Public and APEX Perspectives on Trust and Ethics:

What Do the Public Really Want?

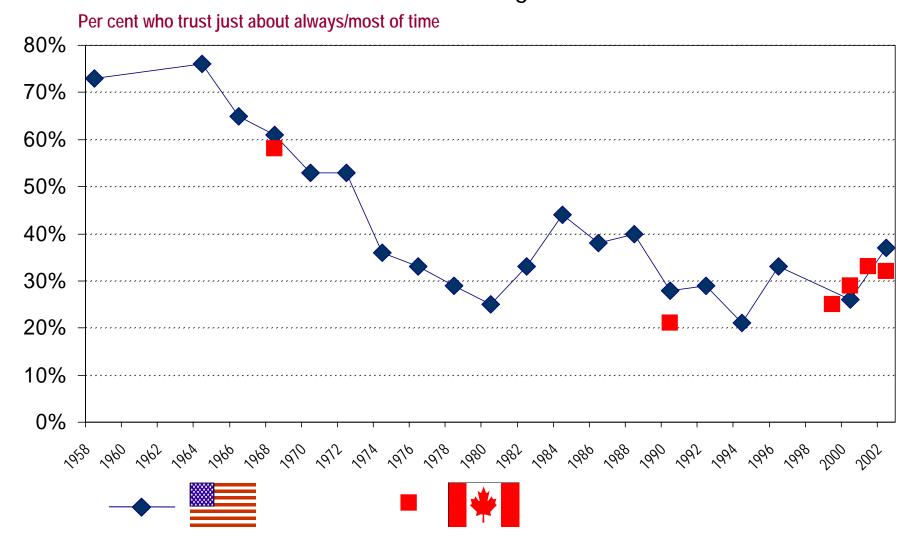**APEX Symposium**

October 7, 2004

Broad Historical Context
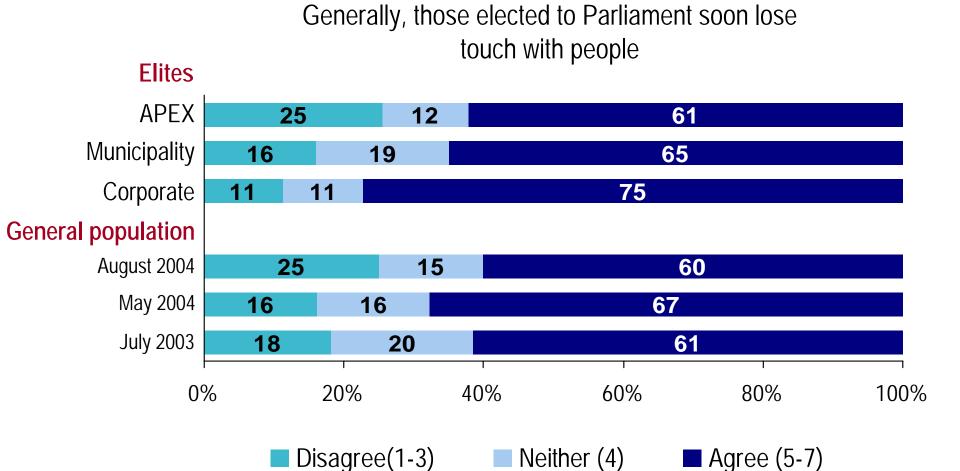
Is There a Problem/Broad Historical Context

■ **Canadians indicate a low level of confidence in government**

- ✓ Larger government disaffection is observed across generations and, to some extent, regions

- ✓ The overall public perception of government's ethical standards is low but higher than for business (and arguably not particularly enflamed)

- ✓ Highest trust given to professions working for the public interest (e.g., nurses, doctors, NGOs), lowest to elite/decision-maker occupations

- ✓ APEX members view public institutions more favourably

  - ➤ but consistent with previous research their views of the media are far more severe than those of the general public

