



## PRESS RELEASE

# FEDERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN 2004: THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

<b>National Federal Voting Intentions (Decided Voters, n=4,159)</b>	
Liberal Party of Canada	32.6
Conservative Party of Canada	31.8
New Democratic Party	19.0
Bloc Quebecois	11.2
The Green Party	4.9
Other	0.5

Ottawa, ONTARIO. An exciting and highly competitive campaign appears headed for a virtual tie, with late campaign evidence leaning to a slim Liberal minority. More importantly, it also appears that none of the contenders will receive a clear legal or moral mandate from a fractious and conflicted electorate. The key forces favouring the Liberals are recent upswings in Ontario and Quebec and evidence of greater growth potential than the stalled Conservatives.

### *OVERVIEW:*

EKOS President Frank Graves had this to say of the overall findings: "To hell with the purists who say the democratic process is compromised by the attention to horserace campaigns, the leaders are neck and neck and it's a damn fine race! In this campaign, Canadian politics have suddenly gone from numbing to riveting." Graves continues, "There have been two clear overall trends in this campaign. First, there has been a steady erosion of Liberal Party support from the outset of the campaign to the period immediately following the debate. Since the debate the Liberal Party has rebounded somewhat, propelled by wariness of Stephen Harper's Conservatives and a modest return to the Liberal Party by the large number of Liberal voters from 2000 who had previously abandoned the party."

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“The second key trend is really not a trend, but a fairly flat line of Conservative Party support which has solidified, but failed to break out of the low 30’s. Throughout the campaign, the key regional shift has been battleground Ontario, which seems to be accenting safety over adventure and punishment in the final stages of the campaign. It may well be that the somewhat irrational desire to punish Mr. Martin for Mr. McGuinty’s perceived sins has dissipated and we see the landscape returning to where it was prior to the poorly received Ontario budget.”

“Furthermore,” notes Graves, “an important factor left to play out is the potential movement across Liberal Party-NDP support. The Conservative vote, on the other hand, appears quite stable and its growth opportunities limited. A swing portion of Liberal, NDP (and Green Party) supporters are still weighing their options and pondering where to most effectively spend their vote.” The most fluid factors in the final stages are a loosely committed group of NDP voters, a large segment of undecided seniors and a relatively indecisive Generation X (25-44 years of age) who are weakly engaged, but leaning Liberal.

### *PREDICTING THE OUTCOME:*

“Quite honestly” Graves said “producing seat counts predictions is a bit of a mug’s game at the best of times — with the closest race in recent years it is even more of a risky pursuit. Having said that, the robust sample size of this survey gives us a bit of comfort and we see the Liberals ending up with somewhere in the area of 117 seats, 109 for the Conservative Party of Canada, 55 for the Bloc and 27 for the NDP. It seems like the Green Party, despite some serious examination by voters, will need to wait until next time to gain their first seat in Parliament”.

	North	BC	Alta	Prairies	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic	Totals
<b>LPC</b>	3	11	1	6	58	20	18	117
<b>CPC</b>	0	17	27	16	41	0	8	109
<b>NDP</b>	0	8	0	6	7	0	6	27
<b>BQ</b>	0	0	0	0	0	55	0	55
<b>Totals</b>	3	36	28	28	106	75	32	308

“In a very real way” Graves continued “we could consider the Bloc to be the big winners here. They’ve gone from trailing badly to likely holding the balance of power in the next Parliament — this must be Nirvana for the BQ. They will likely be loathe to squander this gift by being partners in any scheme to see whichever they party they chose to prop up lose the confidence of the House”.

### *REGIONAL ANALYSIS*

#### British Columbia

Graves notes that, “B.C. will be a crucial region to watch. Voters are divided across the Liberals, Conservatives, and the NDP.” Graves continues, “The Conservatives have seen their support shrink, but still enjoy a slight lead with highly committed voters. Liberal support is a close second and the NDP are a formidable force. The Green Party also attracts significant support and is tied with the NDP for second choice. As in Ontario, the crucial issue is whether or not less committed NDP voters will turn to the Liberal Party.”

