

FEDERAL POLITICAL SCENE

# Conservatives Lead by Four Points as Liberals Gain in Ontario

*Michael Ignatieff maintains a positive momentum score, as views on the NDP and Jack Layton drop.*

[TORONTO – Mar. 17, 2008] – The governing Conservative Party holds a small advantage in Canada and the Liberal Party has gained support in the seat-rich province of Ontario, a new *Toronto Star* / Angus Reid poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative national sample, 35 per cent of respondents (-3) say they would vote for the Tories in the next federal election, followed by the Grits with 31 per cent (+2), the New Democratic Party (NDP) with 16 per cent (-2), the Bloc Québécois with 10 per cent (+2), and the Green Party with seven per cent (+2).

The Conservatives and the NDP both sit below their share of the vote in the October 2008 federal contest, while the Liberals have reached the 30 per cent mark for the third time since Michael Ignatieff became the new leader of the official opposition. The Bloc and the Greens are exactly where they were in the last election.

As has been the case throughout this year, the Tories are still popular in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and garner practically twice the support of the NDP in British Columbia. In

Ontario, the Liberals are now in a statistical tie with the Conservatives (39% to 38%). The Grits have also solidified their position as the second choice for voters in Quebec (29%, behind the Bloc at 38%).

## KEY FINDINGS

- **Voting Intention: Con. 35%, Lib. 31%, NDP 16%, BQ 10%, Grn. 7%**
- **Preferred Prime Minister: Harper 26%, Ignatieff 24%, Layton 10%, Duceppe 4%, May 3%**
- **Momentum Scores: Ignatieff +4, Duceppe -14, May -11, Harper -20, Layton -27**
- **Harper leads Ignatieff in most qualities and characteristics**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

*From March 10 to March 11, 2009 Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among 1,002 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%, 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.*

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Much of the Liberal increase from the last election seems to have come from the NDP. In fact, nearly a quarter (22%) of people who voted NDP in 2008 are now supporting or leaning towards Ignatieff's Liberals.

### **Preferred Prime Minister and Momentum Score**

A tight race continues when Canadians asked which of the five federal party leaders would make the best head of government. Conservative leader and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper (26%) is barely ahead of Ignatieff (24%). NDP leader Jack Layton is a distant third with 10 per cent. Bloc Québécois leader Giles Duceppe and Green Party leader Elizabeth May remain in single-digits.

The Liberal leader posted a positive momentum score (+4), while the remaining four federal party leaders did not perform as well. One-in-four respondents (26%) say their opinion of Ignatieff improved over the course of the past month, while 22 per cent report a decline. A third of Canadians (34%) say their opinion of Harper has worsened. May holds a negative momentum score of -11.

For Layton, the situation is dire. The NDP leader posted the worst momentum score this month (-27) and half of Canadians (50%) disapprove of the performance of the party he commands.

The Tories have done a better job of keeping their core voters happy than the Liberals, with 82 per cent of people who voted Conservative in the last federal election saying they approve of the Conservative Party's performance. Conversely, 65 per cent of 2008 Liberal voters approve of the Liberal Party's performance. The party most in trouble with its own base is the NDP where only slightly more than half (56%) of its voters in the last election approve of its performance.

### **Qualities and Characteristics**

In the poll, respondents were provided with nine qualities and characteristics usually associated with politicians, and asked to state whether each of them applied to Canada's three main federal party leaders.

Harper is ahead of his competitors on having a vision for Canada's future (43%), being a strong and decisive leader (43%) and an effective economic manager (31%), and understanding complex issues (42%). Ignatieff is regarded as a politician who inspires confidence (30%).

While Layton is still regarded as a man who cares about the environment (49%), understands the problems of Canadians (39%), is honest and trustworthy (34%) and who generally agrees with Canadians on issues they care about (30%), he lost points from January in every single one of the qualities that are tracked in this survey.

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## **Analysis**

Both the Tories and the NDP have rebounded in BC, pushing the Liberals to the third place they held in the last federal election. Still, the key fluctuations are in Canada's two most populous provinces. The Grits are garnering twice as much support as the Tories in Quebec, and Ontario finds the two dominant federal parties virtually tied—two accomplishments that completely eluded the Liberals during the leadership of Stéphane Dion.

While Ignatieff keeps a positive momentum score and has managed to gain in some qualities and characteristics, Harper maintains a large advantage on the issue that is dominating the airwaves: the economy. Layton is holding on to first place on some issues, but his numbers are starting to flounder as opposition voters appear to be giving the Ignatieff-led Liberals a second look.

