

Canadians Outline Their Federal Budget Priorities

If Government Falls on Budget, Canadians Split on Who's to Blame for Triggering an Election

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If Government Falls on Budget, Canadians Split on Who's to Blame for Triggering an Election

Toronto, ON – Next week Finance Minister Jim Flaherty will release the Federal budget, and speculation that the government might fall is growing. Three MPs – including senior cabinet ministers Stockwell Day and Chuck Strahl – have just announced they will not seek re-election, suggesting that the Tories are clearing the decks to fight an election. The Conservatives are also coming under fire over a number of ethical issues that could collectively constitute an election agenda for the opposition parties.

Leaving aside the specific contents of the budget that Minister Flaherty will deliver, three in ten (27%) Canadians believe that the opposition parties should vote against the budget, while another two in ten (17%) would advise the opposition parties to take a wait-and-see approach and make their decision based on what's in the budget. Four in ten (40%) believe the Government's budget should be supported, while nearly two in ten (16%) don't know what to think about it.

In Canadian politics, budgets are considered a matter of confidence, meaning that if the government loses any key budget vote, it loses the confidence of the House and an election is triggered. If an election were to be triggered over the budget, Canadians are evenly split on whether it would be the government or the opposition parties that is to blame. Four in ten (40%) would blame Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Conservatives, while four in ten (39%) would either blame Michael Ignatieff and the Liberals (31%), Gilles Duceppe and the

Bloc (5%), or Jack Layton and the NDP (3%). Two in ten (21%) don't know who would be to blame for triggering the election.

Rather than just being a yearly formality or merely just ceremony, most (95%) Canadians see the federal budget as being 'important' (73% very/22% somewhat) to the health and direction of Canada's economy, while just 4% think it isn't. Canadians are split, though, on whether or not the budget should contain any new major-spending announcements. A slim majority (54%) believes that 'even though we're in a deficit position, the government should continue to make new investments in social programs and other priorities'. Conversely, four in ten (42%) more closely align with the sentiment that 'due to the current budget deficit, this budget should contain no new major spending announcements'. Just 4% are undecided on the matter.

Respondents were given a list of budget line items and asked whether they would support or oppose the inclusion of these items in the budget:

- Nine in ten (92%) would support (55% strongly/37% somewhat) the inclusion of **expanding government support for low-income seniors**, while just 7% would oppose (2% strongly/5% somewhat) these measures. Just 1% doesn't know.
- Nine in ten (90%) would support (60% strongly/31% somewhat) **increased spending on healthcare**, while just one in ten (9%) would oppose it (2% strongly/7% somewhat). Just 1% doesn't know.
- Eight in ten (84%) would support (43% strongly/41% somewhat) **an expansion of the Canada Pension Plan**, while one in ten (14%) would oppose it (4% strongly/10% somewhat). Two percent (2%) don't know.

- Seven in ten (68%) would support (36% strongly/32% somewhat) **personal income-tax cuts**, while three in ten (30%) would oppose (11% strongly/19% somewhat) them at this time. Two percent (2%) don't know.
- Two in three (67%) would support (28% strongly/38% somewhat) **the inclusion of aggressive spending cuts to balance the budget by 2015**, while three in ten (30%) would oppose (12% strongly/18% somewhat) these type of spending cuts. Three percent (3%) don't know.
- Fully one half (50%) would support (19% strongly/32% somewhat) **increased spending on National Defence and the Armed Forces**, while nearly one half (48%) would oppose (22% strongly/26% somewhat) this. One percent (1%) doesn't know.
- Four in ten (39%) would support (17% strongly/22% somewhat) **corporate tax cuts**, while a majority (58%) would oppose (35% strongly/23% somewhat) their inclusion. Just 3% don't know.
- Three in ten (29%) would support (10% strongly/19% somewhat) **\$2.2 billion for Quebec for harmonizing its federal and provincial sales taxes** (64% support in Quebec), while most (65%) Canadians would oppose it (42% strongly/23% somewhat), 29% in Quebec. Just 5% of Canadians don't know.

Conservatives Maintain Strong Lead Heading into Budget...

The poll conducted from March 8 to 10 also reveals that the Conservatives continue to hold a strong lead heading into the budget. If the election were to be held tomorrow, Prime Minister Harper and the Conservatives would receive 40% of the national vote among decided voters

(down 3 points), while Michael Ignatieff and the Liberals would receive 27% support (unchanged).