Graves concludes, “There could be significant movement across all three parties and B.C. will enjoy the unprecedented advantage of being in the position of determining the final outcome of the election. Moreover, they will do so with explicit knowledge of the results of the election in Eastern and Central Canada. B.C. voters have essentially moved from bystanders to final arbitrators in this election.”

### Alberta & the Prairies

The Conservatives have a strong hold on Western Canada, particularly in Alberta. As Graves says, “Look for the Conservative fortress to virtually sweep here.” The story is a bit different in the Prairies, where, as Graves highlights, “There are a number of tight three-way races which favour the Conservatives slightly, but there will be NDP and Liberal successes here too.”

### Ontario

Graves remarks that, “The most notable region remains Ontario where the Liberals have regrouped, the Conservative vote has solidified but seems to have approached a ceiling and may be contracting, and a number of late trends point in favour of the Liberals. The key potential shifts will be across the Liberal Party and a re-invigorated NDP.”

A surprisingly strong cadre of Green Party support are also ready to move, but cite the NDP as their second choice. “The key Liberal fortune here is a large group of loosely committed NDP supporters who may still turn to the Liberals. As we have also seen, they have already been aided by Ontario women,” says Graves.

### Quebec

Graves had this to say about the results in Quebec: “Showing some volatility, the BQ continue to enjoy a large lead but the last minute instability, and the preponderance of younger, lower socio-economic status Bloc supporters (who may stay home in droves) may mean that the Liberals could do better than expected. Although still trailing badly, the Liberals have reduced their overall gap by 13 points since our last poll.”

### Atlantic

There has been some softening of Liberal support in the Atlantic region (down nine percentage points from June 17). “Some late instability in the Atlantic could see Liberal strength eroded meaning that the NDP should pick up a few seats,” states Graves.

## *ANALYSIS OF SELECT RIDINGS*

A select number of key ridings were over sampled in order to perform some additional analysis.

- In the riding of **Outremont**, Quebec Bloc MP François Rebello has a strong lead on Paul Martin’s Quebec Liberal Lieutenant, Jean Lapierre (38 to 26). As Graves notes, “Look for Lapierre’s brief foray back into federal politics to end with a shocking defeat in Outremont.”

- NDP leader Jack Layton is faring well, leading Liberal incumbent Dennis Mills by approximately nine points in the **Toronto-Danforth** riding. As Graves says, "Look for Layton to win his seat in a competitive fight with Mills."
- Current Minister of Finance Ralph Goodale looks to have once again secured his seat in the **Wascana** riding in Saskatchewan, leading both the NDP and Conservative candidates by more than 20 points. "Look for Goodale to win comfortably in Wascana," says Graves.
- In the redistributed riding of **Edmonton Centre**, the Liberal incumbent and Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan is losing a tough battle to Conservative candidate Laurie Hawn (20 to 46). As Graves notes, "McLellan is about to lose decisively in Edmonton Centre."
- In the **Regina-Qu'Appelle** riding in Saskatchewan, long-time NDP MP and incumbent Lorne Nystrom appears to be falling behind both the Conservative and Liberal candidates (27 to 29 Liberal and 37 Conservative).

### *DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS*

"Seniors are a crucial group to watch," remarks Graves, "as they are least likely to declare a firm voting intention and most likely to vote." Liberals have been rebounding amongst seniors, but the Conservatives do very well here as well. Notes Graves, "Where the final 20 per cent of seniors fall may well determine which party wins government."

Another crucial age group is the Generation X category (25-44-year olds), which has remained relatively disengaged throughout the campaign, and are split between the Conservatives and the Liberals.

### *METHODOLOGY:*

These data are based on telephone interviews conducted June 21 to June 24, 2004 with a random sample of 5,254 Canadians aged 18 and over. A sample of this size provides a margin of error of +/- 1.4 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 regions).

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.