

Harper Has Hammer, Even With New Grit Leader

Call for Election Looms as Canadians Want Compromise, Confidence, Not Coalition

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Toronto, ON – In a week that witnessed the hasty departure of Stephane Dion as Leader of the Liberal Party and the selection of Michael Ignatieff as his replacement, a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of Canwest News Service and Global National Television reveals that Prime Minister Harper still holds a significant vote-garnering hammer over his political opponents because of the support he would receive if the opposition forced an election, regardless of what has transpired since the Governor General prorogued parliament until late January.

If an election were held tomorrow, the Conservatives would receive the support of 45% of decided voters (down 1 point), while the Liberals would receive 26% of the vote (up 3 points). The NDP would garner 12% support (down 1 point), and the Green Party would receive 7% support (down 1 point). Within Quebec, the Bloc has the support of 39% of Quebecers (up 2 points), which amounts to 10% nationally.

Inserting the new Liberal leader's name into the vote-intention question appears to have had no immediate impact, at this moment, on how people would vote, as support for the Conservatives, Liberals and NDP remains unchanged as a result. Support for the Green Party under Elizabeth May declines to 5%, and support for Gilles Duceppe's Bloc within Quebec jumps to 43%.

Similarly, opposition to the Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition continues to be strong, even with Mr. Ignatieff as chief, with 57% of Canadians indicating that they 'oppose' the coalition (down 3 points). Conversely, 37% 'support' (unchanged) the coalition, while 7% don't know what to think of it (up 4 points).

Canadians appear to be sending a message to Michael Ignatieff, the new leader of the Liberal Party: two in three (65%) believe he should 'try to find a compromise with the Conservatives and keep the current government in power', compared with the three in ten (27%) who say that he should 'stick with the Liberal-NDP coalition and defeat the government'. One in ten (8%) don't know what Mr. Ignatieff should do going forward.

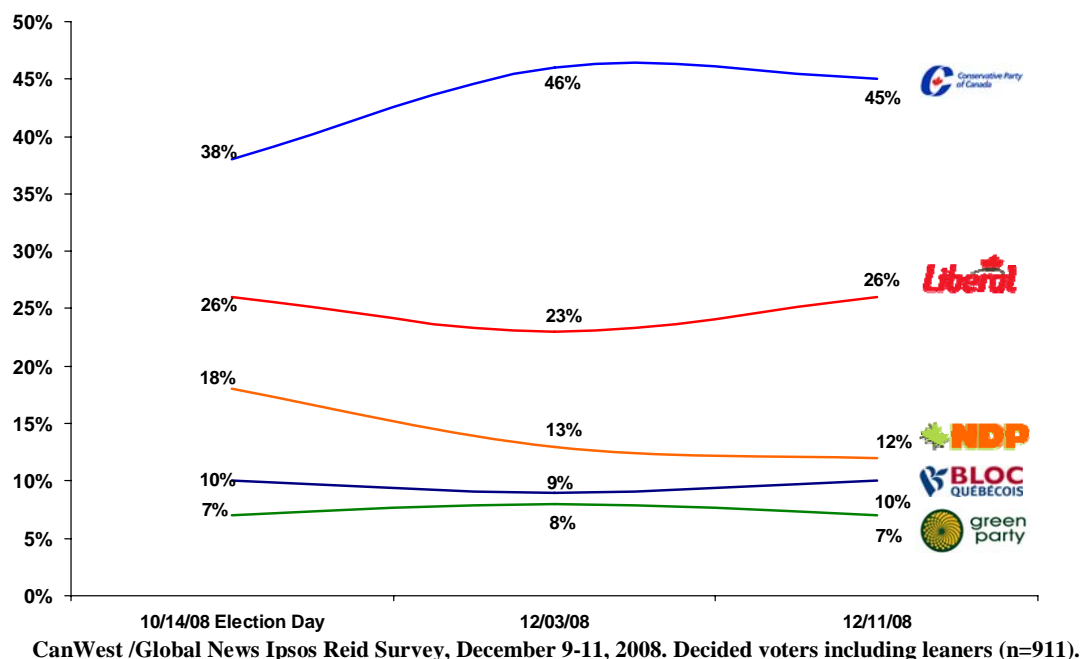
Once parliament resumes and the Conservatives have delivered their budget, the opposition parties will have an opportunity to defeat the government, if they so choose, because it is deemed to be a 'matter of confidence'. As such, it would appear that Canadians are also sending the Governor General a message: Despite the potential constitutional options, if the Conservatives lose this confidence vote, a majority (56%) says the Governor General, Michaëlle Jean, should 'ask for another election to be held', rather than 'give the Liberal-NDP coalition a chance to form a new government, with the support of the Bloc Québécois' (39%). Six percent (6%) of Canadians are unsure of what she should do.

