

**Belinda's Cross-Over—
Parliamentary Bullet, Electoral Blank**

A Nation-Wide COMPAS/Ottawa Citizen Poll



**COMPAS Inc.
Public Opinion and Customer Research
May 19, 2005**

Overview

The departure of leading Conservative M.P. Belinda Stronach for the Liberal benches and a senior cabinet post may well have helped the Liberal government in Parliament. The cross-over likely buoyed morale among remaining Liberal voters. But the cross-over appears to have done nothing to stem Liberal losses to the Conservatives, who are now in the lead nationally.

A highly skeptical public views cynically the cross-over. As detailed below,

- ❑ few voters see the cross-over as motivated by the good of the country (16%); a plurality (39%; an apparent 44% in Ontario) see it as motivated by the opportunity of a cabinet post;
- ❑ at least as many voters say that they are more likely to vote Conservative as a result of the cross-over than more likely to vote Liberal (21% vs. 16%);
- ❑ asked whether Ms. Stronach's riding should re-elect or defeat her, those advocating defeat edge out those advocating re-election (40% vs. 31%); and
- ❑ young voters (30 years and under), the segment to which she appealed strongly when running for the Conservative leadership, are generally more charitable in their feelings towards Ms. Stronach than older Canadians but they are no more persuaded to move Liberal by her cross-over than the public as a whole.



Detailed Findings

Methodological Note

A national sample of 500 voters was interviewed by professional interviewers using CATI on the evening of May 17, 2005 following heavily mediated reports of Ms. Stronach's change of party. The margin of error is 4.5 percentage points 19 times out of 20. Most of the striking findings from this COMPAS/Ottawa Citizen poll are outside the margin of error and can thus be treated as statistically valid.

The vote question was asked as a clean question, i.e. at the top of the interview.

Major Conservative Lead

As shown in table 1, the Conservatives now experience a perceptible lead over the Liberals—38% vs. 29%. Compared to a month ago, the Liberals are nominally down 1 percentage point while the Conservatives are nominally up four.



Stronach Poll
A Nation-wide COMPAS/Ottawa Citizen Poll, 20050519

Table 1: Tracking the National Vote
"Could you please tell me if you would vote for [ROTATE] if an election were held today? [ROTATE]"¹

	MAY 17	APR 14	MAR 11	FEB 26	FEB 1
The Conservative party led by Stephen Harper	38	34	30	29	28
The Liberal Party led by Paul Martin	29	30	35	38	42
The NDP led by Jack Layton	17	18	19	18	18
[IN QUEBEC] The Bloc Quebecois led by Gilles Duceppe	13	15	13	12	10
[UNPROMPTED] Other	3	4	3	3	2
[UNPROMPTED] DNK/Undecided/Refused/ Won't vote (excluded from calculation)	18	20	18	19	21

Cross-Over Motivated Mainly by Opportunity for a Cabinet Post, Not the Good of the Country

As shown in table 2, a plurality of voters attribute the cross-over to ministerial ambition or the opportunity for a cabinet post. In distant second place is policy disagreement as a motivation. The public interest falls in last place. Seat-rich Ontarians seem to place as much emphasis on ambition as the motivator.

Respondents 30 years of age and under are the most charitable, placing special emphasis on policy disagreement as the motivator. However, this

¹ Combines initial response plus "leaning" among respondents who initially aver that they don't know how they would vote.



Stronach Poll
A Nation-wide COMPAS/Ottawa Citizen Poll, 20050519

interpretation of Ms. Stronach's motivations does not lead the youngest cohort to become more predisposed to the Liberals than the electorate as a whole, as shown in table 3.

Table 2: Explaining the Cross-Over
"As you know, Conservative M.P. and former leadership candidate
Belinda Stronach just left the Conservatives to join Paul Martin's
government as a cabinet minister. Did she change parties mainly
because...[RANDOMIZE] [FORCED CHOICE]"
In Percent

	CDA	30 YEARS AND UNDER	ON	QC	LIB	CPC	NDP	BQ
The chance to get a cabinet position in the government	39	24	44	35	23	57	26	46
Of a policy disagreement with the Conservative party	27	38	28	25	31	16	41	26
Personality differences with the Conservative party leader	18	25	14	25	18	19	14	18
For the good of the country	16	13	15	14	28	7	20	11
[UNPROMPTED] Don't know/Refused	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



Impact of Stronach Cross-Over on Vote Intentions—Slightly More Likely to Vote Conservative

In the present climate of voter cynicism, the cross-over of Belinda Stronach has most likely contributed no immediate electoral benefit to the Liberals and may even be benefiting slightly the Conservatives.

The possibility of a slight benefit to the Conservatives by way of reaction against the change of party is suggested by the following findings:

- ❑ voters are about evenly divided in whether they are more likely or less likely to vote Liberal as a result (16% vs. 15%) but those who say that they are more likely to vote Conservative outnumber more than 2:1 those who say that they are less likely to (21% vs. 8%), as shown in table 3;
- ❑ when both pro- and anti-feelings are added together, the proportion reporting that they have become more anti-Liberal or more pro-Conservative amounts to 36% compared to the 24% who have become more pro-Liberal or anti-Conservative as a result of the cross-over, as shown in table 3; and
- ❑ more voters believe that Ms. Stronach's riding should defeat than re-elect her as a result of the cross-over (40% vs. 31%), and this seems especially so among Ontarians (49% vs. 30%), who may be more aware of her role in politics than other Canadians (see table 4).



Stronach Poll
A Nation-wide COMPAS/Ottawa Citizen Poll, 20050519

Table 3: Impact of Cross-Over on Vote Intentions
” Compared to your feelings yesterday, does Belinda Stronach’s
change of party make you personally...”
[ROTATE THE TWO PAIRS]

	CDA	30 YEARS AND UNDER	ON	QC	LIB	CPC	NDP	BQ	UNDEC
More likely to vote Liberal	16	5	16	10	49	2	22	0	4
Less likely to vote Liberal	15	26	9	26	6	14	14	44	11
More likely to vote Conservative	21	19	30	11	3	57	3	7	3
Less likely to vote Conservative	8	13	5	8	12	1	17	6	7
[UNPROMPTED] No change	41	37	40	45	29	26	45	44	74
[UNPROMPTED] Don't know/Refused	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



Stronach Poll
A Nation-wide COMPAS/Ottawa Citizen Poll, 20050519

*Table 4: Re-Elect or Defeat Belinda Stronach in her
Constituency?
" As we conclude, in your opinion should Belinda Stronach's
riding... [ROTATE]"In Percent*

	CDA	30 YEARS AND UNDER	ON	QC	LIB	CPC	NDP	BQ
Keep her in the next election	31	33	30	25	62	9	47	16
Defeat her	40	39	49	40	14	70	31	46
[UNPROMPTED] No opinion/Refused	29	29	21	34	24	21	22	38