Tracking Trust in Federal Government
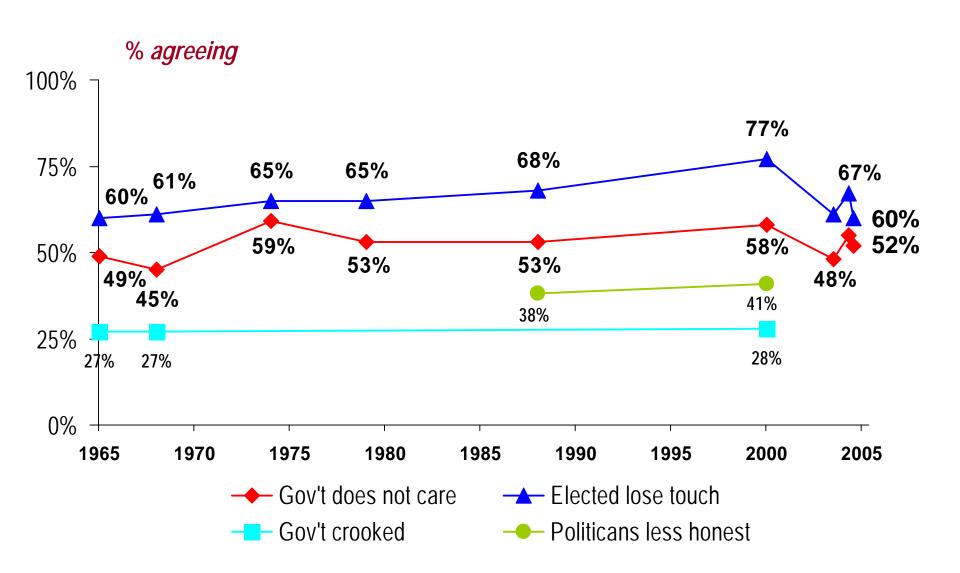
"How much do you trust the government in Washington/Ottawa to do what is right?"

Per cent who trust just about always/most of time

Political Cynicism

Generally, those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with people

Elites

	Disagree(1-3)	Neither (4)	Agree (5-7)
APEX	25	12	61
Municipality	16	19	65
Corporate	11	11	75

General population

	Disagree(1-3)	Neither (4)	Agree (5-7)
August 2004	25	15	60
May 2004	16	16	67
July 2003	18	20	61

Disagree(1-3) Neither (4) Agree (5-7)
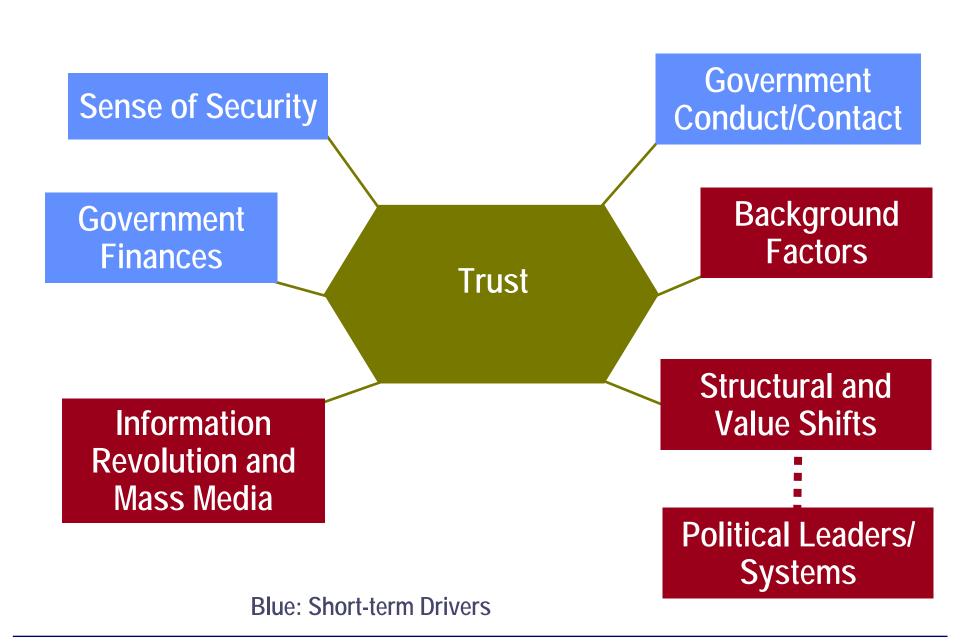
Tracking Political Cynicism in Canada
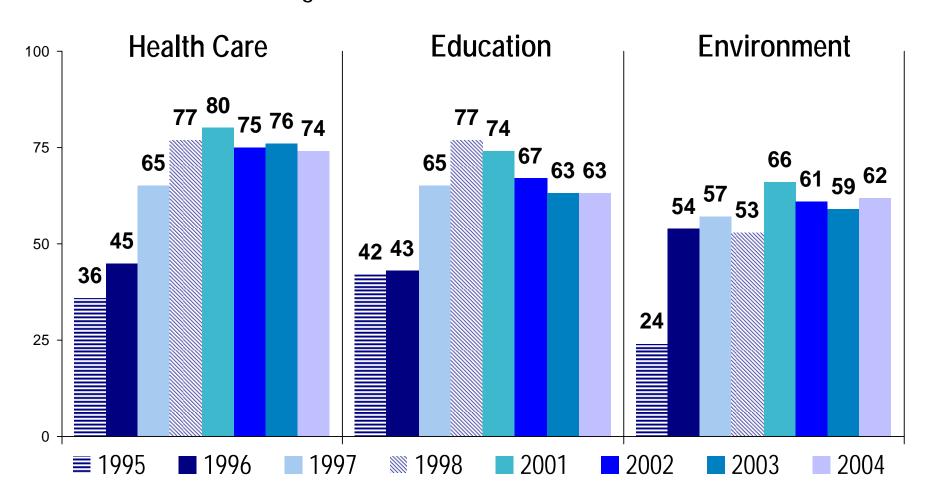
% agreeing

