

**Campaign Week One: PC and NDP Collapse on the Horizon,
and Hints of Weakness in the Liberal Fortress**

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Campaign Week One¹:

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Overview—PCs and NDP Risk Oblivion, Huge Majority for the Liberals Remains a Possibility, But Liberals Shows Early Signs of Some Fading

Right after the writ was dropped, all the opposition parties joined in unison to blast the government Liberals for calling a needless election. But, only the Bloc and Alliance seem destined to benefit from public disaffection. Without a dramatic change of fortune in coming weeks, the federal PCs face the distinct possibility of re-electing at most a handful of members, principally a few well liked Maritime notables like Elsie Wayne. A complete shut-out cannot be ruled out, as evidenced in tables 1 and 2, below.

Table 1: Vote Intentions Tracked with DNKs Excluded

	Completed Sept. 27 th	Completed October 12 th	Completed October 25 th
Liberals led by Jean Chretien	47	45	44
Canadian Alliance led by Stockwell Day	24	26	27
Progressive Conservatives led by Joe Clark	10	7	8
NDP led by Alexa McDonough	9	11	8
Quebec only: Bloc Quebecois led by Gilles Duceppe	9	11	10
Other (volunteered)	1	>0	3
Percent DNK excluded from final percent calculation	30	12	18

¹ This is the first media poll conducted exclusively after the writ was dropped and the election called. The present document provides analysis that should be examined alongside its companion interview schedule (i.e. questions and answers).



Table 2: Regional Vote, DNKs Excluded, Current Wave

	BC N=138	Alberta N=502	Sask- Man N=74	ON N=332	905 N=541	QC N=252	Atlantic N=507
The Liberals led by Jean Chretien	40	25	35	52	62	40	55
The Canadian Alliance led by Stockwell Day	47	60	25	27	24	11	11
QUEBEC: the Bloc Quebecois led by Gilles Duceppe	-	-	-	-	-	40	-
The NDP led by Alexa McDonough	6	6	28	9	5	2	13
The Progressive Conservatives led by Joe Clark	6	8	2	11	9	3	17
Other	2	2	10	1	*	3	3

No more popular than the Tories, the NDP is nonetheless likely to send a few more Members to Ottawa thanks to a certain concentration of support in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. But, the NDP's traditional strongholds in B.C. are gravely threatened as are its recent victories in the Maritimes.

If an election were held today instead of a month from now, the Liberals might win a resounding majority of Diefenbaker or Mulroney proportions. The Liberals are set to sweep Atlantic Canada and Ontario thanks to more than 50% of the decided vote in each of these regions and a very divided opposition in Atlantic Canada. The Liberals are apt to retain federalist strongholds in Quebec, win a few seats in Manitoba, and perhaps gain a few in B.C. But, the Liberals are showing some early hints of weakness, which could conceivably benefit the Alliance somewhat in the weeks ahead.

With respect to the events of the last ten days, the Liberals do not appear to have benefited at all from the tax cutting, mini-budget while they remain vulnerable to public discontent over the HRDC imbroglio.

With respect to the general mood of the electorate, the Liberals are benefiting from the fact that the electorate does not see this election as particularly important. The Opposition has failed to persuade the public that the outcome of balloting will matter



greatly. The Liberals meanwhile are vulnerable to a moderate, continuing, public desire for a change of government.

The gender gap between the Alliance and the Liberals persists but the gap is not a matter of simple biology. Anti-feminist thinking is a source of appeal for the Alliance party among males and females alike. Among Anglophones, young women, especially mothers, are attracted to the Liberals, likely in response to the Liberals' prominently disseminated emphasis on children's programs.

In Quebec, the Bloc remains the preferred channel for the expression of Quebec nationalism. Support for the Bloc is concentrated disproportionately among young francophones, especially those with college education rather than university or secondary education. For years, the community college system has been a locus of nationalist thinking.

Tories and NDP Risk Oblivion

Tories May Be Shut Out

The federal PCs and NDP are each at a nadir of support, each at 8% of decided voters nationally. This low level of support persists despite high levels of media attention given to the two parties and their leaders in the first week of the campaign.

