

POLITICS AND THE BUDGET

After Budget, Conservatives Maintain Nine-Point Lead Over Liberals

If the government falls, Canadians would prefer to hold a new election than to allow the proposed opposition coalition to take power.

[VANCOUVER – Jan. 29, 2009] - The federal budget did little to change the perceptions of Canadians on the federal political parties, a new *Toronto Star* / Angus Reid poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative national sample, 38 per cent of respondents (-1) say they would vote for the governing Conservative Party in the next federal election, followed by the Liberal Party with 29 per cent (-1), the New Democratic Party (NDP) with 18 per cent (+1), the Bloc Québécois with eight per cent (-1), and the Green Party with six per cent (+1).

The Tories and the NDP maintain their respective share of the vote in the October 2008 federal contest, the Bloc and the Greens are slightly below their total in the last federal ballot, and the Liberals remain above the 26 per cent they received under Stéphane Dion last year.

The Tories are still particularly popular in Alberta (72%), Manitoba and Saskatchewan (46%) and British Columbia (44%).

The Liberals are just five points behind the Bloc in Quebec (31% to 26%) and have clearly become the second choice in BC, eight points ahead of the NDP.

In Ontario, the Conservatives hold an eight-point advantage over the Liberals (41% to 33%)

KEY FINDINGS

- **Voting Intention: Con. 38%, Lib. 29%, NDP 18%, BQ 8%, Grn. 6%**
- **41% say Harper has a clear plan to deal with the economic crisis; 26% say Ignatieff does**
- **39% have confidence in Harper to find the right solutions for the Canadian economy; 38% trust Ignatieff**
- **36% think Ignatieff is sensitive to the needs of their province; 32% think Harper is**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

On January 27, 2009 Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among 1,020 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.0%, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

CONTACT:

Tim Olafson, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs, 403-543-1088, tim.olafson@angus-reid.com
Mario Canseco, Vice President, Public Affairs, 604-647-3570, mario.canseco@angus-reid.com

Harper and Ignatieff

The survey, conducted after the Conservative minority government tabled the federal budget, asked respondents about the ability of Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Opposition Leader Michael Ignatieff to deal with the economy.

While 41 per cent of Canadians believe Harper has a clear plan to deal with the economic slowdown, only 26 per cent feel the same way about Ignatieff. The Conservative leader also edges the Liberal leader on having a strong team (40% to 31%).

The two politicians are almost tied when Canadians are asked if they have confidence in them to find the right solutions for the Canadian economy (39% for Harper, 38% for Ignatieff). The Liberal leader holds the upper hand in being sensitive to the needs of provinces (36% to 32%).

A majority of Canadians (56%) feel Harper is more interested in his political career than in doing what's best for Canada, and 48 per cent feel the same way about Ignatieff.

After issuing the budget, at least three-in-ten Canadians perceive Harper as a leader they trust to deal with taxes (35%), boost the national economy (34%), get Canada out of a recession (33%) and minimize the federal deficit (31%). Ignatieff cannot clear the 30 per cent mark in any of these issues.

Analysis

Exactly two months after the ill-advised economic statement that almost doomed the Conservative government, the political map finds the five federal parties—with the exception of the Liberals—very close to their level of support in the last federal election.

The Liberals have managed to sustain positive numbers in Quebec (where they are second to the Bloc) and British Columbia (where they trail the Tories). In these two provinces, the Grits are doing better than they did in the 2008 election. Ignatieff is clearly outperforming his predecessor in head-to-head match-ups against Harper, but many respondents remain unaware or uncertain.

The Conservatives have a large lead in Ontario, and maintain a commanding advantage in the four Western provinces. The Tory base is satisfied with the budget, and ready to see this government in place for at least another year. The governing party is holding on to 91 per cent of those who supported it last year, even after the first deficit in more than a decade.

The NDP, in stark contrast to Tories and Grits, is only holding on to 64 per cent of its 2008 voters. Three out of every ten NDP supporters are now backing either of the two main federal parties.

