

## ELECTION ISSUES

*CANADIANS HAVE THE ECONOMIC JITTERS NOW, BUT WORRY ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT LONGER TERM*

[OTTAWA – September 7, 2008] – Canadians are not panicked, but they are worried about the economy, as they head into a federal election.

Technically, Canada has not had the two consecutive quarters of negative growth that economists call a “recession”. But more than half of Canadians (58%) say they believe Canada is already in a mild recession. A few (4%) even say we are in a severe recession.

Ontarians are the most concerned: 76% think Canada is in a recession. Only 20% think the country is in a period of moderate growth. As Canadians prepare for a federal election, a new EKOS poll shows a good deal of churn in the mix of campaign issues facing the electorate.

Ninety per cent of Canadians say that the economy should be among the priority issues in this campaign, compared with 66% who say the environment should be a priority.

Interestingly, though, almost two-thirds of Canadians see the issue of global warming as being the most important facing Canada in the medium- to long-term.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- **More than half of Canadians (58%) say they believe Canada is already in a mild economic recession**
- **Ninety per cent of Canadians say that the economy should be among the priority issues in this campaign**
- **Almost two-thirds of Canadians see the issue of global warming as being the most important facing Canada in the medium- to long-term**
- **Liberal Party’s “Green Shift” plan runs well ahead of the Liberal Party in popularity**
- **Economic concerns (36%) now rival social issues (37%) for “most important issue” in upcoming federal campaign**
- **At this stage it does not appear that we will have a traditional “issues-driven” campaign**

*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.*

At the moment, the electorate seems more concerned with leadership than with policy issues, and it is not clear how the economic jitters Canadians are feeling will play out over the campaign. Normally, a weak economy is bad news for an incumbent party like the Conservatives. Moreover, many Canadians are anxious about the country's ability to adapt economically to longer-term challenges, such as a lower-carbon economy.

However, at the moment, Canadians have more faith in Stephen Harper's leadership, on the economy among other issues, than they do the other leaders.

On the environment, which the Liberal leader Stéphane Dion has tried to make his own, there is, if anything, a more interesting story. Sixty-three per cent of Canadians say that the issue is the most important facing Canada in the medium- to long-term. That should be good news for the Liberals (as well as the Greens). And remarkably, roughly half of Canadians who have an opinion, think Dion's "Green Shift" plan to increase taxes on greenhouse-gas emitting energy and cut income taxes is a good one.

Still, the Liberals as a party are running 20 percentage points behind their Green Shift plan, and the party is, in turn, running ahead of Mr. Dion. While there is a potential upside here for the Liberals on the environmental issue over the course of the campaign, in the short-term, this calls yet more attention to the problems of his leadership.

### Economic jitters

Over the past several campaigns, in a forced choice analysis, Canadians put social issues substantially ahead of the economy, fiscal issues and ethics and accountability. However, the economy is now at least equally important as social issues.

Not surprising, considering most Canadians believe the country is now in a recession (even if economists say the slow-down does not yet meet the technical definition). More than half of Canadians (58%) say they believe Canada is already in a mild recession. A few (4%) even say we are in a severe recession.

Ontarians are the most concerned: 76% think Canada is in a recession. Only 20% think the country is in a period of moderate growth.

Longer term, Canadians are also worried about the way in which wealth is being distributed. A large majority of Canadians (73%) say they are concerned that we are moving to a society more divided between "haves" and "have-nots". This concern is not limited to centre and left voters. Most Conservative voters (62%) share this concern. These concerns are highest in Quebec, as well as among the elderly, and not surprisingly, low-income households.

Although Canada's economy is arguably more closely tied to the world economy than ever before, Canadians are looking to political solutions closer to home. Fifty-seven per cent of Canadians say that in light of our economic situation, Canada should be focusing on domestic issues. That compares with just 22% who think the emphasis should be on emerging economic powerhouses like India and China, and an even smaller 11% who think the focus should be on our relations with the United States.

