parties leaders have faired better: with 28% of Canadians having an "improved" opinion of Mr. Layton compared with 16% who indicate that their opinion is "worse" (a net +12) and Mr. Duceppe in the Province of Quebec has a very wide margin of momentum - 37% "improved" opinion vs. 15% "worse" (net +22 points) this compares to Prime Minister Martin's momentum in Quebec of a net -23.

But perhaps overarching all of these numbers is the unknown volatility in voters choice on election day when it comes to the issue of same-sex marriage as half (48%) indicate that a party and leader's position will be an important factor in determining how they vote while another half (50%) disagree with this point of view.

As for what Canadians choose the estimated Federal budget surplus of between \$11 Billion and \$12 Billion to be used for, the ranked ordering of initiatives is as follows:

1. "Increase spending on health care" (66%) tops the list of Canadians surplus spending priorities; followed by
2. "Increase spending on post-secondary education" (46%);
3. "Cut taxes for middle class Canadians" (45%);
4. "Reducing the Government of Canada debt" (39%);
5. "Create a new national childcare program" (39%);
6. "Increase spending on environmental issues such as the cost of implementing the Kyoto Accord" (34%); and
7. "Increase spending on Canada's military and national defence" (27%).



These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/CTV/The Globe And Mail poll conducted from February 15th to February 17th, 2004. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 2002 adult Canadians were interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the aggregate results are considered accurate to within ± 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 each sub-grouping 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.

Almost Half (47%) Believe That The Federal Liberals Deserve To Be Re-Elected...

This latest sounding indicates that 47% of Canadians (up 18 full points from 29% when measured during the latter part of the election campaign in June 2004) feel that if a Federal election were held tomorrow the Federal Liberals deserve to be re-elected. This compares with 51% who disagree with this point of view.

- Regionally, those most likely to agree that the Federal Liberals deserve to be re-elected are equally Atlantic Canadians and British Columbians (52%), followed by Ontario (49%), Quebec (43%), Alberta (41%), and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (37%).
- Among those who disagree (51%), those most likely to feel this way are from Saskatchewan/Manitoba (59%), Alberta (57%), and Quebec (56%), followed by Ontario (49%), British Columbia (46%) and Atlantic Canada (45%).
- There are no further demographic variations with respect to this question.

Half (49%) Believe Prime Minister Has Shown He Is The Type Of Leader Canada Needs In Difficult Times...

Split down the middle, 49% of Canadians believe that the Prime Minister is the right man at the right time led by the Atlantic Provinces (66%), followed by Ontario (54%), and British



Columbia (53%), with full majorities. Saskatchewan/Manitoba (49%) followed by Alberta (46%) and Quebec (38%) are less enthusiastic.

For those who disagree that the Prime Minister is the right man at the right time (49%) they are most likely to reside in Quebec (62%), followed then by Alberta (50%), and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (49%), and British Columbia (45%) and Ontario (45%), and finally Atlantic Canada (32%).

- Older Canadians are more likely to take this position than younger Canadians.

A Majority (56%) Give Thumbs Up To The Performance Of The Prime Minister...

A majority (56%) of Canadians approve of the performance of Paul Martin over the last while --compared with a minority of 41% who disapprove.

- Of those who approve (56%), those most likely to do so are from Atlantic Canada (67%), and British Columbia (64%), followed by Ontario and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (both at 56%), Alberta (53%), and Quebec (48%).
- Those most likely to approve of the Prime Ministers Performance are younger Canadians.
- Of those who disapprove of the Prime Minister's performance (41%), they are most likely to come from Quebec (48%), followed by Ontario and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (both at 41%), Alberta (42%), British Columbia (31%), and Atlantic Canada (29%).
- Demographically, those most likely to hold this view are middle to older aged Canadians.



But Does Stephen Harper Have The Right Stuff?

Only a minority of Canadians (38%) believe that Conservative leader Stephen Harper has shown that he is truly ready to be Canada's next Prime Minister compared with 58% who disagree with this perspective.

- Those most likely to believe that Mr. Harper is up to the job are most likely to reside in Alberta (51%), and Manitoba/Saskatchewan (47%), followed by Atlantic Canada (38%), Ontario (36%), and Quebec and British Columbia (both at 34%).
- Of the six in ten (58%) who disagree that Mr. Harper may be up to the job, there is fairly consistent opinion with Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia each at 60% and Atlantic Canada at 59%, followed by Saskatchewan/Manitoba at 50%, and Alberta, Mr. Harper's political base, at 44%.
- There are no further significant demographic variations.

Major Party Leader Momentum...

Despite having significant approval ratings, accolades for being the right man during difficult times to lead the country, and improved deserve to be re-elected numbers, the opinion of Prime Minister Paul Martin as leader of the Federal Liberal Party is a bit of a drag. Reflecting back over the time since the Federal election last June, 29% indicate that their opinion of Mr. Martin has improved compared with 39% who say it has worsened (28% say it has stayed the same) for a net score of -10. Mr. Martin's greatest drag in opinion is in the Province of Quebec (net -23), followed by Saskatchewan/Manitoba (-12), and Ontario (-10) and Alberta (-5). This compares to a net +12 in Atlantic Canada and +2 in British Columbia.

