

# **As Parliament Resumes, Canadians Weigh in on Issue Leadership and Priorities: Harper Viewed as Best Leader on Four of Fives Issues Facing Country**

*May Viewed as Best Leader on Environment over other Leaders,  
Ignatieff Trails in All Categories*

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## **As Parliament Resumes, Canadians Weigh in on Issue Leadership and Priorities: Harper Viewed as Best Leader on Four of Fives Issues Facing Country**

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Ignatieff Trails in All Categories*

**Toronto, ON** - As Canada's political leaders gather in Ottawa for a new session of Parliament, a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of Canwest News Service and Global Television has revealed that Canadians continue to believe that the economy should be tops on the agenda of politicians, with four in ten (36%) indicating, unaided, that this is the issue that should receive the greatest attention from Canada's leaders. This is slightly less than the 41% of Canadians who thought the same in November of last year, and well down from the 63% of Canadians who thought the economy should be the focus of our politicians back in March of 2009, the darkest days of the recession.

Canadians are given the option to offer up to 3 responses in an open-ended fashion, and the mentions are then aggregated to provide a list of Canada's top issues. One quarter (23%) of Canadians believe that healthcare should be the focus of Canada's leaders, down 8 points since November, while two in ten (17%) think the environment should be tops, down 4 points.

Rounding out the top-ten issues include: jobs and unemployment (16%, up 6 points), education (10%, up 1 point), the deficit and government spending (9%, up 2 points), political

leadership (7%, up 2 points), poverty (6%, up 2 points), the armed forces (6%, down 3 points) and taxation (5%, down 1 point).

Based on their first response, Canadians were asked which political leader they believe has the best ideas to deal with that issue:

- Among those who said that the **economy** is their top issue, four in ten (41%) believe Stephen Harper has the best ideas on the economy, while fewer believe Ignatieff (23%), Layton (16%), Duceppe (3%, 13% in Quebec – 4<sup>th</sup> place), or May (3%) best fits the bill. One in ten (12%) believe none of them have the best ideas.
- Among those who said that **healthcare** is their top issue, Harper (26%), is narrowly in the lead followed closely by Layton (24%), while Ignatieff (16%), May (10%) and Duceppe (7%, 25% in Quebec – 1<sup>st</sup> place) are farther behind. One in ten (6%) believe none of these leaders has the best ideas to deal with healthcare.
- Among those who said that the **environment** is their top issue, four in ten (39%) believe that Elizabeth May has the best ideas to deal with this issue, followed by Layton (22%), Ignatieff (16%) and Duceppe (7%, 20% in Quebec – 3<sup>rd</sup> place). Stephen Harper (3%) trails badly in this area of public policy, while one in ten (8%) believe none of these leaders has the best policies in this area.
- Among those who said that the **jobs and unemployment** is their top issue, Harper (37%) is the clear favourite over Layton (25%), Ignatieff (19%), and May (3%). One in ten (9%) believe none of these leaders has the best ideas to get people back to work.
- Among those who said that the **deficit and government spending** is their top issue, Harper (47%) bests Layton (15%), Ignatieff (15%), Duceppe (4%, 16% in Quebec – 4<sup>th</sup>

place) and May (2%) by a two-to-one margin. One in ten (12%) believe that none of these leaders is best equipped to tackle government spending and the deficit.

## ***Canadians Say Prorogation Still on Their Mind...***

Now that the Olympics are over and Canada's political leaders return to work on Parliament Hill, the issues of prorogation and the detainee issue will likely once again rise to the forefront. Canadians apparently haven't forgot about prorogation as one half (50%) **disagrees** (30% strongly/20% somewhat) that they 'couldn't care less' about the issue of prorogation. However, four in ten (37%) 'agree' (17% strongly/20% somewhat) that they 'couldn't care less' about the issue.

Moreover, one quarter (24%) of Canadians 'strongly agree' that they were 'thinking of voting Conservative in the next election, but because of prorogation they won't vote Conservative anymore'. Still, four in ten (38%) 'agree' (11% strongly/27% somewhat) that 'the Prime Minister had the right to prorogue Parliament', while a majority (53%) 'disagrees' (35% strongly/18% somewhat) that he had the right to do so.

*These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of Canwest News Service and Global Television from February 18 to 22, 2010. For the survey dealing with voting intentions and impressions of leaders, a representative randomly selected sample of 1,000 adult Canadians was interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.1$  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.*



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**For more information on this news release, please contact:**

*Darrell Bricker, PhD  
President and CEO  
Ipsos Reid  
Public Affairs  
(416) 324-2001*

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