

DECISION CANADA

The Issue Agenda For Canadians



Ipsos Reid

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The Issue Agenda For Canadians

Toronto, ON –As the campaign unfolds a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted for CanWest News Service/Global News identifies the issues which are attaching themselves to the different parties, issue priorities among voters and which issues may or may not be on the agenda of our political leaders but are certainly on the minds of voters.

According to the survey, healthcare (29%, -1 point from a May 2004 survey) tops the list as the most important election issue volunteered by Canadians. Perhaps surprisingly, as the Gomery Report has so dominated the focus of Canadians for many months, the second place issue of corruption (12%) trails distantly.

After volunteering what they feel is the most important issue in this election, Canadians were asked a follow-up question as to which party and leader they think would do the best job of dealing with this issue if elected. Slightly more Canadians choose Paul Martin and the Liberals (30%) as the party and leader most capable of dealing with their most important election issue than choose Stephen Harper and the Conservatives (28%).

Further, Canadians were also asked to consider, if elected, which party and leader they think would do the best job of dealing with a list of specific federal government responsibilities:

- Paul Martin and the Liberals are the strongly favoured party and leader when it comes to “keeping Canada together” (48%), “representing Canada in world affairs” (47%) and “managing the economy” (41%);
- Stephen Harper and the Conservatives win big when it comes to “running a scandal-free and ethical government” (30%) and “keeping their promises” (28%); and



- Jack Layton and the NDP score strongest when it comes to “protecting the environment” (38%) and “understanding the needs of young people” (30%).

Tracking these scores from a survey conducted in May of 2004 shows that Paul Martin and the Liberals are down when it comes to almost federal government responsibilities asked about, while in contrast, the Conservatives and the NDP are up at least somewhat in all of these areas.

Lastly, Canadians were asked to volunteer an issue that they feel might be part of the ‘the lost agenda’ – meaning an issue that keeps them up at night or is one they want politicians to talk about and they never seem to do. Healthcare (9%) tops the list of ‘the lost agenda’ – signalling that while healthcare is a high-profile issue in this election, many Canadians still feel there is not enough discussion about this issue from the party leaders. Tied for second in this list are “social programs” and “protecting the environment” (both at 7%).

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted for CanWest News Service/Global News and fielded from November 29th to December 1st 2005. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 2,450 adult Canadians were interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the aggregate results are considered accurate to within ± 2.0 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.

“Healthcare” Tops The List Of Election Issues For Canadians, With “Corruption” Trailing...

When Canadians are asked what is, for them personally, the most important issue in the federal election campaign, the top volunteered answers are “fixing our healthcare system” (29%), “corruption” (12%), and “managing the economy” (8%).

	May, 2004	Dec, 2005	Change
Fixing our health care system	30%	29%	-1%
Corruption (Gomery/ running a scandal-free and ethical government)	2%	12%	10%
Managing the economy	7%	8%	1%
Fiscal responsibility (no debt)/Government spending	6%	6%	0%
Protecting the environment	3%	5%	2%
Reducing taxes	6%	5%	-1%
Social programs (child care, poverty, child poverty, seniors)/Pensions (old age, disability, etc.)	1%	5%	4%
Education	6%	3%	-3%
Moral issues (e.g. abortion, same-sex marriage)	1%	3%	2%
Employment/ Jobs	2%	2%	0%
Keeping Canada together	1%	2%	1%
Fixing our trade relationship with the US	0	2%	2%
Criminal justice system	1%	1%	0%
International affairs	1%	1%	0%
Military/ defense	1%	1%	0%
Immigration policies	0	1%	1%
Other	3%	7%	4%
Don't know/Refused	9%	7%	-2%

- Tracking this question back to a May 2004 survey shows that “corruption” (+10 points) is much more prominently featured on the election issue landscape for Canadians this time around.

Important Issues By Vote Intention...

	Con	Lib	NDP	BQ
Fixing our health care system	22%	33%	36%	23%
Corruption (Gomery/ running a scandal-free and ethical government)	24%	4%	7%	10%
Managing the economy	7%	11%	5%	7%
Fiscal responsibility (no debt)/Government spending	7%	5%	3%	14%
Protecting the environment	2%	3%	9%	13%
Reducing taxes	8%	5%	4%	2%
Social programs (child care, poverty, child poverty, seniors)/Pensions (old age, disability, etc.)	2%	5%	8%	5%
Education	1%	4%	5%	4%
Moral issues (e.g. abortion, same-sex marriage)	6%	2%	1%	1%
Employment/ Jobs	1%	3%	2%	2%
Keeping Canada together	1%	3%	1%	2%
Fixing our trade relationship with the US	2%	1%	2%	1%
Criminal justice system	1%	1%	1%	-
International affairs	1%	2%	1%	-
Military/ defence	1%	1%	1%	-
Immigration policies	1%	1%	1%	-
Other	6%	7%	6%	9%
Nothing	0	1%	-	-
Don't know/Refused	5%	7%	5%	7%

Which Party And Leader Do Canadians Think Is Best Suited To Tackle Their Most Important Election Issue?