The PCs are especially vulnerable to a Parliamentary shut-out because they earn two digit support in only two regions of the country and barely so in one of them-- Atlantic Canada (17%) and Ontario (11%). Furthermore, in the Atlantic region, where the Tories have their greatest strength, the top vote getter, the Liberals, well exceeds 50% support.

In Atlantic Canada, the Liberals lead with 55%, followed by the Tories with 17%, the NDP with 13%, and the Alliance with 11%. These Atlantic Canada figures are based on a special over-sample of Atlantic voters (n=507). The representative sample of Atlantic voters is considered accurate to within 4.5 percentage points 19 times out of 20.

NDP Repudiated in B.C., Still Welcome in Saskatchewan-Manitoba

The NDP is very vulnerable in its newly won Atlantic Canada ridings. Across the region, the NDP secures only 13% of decided support, only nominally higher than the 11% secured by the Alliance despite all the negative publicity the Alliance earned around the issue of regional subsidies and supports.

The greatest threat to the NDP is in B.C., where the NDP sits at an amazing 6% level of public support. Continuing public dismay over the conduct of the provincial NDP government is undoubtedly a factor in the depressing numbers for the NDP on the pacific coast.

While the NDP risks being shut out of both B.C. and Atlantic Canada, it is apt to retain some support in Manitoba and/or Saskatchewan, where the NDP seems to be in



a virtual three-way race with the Liberals and the Alliance. In these two prairie provinces, the NDP benefits from a hint of momentum—11% say that the NDP “is increasingly attracting support of people like [the respondent]” compared to 19% for the Liberals and 38% for the Alliance.

PCs and NDP Lack Momentum

The electorate continues to see the Alliance as the party of momentum with the Liberals in second position. But the Tories and NDP are rarely singled out as the parties that are increasingly attracting support. Respondents were asked: “Forgetting about your own preferences, so far as you can tell, which party is increasingly attracting support of people like yourself?”

Table 3 below illustrates the stability of perceived momentum over the last two weeks and the weakness of the Tories and NDP.

Table 3: Perceived Momentum in Two National Post/Southam/COMPAS Polls

	October 12 th	October 25 th
The Canadian Alliance	39	38
The Liberals	26	28
The Progressive Conservatives	7	5
The NDP	6	4
QUEBEC: the Bloc Quebecois	5	4
None of them	7	7
Refused	1	1
DNK	9	14

Fortress Liberalism under Assault by Mobile Alliance Forces

Liberal Strength—Raw Numbers in Key Regions and the Absence of a Sense of Public Urgency

As evidenced in tables 1 and 2, the Liberals have resounding leads in Atlantic Canada, where they are apt to pick up a large number of seats, and in Ontario, where they are apt to lose few seats to the Alliance.

The Alliance has an excellent chance of taking a handful of seats in very traditional, small town Tory areas such as in Lanark in Eastern Ontario, in the Simcoe region, and in the Niagara region. In North York, the Alliance candidate could conceivably achieve an upset win because of anger among Jewish voters about the Canadian vote in the UN Security Council blaming Israel exclusively for violence involving Palestinians. But, for the Alliance to make a big dent in Liberal armour, the Alliance party would have to make



inroads in the Harris Tories' second tier of support, the 905 crescent overlaying metro Toronto. COMPAS conducted a special n=541 oversample among 905 area ridings where the Liberal candidate secured fewer than 50% of the vote in the last federal election. Far from being threatened by the Alliance in this second tier of provincial Tory support, the Liberals are more popular here than in the province as a whole—62% vs. 52% across the province as a whole.

In Quebec, the Liberals are apt to hold onto their federalist strongholds. Despite the Alliance party's surpassing of the Tories and NDP, Stockwell Day's party has yet to reach the two digit mark in Quebec.

Liberals' chances are most blighted in Alberta, where the two Liberal cabinet ministers will have a difficult time securing re-election given the streamroller-like appeal of Alliance—60% province-wide vs. 25% for the Liberals (with DNKs excluded).

In neighbouring B.C., the second-place Liberals are likely to save some honour.

Quite apart from the power of their raw numbers, the Liberals benefit from a public opinion setting or zeitgeist that does not see the coming election as having earth-shattering importance. Respondents were asked if they thought that "the outcome of this election will make an enormous amount of different, a large difference, some difference, not much difference, or none at all." Most voters think that the election will make not much difference or none at all while only 14% consider that it will make enormous or a large difference.

