



PRESS RELEASE

CANADIAN POLITICAL SCENE

July 17, 2003

PART I: LOOKING FORWARD – THE CANADIAN POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Ottawa, ONTARIO. A new EKOS Research Associates series of polls points to the potential for a quite different face on Canada's Parliament as we look ahead past the fall of 2003 towards an anticipated Spring 2004 election.

Liberals reign supreme as Martin awaits passing of the torch

- The dominance of the Liberals (54% of decided voters) is basically unchallenged; and prospects for a widened majority exist
- There is evidence of some major potential shifts underlying the political landscape
 - ◇ The Canadian Alliance's fortunes appear to be bleak: the CA (11%) forming a national government is utterly improbable, and their retaining Official Opposition leadership status now also appears iffy. They have been stuck at 13% or under in our polls since April of this year.
 - ◇ The Progressive Conservative party is poised to move: we find continued evidence that PCs (17%) are assuming the mantle of "the alternative". Survey tests reveal Tories are only party (save the LPC) who could *theoretically* form a national government.
 - ◇ NDP are a rogue factor: in the past month, there is some evidence of improvement (10%), but they are currently stalled.
 - ◇ BQ (5%) appear to be moribund and in serious difficulty in Quebec; the Liberals are incredibly strong in Quebec.
- Some regional shifts in composition of next parliament likely:
 - LPC will probably do better in West and Quebec
 - PC's may do better in Atlantic and rest of country
 - CA may retract into Alberta (and BC)
 - NDP may fare better in BC and Prairies

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- PC vote is “loosest” and most mobile. Overall preferred second choice – highest potential upward mobility.
- CA vote is firm, but small. Little appeal as second choice. Combining trajectory of past few months, current intentions, second choice scores and Harper’s inauspicious trust scores, CA appear poised to fade as a major national political force. Moreover, disaffected CA voters will vote Tory (but reverse is not true). The Alliance have done much better in elections than in inter-election polls and the Tory opportunities are quite tentative, but the sum of all current forces and trends suggest a poorer result for the CA in the next election.

“Liberal hegemony on the national political scene certainly isn’t news any longer,” said EKOS President Frank Graves, “but what is interesting is to look at how the other parties are likely to fare.” Regardless of current voting intentions, between 25 and 43 per cent of those supporting any party say that it is at least somewhat likely they might change their mind.

The PC party is positioned as the main beneficiary of any such vote migration, with 28% of all those who feel they might switch saying they would move over towards a Tory vote. The Liberals follow with 22% of potential movers, the NDP have 17% and the CA 13%.

“What you have is a reduced core of loyal CA voters who really have very little room to pick up additional support and no sign of being able to capture the public’s attention.” Graves continued, “The Tories on the other hand, are now looked at as the only party besides the Liberals who could credibly be seen as forming a national government. The main exposed flank for the Tories is the inauspicious levels of recognition and trust accorded their new leader”

Paul Martin continues to enjoy high trust levels, as does Prime Minister Chrétien; Martin transition seen as inevitable, positive and harbinger of substantive change

- Prime Minister Chrétien enjoys high trust advantage over other party leaders; does extremely well with current Liberal voters. As he approaches the conclusion of his tenure both his personal standing and the Party’s position are very strong.
- Paul Martin continues to trounce leadership rivals in terms of public esteem; overall, enjoys highest trust levels in country. A Martin-led Liberal majority in spring (if Chrétien goes), a fairly safe bet.
- Canadians see little chance of Paul Martin not winning the Leadership of the Liberal Party, with just 5% feeling such an eventuality is unlikely.
- This scenario is also one they appear quite comfortable with, with those seeing a Martin-led Liberal Party as being good for the country outnumbering those who feel it will be bad by a margin of close to four to one.
- Expectations of a Martin-led government are manageable, with a slim majority expecting it to bring some change to the current Liberal government. Only one in four Canadians expects

little to no change, which suggests mantra of change is connecting with the public—14% expect radical or major change.

“Canadians have joined many pundits in their assessment of the Liberal Leadership race, seeing a Paul Martin victory as essentially a foregone conclusion,” said Graves. “As important for Mr. Martin is this finding that Canadians are expecting neither radical change nor the *status quo* but rather some degree of change. The public seem broadly satisfied with the current direction of the federal government but are arguably looking for a fresher and more ambitious casting of national direction.”

PART II: LOOKING BACKWARD – A PUBLIC PERSPECTIVE ON LEADERSHIP

- Public perspective on leadership provides an interesting alternative (antidote?) to the expert perspective offered recently by Messrs. Segal and MacDonald (front page of the Globe and Mail)

Trudeau best rated Canadian Prime Minister

- According to the public, the best PM is unambiguously Pierre E. Trudeau. He haunts us still and continues to define the paragon of leadership (even when arrayed against an international field).
 - ◇ 65% consider Trudeau’s performance good, only 14% consider it to be poor
- His predecessor (and policy mentor) Lester B. Pearson comes in a strong second. Although he has a 1 in 5 “don’t know” response, he is actually seen as having the least poor performance (only 8 per cent negative) with nearly half evaluating him as positive. Discounting lower awareness, he nearly ties Trudeau and is the only real rival (ironic for a Prime Minister that never secured a majority government).
- Jean Chrétien comes third, and although he has a sizable cadre of detractors (32 per cent rate his performance as “poor”), he gathers the third largest positive core at 42 per cent – rather remarkable for “yesterday’s man” of 10 years ago to enjoy this auspicious a rating while still under the critical glare reserved for those currently in office.
- John Diefenbaker appears to have benefited from historical distance with quite a positive evaluation. Although unknown to 1 in 4 Canadians, Diefenbaker fares exceptionally well with Westerners and current CA supporters (Diefenbaker as the CA achetype?).
- Brian Mulroney’s reported rehabilitation has gone largely unnoticed by the Canadian public who, although more reserved in their censure, still see him as the poorest performing Prime Minister of modern times. He is the only past Prime Minister with a decisive preponderance of negative to positive evaluations of 41:28 (but is actually the most recognized past Prime Minister).

The international test is much more limited

- Both Tony Blair and Bill Clinton fare very well with a strong lean to positive versus negative evaluations.

- Neither Bush Sr. nor Jr. fare well, and instructively, George W. receives the poorest ratings of all leaders tested. Apparently Canadians prefer their foreign leaders to be progressive rather than conservative, or perhaps they just don't care for George W. and his recent umbrage with the Canadian government.
 - ◇ George W's ratings represent a significant decline in the Canadian public's confidence since the period following September 11th.

- It is interesting that both Bush Jr. and Brian Mulroney secure the lowest scores (26/28) of positive ratings.

Methodology:

The voting intention and assessment of Leader's data were collected between June 19 and July 9 and are based on a random sample of 1,501 telephone interviews conducted across Canada. A sample of this size provides a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The data on a potential Paul Martin victory in the Liberal Leadership contest were collected July 8 to 11 and are based on a random sample of 600 telephone interviews conducted across Canada. A sample of this size provides a margin of error of +/- 4.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The margin of error increases when the results are sub-divided (i.e., error margins for sub-groups such as region are larger). It should also be noted that the refusal rate and other measurement errors could also increase the margin of error.

All the data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional, gender and age composition reflects that of the actual population of Canada according to Census data.