Conservative leader Stephen Harper fares better, but not much better, as 27% have an improved opinion since last June compared to 31% who say their opinion has worsened and



31% who say their opinion has stayed the same --a net score of -4. Mr. Harper has picked up net improved views in Alberta (+10), and Quebec (+2). Compared to net worsened views in Atlantic Canada (-1), British Columbia (-8), and Ontario (-11).

NDP leader Jack Layton has 28% who have an improved of him since last June's election compared with 16% of have a worse opinion (and 40% who have the same opinion) for a net score of +12. Mr. Layton is the only national leader to pick up positive momentum in each area and province of the country - with Quebec leading the way at net +20, followed by British Columbia (+13), Ontario (+11), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (+7), Alberta (+3), and Atlantic Canada (+2).

And What If An Election Were Held Tomorrow?

According to the survey, if a Federal election were held tomorrow, 37% of decided voters in Canada would vote for the Liberals (- 2 points), 26% would vote for The Conservative Party (unchanged) and 17% would vote for the New Democratic Party (+1 point). Nationally, the Bloc Quebecois garners 10% of the decided vote, and within Quebec attracts 39% of the decided vote (+3 points) - they also hold a 5-point lead over the Liberals (34%, -4 points) in this province.

Of remaining decided voters, 7% would cast their ballot for the Green Party (unchanged) and 4% would vote for some "other" party.

Among all Canadians, 8% "don't know" or are unsure of whom they would vote for if a Federal Election were held tomorrow.

Parties	Election Results June 28, 2004	October 5-7, 2004	October 26-28, 2004	February 15-17, 2005	Change
The Conservative Party	30	25	26	26	0
The Liberals	37	40	39	37	-2
The New Democratic Party	16	17	16	17	+1
The Bloc Quebecois	12	9	9	10	+1
The Green Party	4	6	7	7	0

- As a regional highlight, the Liberals have clearly won a boost of support in Atlantic Canada with the recent signing of the off-shore oil deal where they capture 48% of the decided vote – a full 15 points ahead of the Conservatives; in vote rich Ontario, the Liberals capture 43% of the vote a full 15 points ahead of the Conservatives (28%). And in Quebec, the Liberals are just five points back of the Bloc Quebecois at 34%. While they have the plurality (34%) of the vote in British Columbia.
- Regionally, for the Conservatives, their lead is in Alberta (43%, where they lead the Liberals by 14 points), and in Saskatchewan/Manitoba (41%, where they outpace both the Liberals (24%) and the NDP (25%).
- As for the NDP, their strongest showings are in Saskatchewan/Manitoba (25%), followed by British Columbia (22%), and Ontario (18%).
- In Quebec, the Bloc (39%) lead the Liberals (34%) followed by the NDP (11%), the Conservatives (8%) and the Green Party (4%).



Same-Sex Wildcard?

The wildcard in any potential Federal vote may be the issue of same-sex marriage currently under hot debate in the House of Commons. When asked if in the next Federal election a Party and Leader's position on a same-sex marriage will be an important factor in determining how they vote, Canadians are split almost dead-even at 48% who agree with this view vs. 50% who disagree with this perspective. Of those who agree with this position, they are most likely to reside in Alberta (60%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (54%), Ontario (51%), Atlantic Canada (50%), British Columbia (49%) and Quebec (38%) – and our most likely to be women and younger Canadians. This compares with the other half of Canadians who disagree that this issue will be an important factor and who most likely reside in Quebec (61%), followed by Atlantic Canada (49%), Ontario (48%), British Columbia (47%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (44%), and Alberta (37%) – with older Canadians being slightly more likely to disagree.

While this may not provide a clear answer as to how Canadians would vote in a Federal election if influenced by this decision, a poll released just weeks ago for CTV/Globe and Mail indicated that Paul Martin's Liberals would receive 41% of the potential decided vote compared with Stephen Harper's Conservatives at 29%, Jack Layton's NDP at 13% and the the Bloc at 36% in Quebec.

And Where To Spend The Surplus Money In The Budget...

With Finance Minister Ralph Goodale set to table his second budget (and the first of Paul Martin's minority government) on Wednesday, with an expected \$11 billion to \$12 billion dollar range surplus, respondents were asked a series of direct paired trade offs about where they would prefer the surplus money be spent. Different groups of respondents were read a number of paired-choices and were asked to identify which one out of the two they feel the Federal government should spend the surplus on.



By ranking these choices by the highest percentage of respondents, we can identify Canadians' spending priorities:

1. **"Increase spending on health care" (66%)** tops the list of Canadians surplus spending priorities; followed by
2. **"Increase spending on post-secondary education" (46%);**
3. **"Cut taxes for middle class Canadians" (45%);**
4. **"Reducing the Government of Canada debt" (39%);**
5. **"Create a new national childcare program" (39%);**
6. **"Increase spending on environmental issues such as the cost of implementing the Kyoto Accord" (34%); and**
7. **"Increase spending on Canada's military and national defence" (27%).**

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