Liberal Weakness # 1—Hints of Holes in the Fortress Wall

Voter support for the Liberals is not weakening enough for the weakness to be considered statistically significant. Support for the Liberals is nonetheless evincing a nominal decline—down from 47% in fieldwork completed September 27th to 45% in fieldwork completed October 12th and to 44% in fieldwork completed October 25th. While Liberal support appears to have abated by 3 points, Alliance support seems to have grown by the same margin.

Another indicator of possible weakness is an apparent rise in the undecided from the poll completed just before the writ was dropped—up from 12% to 18%. An apparent increase in the undecided could be a hint of trouble. In a similar spirit, there appears to be a small rise in voter uncertainty about why they are voting the way they are. Today, 8% of voters say that they don't know or refuse to say why they intend to vote for their preferred party, compared to less than 1% two weeks earlier.

Liberal Weakness # 2—Alliance Retains Momentum

As evidenced in table 3 above, the Alliance party continues to retain momentum. It is certainly the one party perceived as gaining increased support.



Liberal Weakness # 3—Chretien Continues to Underperform in Perceived Honesty and Outperform in Perceived Arrogance

Respondents were once again asked to rate each party leader on a 7 point scale in terms of honesty (and separately in terms of arrogance), “where 7 means honest (or arrogant) and 1, the opposite.” As evidenced in table 4 below, Chretien continues to earn weaker honesty scores—nominally weaker than Day and appreciably weaker than the Tory and NDP leaders. Table 5 shows that the Prime Minister continues to earn the highest arrogance scores.

Table 4: Honesty Scores

	Mean	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	DNK	REF
Alexa McDonough	4.4	9	12	19	13	10	6	6	25	2
Stockwell Day	4.1	9	11	19	15	10	7	11	17	2
Joe Clark	4.4	10	14	22	15	11	6	9	11	1
Gilles Duceppe	4.2	9	15	20	15	11	7	12	10	1
Jean Chretien	3.9	10	12	20	14	13	8	17	6	1

Table 5: Arrogance Scores

	Mean	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	DNK	REF
Jean Chretien	5.1	32	15	17	9	8	5	6	6	1
Stockwell Day	4.4	14	11	18	12	11	8	8	16	2
Gilles Duceppe	4.3	12	12	18	19	13	6	8	12	2
Joe Clark	3.6	7	6	15	18	17	13	13	10	1
Alexa McDonough	3.3	3	4	11	13	16	14	12	26	3

Liberal Weakness # 4—Electorate Remains Somewhat Intrigued by the Notion of Changing Government

Respondents were asked to indicate “how they feel about the idea of a change of government, using a 7 point scale where 7 means it’s definitely a time for a change in government and 1, definitely not a time for change. Scores remained essentially unchanged in two weeks with identical means of 4.7.

Liberal Weakness # 5—Liberals’ Mini-Budget May Have Backfired

The Liberals’ tax-cutting mini-budget may have backfired. On the one hand, voters seem somewhat hesitant to give the Liberals credit for understanding the importance of tax cuts. On the other hand, voters are slightly inclined to interpret the mini-budget as evidence that the Alliance was right all along in its advocacy of tax cutting.



The pro-Liberal and pro-Alliance questions were as follows:

Some people say that the mini-budget shows that the Liberals truly understand the importance of lower taxes and the Liberals deserve more public respect as a result. Please tell me how much you agree with this viewpoint using a 7 point scale where 7 means agree a lot, and 1 disagree a lot.

Some people say that the Liberals' tax cuts show that the Alliance party was right all along in advocating tax cuts, and that the Alliance deserves more public respect as a result. Please tell me how much you agree with this viewpoint using a 7 point scale where 7 means agree a lot, and 1 disagree a lot.

The distribution of responses to the pro-Liberal question appear in table 6 while the responses to the pro-Alliance question appear in table 7.

