

## ELECTION IS HARPER'S TO LOSE

*TIMELY HARPER ELECTION CALL YIELDS FORMIDABLE ADVANTAGES FOR THE CPC  
– INCLUDING WEAK LIBERAL LEADERSHIP*

[OTTAWA – September 7, 2008] – It appears that now may be the most auspicious time for the Conservatives to pursue a majority since Brian Mulroney's victory in 1988.

It is not so much burgeoning enthusiasm for Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party of Canada as a very grim outlook for the Stéphane Dion-led Liberal Party that has produced this notable rupture in what had been a remarkably stable --and gridlocked -- political landscape in Canada since the 2006 election.

Three key factors are at play.

First, the Canadian electorate are underwhelmed by Mr. Dion. Nearly 2 years after his ascension to the Liberal leadership, he trails Mr. Harper by a huge margin for "best Prime Minister". He also trails Jack Layton and loses to "none of the above". Moreover, he inspires little trust or confidence on the key issues of the day.

Second, the underlying division of the Canadian electorate has shifted unfavourably for the LPC. Just as the various right of centre parties struggled in political oblivion for over a decade, it appears it is the centre and left who are now divided, creating ideal conditions for a unified Conservative Party.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- **National federal vote intention among decided voters: CPC 37%, LPC 24%, NDP 19%, Green Party 10%, and the BQ 6%**
- **Conservatives also have the leadership advantage with Harper seen as "best Prime Minister" (32%), followed by Layton (19%); Dion is a distant third (12%)**
- **Similar scores are given for leader "most trusted" to deliver on campaign promises: 30% Harper, 16% Layton, and 13% Dion**
- **Concerns with the economy and directionality of the country may be looming challenges for the incumbent Conservatives**

*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.*

Third, Stephen Harper Conservatives have re-shaped the party's traditional socio-economic base. It is no longer a party of the affluent, which achieves success by dipping into the middle class to augment its support. It has displaced the Liberal Party as the party of the middle class, and reaches out from there to add some affluent and some working class voters.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the Liberals were able to dominate the centre and left of the political spectrum in Canada, with NDP support hovering around 15% -- and sometimes less. Today, the Green Party and the NDP together account for nearly 30% of the vote. Essentially, this means that the Liberals have lost about 15% of their historically reliable voter pool. Coupled with a leader who is poorly regarded, at least for now, this makes the goal of restoring the LPC's traditional dominance nearly impossible. In fact, the party's most realistic goal may be reduced to stopping a Conservative majority.

It would be premature to forecast the outcome of the election now. But as the election has loomed, the picture has shifted rapidly from one of apparent gridlock and parity, to a major advantage for the CPC. If an election were held today, the Conservatives would likely win a slim majority, or come very close to it.

#### Regional & demographic analysis of vote intention

A regional analysis shows the CPC running well in all regions of the country (37% nationally), but particularly so in Alberta (66%) and British Columbia (44%). The Liberals are trailing behind (24% nationally), but continue to hold their own in Ontario (32%) and Atlantic Canada (30%). In fact, one of the only encouraging signs for the LPC is their potentially strong prospects in seat-rich Ontario. The NDP (19% nationally) have their best showings in the Prairies (38%) and Atlantic Canada (36%).

In terms of demographics, there is a crucial divide before and after the baby boom. Boomers and seniors have largely defected from their traditionally strong support of the LPC. Despite large shifts across the Generation X and Generation Y segments, the post-boomer cohorts are much less attracted to the LPC. Initially, it would seem that this is an advantage for the CPC since boomers and seniors are more likely to actually vote. This generational divide does bear careful watching. Our research shows a broad consensus that boomers exert a virtual stranglehold over the political agenda. This is increasingly a point of resistance with Generation X in particular. It will be interesting to see whether the trailing boomer cohorts will heighten their levels of political engagement in the face of the increasingly plausible prospect of a Conservative majority cast in the image of the boomers' interests and values.

### A note on the political context in Canada

Unlike the American presidential campaign, the current Canadian campaign is not rooted in a society which had abandoned confidence in its overall trajectory. Thus the messages of "change" are not so resonant in Canada. Despite this important qualitative difference in political context, there are a few notable shifts in confidence in the country and the economy which bear watching.

Simply put, there has been a quite significant decline in confidence in national direction over the past few months (from 57% "right direction" in July to 45% in the current survey). This is most likely a product of rising economic angst where we now find most Canadians convinced that the country is in a recession, albeit a mild one (58%). This also probably explains the relative salience of "the economy" as an issue for this election (please see our "Election Issues" release for more on this issue, including detailed tables of results).

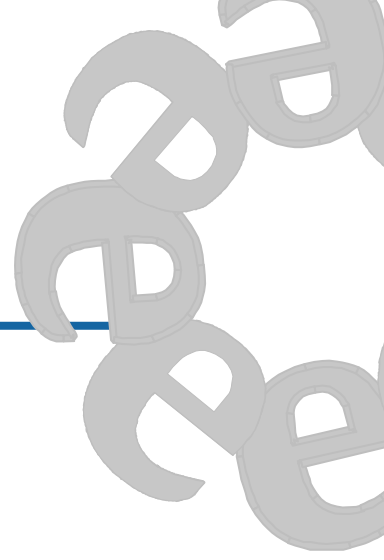
Curiously, eroding national and economic confidence has not had a deleterious impact on the political fortunes of the CPC incumbent. This may be due to the weak confidence in the economic credentials of the political alternatives. We do, however, note that there may well be a lagged political price to pay for the Conservatives which bears watching in the coming weeks.

