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*Approval of Harper Government (59%) Edges Up Despite
Continuing Controversy*

*Majority (56%) Say Controversy Over Cabinet Appointments is
“A Lot of Noise About Nothing”*

But Six-in-Ten (62%) Say Emerson Should Resign



Ipsos Reid

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Toronto, ON - Immediately after announcing his cabinet, Stephen Harper's government steered into waves of controversy. Yet, as a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted for CanWest News Service/Global News shows, approval of his government's performance remains high (59%) and has even increased five points in the last week. This comes as a majority of Canadians (56%) say the controversy over his cabinet appointments is “a lot of noise about nothing”. But embattled Minister of Trade David Emerson remains in trouble with six-in-ten (62%) calling for him to immediately resign his seat and run in a by-election.

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid telephone poll conducted between February 14th and February 16th, 2006. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 1000 adult Canadians. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population of Canada been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. 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 2001 Census data.

Approval of Harper Government (59%) Edges Up Despite Continuing Controversy

Stephen Harper's first few weeks in power have not been easy but despite continuing controversy over his cabinet appointments and what that means for his government, a solid majority (59%) of Canadians approves of his government's performance. In fact, approval of his government has increased five points (from 54%) over the last week. The largest proportion (45%) "somewhat approve" while 14% "strongly approve". In contrast, 32% disapprove of the Harper government's performance (15% "strongly disapprove", 17% "somewhat disapprove") while 10% say they "don't know".

- Perhaps not surprisingly, Albertans (75%) are the most likely to approve of the Harper government's performance.
- The controversy over Fortier's appointment to the Senate and cabinet seems to have played out well among Quebecers who, at 63%, are second only to Alberta in their approval of the government.
- But the Emerson controversy seems to have dented approval among British Columbians, who at 52% are the least likely to approve of his performance.

Majority (56%) Say Controversy Over Cabinet Appointments is "A Lot of Noise About Nothing"

Underscoring the approval for the government is a majority (56%) of Canadians who agree that "the controversy about Prime Minister Harper's cabinet appointments is just a lot of noise about nothing. It really doesn't reflect on the character of his government or how he will run the country". This includes 21% who "strongly agree" and 35% who "somewhat agree". Only a third (36%) of Canadians disagree (18% "somewhat disagree", 18% "strongly disagree") and 8% say they "don't know".

- Albertans (72%) are more likely than the rest of Canadians to say the current controversy is just a lot of noise.

- Men (63%) are more likely than women (50%) to say the controversy is just a lot of noise.

In addition, a majority (58%) say they “believe that the Harper Conservatives will govern in a more ethical way than the Martin Liberals”, including 27% who “strongly agree” and 31% who “somewhat agree”. Once again, only a third (36%) disagree (19% “somewhat disagree”, 18% “strongly disagree”) and 5% “don’t know”.

- Albertans (73%) and Quebecers (66%) are the most likely to say the Harper Conservatives will govern more ethically than the Martin Conservatives.
- Men (64%) are more likely than women (52%) to say Harper’s government will be more ethical.
- Canadians aged 55+ are more likely (65%) than those under 55 (55%) to say Harper will govern more ethically.

But Six-in-Ten (62%) Say Emerson Should Resign

But while Canadians seem to be willing to give the government a pass, they have Minister of Trade David Emerson squarely in their sights. Six-in-ten (62%) agree that “David Emerson, the Vancouver Liberal who crossed the floor and was appointed to the new Conservative cabinet, should immediately resign his seat in the House of Commons and run in a by-election”. This includes four-in-ten (40%) who “strongly agree” and two-in-ten (22%) who “somewhat agree”. In contrast, only three-in-ten (30%) disagree that he should resign (14% “somewhat disagree”, 16% “strongly disagree”). Less than one-in-ten (8%) say they “don’t know”.

- Agreement that Emerson should resign is consistent across all regions.
- Men (66%) are more likely than women (58%) to say Emerson should resign.
- Canadians aged 35 and over (64%) are more likely than those under 35 (59%) to say he should resign.

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