

CANADIANS ASSESS THE PERFORMANCE OF THE MINORITY CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT UNDER PRIME MINISTER STEPHEN HARPER



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Toronto, ON – As Parliament prepares for its return on September 18, 2006, a new public opinion poll indicates that if an election were held tomorrow, the Minority Conservative government under the leadership of Prime Minister Stephen Harper would garner the support of 38% of national voters (down 1 point from a late July poll and down 5 points from mid-May) with the still leaderless Liberals (29%, +2 points) and the NDP (17%, unchanged) trailing. The Green Party of Canada elicits 5% of the national vote (-2 points) -- with this poll coming on the heels of the party's convention where former Sierra Club activist and lawyer Elizabeth May was chosen as its new national leader.

What is important to note about this latest poll is that despite almost 8 months in power and facing a leaderless Liberal party with its own issues to contend with, the Minority Conservative government and all of the other opposition parties are almost right back where they were in terms of national voter support on Election Day, January 23, 2006, making the government's quest for a majority in parliament appear volatile and elusive. [For the three major national parties on Election Day, the Conservative Party garnered 36.25% of the national vote followed by the Liberals at 30.2%, the New Democratic Party at 17.5%. In Québec, the Bloc Québécois emerged with 42.1% of the popular vote followed by the Conservatives at 24.6% and the Liberals at 20.7%.]

And if building the fortunes of the Conservative Party in the province of Québec was viewed by many Conservatives as the gateway to a majority then the latest pulse of voters in Québec will be sobering indeed showing that the Conservatives have dropped from a post-election honeymoon high of 34% in February to 22% now (-5 points since July) – representing a full 12



point fall in approximately 7 months when issues such as the government's support of Israel in the recent middle east conflict and Canada's troop deployment in Afghanistan have not been popular in the province.

Conversely, the Bloc Quebecois appear resilient at 43% of the vote (up 7 points since February and +2 points since the last sounding in July) and has a broad lead over both the Conservatives (22%, -5 points) and the Liberals (19%, -2 points).

The poll also asked Canadians to rate the various directions and policies of the new government (all of which follow in greater detail in this release). And if there is better news for Conservative supporters than the vote numbers above, it can be found in these where on almost every measure at least 45%, and often a good majority, of Canadians support the government. So, paradoxically, the Harper government appears to have a fairly good "air cover" support of its policies in directions but not so much political traction on the ground. It does mean, however, that the government's vote numbers have room to grow.

Again, it's instructive to examine the differences between the rest of the country and Québec support for the Harper government's directions and policies are much lower and may be evidence for the corresponding deteriorating voter support in that province:

- 57% of Canadians (-2 points from May) overall, think the government has Canada on the "right track" (just 45% think this way in Quebec, -24 points);
- 54% of Canadians feel the government has the "right priorities" for Canada (just 45% of Quebecois feel this way); and
- 67% of Canadians approve of the government's "making major expenditures to equip our armed forces" (versus just 47% in the province of Quebec);



- Half (49%) of Canadians approve of the way the government has formed a “closer relationship with the American administration” (37% feel this way in the province of Quebec);
- 48% of Canadians approve of the government’s “extending Canada’s military commitment to the NATO mission in Afghanistan” (38% of Quebecois approve);
- 45% of Canadians approve of the government “supporting Israel in the latest Mid-East conflict” (only 29% of those in Quebec approve of this).

However, Conservatives who fret about Québec voters will note that despite these differences and lower marks, when asked to rate the government on two overall categories, the totals are individually more than the voter support which suggests room to grow -- 58% of those in the province believe that the Conservatives are doing a "good job" and 45% believe that the Harper government is on the "right track".

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted for CanWest News Service/Global News and fielded from August 22-24th, 2006. For this survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1002 adult Canadians was interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the aggregate 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 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 Census data.

	Total	British Columbia	Alberta	Sask/Man	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic Canada
Sample	1003	140	96	67	385	237	76
Margin of Error +/-%	3.1	8.3	10.0	12	5.0	6.4	11.2

The Federal Vote: Conservatives Continue Slow Slide Since The Peak Of The Honeymoon In May, But Still Maintain Lead...

