

MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

# Only a Third of Canadians Agree with Afghanistan Mission Extension

*Public remains dissatisfied with the way the government has explained the military effort.*

[VANCOUVER – Sept. 11, 2008] – The majority of Canadians appear ready to welcome Stephen Harper's recent pledge to withdraw troops from Afghanistan at the end of 2011, a new Angus Reid Strategies poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative national sample, 34 per cent of respondents agree with the House of Commons' decision earlier this year to extend Canada's role in Afghanistan until the end of 2011. Conversely, 59 per cent of respondents disagree with this rationale. Support for the Afghan mission has dropped by two percentage points since the last Angus Reid Strategies poll on this topic was conducted in July.

On Sept. 10, as this survey was being conducted, Canadian Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader Stephen Harper announced he would not renew Canada's military commitment in Afghanistan once the mission expires in 2011 if he forms the government after the federal ballot scheduled for Oct. 14.

The majority of Canadians continue to regard the Afghan mission as soldiers fighting a war (54%), rather than working in a peace-building mission (27%). This perception has not changed over the past two months.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **34% of Canadians agree with the mission, 59% oppose it**
- **62% say the government has not explained the mission properly**
- **55% of respondents say Afghans benefit from presence of Canadian troops (down 4 points since July)**
- **54% say Afghan assignment is a war mission; 27% see it as a peace mission**
- **Vast majority (75%) continues to believe Canada bears too much of the burden of NATO's mission in Afghanistan.**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

*From September 9 to September 10, 2008 Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among a randomly selected, representative sample of 1,001 adult Canadians. The margin of error for the total sample 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.*

## CONTACT:

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What has changed is the perception that Afghan people are clearly benefitting from the presence of Canadian soldiers on their soil. While 59 per cent of respondents agreed with this premise in July, the proportion has dropped by four points to 55 per cent in September.

Most people across the country continue to complain about the way the information about the mission is being relayed to the public. More than three-in-five respondents (62%) think that the Harper administration has not effectively explained the mission to Canadians. And the vast majority (75%) is still under the impression that Canada works much harder in Afghanistan than its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Finally, about half of Canadians (49%) continue to oppose direct negotiations with the Taliban insurgency, an idea that has been informally proposed (unchanged since the July survey).

Opposition to the Afghan mission is persistently high in Quebec (77%), followed by Atlantic Canada and Ontario (both at 58%), and British Columbia (53%). Support for the mission remains extremely high among Conservative voters (64%) compared to those who would vote for other political parties on Oct. 14 (less than 28%).

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<b>Mission in Afghanistan</b>							
As you may know, the House of Commons has authorized an extension of Canada's mission in Afghanistan until the end of 2011. Do you agree or disagree with the decision to extend Canada's mission in Afghanistan until the end of 2011?							
	<b>Total</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>MB/SK</b>	<b>ONT</b>	<b>PQ</b>	<b>ATL</b>
<b>Agree</b>	34%	41%	53%	44%	35%	15%	42%
<b>Disagree</b>	59%	53%	38%	43%	58%	77%	58%
<b>Not sure</b>	7%	6%	10%	13%	7%	8%	1%

<b>Mission in Afghanistan</b>						
As you may know, the House of Commons has authorized an extension of Canada's mission in Afghanistan until the end of 2011. Do you agree or disagree with the decision to extend Canada's mission in Afghanistan until the end of 2011?						
		<b>Will vote for or intends to vote for in next federal ballot</b>				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Con</b>	<b>Lib</b>	<b>NDP</b>	<b>BQ</b>	<b>Green</b>
<b>Agree</b>	34%	64%	26%	23%	8%	28%
<b>Disagree</b>	59%	32%	68%	70%	86%	69%
<b>Not sure</b>	7%	4%	6%	8%	6%	2%

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**TREND -  
Mission in Afghanistan**

As you may know, the House of Commons has authorized an extension of Canada's mission in Afghanistan until the end of 2011. Do you agree or disagree with the decision to extend Canada's mission in Afghanistan until the end of 2011?