100%

77%

75%

68%

65% 65%

67%

60% 61%

60%

59%

58%

52%

50%

53% 53%

49%

48%

45%

41%

25%

38%

27% 27%

28%

0%

1965   1970   1975   1980   1985   1990   1995   2000   2005

◆ Gov't does not care   ▲ Elected lose touch

■ Gov't crooked   ● Politicans less honest

Main Drivers of Trust in Government Legitimacy
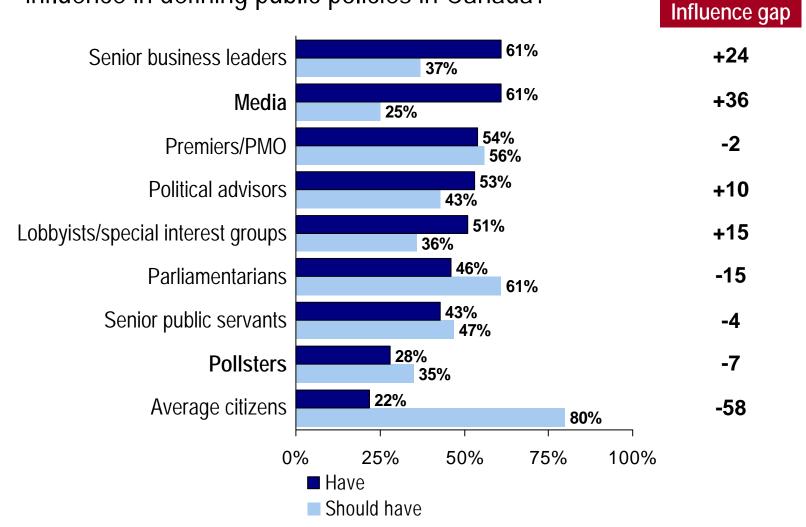
Sense of Security

Government Conduct/Contact

Government Finances

Background Factors

Trust

Information Revolution and Mass Media

Structural and Value Shifts

Political Leaders/ Systems

Blue: Short-term Drivers

Greatest Influence on Public Policy (paired choice)
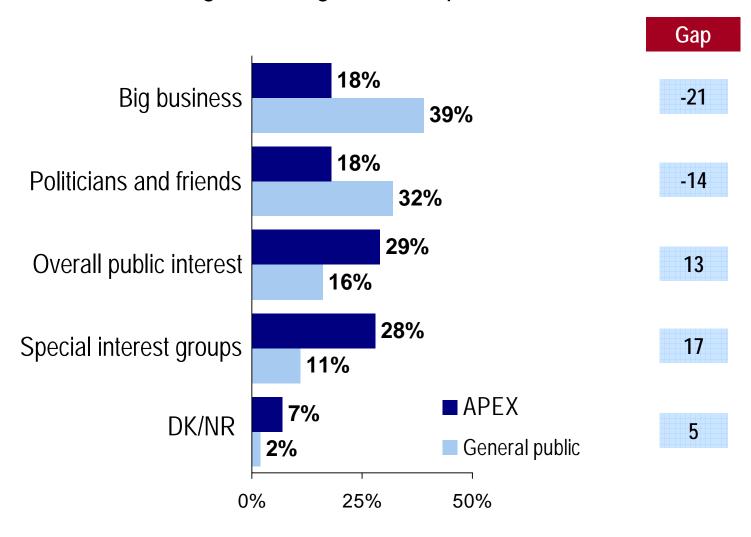
"Which of the following groups HAVE/SHOULD HAVE the most influence in defining public policies in Canada?"*

Influence gap

Group	Have	Should have	Influence gap
Senior business leaders	61%	37%	+24
Media	61%	25%	+36
Premiers/PMO	54%	56%	-2
Political advisors	53%	43%	+10
Lobbyists/special interest groups	51%	36%	+15
Parliamentarians	46%	61%	-15
Senior public servants	43%	47%	-4
Pollsters	28%	35%	-7
Average citizens	22%	80%	-58

0%   25%   50%   75%   100%

■ Have
■ Should have

* Presented in series of random paired choices. Per cent indicates average number of times option is selected over all others.
Base: All Canadians; Aug. 04

Influence On Government Decision Making

"When the federal government makes decisions, whose interests do you think are given the greatest importance?"