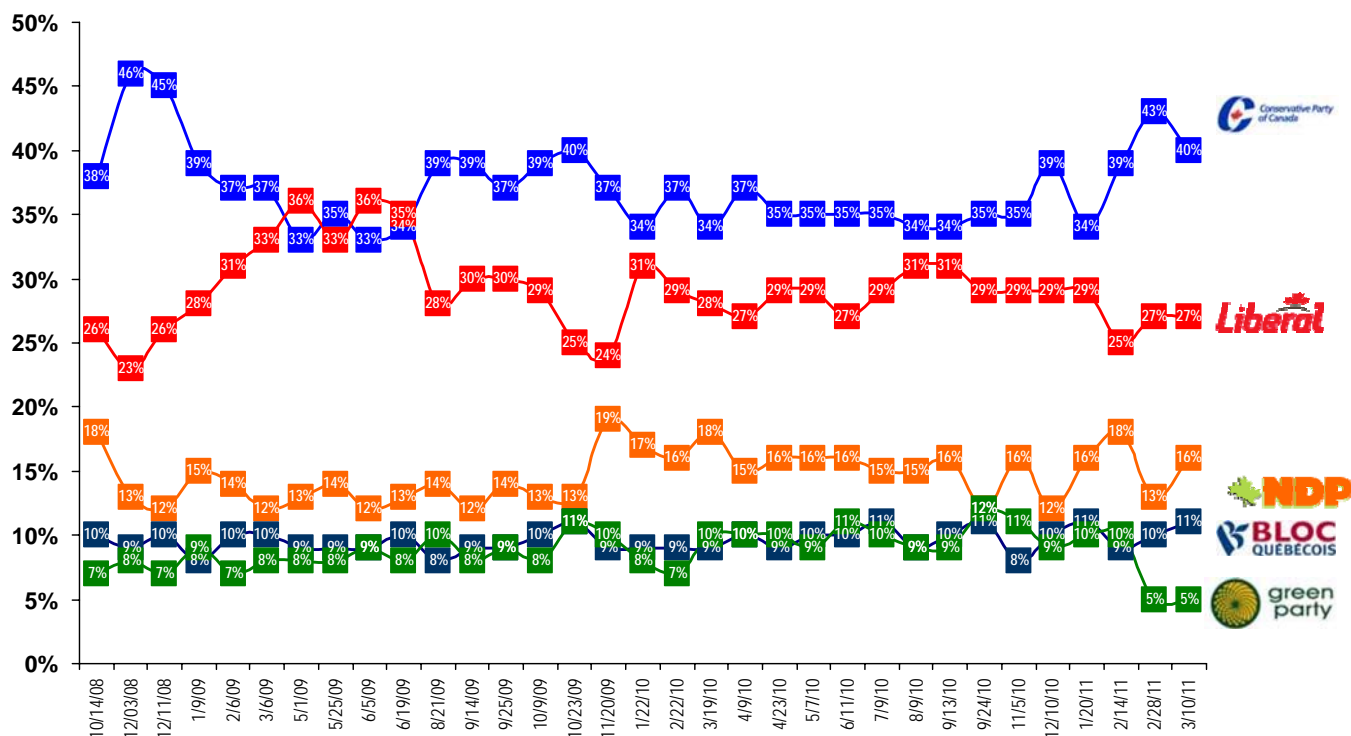
Jack Layton and the NDP would receive 16% support (up 3 points), while the Green Party, led by Elizabeth May, would receive 5% support (unchanged). Nationally, the Bloc would receive 11% of the vote (up 1 point). One in ten (9%) Canadians are undecided.

- In seat-rich Ontario, the Tories (43%) continue to hold a solid lead over the Grits (32%), while the NDP (15%) and Green Party (8%) trail behind.
- In Quebec, the Bloc (46%) has widened the gap between the Liberals (21%), while the Conservatives (15%) and NDP (14%) fight it out for third place. The Green Party (4%) trails.

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of Postmedia News and Global Television from March 7-9, 2011. For the survey, a representative randomly-selected sample of 1,002 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. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

Federal Vote Support

March 7-9, 2011, percentage of decided voters.



Postmedia News /Global TV Ipsos Reid Survey, March 7-9, 2011. Decided voters including leaners (n=871).

9% of all Canadian adults (n=1,002) are undecided

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