CONTACT:

Tim Olafson, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs, 403-543-1088, tim.olafson@angus-reid.com
Mario Canseco, Vice President, Public Affairs, 604-647-3570, mario.canseco@angus-reid.com

Federal Political Scene - TREND

If a federal election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency?

| | Jan. 27 | Jan. 14-15 | 2008 Election |
|----------------------|---------|------------|---------------|
| Conservative Party | 38% | 39% | 37.6% |
| Liberal Party | 29% | 30% | 26.2% |
| New Democratic Party | 18% | 17% | 18.2% |
| Bloc Québécois | 8% | 9% | 10.0% |
| Green Party | 6% | 5% | 6.8% |
| Other | 1% | 1% | 1.2% |

Federal Political Scene

If a federal election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency?

| | Region | | | | | | |
|----------------------|--------|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| | Total | BC | AB | MB/SK | ON | PQ | ATL |
| Conservative Party | 38% | 44% | 72% | 46% | 41% | 19% | 24% |
| Liberal Party | 29% | 25% | 15% | 24% | 33% | 26% | 52% |
| New Democratic Party | 18% | 17% | 7% | 26% | 19% | 17% | 18% |
| Bloc Québécois | 8% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 31% | 0% |
| Green Party | 6% | 13% | 6% | 4% | 6% | 5% | 3% |
| Other | 1% | 1% | 0% | 1% | 1% | 2% | 3% |

CONTACT:

Tim Olafson, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs, 403-543-1088, tim.olafson@angus-reid.com
Mario Canseco, Vice President, Public Affairs, 604-647-3570, mario.canseco@angus-reid.com

Politics and the Budget

Now we'd like to ask you some questions about Stephen Harper. Do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?

| | Agree | Disagree | Not sure |
|--|-------|----------|----------|
| Stephen Harper has a clear plan to deal with the economic slowdown | 41% | 49% | 10% |
| Right now, Stephen Harper is more interested in his political career than in doing what's best for Canada | 56% | 37% | 7% |
| I have confidence in Stephen Harper to find the right solutions for the Canadian economy | 39% | 52% | 8% |
| Stephen Harper has a strong team | 40% | 50% | 10% |
| Stephen Harper is sensitive to the needs of my province | 32% | 58% | 9% |

Politics and the Budget

Now we'd like to ask you some questions about Michael Ignatieff. Do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?

| | Agree | Disagree | Not sure |
|---|-------|----------|----------|
| Michael Ignatieff has a clear plan to deal with the economic slowdown | 26% | 45% | 29% |
| Right now, Michael Ignatieff is more interested in his political career than in doing what's best for Canada | 48% | 33% | 19% |
| I have confidence in Michael Ignatieff to find the right solutions for the Canadian economy | 38% | 40% | 22% |
| Michael Ignatieff has a strong team | 31% | 44% | 26% |
| Michael Ignatieff is sensitive to the needs of my province | 36% | 38% | 26% |

CONTACT:

Tim Olafson, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs, 403-543-1088, tim.olafson@angus-reid.com
Mario Canseco, Vice President, Public Affairs, 604-647-3570, mario.canseco@angus-reid.com

Budget Expectations

Which of these two leaders do you trust more to handle each of the following economic issues?

| | Stephen Harper | Michael Ignatieff | Neither | Not sure |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Boosting the national economy | 34% | 27% | 27% | 12% |
| Minimizing the federal deficit | 31% | 27% | 32% | 10% |
| Getting Canada out of a recession | 33% | 23% | 32% | 12% |
| Dealing with taxes | 35% | 26% | 28% | 10% |

CONTACT:

Tim Olafson, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs, 403-543-1088, tim.olafson@angus-reid.com
Mario Canseco, Vice President, Public Affairs, 604-647-3570, mario.canseco@angus-reid.com

Angus Reid Strategies is a full-service polling and market research firm which is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Strategies team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995.

Angus Reid Strategies, along with its sister company, Vision Critical, is now the largest Canadian-owned market research enterprise. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.

Angus Reid Strategies polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum online panel (www.angusreidforum.com), which is recruited via an industry-leading process that incorporates a randomized, widespread invitation approach and a triple opt-in screening procedure. The panel is maintained through state-of-the-art sampling techniques and frequent verifications of personal identity, contact information, and demographic characteristics. This premier online survey platform presents respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses.

Angus Reid Strategies, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election.

<http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=news&newsid=349>

Since 2006, Angus Reid Strategies has covered six provincial elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes.

<http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=news&newsid=194>

More information on the way Angus Reid Strategies conducts public opinion research can be found at <http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/ARS.ARF.WP.pdf>

- 30 -

**For more information, please contact
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:
www.angusreidstrategies.com**

CONTACT:

Tim Olafson, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs, 403-543-1088, tim.olafson@angus-reid.com
Mario Canseco, Vice President, Public Affairs, 604-647-3570, mario.canseco@angus-reid.com