### **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.

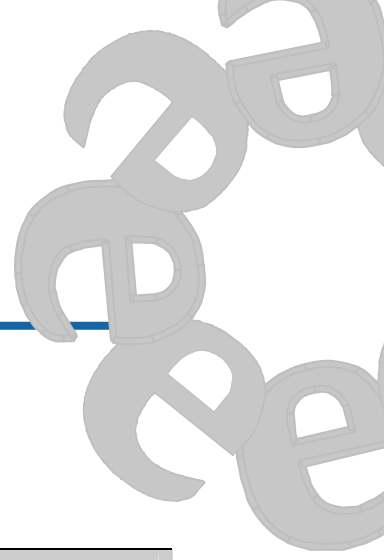


**Detailed Tables:**

**Federal Vote Intention By Region**






*Q. If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?*

BASE: Decided Voters n=	Canada	BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL
	<b>37</b>	44	66	36	36	25	29
	<b>24</b>	18	17	14	32	18	30
	<b>19</b>	28	8	38	12	21	36
	<b>10</b>	10	8	8	14	7	5
	<b>6</b>	0	0	1	0	26	0
Other	<b>3</b>	0	1	4	5	3	0



## Federal Vote Intention By Demographics

*Q. If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?*

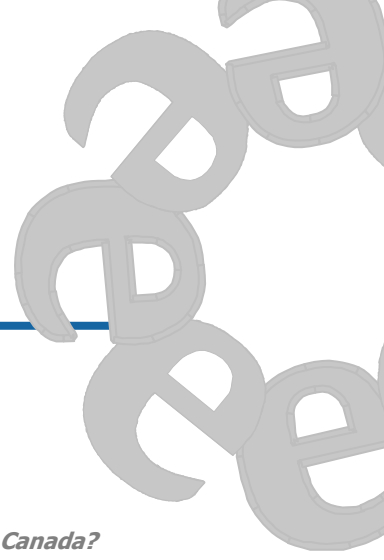
BASE: Decided Voters n=	CANADA	Gender		Age				Education		
		M	F	<25	25-44	45-64	65+	HS	Col.	Uni.
	<b>37</b>	46	28	25	34	40	46	37	44	30
	<b>24</b>	21	27	22	24	24	25	23	20	30
	<b>19</b>	18	21	33	17	19	17	22	13	23
	<b>10</b>	7	13	4	14	9	8	6	13	11
	<b>6</b>	5	7	9	7	8	1	7	7	5
Other	<b>3</b>	3	4	6	5	2	2	4	3	2

## Party Platform Driving Vote Intention

*Q. [IF DECIDED] What is the main factor that makes you decide in favour of [PARTY] at this point?*

*Q. [IF UNDECIDED] For you, what is the main factor when deciding who to vote for?*

BASE: Decided & Undecided Voters n=	Federal Vote Intention					
	CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	BQ	Undecided
	693	497	328	177	128	166
Party platform / ideas	37	36	54	40	42	43
Party leader	27	11	12	1	10	3
Dislike of other parties	23	28	20	36	30	4
Local candidate	6	13	9	2	8	12
Other	6	10	5	17	8	19
Don't know/No response	0	2	0	4	2	19



## Best Prime Minister

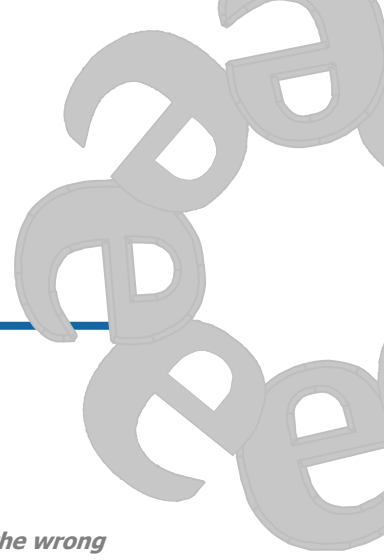
*Q. Which of the following leaders do you think would make the best Prime Minister for Canada?*

BASE: All Canadians n=	CANADA	Federal Vote Intention				
		CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	BQ
	<b>2000</b>	693	497	328	177	128
Stephen Harper (CPC)	<b>32</b>	84	3	3	10	9
Jack Layton (NDP)	<b>19</b>	4	14	69	9	10
Stéphane Dion (Liberal)	<b>12</b>	0	46	3	5	3
Elizabeth May (Green)	<b>5</b>	1	4	1	34	0
Gilles Duceppe (BQ)	<b>3</b>	0	1	1	1	48
None of the above	<b>18</b>	5	26	15	23	18
DK/NR	<b>11</b>	6	6	7	18	11

## Most Trusted Leader

*Q. Which of the following leaders could you trust to actually do what they are promising to do if elected?*

BASE: All Canadians n=	CANADA	Federal Vote Intention				
		CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	BQ
	<b>2000</b>	693	497	328	177	128
Stephen Harper (CPC)	<b>30</b>	77	3	4	9	13
Jack Layton (NDP)	<b>16</b>	2	12	67	7	7
Stéphane Dion (LPC)	<b>13</b>	1	52	3	5	6
Elizabeth May (Green)	<b>6</b>	2	9	3	31	1
Gilles Duceppe (BQ)	<b>5</b>	0	1	6	1	59
None of the above	<b>19</b>	12	18	12	30	5
Don't know/No response	<b>10</b>	6	5	6	17	10



## Direction of Country

*Q. All things considered, would you say the country is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?*

BASE: Decided Voters n=	Canada		BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL
	Sep. 08 2000	Jul. 08						
Right direction	<b>45</b>	57	43	61	51	44	40	46
Wrong direction	<b>37</b>	33	42	18	36	41	38	34
Don't know/No response	<b>18</b>	10	15	21	13	15	22	20