After establishing what they feel is the most important issue in this election, Canadians were asked a follow-up question as to which party and leader they think would do the best job of dealing with their most important issue.

As shown below, slightly more Canadians choose Paul Martin and the Liberals (30%) as the party and leader most capable of dealing with their most important election issue than choose Stephen Harper and the Conservatives (28%).

	TOTAL	BC	ALB	SK/MN	ONT	QUE	ATL
Paul Martin and the Liberals	30%	29%	23%	27%	32%	26%	40%
Stephen Harper and the Conservatives	28%	31%	55%	35%	30%	10%	25%
Jack Layton and the NDP	25%	33%	14%	27%	29%	17%	27%
Gilles Duceppes and the Bloc Quebecois	9%	-	-	-	-	39%	-
Don't know/Refused	8%	7%	9%	11%	9%	8%	7%

- Albertans (55%) overwhelmingly choose Stephen Harper and the Conservatives as the leader and party best able to deal with their most important issue.
- A plurality of the residents of Quebec (39%) point to Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Quebecois.
- In Atlantic Canada, Paul Martin and the Liberals (40%) are the most popular choice.

In all other regions of Canada, there are no clear front-runners.

When It Comes To Specific Issues: Liberals Win Strongly With Unity, World Affairs, And Economy; Conservatives Win On Taxes, Ethics, And Keeping Their Promises; NDP Win On Environment And Youth...

Canadians were also asked to consider, if elected, which party and leader they think would do the best job of dealing with a list of national issues (issues shown in chart below).

Issue	Liberals	Cons	NDP	QUE ONLY: Bloc
Reducing taxes	30%	35%	15%	29%
Managing our social programs in a way that is both compassionate and cost-effective	29%	25%	28%	39%
Managing the economy	41%	31%	12%	34%
Providing government that is closest to your values	31%	29%	22%	43%
Representing your province in Ottawa	30%	30%	18%	64%
Keeping Canada together	48%	26%	14%	13%
Fixing our trade relationship with the US	39%	34%	11%	25%
Understanding the needs of young people	22%	24%	30%	46%
Running a scandal-free and ethical government	19%	30%	26%	39%
Protecting the environment	22%	20%	38%	34%
Keeping their promises	22%	28%	22%	45%
Understanding the needs of people like you	28%	27%	25%	49%
Representing Canada in world affairs	47%	27%	13%	27%
Fixing our health care system	28%	26%	28%	37%
Presenting a positive vision of the future	33%	27%	20%	40%
Providing the best government overall	35%	31%	18%	37%

- Paul Martin and the Liberals are the strongly favoured party and leader when it comes to “keeping Canada together” (48%), “representing Canada in world affairs” (47%) and “managing the economy” (41%).
- Stephen Harper and the Conservatives are the strongly favoured party and leader when it comes to “running a scandal-free and ethical government” (30%) and “keeping their promises” (28%).
- Jack Layton and the NDP are the strongly favoured party and leader when it comes to “protecting the environment” (38%) and “understanding the needs of young people” (30%).

Tracking These Issues From A Survey Conducted In May Of 2004...

Paul Martin and the Liberals are down when it comes to almost all issues asked about. The Liberals have taken the most sharp losses when it comes to “representing Canada in world

affairs” (-11 points), “providing the best government overall” (-9 points) and “managing the economy” (-7 points).

Paul Martin and the Liberals	May, 2004	Dec, 2005	Change
Keeping Canada together	NA	48%	NA
Representing Canada in world affairs	58%	47%	-11%
Managing the economy	48%	41%	-7%
Fixing our trade relationship with the US	NA	39%	NA
Providing the best government overall	44%	35%	-9%
Presenting a positive vision of the future	NA	33%	NA
Providing government that is closest to your values	35%	31%	-4%
Reducing taxes	29%	30%	1%
Representing your province in Ottawa	35%	30%	-5%
Managing our social programs in a way that is both compassionate and cost-effective	34%	29%	-5%
Understanding the needs of people like you	30%	28%	-2%
Fixing our health care system	34%	28%	-6%
Understanding the needs of young people	NA	22%	NA
Protecting the environment	25%	22%	-3%
Keeping their promises	27%	22%	-5%
Running a scandal-free and ethical government	22%	19%	-3%

Stephen Harper and the Conservatives have improved in all of the issue areas asked about. The Conservatives have made the biggest gains when it comes to “representing Canada in world affairs” (+6 points) and “representing your province in Ottawa” (+5 points).