EKOS President Frank Graves offered his analysis of the election issues: "There is little sense, that this election will be a classic 'issues driven' campaign. Despite the fact that voters say issues are at least as important as leadership, there does not appear to be a pivotal free trade or deficit type issue such as we have seen in previous elections. It appears that leadership is the initial focus and so far is working to the Conservative Party's advantage.

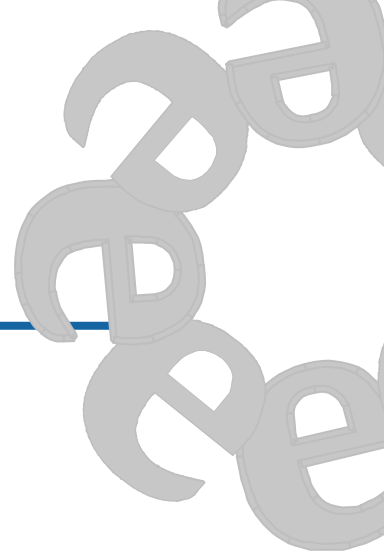
"There is more to this story though. The impacts of rising anxieties about the economy have yet to really express themselves. Furthermore, it appears that Mr. Dion's favourite issues — the environment and the "Green Shift" remain potential advantages for the Liberals. Long-term concerns about climate change are extremely high and as many Canadians support as oppose the Green Shift (although Conservative supporters are more off-side). Appetite for a longer-term climate change strategy is much-higher amongst the post-boomer cohort. It is possible the Liberals can turn this to their advantage over the length of the campaign."

### **Methodology:**

Today's poll was conducted using EKOS' unique hybrid internet-telephone research panel, PROBIT<sup>®</sup>. This panel is **randomly** recruited from the general population, meaning that, the only way to be included in PROBIT<sup>®</sup> is through random selection. Unlike opt-in internet-only research panels, PROBIT<sup>®</sup> supports confidence intervals and error testing.

The field dates for this survey are September 2 to September 4, 2008. In total, a random sample of 2000 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey. A sample of this size provides a margin of error of +/- 2.2 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.



## Detailed Tables:

### State of the Economy

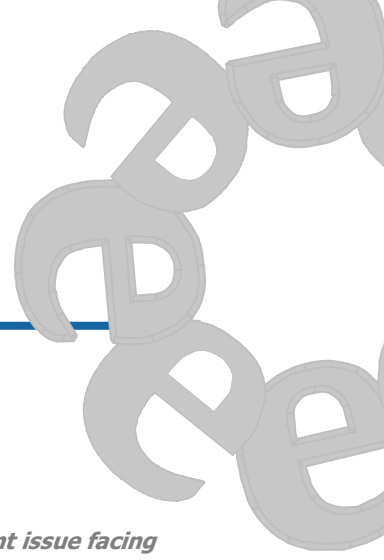
*Q. Which of the following best describes how you feel about Canada's economy? Would you say the economy is currently ...?*

BASE: Decided Voters	Canada	BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL
n=	2000	281	172	142	731	453	220
...in a severe recession	<b>4</b>	2	1	1	4	7	2
...in a mild recession	<b>58</b>	54	42	45	72	46	60
...in a period of moderate growth	<b>30</b>	30	41	44	20	37	31
...in a period of strong growth	<b>2</b>	4	2	5	0	3	3
Don't know/No response	<b>6</b>	8	15	5	4	7	4

### Election Priorities

*Q. Thinking about the possibility of a federal election being held soon, what priority should be placed on the following issues...? (% "high priority")*

BASE: All Canadians	CANADA	Federal Vote Intention				
		CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	BQ
n=	2000	693	497	328	177	128
The economy	<b>90</b>	93	88	89	84	93
The environment / climate change	<b>66</b>	48	75	72	84	81
The war in Afghanistan	<b>47</b>	49	50	47	40	33
Canada-U.S Relations	<b>43</b>	52	44	34	33	36