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted December 9 to 11, 2008 on behalf of the Canwest News Service and Global National. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1,001 adult Canadians was interviewed by telephone. 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 weighted to ensure

that the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data.

Federal Vote Support

December 12, 2008, percentage of decided voters.



5% of all Canadian adults (n=1001) are undecided

Vote Support in the Regions...

- In **British Columbia**, the Conservatives (56%) continue to enjoy a commanding lead over the NDP (23%) the Liberals (14%), and the Green Party (6%).
- In **Alberta**, the Conservatives dominate the landscape (77%), while the Liberals (10%), NDP (7%) and Green Party (6%) trail.

- In **Saskatchewan and Manitoba**, the Conservatives would receive votes from six in ten (59%) Canadians in this part of the country, while the NDP (20%), Liberals (17%) and Greens (4%) would receive far less support.
- In seat-rich **Ontario**, the Conservatives (50%) are enjoying a significant lead over the Liberals (30%). The NDP (11%) and Green Party (10%) trail behind at a distance.
- In **Quebec**, the Bloc (39%) and the Liberals (32%) have widened the gap between themselves and the Conservatives (16%), the NDP (8%) and the Greens (5%).
- In **Atlantic Canada**, the Grits (45%) are leading the Tories (35%) and the NDP (17%). Support for the Green Party (1%) is lagging.

Quebec Stands Alone As Only Region to Support Coalition...

Quebecers are the only region in the country where a majority supports the idea of the Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition:

- Six in ten (62%) Quebecers 'support' the coalition, while support in British Columbia (32%), Atlantic Canada (32%), Ontario (31%), Saskatchewan and Manitoba (21%) and Alberta (16%) is considerably less.
- Opposition is strongest in the West, considering that eight in ten (80%) Albertans 'oppose' the coalition, followed by majorities in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (77%), and British Columbia (67%). Six in ten Ontarians (61%) and Atlantic Canadians (58%) 'oppose' the coalition as well, but only three in ten (29%) Quebecers say the same.

Quebecers Split on Whether Coalition or Conservatives Should Govern, But Rest of Country Favours Conservatives...

Quebecers are evenly split on whether the new leader of the Liberal Party should stick with the coalition and defeat the government (45%) or try to find a compromise with the Conservatives and let them govern (45%).

- However, following Quebec, the next-most likely regions to believe that the coalition should defeat the government and try to govern themselves are Atlantic Canada (30%) and Saskatchewan and Manitoba (30%), followed by British Columbia (25%), Ontario (19%) and Alberta (14%).
- Albertans (77%) are the most inclined to say that the coalition and the Conservatives should find common ground in order to allow the current government to continue, while residents of Ontario (73%), Saskatchewan and Manitoba (70%), British Columbia (67%), Atlantic Canada (66%) and Quebec (45%) are less likely to believe the same.

If the Government Falls, Quebecers Want Coalition, But Rest Want Election...

If the opposition parties do decide to defeat the Conservatives once parliament resumes, a majority of Quebecers (66%) believe that the Governor General should invite the coalition to form the government. Just three in ten (27%) Quebecers would favour another election.

- Following Quebecers, Atlantic Canadians (40%) are next in line to support the idea of the coalition governing if the Conservatives lost a confidence vote, followed by

Canadians in Ontario (33%), British Columbia (29%), Saskatchewan and Manitoba (26%), and Alberta (13%).

- On the flip side, Albertans (83%) have the highest propensity to believe there should be another election in this instance, while a majority of Canadians living in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (69%), British Columbia (67%), Ontario (61%), and Atlantic Canada (53%) also would prefer an election.

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