

CANADIAN POLITICAL PULSE

Tory Four-Point Lead Continues as Canada Awaits New Federal Budget

Jack Layton posts a positive momentum score, as his party reaches the 20 per cent mark for the first time since the 2008 campaign.

[TORONTO – Mar. 2, 2010] – The three main federal party leaders have improved their standing during the Winter Olympic break, and the ruling Conservatives maintain their four-point advantage over the Liberals as Canada prepares to review the latest federal budget, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

Voting Intention

Across the country, 33 per cent of decided voters (-1 since mid-February) would cast a ballot for the Conservative candidate in their riding if a new federal election took place today.

The Liberal Party is second with 29 per cent (-1), three points ahead of the proportion of the vote that the party received in the October 2008 federal election.

The New Democratic Party (NDP) is third with 20 per cent (+2), followed by the Bloc Québécois with nine per cent (=), and the Green Party also with nine per cent (+1). This is the best result for the NDP since an Angus Reid survey conducted in the middle of the 2008 federal campaign.

Regional Breakdowns

The Tories remain the most popular party in Alberta (55%) and Manitoba and Saskatchewan (52%), but have lost ground on other regions. In Ontario, Tories and Grits are virtually tied (Con. 34%, Lib. 33%). In British Columbia, they are in a dead heat at 33 per cent, with the NDP a close third with 25 per cent.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Voting Intention: Con. 33%, Lib. 29%, NDP 20%, BQ 9%, Grn. 9%.**
- **Approval Rating: Layton 36%, Harper 29%, Ignatieff 19%.**
- **Momentum: Layton +3, Ignatieff -19, Harper -29.**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From February 25 to February 26, 2010, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,008 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

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While the Liberals have improved in Alberta (27%), they continue to trail the Bloc Québécois in Quebec (BQ 34%, Lib. 23%), with the Tories in third place with 19 per cent. The NDP, despite falling to third place in BC, had a good showing in Ontario (22%).

Approval

With no activity in the House of Commons over the past few weeks, the three main party leaders posted higher approval ratings than they did in mid-February. Prime Minister and Conservative leader Stephen Harper gained three points and is now at 29 per cent. Liberal Party and Official Opposition leader Michael Ignatieff had the best fortnight of his tenure, and gained four points (19%). However, the NDP's Jack Layton did even better, improving on his mid-February score by seven points (36%). Layton's performance now gets a thumbs up from one third of Canadians.

Momentum

While Harper posted the worst momentum score of the three leaders again, his numbers (-29) are not as bad as they were last month (-34). In all, seven per cent of Canadians report an improvement in their opinion of the Prime Minister over the past month, while 37 per cent say their views have worsened. Ignatieff (-19) maintained his showing from mid-February, a definite improvement from his -33 score in December 2009. Layton has become the first leader to reach the positive momentum plateau (+3) in 2010.

The Leaders

With the possibility of a new election fresh in the minds of Canadians, it was important to review how voters feel about the current crop of political leaders.

Canadians are evenly divided in their assessment of Harper (43% think the Tories should keep him until the next election, 44% believe he should be replaced). However, Tory voters came out in favour of their leader by a 5-to-1 margin (80% would keep Harper, 16% want a change at the helm.)

The level of support from party faithful is equally impressive for the NDP's Layton (82% of NDP voters would keep him, 12% would replace him) and the Bloc's Gilles Duceppe (only seven per cent of Bloc voters would change Duceppe, and 88 per cent would retain him).

The Green Party's Elizabeth May is supported by 62 per cent of Green voters, while 19 per cent would like to face the next federal election with a new leader.

Ignatieff had the lowest score on this question. Almost three-in-five Liberal voters (57%) would keep him as leader of the Liberal Party, while three-in-ten (30%) would replace him.

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Analysis

The federal budget presents the first opportunity for the opposition to topple the government, following tense weeks marked by the prorogation of Parliament and the Olympic break.

The numbers show the Liberals gaining in British Columbia and maintaining a tight race in Ontario, while the Tories remain strong in the Prairies. The Bloc is now in the mid-thirties in Quebec, with the Tories closing in on the Grits. The NDP arrives at the spring session with its best national numbers since the last campaign, and with a popular leader who boasts a positive momentum score.

It is important to note that all three main leaders experienced their biggest increases on approval at a time when the Olympics were on and there was no activity in the House of Commons. The discussions about the budget and its repercussions will play a key role in defining whether Canadians continue to show an increased rapport with the leaders and their parties, or give way to more negative assessments as the year progresses.

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Canadian Political Pulse - TREND

If a federal election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency?

