

Canadians Give Shrug to Budget, Seen as Benign:
58% Say It's Neither Good Nor Bad, Only 24% Give Thumbs Up
While Government Viewed as Doing What it Takes to Get Economy Back on Track
(61%), Only 23% Say Budget Will Help Them
Personally, and Only 32% Derive Spending Confidence

Majority (53%) Says Big Deficit Shows Government Doesn't Know
What It's Doing on Managing Spending

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While Government Viewed as Doing What it Takes to Get Economy Back on Track (61%), Only 23% Say Budget Will Help Them Personally, and Only 32% Derive Spending Confidence

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Toronto, ON - The public verdict is in on the latest Conservative Budget: while hardly personally inspiring or spending-confidence building, a majority of Canadians give the government marks for trying to get the economy back on track, according to a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted exclusively for Canwest News Service and Global Television.

But it appears that Canadians have received the budget with a benign reaction. Six in ten (58%) believe the budget is 'neither good nor bad' and they'd 'symbolically just shrug their shoulders'. Only one quarter (24%) believes that the budget is 'good' and that they'd symbolically 'give it two thumbs up', and 18% think it's 'bad' and 'give it two thumbs down'.

Comparing current support with that of past budgets, it appears that this budget is slightly off compared to previous efforts. For example, following the economic update delivered in October of 2007, 41% gave that budget thumbs up, while just 8% gave it thumbs down and 43% simply shrugged their shoulders.

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Still, six in ten (61%) 'agree' (16% strongly/45% somewhat) that 'the Harper Government is committed to doing what it takes to get Canada's economy back on track'. Just four in ten (39%) 'disagree' (10% strongly/29% somewhat).

Despite the perceived good intentions of the government, it appears that they have not yet hit a home run when it come to inspiring Canadians to open their wallets and spend. Just one in three (32%) 'agree' (4% strongly/28% somewhat) that this budget gives them 'the confidence to start spending again'. Conversely, two in three (68%) 'disagree' (20% strongly/48% somewhat) that they gained confidence to spend as a result of this budget.

In fact, just one quarter (23%) of Canadians believes that this budget will personally help them, down from 44% (21 points) who thought the same of Minister Flaherty's budget in the spring of 2006. But only 7% think this budget will personally hurt them (down 15 points), and most (51%) say it will do neither (up 29 points). Two in ten (19%) are unsure of how the budget will personally affect them.

A slim majority (51%) does 'agree' (8% strongly/44% somewhat), however, that it 'helps the people most vulnerable to the current economic situation'. Nearly one half (49%) 'disagrees' (15% strongly/33% somewhat) that it does this.

The two main components of the stimulus announced in Tuesday's budgets were new spending initiatives and tax cuts, resulting in a projected deficit of \$64 billion over the next two years. The majority (53%) 'agrees' (15% strongly/38% somewhat) that 'the size of the deficit announced Tuesday shows that the Harper government doesn't know what it's doing when it comes to managing spending', while a minority (47%) 'disagrees' (13% strongly/34% somewhat) that this is the case.



But only four in ten (39%) 'agree' (10% strongly/29% somewhat) that 'the opposition coalition would have presented a better budget for these tough economic times than the Harper government has'. Most (61%) 'disagree' (30% strongly/31% somewhat) with this notion.

Finally, if the tax cuts contained in the budget work out to be about \$1,000 per family, most would not be inclined to spend the extra money they have in their pocket. Half (49%) would 'pay down debt and credit cards', while others would 'put money into savings' (26%) or 'put money into tax-sheltered vehicles like RRSPs, RESPs, or new savings accounts' (13%). Just 7% would 'spend it on a big-ticket item like a car or appliances', and 6% would 'put it towards or buy a house'. One in ten (12%) would choose another option.

These are the findings of a poll conducted on behalf of Canwest News Service and Global Television from January 28 to 29, 2009. This online survey of 1027 Canadians was conducted via the Ipsos I-Say Online Panel, Ipsos Reid's national online panel. The results of these polls 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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