Table 6: Responses to the 7 Point Scale, Pro-Liberal Question (7=Agree)

Mean	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	DNK	REF
3.5	9	7	17	16	15	10	24	3	1

Table 7: Responses to the 7 Point Scale, Pro-Alliance Question (7=Agree)

Mean	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	DNK	REF
4.1	16	11	16	14	13	8	17	4	1

In a follow-up question, respondents were asked to indicate "how the tax cuts in the Liberals' mini-budget affect[ed] how [the respondent] fe[el]t about the parties." As evidenced in table 8, the overwhelming majority of voters were not affected by the mini-budget. About one-fourth were influenced in their attitudes towards the Liberals, with half of these becoming more pro-Liberal and the other half, more anti-Liberal.

The clearest evidence about the impact of the mini-budget is that the Liberal mini-budget achieved no net benefits for the Liberal party. After all, those who became more pro-Liberal were balanced by an equal number becoming more anti-Liberal. Meanwhile, a reasonably strong case can be made that the mini-budget gave the Alliance party increased legitimacy, as evidenced by the responses in table 7.

Table 8: All in all, how did the tax cuts in the Liberals' mini-budget affect how you feel about the parties?



	%
Pro-Liberal	13
Anti-Liberal	12
Pro-Alliance	2
Anti-Alliance	*
Pro-Prog. Conservative /Tory	*
Anti-Prog. Cons/Tory	*
Pro-NDP	*
Anti-NDP	*
Pro-Bloc	*
Anti-Bloc	*
No Impact	53
Dislike several or all	2
Like several or all	1
Other	5
DNK	11
Refused	1

Liberal Weakness #6--HRDC Imbroglia a Serious Liability

While the mini-budget did the Liberals no net good, the Auditor-General's report relating to HRDC spending most likely did the Liberals some harm. A clear majority of voters feel that the Prime Minister handled the issue of HRDC contracting poorly or badly. Furthermore, those who reporting becoming more anti-Liberal as a result of the imbroglia outnumber 10:1 those become more pro-Liberal.

Respondents were asked:

As you may know, the Auditor-General has released a report that is critical of how the federal government handled money given out by HRDC to various companies. How would you assess Prime Minister Chretien's performance on this issue [no rotation] excellent, good, poor, or bad. DON'T PROMPT BUT RECORD IN BETWEEN, DNK, REFUSE

	%
Excellent	2
Good	25
Poor	33
Bad	25
DNK	15
Refused	1



In a follow-up, respondents were asked “All in all, how did the mishandling of money at HRDC affect how you feel about the parties?” Most respondents reported that their attitudes to the parties were unaffected. But, 30% volunteered that they had become more anti-Liberal as a result while only 3% said that they had become more pro-Liberal. The HRDC imbroglio galvanises the Alliance vote while slightly demoralising the Liberal vote. Among Alliance voters, 53% declare that the issue made them more anti-Liberal. Among Liberal voters, 13% say that the issue turned them against their own party while 7 % said that the issue reinforced their attachment.

Liberal Weakness #7—Very High Alliance Morale

A final source of weakness is that Liberal voters are not as enthusiastic about their party or leader as are Alliance voters about theirs. For example, when asked why they support their party, Alliance voters are more apt to highlight “special reasons” for doing so—38% vs. 28%.

By the same token, Liberal voters do not quite rate their leader as honest as do Alliance voters rate theirs. In practice, 38% of Liberal voters score Chretien’s honesty as 6 or 7 on the 7 point scale. By comparison, 52% of Alliance voters score Day’s honesty as 6 or 7 on the 7 point scale. Among Liberals, Chretien earns a 5.1 mean honesty score compared to 5.6 for Day among Alliance voters.

A similar pattern emerges in the case of perceived arrogance. Liberals tend to see Chretien as moderately less arrogant than Day—means of 4.5 and 5.1, respectively. By contrast, Alliance voters perceive Chretien as much more arrogant than Day—6.0 vs. 3.2.

Alliance voters meanwhile are somewhat more likely to think that the election outcome will make a large or enormous differences—20% of Alliance voters vs. 13% among Liberals.

Gender, Ideology, and Hardcore Alliance, English Liberal, and Bloc Voters

Alliance

A gender gap divides Alliance voters from Liberal voters as it normally does rightwing from leftwing parties among the democracies. In practice, 22% of Canadian women vote Alliance compared to 48% who support the Liberals. Among English-speakers, the correspondent proportions are 27% and 50%.