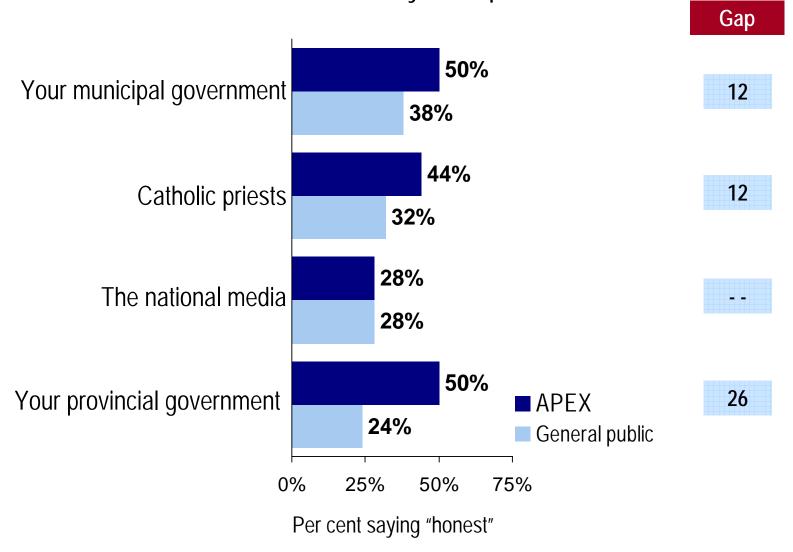|	Gap
Big business — APEX 18%, General public 39%	-21
Politicians and friends — APEX 18%, General public 32%	-14
Overall public interest — APEX 29%, General public 16%	13
Special interest groups — APEX 28%, General public 11%	17
DK/NR — APEX 7%, General public 2%	5

■ APEX
■ General public

Public and APEX Perceptions of Ethics

Ethics as a Relative Priority

■ Citizens in Western democracies are becoming more critical and demanding, and have shown signs that they are bringing into question the general principles of deference

■ Ethics is a major priority for the public and seen as problematic
  ✓ BUT it is not the dominant issue

■ Longer term trends are unclear, but there is no evidence of recent decline
  ✓ Some contradictory signals on ethics
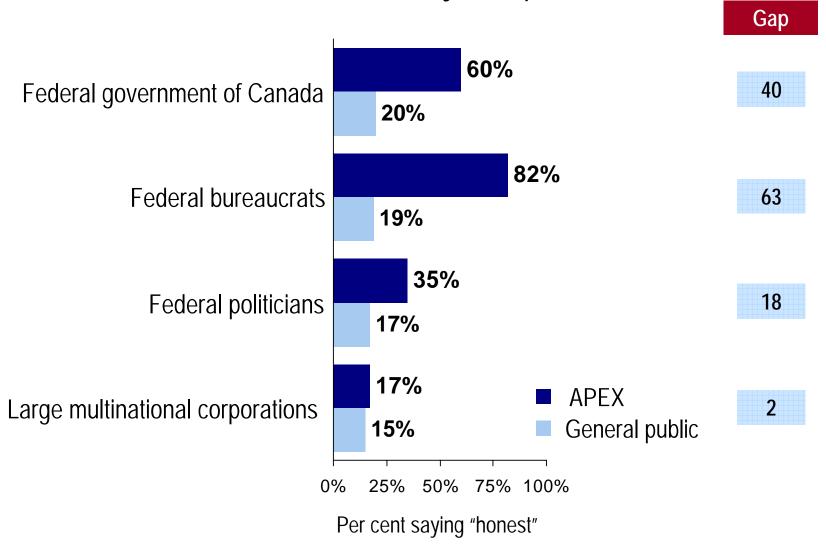
Perceived Honesty of Various Individuals and Institutions (I)

"Please rate the following offices/organizations on a scale from totally honest to totally corrupt"