	<b>September 2008</b>	<b>July 2008</b>	<b>May 2008</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>54%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>6%</b>

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<b>Mission in Afghanistan</b>							
In your view, is the Canadian mission in Afghanistan...							
	<b>Region</b>						
	<b>Total</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>MB/SK</b>	<b>ONT</b>	<b>PQ</b>	<b>ATL</b>
<b>A peace mission</b>	27%	31%	28%	27%	29%	21%	35%
<b>A war mission</b>	54%	55%	55%	61%	51%	55%	56%
<b>Not sure</b>	19%	14%	17%	12%	19%	25%	9%

<b>TREND</b>			
<b>Mission in Afghanistan</b>			
In your view, is the Canadian mission in Afghanistan...			
	<b>September 2008</b>	<b>July 2008</b>	<b>May 2008</b>
<b>A peace mission</b>	27%	28%	30%
<b>A war mission</b>	54%	53%	54%
<b>Not sure</b>	19%	19%	17%

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<b>Mission in Afghanistan</b>							
Do you agree or disagree with this statement? –The Harper government has effectively explained the mission in Afghanistan.							
		<b>Region</b>					
	<b>Total</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>MB/SK</b>	<b>ONT</b>	<b>PQ</b>	<b>ATL</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>15%</b>

<b>TREND</b>			
<b>Mission in Afghanistan</b>			
Do you agree or disagree with this statement? –The Harper government has effectively explained the mission in Afghanistan.			
	<b>September</b>	<b>July 2008</b>	<b>May 2008</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>62%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>6%</b>

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<b>Mission in Afghanistan</b>							
Do you agree or disagree with this statement? – Canada is shouldering too much of the burden of NATO's mission in Afghanistan.							
		<b>Region</b>					
	<b>Total</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>MB/SK</b>	<b>ONT</b>	<b>PQ</b>	<b>ATL</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>79%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>11%</b>

<b>TREND</b>			
<b>Mission in Afghanistan</b>			
Do you agree or disagree with this statement? – Canada is shouldering too much of the burden of NATO's mission in Afghanistan.			
	<b>September 2008</b>	<b>July 2008</b>	<b>May 2008</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>

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<b>Mission in Afghanistan</b>							
Do you agree or disagree with this statement? –The Afghan people are clearly benefiting from Canadian efforts in their country.							
		<b>Region</b>					
	<b>Total</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>MB/SK</b>	<b>ONT</b>	<b>PQ</b>	<b>ATL</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>56%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>17%</b>

<b>TREND</b>			
<b>Mission in Afghanistan</b>			
Do you agree or disagree with this statement? –The Afghan people are clearly benefiting from Canadian efforts in their country.			
	<b>September 2008</b>	<b>July 2008</b>	<b>May 2008</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>11%</b>

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### Mission in Afghanistan

Some people have stated that officials from foreign nations should reach out to the Taliban if this helps the peace efforts led by the elected Afghan government. Would you agree or disagree with the Canadian government actively negotiating with the Taliban?

	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ONT	PQ	ATL
<b>Agree</b>	34%	32%	24%	32%	33%	40%	40%
<b>Disagree</b>	49%	50%	61%	49%	51%	42%	49%
<b>Not sure</b>	16%	18%	15%	20%	15%	18%	10%

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Some people have stated that officials from foreign nations should reach out to the Taliban if this helps the peace efforts led by the elected Afghan government. Would you agree or disagree with the Canadian government actively negotiating with the Taliban?

	September 2008	July 2008	May 2008
<b>Agree</b>	34%	35%	41%
<b>Disagree</b>	49%	49%	54%
<b>Not sure</b>	16%	16%	6%

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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 four offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices San Francisco, New York and London, England. 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.*

*Over the last year, Angus Reid has covered five 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>*

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**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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