Federal Vote Support

Parties	Election '06	Mar 21-23, '06	May 16-18, 06	July 24-26, 06	Aug 22-24, 06	Latest Movement	Movement Since Election
The Conservative Party	36%	38%	43%	39%	38%	-1%	+2%
The Liberals	30%	28%	25%	27%	29%	2%	-1%
The New Democratic Party	17%	19%	15%	17%	17%	0%	0%
The Bloc Quebecois	11%	9%	9%	10%	10%	0%	-1%
The Green Party	5%	5%	5%	7%	5%	-2%	0%

Among all Canadians, 8% are undecided, refused to say whom they would vote for, or don't know.

- Conservative support is down in Quebec (-5%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (-4%).
- Liberal Support is up in Quebec (+5%) and British Columbia (+11%).

Full regional tables showing voter movement are located at the end of this factum report.

Government's "Right Track" Rating Remains Relatively Stable At 57% (-2%)...

Currently, six in ten (57%) Canadians, overall, think the Stephen Harper government has Canada on the "right track" versus 39% who feel they have it on the "wrong track" - essentially unchanged on the national level since early May 2006.

However, these sentiments have declined very sharply in Quebec (-24%) [45% now compared to 69%] since early May.

Government's "Right Track" Rating

	% Saying "Right Track"						
	TOTAL	BC	ALB	SK/MN	ONT	QUE	ATL
May 2-4, 2006	59%	50%	70%	60%	54%	69%	51%
Aug 22-24, 2006	57%	54%	82%	61%	58%	45%	60%
Change	-2%	4%	12%	1%	4%	-24%	9%

And, Six In Ten (60%) Feel Government is Doing A "Good Job"...

Six in ten (60%) feel, overall, that the Stephen Harper government is doing a "good job" versus 36% who feel they are doing a "bad job" [This is the first time that this question has been asked during the term of this government.]

- Albertans (82%) are the most likely to say they are doing a "good job", followed distantly by residents of Atlantic Canada (67%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (64%).
- Residents of Ontario (41%) and British Columbia (38%) are the most likely to say they are doing a "bad job".
- In Québec, 58% believe that the government is doing a "good job" compared with 37% who believe that they are doing a "bad job".

Fifty-four Percent Feel Government Has The Right Priorities For Canada...

Fifty-four percent of Canadians feel that the Stephen Harper government has "the right priorities" for Canada while 41% feel it has the "wrong priorities".