Gap

Institution	APEX	General public	Gap
Your municipal government	50%	38%	12
Catholic priests	44%	32%	12
The national media	28%	28%	- -
Your provincial government	50%	24%	26

Legend: ■ APEX ■ General public

Per cent saying "honest"

(x-axis: 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%)
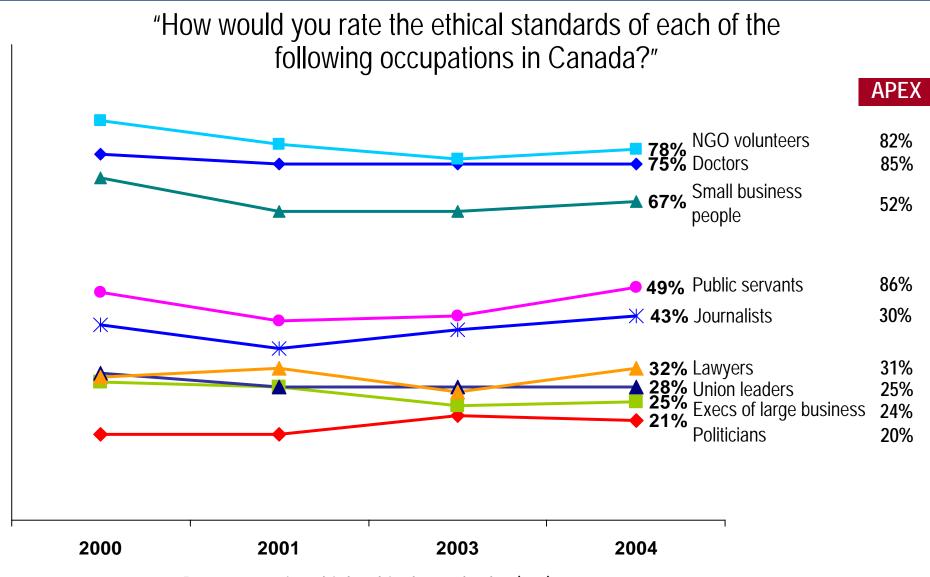
Perceived Honesty of Various Individuals and Institutions (II)

"Please rate the following offices/organizations on a scale from totally honest to totally corrupt"

	APEX	General public	Gap
Federal government of Canada	60%	20%	40
Federal bureaucrats	82%	19%	63
Federal politicians	35%	17%	18
Large multinational corporations	17%	15%	2

Per cent saying "honest"

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Ethical Standards of Occupations

"How would you rate the ethical standards of each of the following occupations in Canada?"

APEX

Occupation	2004	APEX
NGO volunteers	78%	82%
Doctors	75%	85%
Small business people	67%	52%
Public servants	49%	86%
Journalists	43%	30%
Lawyers	32%	31%
Union leaders	28%	25%
Execs of large business	25%	24%
Politicians	21%	20%

2000   2001   2003   2004
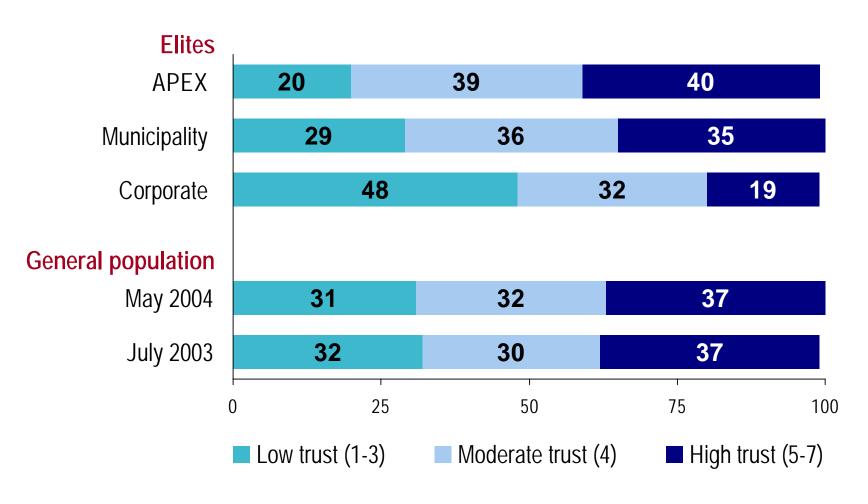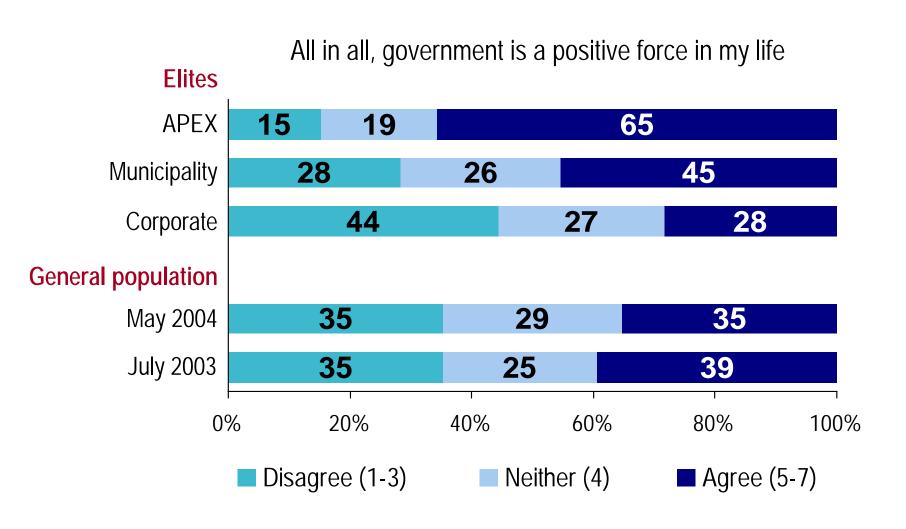
Per cent saying "high ethical standards" (5-7)