	Feb. 25-26	Feb. 11-13	2008 Election
Conservative Party	33%	34%	37.6%
Liberal Party	29%	30%	26.2%
New Democratic Party	20%	18%	18.2%
Bloc Québécois	9%	9%	10.0%
Green Party	9%	8%	6.8%
Other party	1%	1%	1.2%

Canadian Political Pulse - REGIONS

If a federal election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency?

	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Conservative Party	33%	33%	55%	52%	34%	19%	29%
Liberal Party	29%	33%	27%	17%	33%	23%	33%
New Democratic Party	20%	25%	9%	15%	22%	16%	27%
Bloc Québécois	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	34%	0%
Green Party	9%	8%	7%	16%	10%	5%	11%
Other party	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	3%	0%

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Canadian Political Pulse - APPROVAL

Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of each of the following people?
(Change since Feb. 11-13)

	Approve	Disapprove	Not sure
Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader Stephen Harper	29% (+3)	48% (-3)	23% (+1)
Liberal Party and Official Opposition leader Michael Ignatieff	19% (+4)	48% (-1)	33% (-3)
New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jack Layton	36% (+7)	30% (-4)	34% (-3)

Canadian Political Pulse - MOMENTUM

Over the course of the past month, would you say your opinion of each of the following people has improved, stayed the same or worsened?
(Change since Feb. 11-13)

	Improved	Stayed the same	Worsened	Not sure
Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader Stephen Harper	8% (+1)	48% (+4)	37% (-4)	7% (=)
Liberal Party and Official Opposition leader Michael Ignatieff	9% (=)	52% (+1)	28% (=)	11% (-1)
New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jack Layton	12% (+3)	68% (-2)	9% (-1)	10% (-1)

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Canadian Political Pulse - ELECTION IN 2010

Thinking about the five main federal party leaders, do you think each of these parties should keep their current leader or change their leader before the next federal election? –

Stephen Harper – Conservative

	Total	Voted Conservative in 2008 election (285 respondents)
Keep the current leader	43%	80%
Change the leader	44%	16%
Not sure	13%	5%

Canadian Political Pulse - ELECTION IN 2010

Thinking about the five main federal party leaders, do you think each of these parties should keep their current leader or change their leader before the next federal election? –

Michael Ignatieff – Liberal

	Total	Voted Liberal in 2008 election (207 respondents)
Keep the current leader	29%	57%
Change the leader	50%	30%
Not sure	20%	13%

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Canadian Political Pulse - ELECTION IN 2010

Thinking about the five main federal party leaders, do you think each of these parties should keep their current leader or change their leader before the next federal election? –

Jack Layton – New Democratic Party (NDP)

	Total	Voted NDP in 2008 election (136 respondents)
Keep the current leader	61%	82%
Change the leader	23%	12%
Not sure	16%	6%

Canadian Political Pulse - ELECTION IN 2010

Thinking about the five main federal party leaders, do you think each of these parties should keep their current leader or change their leader before the next federal election? –

Gilles Duceppe – Bloc Québécois

	Total	Voted BQ in 2008 election (71 respondents)
Keep the current leader	37%	88%
Change the leader	27%	7%
Not sure	36%	5%

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Canadian Political Pulse - ELECTION IN 2010

Thinking about the five main federal party leaders, do you think each of these parties should keep their current leader or change their leader before the next federal election? –

Elizabeth May – Green

	Total	Voted Green in 2008 election (63 respondents)
Keep the current leader	45%	62%
Change the leader	20%	19%
Not sure	36%	18%

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Angus Reid Public Opinion is a practice of Vision Critical—a global research and technology company specializing in custom online panels, private communities, and innovative online methods. Vision Critical is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Public Opinion team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995

Vision Critical is now one of the largest market research enterprises in the world. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.

Angus Reid Public Opinion polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum (www.angusreidforum.com), Springboard America (www.springboardamerica.com) and Springboard UK (www.springboarduk.com) online panels, which are carefully recruited to ensure representation across all demographic and psychographic segments of these populations. Panel members pass through rigorous screening and a double opt-in process ensuring highly motivated and responsive members. These premier online survey platforms present respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses. Each survey is actively sampled and weighted to model that characteristics of the universe required and employs the latest in quality control techniques to ensure data validity.

Since 2006, Angus Reid has covered eight provincial elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes.

Angus Reid, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election. More information on our electoral record can be found at:
<http://www.visioncritical.com/record-of-accuracy>

More information on the way Angus Reid conducts public opinion research can be found at
<http://www.visioncritical.com/what-we-do/practices/angus-reid-public-opinion/>

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**For more information, please contact
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

Copies of this poll are available on our website:
<http://www.visioncritical.com/category/global-opinions-and-trends>

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