

Ignatieff Closes Gap on Harper as Choice for Best Prime Minister

Harper (43%) Still Leads but Tumbles after Parliament Debacle with Ignatieff (33%), Layton (23%)

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Toronto, ON –A new Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of Canwest News Service and Global Television reveals that in the wake of a major Parliamentary debacle that led to a hasty proroguing of the House of Commons until late January, and the ascension of Michael Ignatieff to become the new leader of the Federal Liberal Party, Prime Minister Stephen Harper still leads his rivals in most assessed leadership categories, but the margin has been narrowed somewhat by Mr. Ignatieff compared with his predecessor Stephane Dion .

Four in ten (43%, down 7 points) Canadians believe that Stephen Harper would make the best Prime Minister of Canada when compared to his main rivals Michael Ignatieff (33%, up 13 points from Dion) and Jack Layton (23%, down 8 points). Tracking these data back to the end of September reveals that Mr. Harper is still in the lead, but in Mr. Ignatieff's short tenure as leader he's closed the gap created by Dion's leadership.

In fact, on every leadership measure, Mr. Ignatieff is up between 5 and 10 points over his predecessor's score, and has dropped substantially in the 'hidden agenda' assessment. Alternately, the Prime Minister has taken an opinion hit on almost every attribute, with even more (51%, up 10 points) believing he has a hidden agenda.

The new assessment was made just before the Prime Minister's appointment of 18 new Senators to the Upper Chamber and is as follows:

- **Someone you can trust:** Harper (38%, unchanged), Layton (29%, down 3 points), Ignatieff (27%, up 5 points), Duceppe (6%, down 2 points)
- **Someone who will get things done:** Harper (42%, down 6 points), Ignatieff (27%, up 8 points), Layton (25%, up 1 point), Duceppe (6%, up 1 point)
- **Someone who has what it takes to lead Canada:** Harper (42%, down 5 points), Ignatieff (34%, up 7 points), Layton (22%, down 5 points), Duceppe (3%, down 1 point)
- **Someone who has a vision of Canada that you can support:** Harper (40%, down 3 points), Ignatieff (30%, up 5 points), Layton (27%, unchanged), Duceppe (3%, down 2 points)
- **Someone who knows when to compromise for the greater good:** Harper (34%, down 6 points), Ignatieff (31%, up 8 points), Layton (29%, down 1 point), Duceppe (6%, down 1 point)
- **Someone who is best to manage during tough economic times:** Harper (44%, down 6 points), Ignatieff (32%, up 10 points), Layton (20%, down 3 points), Duceppe (3%, down 2 points).
- Despite trying to shake the opposition branding him as **someone who has a hidden agenda**, Harper (51%, up 10 points) also leads Ignatieff (19%, down 18 points), Layton (26%, up 10 points), and Duceppe (4%, down 2 points) here as well.

- Finally, Ignatieff (33%, up 9 points) leads Layton (32%, down 4 points), Harper (30%, down 4 points) and Duceppe (5%, down 1 point) when it comes to being **someone who is open to the ideas of others**.

Canadians Want Cooperation...

When the government tables its budget on January 27, which it says will contain measures to deal with the economy, the opposition parties will have an opportunity to defeat the government if the budget doesn't contain what they believe are necessary measures to stimulate the economy.

But it is clear that Canadians want compromise and cooperation, not quarrelling and contention, as seven in ten (70%) indicate that they'd like 'the politicians on parliament hill to start cooperating so that the budget is passed and we get more stability in parliament'.

Adopting the opposite stance, three in ten (30%) believe that 'if the opposition says the budget is insufficient, they should defeat it so we can have an election and clear the air once and for all'.

- Residents of Saskatchewan and Manitoba (82%) are most likely to want our political leaders to cooperate to pass the budget, followed by those living in Ontario (71%), British Columbia (69%), Quebec (68%), Atlantic Canada (68%), and Alberta (63%).
- Albertans (37%) are most inclined of all Canadians to want the opposition to defeat the government if it is unnecessary so that we can have another election. Quebecers (32%), Atlantic Canadians (32%), British Columbians (31%), Ontarians (29%) and those living in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (18%) are less supportive of this course of action.

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of Canwest News Service and Global National from December 18 to December 21, 2008. This online survey of 1021 Canadians was conducted via the Ipsos I-Say Online Panel, Ipsos Reid's national online panel. The results of this poll are based on a sample where quota sampling and weighting are employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data. Quota samples with weighting from the Ipsos online panel provide results that are intended to approximate a probability sample. Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online polls, however, an unweighted probability sample of this size, with a 100% response rate, would have an estimated margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had the entire adult population of Canada been polled.

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