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Trust in Governments

"To what extent do you trust governments to do what is right most of the time?"

Elites

	Low trust (1-3)	Moderate trust (4)	High trust (5-7)
APEX	20	39	40
Municipality	29	36	35
Corporate	48	32	19

General population

	Low trust (1-3)	Moderate trust (4)	High trust (5-7)
May 2004	31	32	37
July 2003	32	30	37

■ Low trust (1-3)　■ Moderate trust (4)　■ High trust (5-7)

Government as a Positive Force

All in all, government is a positive force in my life

Elites

Category	Disagree (1-3)	Neither (4)	Agree (5-7)
APEX	15	19	65
Municipality	28	26	45
Corporate	44	27	28

General population

Category	Disagree (1-3)	Neither (4)	Agree (5-7)
May 2004	35	29	35
July 2003	35	25	39

Legend: ■ Disagree (1-3) ■ Neither (4) ■ Agree (5-7)

Regional variations in issue priority

"Which of the following do you think will be the most important issue for the next federal election?"

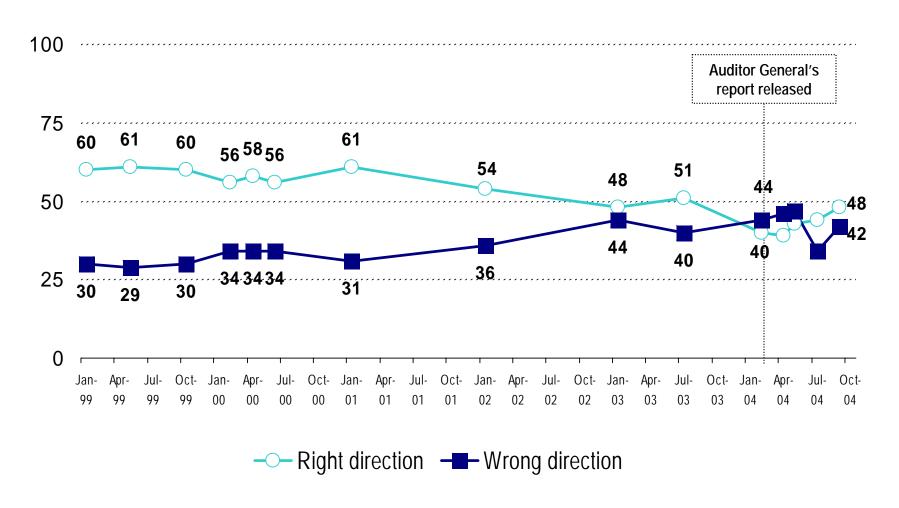|	National	BC	ALB	PRA	ONT	QUE	ATL
Social issues (health/education)	51	52	42	29	49	60	56
The economy (jobs & growth)	19	14	16	21	20	19	22
Ethics and accountability	18	25	26	31	18	10	11
Fiscal issues (taxes)	11	7	15	17	11	10	10

Ethics and Accountability Within Broader Priorities and Preferred Solutions

Prescriptions

- Yes, there is a problem, but must understand key contextual factors

- There is a stable consensus about what to do
  - ✓ Clear lean favouring transparency and reporting, less so policy shifts and audits