Stephen Harper and the Conservatives	May, 2004	Dec, 2005	Change
Reducing taxes	33%	35%	2%
Fixing our trade relationship with the US	NA	34%	NA
Managing the economy	27%	31%	4%
Providing the best government overall	28%	31%	3%
Representing your province in Ottawa	25%	30%	5%
Running a scandal-free and ethical government	27%	30%	3%
Providing government that is closest to your values	27%	29%	2%
Keeping their promises	24%	28%	4%
Understanding the needs of people like you	24%	27%	3%
Representing Canada in world affairs	21%	27%	6%
Presenting a positive vision of the future	NA	27%	NA
Keeping Canada together	NA	26%	NA
Fixing our health care system	24%	26%	2%

Stephen Harper and the Conservatives	May, 2004	Dec, 2005	Change
Managing our social programs in a way that is both compassionate and cost-effective	24%	25%	1%
Understanding the needs of young people	NA	24%	NA
Protecting the environment	19%	20%	1%

Jack Layton and the NDP are also up in all issues asked about in both surveys, having made their biggest gains when it comes to “protecting the environment” (+8 points), “managing our social programs in a way that is both compassionate and cost-effective” and “fixing our health care system” (both at +7 points).

Jack Layton and the NDP	May, 2004	Dec, 2005	Change
Protecting the environment	30%	38%	8%
Understanding the needs of young people	NA	30%	NA
Managing our social programs in a way that is both compassionate and cost-effective	21%	28%	7%
Fixing our health care system	21%	28%	7%
Running a scandal-free and ethical government	21%	26%	5%
Understanding the needs of people like you	21%	25%	4%
Providing government that is closest to your values	18%	22%	4%
Keeping their promises	18%	22%	4%
Presenting a positive vision of the future	NA	20%	NA
Representing your province in Ottawa	15%	18%	3%
Providing the best government overall	13%	18%	5%
Reducing taxes	13%	15%	2%
Keeping Canada together	NA	14%	NA
Representing Canada in world affairs	9%	13%	4%
Managing the economy	10%	12%	2%
Fixing our trade relationship with the US	NA	11%	NA

In Quebec, Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Quebecois have improved most strongly when it comes to “providing the best government overall” (+14 points), “keeping their promises” (+12 points) and “managing the economy” (+9 points).

Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Quebecois (Quebec Only)	May, 2004	Dec, 2005	Change
Representing your province in Ottawa	61%	64%	3%
Understanding the needs of people like you	44%	49%	5%
Understanding the needs of young people	NA	46%	NA
Keeping their promises	33%	45%	12%
Providing government that is closest to your values	39%	43%	4%

Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Quebecois (Quebec Only)	May, 2004	Dec, 2005	Change
Presenting a positive vision of the future	NA	40%	NA
Managing our social programs in a way that is both compassionate and cost- effective	35%	39%	4%
Running a scandal-free and ethical government	36%	39%	3%
Fixing our health care system	31%	37%	6%
Providing the best government overall	23%	37%	14%
Managing the economy	25%	34%	9%
Protecting the environment	32%	34%	2%
Reducing taxes	29%	29%	0%
Representing Canada in world affairs	19%	27%	8%
Fixing our trade relationship with the US	NA	25%	NA
Keeping Canada together	NA	13%	NA

The Lost Agenda...

As part of the survey, Ipsos Reid also asked Canadians to volunteer an issue that they feel might be part of the 'the lost agenda' – meaning an issue that keeps them up at night or is one they want politicians to talk about and they never seem to do.

Healthcare (9%) tops the list of 'the lost agenda' – signalling that while healthcare is a high-profile issue in this election, many Canadians still feel there is not enough discussion about this issue from the party leaders.

Tied for second in this list are "social programs" and "protecting the environment" (both at 7%).

By Vote Intention...

	All CDNs	Cons	Libs	NDP	BQ
Fixing our health care system	9%	9%	10%	9%	9%
Social programs (child care, poverty, child poverty, seniors)	7%	6%	7%	10%	8%
Protecting the environment	7%	2%	4%	10%	14%
Education	5%	4%	5%	7%	6%
Reducing taxes	5%	7%	6%	4%	3%
Corruption (Gromery/ running a scandal-free and ethical government)	4%	6%	2%	3%	3%
Moral issues (e.g. abortion, same-sex marriage)	3%	5%	2%	3%	1%



	All CDNs	Cons	Libs	NDP	BQ
Fiscal responsibility (no debt)	3%	2%	2%	1%	7%
International affairs	2%	2%	3%	4%	1%
Criminal justice system	2%	4%	2%	2%	1%
Employment/ Jobs	2%	2%	4%	1%	1%
Fixing our trade relationship with the US	2%	3%	2%	3%	1%
Immigration policies	2%	4%	2%	1%	0
Keeping Canada together	2%	1%	3%	1%	4%
Gun legislation/ gun violence	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%
Managing the economy	2%	1%	2%	1%	3%
Government spending	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Military/ defence	1%	2%	2%	0	-
Aboriginal issues	1%	1%	2%	2%	-
Farming/ agriculture	1%	1%	1%	1%	-
Pensions (old age, disability, etc.)	1%	1%	1%	1%	0
Other	11%	11%	9%	10%	14%
Nothing	3%	4%	4%	2%	1%
Don't know/Refused	20%	19%	18%	20%	20%

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