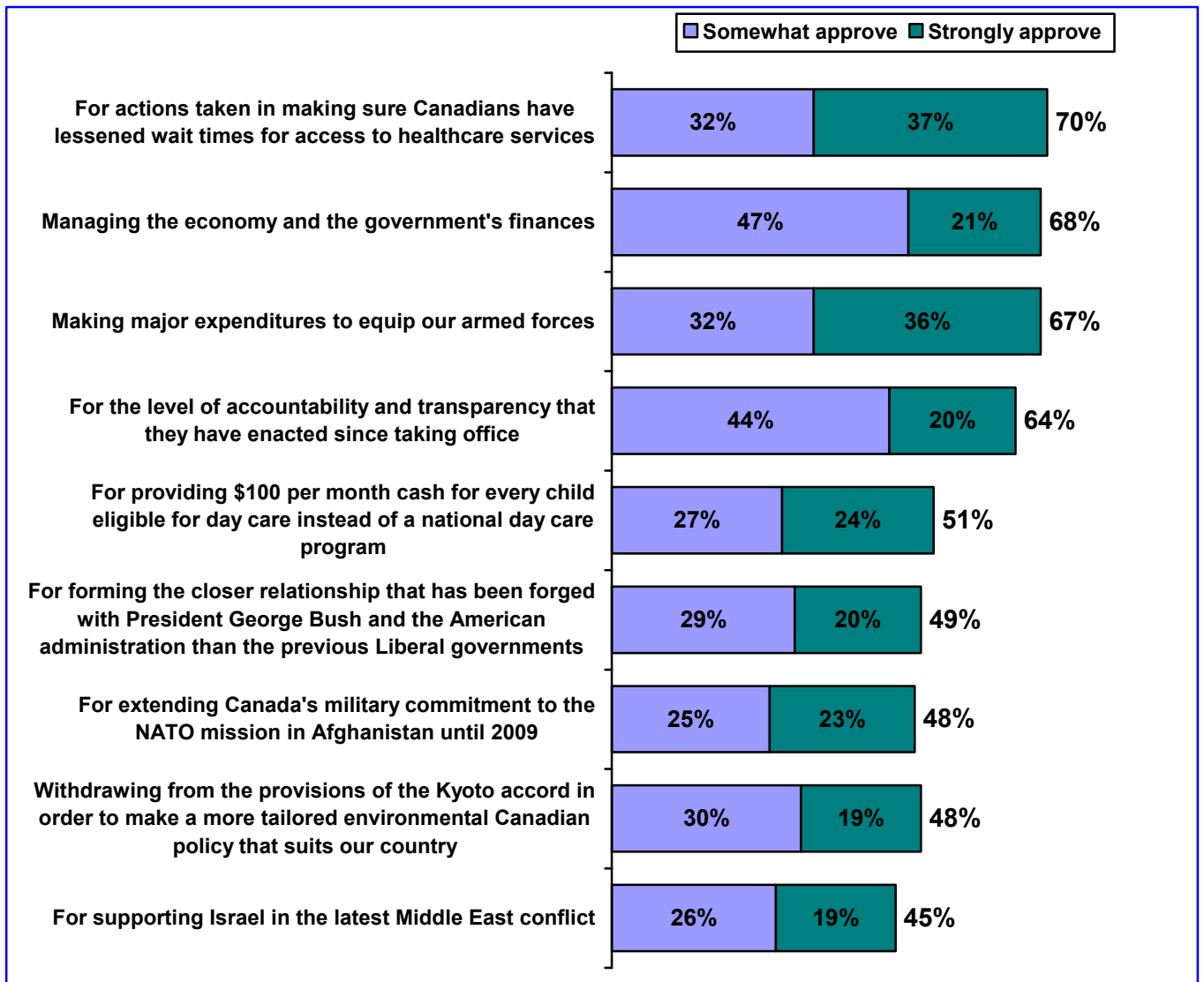
- Albertans (81%) are the most likely to say they have the "right priorities", followed by Atlantic Canada (59%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (56%), Ontario 53%, BC (48%), and Québec (45%).
- Residents of Quebec (48%) and British Columbia (46%) are the most likely to say the government has the "wrong priorities", followed Ontario (42%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (38%), Atlantic Canada (33%), and Alberta (15%).

Alberta Is The Only Province Where Most Believe The Harper Government Is More Clean, Honest, Transparent And Accountable Than Previous Administrations...

Canadians are split on what type of character this government has when it comes to previous administrations. Half (50%) of Canadians believe that the Stephen Harper government is "no better than previous governments who say they will clean up the system but really don't and instead just support their friends and their own ambitions, often in secret deals".

Conversely, 45% of Canadians believe that the new government is, "overall, a more clean, honest and transparent and accountable government compared to previous administrations". Only one province – Alberta (65%) -- has a majority of its residents believing that the Harper government is more clean, honest, transparent and accountable than previous administrations-- followed by Saskatchewan/Manitoba (46%), Québec (45%), Ontario (44%), Atlantic Canada (43%) and BC (36%). As for those Canadians (50%) who believe the government is no different than previous administrations who say they will clean up the system but really don't, BC (58%) leads the rest of the provinces followed by Atlantic Canada (53%), and Québec (52%), Ontario (51%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (47%) and Alberta (27%).

Government Approval By Issues



Regional Policy Approval/Disapproval Findings:

- *For actions taken in making sure Canadians have lessened wait times for access to health care services* –Nationally Approve 70%: Alberta [75%], Ontario [72%], Atlantic Canada [71%], Québec [70%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [65%] and BC [60%] ; Nationally Disapprove 26% : BC [35%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [30%] Atlantic Canada [25%] Ontario [25%], Québec [24%], and Alberta [19%].
- *Managing the economy and the government's finances* – Nationally Approve 68%: Alberta [86%], Québec [67%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [67%], Ontario [66%], BC [66%] and Atlantic Canada [65%]; Nationally Disapprove 27%: BC [30%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [30%], Ontario [29%], Québec [28%], Atlantic Canada [28%] and Alberta [11%].
- *Making major expenditures to equip our armed forces* -- Nationally Approve : Alberta [83%], Atlantic Canada [75%], Ontario [73%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [72%] B.C. [70%] and Québec [47%]; Nationally Disapprove 31%: Québec [52%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [28%], B.C. [26%], Ontario [25%], Atlantic Canada [23%] and Alberta [11%].
- *For the level of accountability and transparency that they have enacted since taking office* -- Nationally Approve 64%: Alberta [85%], Québec [67%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [65%], Ontario [62%], Atlantic Canada [61%] and B.C. [55%]; Nationally Disapprove 30%: B.C. [40%], Atlantic Canada [32%], Ontario [32%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [32%], Québec [27%] and Alberta [12%].
- *For providing \$100 per month cash for every child eligible for day care instead of a national day care program* -- Nationally Approve 51%: Alberta [69%], Atlantic Canada [54%], BC [52%], Québec [50%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [51%] and Ontario [47%];

Nationally Disapprove 46% ; Ontario [52%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [40%], Québec [46%], BC [45%], Atlantic Canada [43%] and Alberta [28%] .

- *For forming the closer relationship that has been forged with President George Bush in the American administration than the previous Liberal governments --* Nationally Approve 49%: Alberta [71%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [53%], Ontario [51%], Atlantic Canada [51%], BC [43%] and Québec [37%]; Nationally Disapprove 49%: Québec [60%], BC [55%], Ontario, [48%] Atlantic Canada [44%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [44%] and Alberta [27%].
- *Withdrawing from the provisions of the Kyoto accord in order to make a more tailored environmental Canadian policy that suits our country -*nationally approve 48%: Alberta [71%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [54%], BC [54%], Ontario [48%], Atlantic Canada [48%] and Québec [36%]; Nationally Disapprove 45%: Québec [60%], Atlantic Canada [44%], Ontario [43%], /1/Manitoba [41%], BC [41%] and Alberta [24%].
- *For extending Canada's military commitment to the NATO mission in Afghanistan until 2009 --* Nationally Approve 40%: Alberta [63%], Atlantic Canada [52%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [50%], Ontario [49%], BC[48%], and Québec [38%]; Nationally Disapprove 50%: Québec [59%], Ontario [49%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [49%], BC [48%], Atlantic Canada [45%] and Alberta [35%].
- *For supporting Israel in the latest middle-aged conflict --* Nationally Approve 45%: Alberta [63%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [60%], Ontario [48%], Atlantic Canada [46%], BC [43%] and Québec [29%]; Nationally Disapprove 50%: Québec [66%], Ontario [49%], BC [49%], Atlantic Canada [43%], Saskatchewan/Manitoba [39%] and Alberta [34%].

All other demographics are to be found on the attached detailed tables.

Regional Vote Intention Results

Atlantic Canada	July 24-26, '06	Aug 22-24, 06	Movement
The Conservative Party	38%	43%	5%
The Liberals	35%	34%	-1%
The New Democratic Party	26%	23%	-3%
The Green Party	2%	1%	-1%

Quebec	July 24-26, '06	Aug 22-24, 06	Movement
The Conservative Party	27%	22%	-5%
The Liberals	21%	19%	-2%
The New Democratic Party	7%	12%	5%
The Bloc Quebecois	41%	43%	2%
The Green Party	5%	4%	-1%

Ontario	July 24-26, '06	Aug 22-24, 06	Movement
The Conservative Party	39%	39%	0%
The Liberals	33%	35%	2%
The New Democratic Party	17%	17%	0%
The Green Party	9%	7%	-2%

Sask/Man	July 24-26, '06	Aug 22-24, 06	Movement
The Conservative Party	47%	43%	-4%
The Liberals	20%	22%	2%
The New Democratic Party	24%	30%	6%
The Green Party	8%	6%	-2%



Alberta	July 24-26, '06	Aug 22-24, 06	Movement
The Conservative Party	66%	64%	-2%
The Liberals	20%	21%	1%
The New Democratic Party	6%	9%	3%
The Green Party	5%	6%	1%

British Columbia	July 24-26, '06	Aug 22-24, 06	Movement
The Conservative Party	36%	36%	0%
The Liberals	23%	34%	11%
The New Democratic Party	33%	21%	-12%
The Green Party	5%	7%	2%

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For more information on this news release, please contact:

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