- APEX members nearly as concerned as general public with current ethical safeguards for politicians' behaviour but dismiss concerns with safeguards for public servants

- For Canadians a key component of rebuilding trust is inclusion and engagement
  - ✓ APEX members show openness to this but more muted
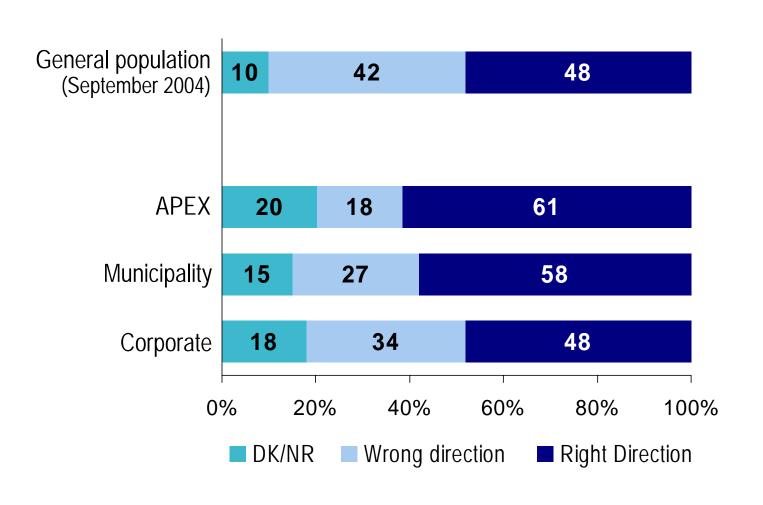
Satisfaction with direction of government

"All things considered, would you say the Government of Canada is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction? »

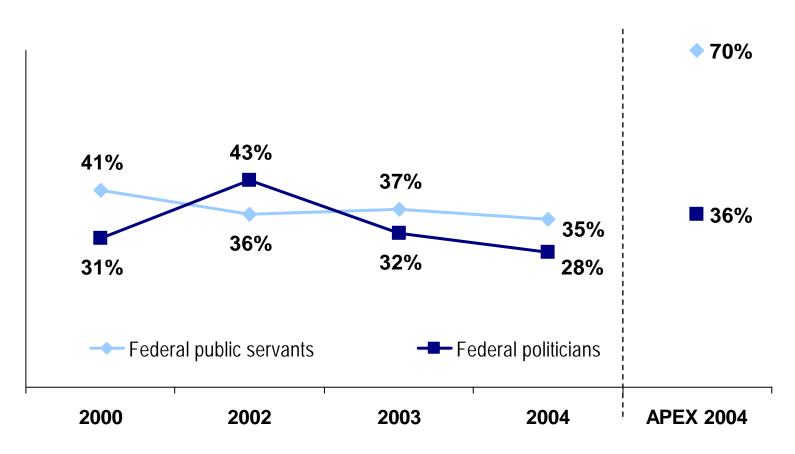—○— Right direction   —■— Wrong direction

Satisfaction with Government Direction

"All things considered, would you say the Government of Canada is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?"

	DK/NR	Wrong direction	Right Direction
General population (September 2004)	10	42	48
APEX	20	18	61
Municipality	15	27	58
Corporate	18	34	48

Sufficient Safeguards Regarding Ethics

"I think that our system of government has sufficient safeguards to ensure that federal public servants/federal politicians conduct themselves in an ethical manner."

Per cent saying "agree" (5-7)
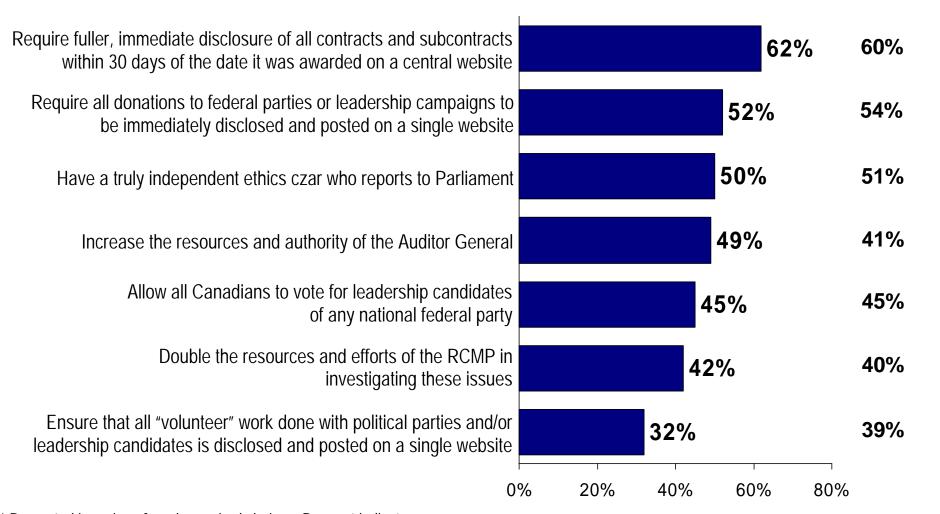
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Best Method for Improving Honesty (paired choice)