The survey shows that the NDP—a few weeks removed from an electoral campaign that was designed to promote Layton as PM material—is facing a tough battle. There is marked increase in the proportion of Canadians who disapprove of the party's performance, and little positive momentum for its leader.

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### 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?

	Mar. 10-11	Jan. 27	2008 Election
Conservative Party	35%	38%	37.6%
Liberal Party	31%	29%	26.2%
New Democratic Party	16%	18%	18.2%
Bloc Québécois	10%	8%	10.0%
Green Party	7%	6%	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	35%	45%	60%	44%	38%	16%	33%
Liberal Party	31%	19%	19%	27%	39%	29%	36%
New Democratic Party	16%	23%	12%	21%	12%	13%	29%
Bloc Québécois	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	38%	0%
Green Party	7%	11%	6%	8%	10%	3%	1%
Other	1%	2%	4%	0%	0%	0%	1%

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<b>Federal Political Scene</b>							
Which of these leaders would make the best Prime Minister of Canada?							
	<b>Region</b>						
	<b>Total</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>MB/SK</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>PQ</b>	<b>ATL</b>
<b>Stephen Harper</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Michael Ignatieff</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Jack Layton</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Giles Duceppe</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Elizabeth May</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>None of these</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>14%</b>

<b>Federal Political Scene - TREND</b>		
Which of these leaders would make the best Prime Minister of Canada?		
	<b>Mar. 10-11</b>	<b>Jan. 14-15</b>
<b>Stephen Harper</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Michael Ignatieff</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Jack Layton</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Giles Duceppe</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Elizabeth May</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>

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### Federal Political Scene

Thinking about the following qualities and characteristics, do you think they apply to Stephen Harper / Michael Ignatieff / Jack Layton?

("Apply" listed)

	<b>Stephen Harper</b>	<b>Michael Ignatieff</b>	<b>Jack Layton</b>
<b>Is honest and trustworthy</b>	<b>30% (+2)</b>	<b>24% (-4)</b>	<b>34% (-5)</b>
<b>Has a vision for Canada's future</b>	<b>43% (-1)</b>	<b>33% (=)</b>	<b>39% (-5)</b>
<b>Understands the problems of Canadians</b>	<b>35% (+3)</b>	<b>29% (+2)</b>	<b>39% (-6)</b>
<b>Can manage the economy effectively</b>	<b>31% (-3)</b>	<b>24% (+4)</b>	<b>13% (-3)</b>
<b>Is a strong and decisive leader</b>	<b>43% (-3)</b>	<b>31% (+2)</b>	<b>25% (-8)</b>
<b>Understands complex issues</b>	<b>42% (+3)</b>	<b>40% (+5)</b>	<b>27% (-5)</b>
<b>Generally agrees with you on issues you care about</b>	<b>28% (=)</b>	<b>23% (+4)</b>	<b>30% (-4)</b>
<b>Inspires confidence</b>	<b>25% (=)</b>	<b>30% (-3)</b>	<b>26% (-5)</b>
<b>Cares about the environment</b>	<b>23% (+4)</b>	<b>27% (+3)</b>	<b>49% (-2)</b>

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### Federal Political Scene

Over the course of the past month, would you say your opinion of each of the following people has improved, stayed the same or worsened?

	Improved	Stayed the same	Worsened	Not sure
<b>Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader Stephen Harper</b>	14% (+1)	45% (+5)	34% (-7)	7% (+1)
<b>Liberal Party and Official Opposition leader Michael Ignatieff</b>	26% (+1)	39% (-1)	22% (+4)	13% (-5)
<b>New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jack Layton</b>	6% (-4)	51% (-1)	33% (+3)	10% (+2)
<b>Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe [Québec Only]</b>	7% (-13)	65% (+15)	21% (+1)	7% (-3)
<b>Green Party leader Elizabeth May</b>	4% (-3)	61% (+6)	15% (-3)	21% (+1)

### Federal Political Scene

Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of each of the following federal political parties?

	Approve	Disapprove	Not sure
<b>Conservative Party</b>	31% (-2)	48% (-2)	21% (+5)
<b>Liberal Party</b>	30% (+5)	41% (-9)	29% (+4)
<b>New Democratic Party (NDP)</b>	23% (-3)	50% (+4)	27% (-2)
<b>Bloc Québécois [Québec Only]</b>	40% (-2)	38% (+2)	22% (=2)
<b>Green Party</b>	21% (-3)	35% (+2)	44% (+1)

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*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](http://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](http://www.angusreidstrategies.com)**

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