The gender gap is not just about biology; it is also about gender ideology. Thus, both men and women are propelled towards the Alliance to the extent that they reject feminist ways of thinking about gender relations.

The Alliance party has its core appeal among older, married, non-feminist males, particularly among English-speakers. Among English-speakers as a whole, 32% intend



to vote Alliance. Among English-speaking males, this rises to 37%. Among English-speaking males 40 years of age or older, the Alliance share rises to 41%. Among the married members of the preceding group, the proportion rises further to 47%. Finally, among married, English-speaking men 40 and older who have serious reservations about government financial support for single mothers, support for the Alliance rises to 52%.²

Women are not as supportive of the Alliance as men, but the non- or anti-feminist impetus that propels men towards the Alliance also propels women in the same direction. Among English-speaking women, 27% intend to vote for the Alliance. This rises to 33% among those women who think that men equal women in their sense of responsibility.³ Among women who think that men are their moral equals and who also have reservations about government financial support for single motherhood, support for the Alliance jumps to 41%.⁴

While much is often made of the apparent religiosity of Alliance party supporters, the true situation is more complex. There is slight evidence that heavy church-going may be disproportionately higher among Alliance voters. The evidence is nonetheless slim, and furthermore Alliance voters also appear to include a disproportionate number of non-observant people.

Alliance voters are sometimes portrayed as prudish, but no evidence emerges from the study to support that portrayal. Respondents were asked how many lifetime sexual partners they had had. Alliance voters were no more likely than others to have limited themselves to one life-long partner.

The bottom line is that religion does not emerge as a clear and direct factor in party preference, but social and marital traditionalism does.

English-speaking Liberals

The Liberals have a particular appeal to younger women, especially with children. The appeal to mothers may have its roots in repeated Liberal pronouncements about child poverty and other child-related concerns. In practice, women are slightly more inclined to vote Liberal than are men—48% vs. 41%. Among women under 40, support for the Liberals rises to 64%. Among mothers under 40, support jumps to 70%.

² Respondents were asked: "One social issue these days is single motherhood. Please tell me how important it is for government to provide financial support for single mothers, using a 7 point scale where 7 means very important and 1, the opposite." Respondents were deemed to have reservations about financial support for single mothers if their score on this 7 point score was 4 or less.

³ Respondents were asked: "Comparing fathers with mothers and husbands with wives these days, do you perceive females in these comparisons as being a lot more responsible, somewhat more responsible, somewhat less responsible, or a lot less responsible than males? DON'T PROMPT FOR BUT RECORD "SAME."

⁴ See note 2, above.



Bloc

The Bloc voter core lies among younger French-speakers with college as opposed to university or purely secondary education. Among all Quebecers, the Bloc elicits 40% support. This rises to 46% among francophones, 57% among francophones under the age of 40, and to 68% among francophones under 40 who attended college.

Methodology

A total of n=2346 Canadians of voting age were interviewed nation-wide October 22-25, 2000, beginning at 2 p.m. on the day that the election was called. The core national, representative sample consisted of n=1000 respondents. Over-samples of approximately n=500 were fielded in each of Alberta, the 905⁵ suburban crescent around Toronto, and Atlantic Canada. The different regions were weighted to their proportional share of the Canadian population when national results were calculated. For the country as a whole, findings are deemed accurate to within 3.2 percentage points 19 times out of 20. The Alberta, 905, and Atlantic region samples are deemed accurate to within 4.5 percentage points 19 times out of 20. The B.C. (n=138), Ontario (n=332), Quebec (n=252), and Sask-Man (n=74) sub-samples are deemed accurate to within approximately 8, 5.5, 6.3, and 11.5 percentage points, respectively. Interviews were conducted by professional interviewers using computer-assisted telephone interviewing technology. The principal investigator and co-investigator on this project were Conrad Winn and Robert Laufer (416-459-6600).

⁵ 905 Ridings include: Brampton Center, Cambridge, Durham, Dufferin-Peel-Wellington, Guelph-Wellington, Halton, Kitchener-Center, Kitchener-Waterloo, Markham, Oak Ridges, Oakville, Oshawa, Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, Vaughan-King-Aurora, Waterloo-Wellington, Wentworth-Burlington, and Whitby-Ajax