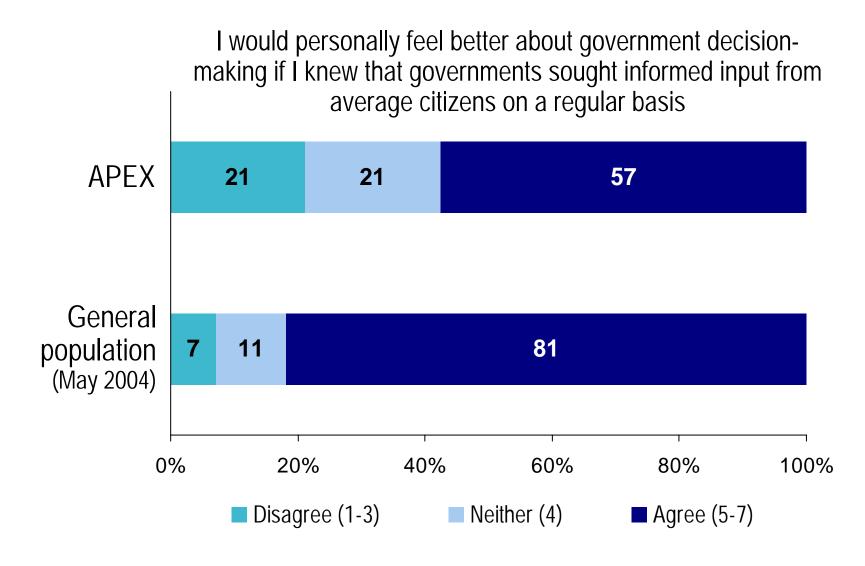"Which of the following actions would improve the level of honesty and reduce corruption in the federal government?*"

2003

Require fuller, immediate disclosure of all contracts and subcontracts within 30 days of the date it was awarded on a central website	62%	60%
Require all donations to federal parties or leadership campaigns to be immediately disclosed and posted on a single website	52%	54%
Have a truly independent ethics czar who reports to Parliament	50%	51%
Increase the resources and authority of the Auditor General	49%	41%
Allow all Canadians to vote for leadership candidates of any national federal party	45%	45%
Double the resources and efforts of the RCMP in investigating these issues	42%	40%
Ensure that all "volunteer" work done with political parties and/or leadership candidates is disclosed and posted on a single website	32%	39%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%

* Presented in series of random paired choices. Per cent indicates average number of times option is selected over all others.

{Base: All Canadians}

Input From Average Citizens

"To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statement?"

I would personally feel better about government decision-making if I knew that governments sought informed input from average citizens on a regular basis

	Disagree (1-3)	Neither (4)	Agree (5-7)
APEX	21	21	57
General population (May 2004)	7	11	81

0%　20%　40%　60%　80%　100%

■ Disagree (1-3)　■ Neither (4)　■ Agree (5-7)

Final Thoughts

Final Thoughts (i)

- "Ethics" is a serious problem

- Much of this problem is rooted in broad culture shifts in western society

- Recent trends paint mixed picture but not conclusive evidence of unusual inflammation (compared to past decade and other sectors — e.g., media, corporate)

- APEX members largely in step with general public on most of these issues
  - ✓ Tendency to lionize public service and even greater tendency to demonize other actors like the media
  - ✓ We would find similar tendencies amongst other elite groups, such as corporate elites' somewhat disparaging views of public sector – "no view except from a viewpoint"

Final Thoughts (ii)

- **While a serious issue, the current level of focus on ethics and accountability is likely out of touch with where Canadians are at**
  - ✓ Far higher priority items are out there

- **Among current threats and exposures, perhaps the largest is an overreaction to recent ethical woes**
  - ✓ Pendulum swinging too far, stifling creativity, agility, partnership and results
  - ✓ Transparency and inclusion remain keys