

**Human Rights in China:  
Harper's Public Diplomacy Outperforms  
Chretien's Quiet Diplomacy;  
Excellent for Human Rights, Neutral for Business**

**BDO Dunwoody CEO/Business Leader Poll  
by COMPAS for publication in  
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## **1.0 Introduction**

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's public diplomacy on the human rights situation in China elicited paradoxical reactions in Canadian journalism and business. Customary advocates of human rights in the *Globe and Mail* chastised the Prime Minister for ostensibly putting Canadian business opportunities at risk.

Some members of the COMPAS business panel also admonished Mr. Harper. But the overwhelming majority judged him well on the issue. The CEOs and business leaders on the panel saw the Prime Minister's public diplomacy as advancing human rights in China, likely causing no short-term pain for Canadian business, entirely justifiable even if Canadian business incurred some losses as a result, and ultimately benefiting Canadian business by helping to strengthen the Chinese legal system.

Prime Minister Chretien, a practitioner of quiet diplomatic arts during his many visits to China, earns a failing grade for his performance on China. Harper earns a reasonably good grade despite the strongly held concerns of a minority of panelists.

These are the principal findings from the weekly business web-survey conducted by COMPAS for the *Financial Post* under sponsorship of BDO Dunwoody LLP.

## **2.0 Good for Human Rights, Neutral for Canadian Business Interests; Harper Outperforms Chretien**

Panelists are strongly agreed that Harper's public diplomacy advances human rights, as shown in table 2A. Almost no one believes that human rights were set back as a result.



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As for the impact on business, most believe that there has been no impact. Among the minority perceiving an impact, those who foresee risk outnumber about 2:1 those who anticipate benefits.

As detailed in section 3.0, the minority of panelists admonishing Harper for his public diplomacy felt strongly on the issue. But they are a decided minority. Despite this admonishing minority, Harper nonetheless outperforms Chretien on the issue of relations with China, as shown in table 2B.

*Table 2A: (Q3-Q4) On balance, does speaking up about human rights in China...*

	%
Help human rights	69
Harm human rights	1
No change	30
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Help Canadian business	13
Harm Canadian business	31
No change	57

*Table 2B: (Q5) On a 100 point school report card, what grade would give each of the following for their China policies?*

	Mean
Prime Minister Stephen Harper	63
Former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien	49



### **3.0. How Panel Views China and China-Canada Relations**

#### **3.1. Canada Is Entitled to an Opinion, and a Law-Abiding China Would Be Excellent for the Planet**

The key factors driving the panel's majority approbation of the Prime Minister are a belief that Canada is entitled to express an opinion and a conviction that a China could become an excellent force for good on the planet if its legal system became more effective, as shown in table 3A. A more than two-thirds majority repudiates the idea that only the Chinese should be entitled to have opinions about human rights in that country. Meanwhile, almost all the members of panel believe that a law-abiding China would do a lot for business and a lot for peace and safety on the planet. A strong majority also believes that China needs to learn to respect human rights because of its history of inhumane treatment of minorities.

. The following verbatims reflect the position of the majority:

[It is vital to encourage the Chinese legal system because Chinese business crimes do much damage.] It is acceptable in China to copy (i.e., steal) foreign companies' technologies, and our own company loses a lot as a result.

Unfortunately, China, along with Russia, form the true evil empire. They are backwards in all sorts of ways, and their human rights record is appalling. China must be stopped.

I would never support people being oppressed and being held down by government. The answer would be to never brush this issue under any carpet, but to continue to address it publicly. If we are truly outraged, which happens very little in modern times, then we would be more strident in our disgust of the situation: cheap goods at what cost!

Any short-term harm to Canadian business caused by speaking up on human rights would be miniscule compared



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to the long-term benefits to business of having China clean up their legal system.

It's by talking openly about infractions that nations can move towards what we have in Canada.

I commend P.M. Harper for speaking up, even if this is not in the short-term economic interests of Canada.

Human rights violations cannot be ignored by the free world, and business with China should be conditional.

We have significant interests in China, and we won't be affected [by Harper's statement]. If any Canadian business is affected at all, it would have to be a very small business that doesn't know China all that well.

While overwhelming majority of the panel supports the Prime Minister on the issue, such support is not universal. The following verbatims reflect the sentiment of the admonishing minority:

He has no business criticizing the Chinese about human rights, as I do not believe that being critical of the most populous and enduring country in the world achieves anything except to highlight the arrogance of our government.

I think that it's arrogant to speak out on human rights in China.

Canada should refrain from sticking its nose in other countries' affairs.

Harper's approach to Chinese human rights actually is a good example of just showing off without having a clear agenda and real intention to resolve anything.



*Table3: (Q1) On a 7 point scale where 7 means strongly agree and 1, strongly disagree, to what extent do you agree with the following opinions about China and human rights RANDOMIZE*

	Mean	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	DNK
A law-abiding China can do a lot for world business	6.0	37	37	15	5	2	2	0	2
A law-abiding China can do a lot to preserve peace and safety on our nuclear armed planet	5.9	39	30	20	6	2	1	1	2
China must learn to respect human rights because of its cruel and inhumane treatment of minorities	5.6	32	28	18	14	3	2	2	2
Only the Chinese are entitled to an opinion about human rights in China	2.5	2	3	12	9	13	16	43	1

### **3.2. Business Gains from a Stronger Chinese Legal System, and Canada Should Not Be Deterred by Fear**

As evidenced in table 3B, the panel is divided on several aspects of Canada-China relations. Panelists are nonetheless virtually united on two matters. First, they believe that business wins from any effort to improve the Chinese legal system. Secondly, the possible threat of business harm should not stop us from speaking up.



*Table 3B; (Q2) On a 7 point scale where 7 means strongly agree and 1, strongly disagree, to what extent do you agree with the following opinions about Canada's speaking up about human rights in China. RANDOMIZE*

	Mean	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	DNK
Business wins from any effort to improve the Chinese legal system	5.3	19	27	28	12	9	1	2	2
Canada's speaking harms our business interests but this should not matter	4.4	14	18	15	16	19	10	4	4
Canada's relations with China put us in a good position to speak	4.4	10	10	31	18	14	11	2	3
There is no real evidence that any Canadian business is harmed	4.3	10	10	21	22	13	9	5	10
Canadian business wins because our government looks like a player	4.1	6	12	26	18	17	14	4	3
Canada's speaking harms our business interests so we shouldn't speak up	2.4	2	2	6	14	13	26	37	1

### 3.0 Methodology

The COMPAS web-survey of CEOs and leaders of small, medium, and large corporations was conducted November 22 - 24, 2006. Respondents constitute an essentially hand-picked panel with a higher numerical representation of small and medium-sized firms.



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Because of the small population of CEOs and business leaders from which the sample was drawn, the study can be considered more accurate than comparably sized general public studies. In studies of the general public, surveys 129 are deemed accurate to within approximate 8.7 percentage points 19 times out of 20. The principal and co-investigator on this study are Conrad Winn, Ph.D. and Tamara Gottlieb.