## Global Warming – Most Important Issue Facing Canada?

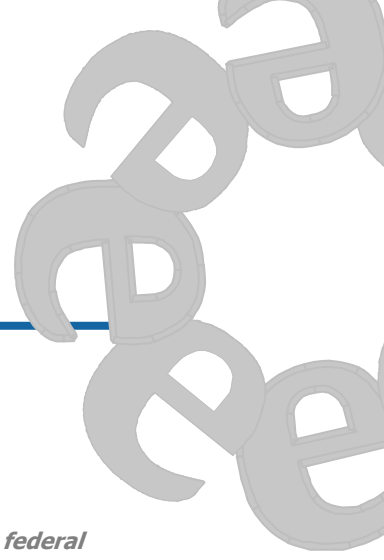
*Q. Over the medium to long term I think that global warming will be the most important issue facing Canada. Do you agree/disagree with...?*

BASE: All Canadians n=	CANADA 2000	Federal Vote Intention				
		CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	BQ
		693	497	328	177	128
Disagree (1-3)	20	36	11	14	7	6
Neither (4)	15	16	17	13	12	8
Agree (5-7)	63	47	70	72	78	85

## Views on the Green Shift

*Q. The Liberal Party under Stéphane Dion has proposed a new tax system to combat global warming. It would increase taxes on forms of energy that create greenhouse gases, and use that money to cut income taxes - this plan is called The Green Shift. Do you support or oppose this idea?*

BASE: All Canadians n=	CANADA 2000	Federal Vote Intention				
		CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	BQ
		693	497	328	177	128
Oppose	44	76	19	35	34	26
Support	45	17	74	53	49	62
DK/NR	11	7	8	12	17	12



## Most Important Election Issue

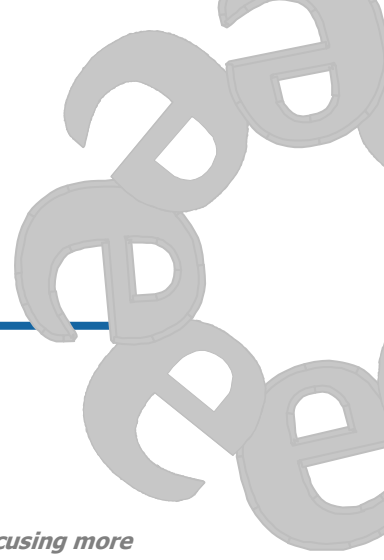
*Q. Which of the following do you think should be the most important issue for the next federal election?*

	CANADA		Federal Vote Intention				
	2008	2006	CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	BQ
BASE: All Canadians n=	<b>2000</b>	1500	693	497	328	177	128
Social issues (health, education)	<b>37</b>	53	19	38	58	35	57
The economy (jobs, growth)	<b>36</b>	20	47	42	22	27	22
Fiscal issues (taxes, debt)	<b>14</b>	14	23	10	9	10	14
Ethics & accountability	<b>10</b>	11	8	7	10	17	6
DK/NR	<b>4</b>	1	1	2	0	11	2

## Divided Society

*Q. I really worry that we are moving to a more divided society of haves and have nots. Do you agree/disagree with...?*

	CANADA		Federal Vote Intention				
	2008	2006	CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	BQ
BASE: All Canadians n=	<b>2000</b>	1500	693	497	328	177	128
Disagree (1 3)	<b>11</b>	18	18	11	6	4	4
Neither (4)	<b>15</b>	19	19	11	10	18	11
Agree (5 7)	<b>73</b>	62	62	77	82	77	83



## Looking Closer to Home

*Q. Given the current state of the Canadian economy, do you think Canada should be focusing more on ...?*

BASE: All Canadians n=	CANADA 2000	Federal Vote Intention				
		CPC 693	Liberal 497	NDP 328	Green 177	BQ 128
Domestic issues here at home	<b>57</b>	55	56	61	58	61
Developing relations with emerging superpowers like	<b>22</b>	20	32	24	22	14
Strengthening the relationship with the United States	<b>11</b>	19	6	7	7	9