



EKOS/CBC NEWS SURVEY

January 19, 2009

Canadians Suffering Obama Envy...But

Canadians share Americans' enthusiasm for Barack Obama, and wish they had a little bit of his magic up here, but that does not mean that they will follow him anywhere...on a longer mission in Afghanistan, for example. Canadians also have concerns about Obama's trade policies and the debt he plans to rack up in fighting the recession.

A new EKOS/CBC poll finds that 81% of Canadians approve of the way Obama, who will be sworn in as President of the United States on Tuesday, has been handling his job as President - elect. The Canadian swoon for Obama crosses all boundaries of region, class, and even party affiliation.

"Whether you are a downtown Toronto Liberal, a rural BQ supporter, or an Albertan Conservative, you probably approve of the job Obama has done so far," said EKOS President Frank Graves.

An overwhelming majority of Canadians – 70% – say that Obama's charisma and inspirational style will be important to his success as President. And that has led to substantial "Obama - envy" among Canadians, nearly half of whom say that watching the excitement in the United States these days leaves them disappointed with their political options up here.

"Canadians are looking south and they see pride and excitement in American politics right now," said Graves. "Barack Obama is the most popular man in America at the moment – ahead of movies stars and sports heroes. Meanwhile in Canada, we had the lowest turnout ever in our fall election, and there is great dissatisfaction with the behaviour of our politicians and the quality of our public life."

Overall, Canadians think that Obama's election will be good for Canada: nearly half of Canadians think that Obama's election will fundamentally alter the Canadian - American relationship, mostly for the better. And they want the Canadian government to find ways to work with the new Obama administration.

Without a doubt, Canadians believe that when President Obama makes his first foreign trip – here to Canada – the top priority should be the economy. Roughly a third of Canadians believe Obama's policies will have a bigger effect on their economic well - being than the policies adopted here in Canada. Somewhat ominously for the Harper government, Canadians rate Obama's economic plans much more favourably than the Canadian government's: 39% rate Obama's approach to the economy as "sound", compared with just 25% who say the same about the Conservative government's.

"Just 15% of Canadians think Obama's economic plan is not sound, compared with 41% who say that the Conservative government's plan is not sound," said Graves. "That means there is not just a 'charisma gap', there is also a gap in terms of economic planning and preparation."



Nonetheless, Canadians appear to be conscious of the fact that the United States starts into the current recession with a proportionately larger debt than Canada's, and that Obama plans to borrow more than the Conservative government here apparently does. Seventy - one per cent of Canadians worry about the economic consequences of U.S. lending in the long term, compared with 53% who have the same concern about Canada's borrowing.

Compared with the economy, Canadians rank climate change much further down their list of important areas for cooperation with the Obama administration. However, they do like the sound of the Harper government's proposal for a common approach with the Obama administration on climate change, which a clear majority supports.

Where Canadians clearly draw the line on cooperation with the Obama administration is on Afghanistan. Obama has spoken about asking American allies to increase their military presence in Afghanistan, which he plans to make an American military priority. When we asked whether Canada should change its scheduled date for getting out of Afghanistan in 2011 if Obama asks us to, 55% say no, compared with just 30% who say yes.

Canadians have also apparently taken note of the reservations Obama expressed about the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) during the American primaries last winter and spring. Most Canadians are at least moderately concerned about his trade policies hurting us, and more than a quarter are very concerned. Worries are even higher in the Ontario and Alberta.

Of course, tremors in American politics often shake up Canadian politics too. With Barack Obama replacing George Bush as President, Stephen Harper no longer has an American counterpart with a conservative viewpoint similar to his. We asked Canadians whether it would make any difference to Canada - U.S. relations that we now have governments of different political leanings. Nearly half of Canadians say it will make no difference, but well over a third say that it will make relations more difficult (compared with 11% who say that it will make relations easier).

Methodology:

This survey was conducted January 15-17, 2009 using EKOS' unique hybrid internet-telephone research panel, Probit. This panel is randomly recruited from the general population, meaning that, the only way to be included in Probit is through random selection. Unlike opt-in internet-only research panels, Probit supports confidence intervals and error testing.

In total, a random sample of 1,000 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey. A sample of this size provides a margin of error of +/- 3.1 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 samples composition reflects that of the actual population of Canada according to Census data.