

PRE-DEBATE POLL

WELL, AT LEAST DION NEEDN'T WORRY ABOUT EXCESSIVE EXPECTATIONS

[OTTAWA – October 1, 2008] – A miniscule 5% of Canadians expect Stéphane Dion to be the winner in the leaders' debates tonight and tomorrow evening. Dion has said in the past that he loves being underestimated, and he certainly doesn't need to worry about high expectations going into these debates, which mark the turn into the home stretch of the election campaign.

Sixty-two per cent of Canadians say that they intend to tune in when the leaders go at it – tonight in French and tomorrow evening in English.

The likely winners? Stephen Harper and Jack Layton are in a dead heat, with 30% of Canadians rating each of them as the likely winner. In most of the country, Harper and Layton are seen as the joint frontrunners, though interestingly, in British Columbia, where the two parties are locked in a fearsome battle, Layton is given the early edge.

Despite the media build-up to her appearance, only 11% of Canadians say Elizabeth May will be the likely winner. She still outstrips Dion. Even Gilles Duceppe, at 9% nationally – largely on the strength of expectations in Quebec – does better than the Liberal leader.

In fact, Dion fails to beat out either "nobody" or "don't know", as the favourite to win.

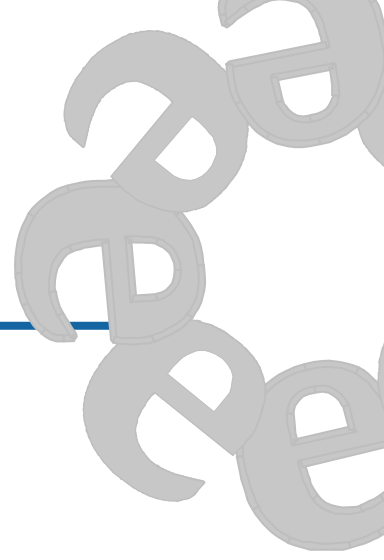
"Dion has such stunningly low expectations coming into this debate that he is almost bound to exceed them," said EKOS President Frank Graves. "That may create an opportunity for him. There are nonetheless dangers for him in the debate as well. Some people who had been sitting on the bench until recently have started to drift back into the Liberal camp in recent days. A weak performance by Dion could send them skittering away again."

Well over half of Canadians – 58% -- say that they consider the debates important in helping them to make up their mind how to vote on October 14.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **2 in 3 Canadians say they plan to watch the debates.**
- **About 1 in 3 says the debates will be "important" in helping them determine who to vote for October 14.**
- **Stephen Harper & Jack Layton tied for leader expected to have "best performance" in the debates.**

Please note that the methodology and detailed tables of these and other results discussed in this release are provided at the end of this document.



Detailed Tables:

Intention to Watch the Debates (regional)

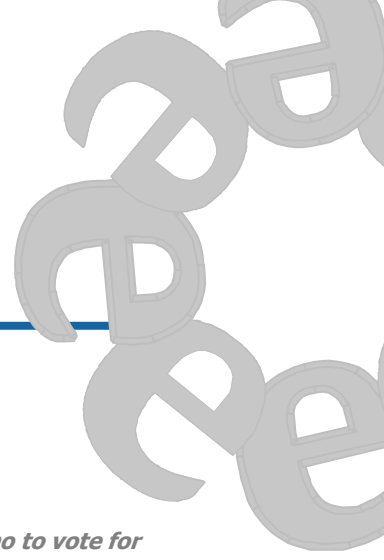
Q. Are you planning on watching the debates?

BASE: Canadians n=	Region						
	CANADA	BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL
Margin of error (+/-)	2.5	6.2	8.8	9.4	4.1	5.7	7.9
Yes	62	55	56	61	66	64	56
No	28	34	33	26	23	29	31
Don't know/No response	10	11	12	13	11	8	13

Intention to Watch the Debates (vote intention)

Q. Are you planning on watching the debates?

BASE: Canadians n=	Current Vote Intention						
	CANADA	CPC	LPC	NDP	GP	BQ	Undecided
Margin of error (+/-)	2.5	4.4	5.0	5.9	8.4	9.4	15.3
Yes	62	66	65	64	54	68	43
No	28	25	24	25	35	25	28
Don't know/No response	10	9	11	12	12	6	29



Importance of the Debates (regional)

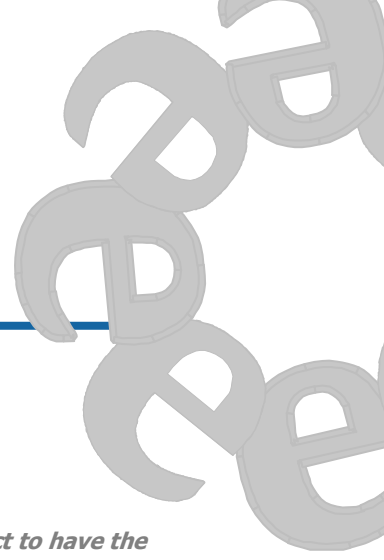
Q. How important will the leaders' performance in the debate be in your decision of who to vote for on October 14?

BASE: Canadians n=	Region						
	CANADA	BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL
n=	1496	244	124	108	569	298	153
Margin of error (+/-)	2.5	6.2	8.8	9.4	4.1	5.7	7.9
Not very important	40	46	45	42	40	35	35
Moderately important	28	30	30	29	29	24	33
Important	30	22	22	27	29	38	31

Importance of the Debates (vote intention)

Q. How important will the leaders' performance in the debate be in your decision of who to vote for on October 14?

BASE: Canadians n=	Current Vote Intention						
	CANADA	CPC	LPC	NDP	GP	BQ	Undecided
n=	1496	497	383	280	136	109	41
Margin of error (+/-)	2.5	4.4	5.0	5.9	8.4	9.4	15.3
Not very important	40	43	38	40	43	33	19
Moderately important	28	29	30	23	29	33	29
Important	30	27	32	34	25	33	25



Expectations for the Leaders in the Debates (regional)

Q. Leaving aside which party you are considering voting for, which leader do you expect to have the best performance in the leader's debates?

BASE: Canadians	Region						
	CANADA	BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL
n=	1496	244	124	108	569	298	153
Margin of error (/ -)	2.5	6.2	8.8	9.4	4.1	5.7	7.9
Stephen Harper	30	29	47	33	31	20	26
Jack Layton	30	37	20	34	32	27	25
Elizabeth May	11	14	12	12	15	2	16
Gilles Duceppe	9	3	1	4	3	29	4
Stephane Dion	5	3	5	5	5	7	6
Nobody	6	4	5	4	6	6	10
Do not know/no response	9	10	10	8	9	7	12

Expectations for the Leaders in the Debates (regional)

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BASE: Canadians	Current Vote Intention						
	CANADA	CPC	LPC	NDP	GP	BQ	Undecided
n=	1496	497	383	280	136	109	41
Margin of error (/ -)	2.5	4.4	5.0	5.9	8.4	9.4	15.3
Stephen Harper	30	60	15	15	23	11	8
Jack Layton	30	20	30	56	24	24	21
Elizabeth May	11	4	19	10	32	2	7
Gilles Duceppe	9	4	6	4	3	52	11
Stephane Dion	5	1	13	3	7	3	0
Nobody	6	5	7	5	2	3	12
Do not know/no response	9	5	11	7	9	4	41

Methodology:

Today's poll was conducted 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.

The field dates for this survey are September 29 to October 1, 2008. In total, a random sample of 1,496 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey. A sample of this size provides a margin of error of +/- 2.5 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.