

Canadians Call for New Election

**Harper Would Win Big Majority,
Sweep Seat-Rich Ontario and Overtake Liberals in Quebec**

**Key Drivers of the Transformation of Public Opinion—
Alarm about Bloc Quebecois as King Maker,
High Confidence in Harper to Manage Economy,
Low Confidence in All of the Opposition Party Alternatives,
Coalition Efforts Perceived as Insincere Power Grab
Misgivings about the Liberals for Not Drawing Lessons from their
Setbacks in the October Election**



**COMPAS Inc.
Public Opinion and Customer Research
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1.0. Overview

Canadians are calling for a new federal election. That is the major finding of a national representative poll carried out for *Canadian Business* by COMPAS Research and completed on December 4th. Given a choice between the Governor-General's inviting Stephane Dion to form a government and a fresh election weeks after the most recent one, Canadians would prefer another election by a factor of more than 2:1.

Harper would win a resounding majority with 51% of the decided vote nationally. Harper would sweep seat-rich Ontario and oust the Liberals from second place in Quebec. The Liberals and NDP would both lose massively while the Bloc would maintain its strongholds within Quebec.

The key reasons for this high-speed, widespread transformation in public opinion are:

- ❑ Strong opposition to the Bloc as king maker—66% believe that the separatist party should have no role in deciding the composition of the government of Canada;
- ❑ Far greater confidence in Harper than anyone else as Prime Minister in the present economic climate—48% have greatest confidence in Harper compared to 14% for Michael Ignatieff in second place, 11% for NDP leader Jack Layton, 8% for Stephane Dion, 4% for Bob Rae, and 3% for Gilles Duceppe;
- ❑ Misgivings about the Liberals—61% believe that the Liberals, following their drop in support in the October election, should not be trying to form a government;
- ❑ Rejection of the Opposition claim that their concern was that Harper is a poor manager of the economy—54%¹ believe that the real motivation was a power grab and only 28% perceive the Opposition as honestly believing that Harper is a poor manager of the economy.

¹ 58% if one includes the 4% who say that this is the Opposition's main motivation.



2.0. The Key Findings Described

2.1. Public Calls for Fresh Election

Most Canadians would prefer a fresh election to calling upon Stephane Dion to form a government with support from the NDP and Bloc, as shown in table 2a.

Table 2a: (Q6) The Governor General normally calls an election if that is what the Prime Minister wants. If Prime Minister Harper asks for an election, should the Governor General...

	All	West	ON	QC
Call an election	69	78	70	55
Invite Stephane Dion to form a government with the NDP and Bloc	31	22	30	45
Excluded from Calculations:				
Neither	12	11	9	15
Don't know	6	5	9	2
Refuse to answer	1	1	1	1



2.2. Striking Harper Victory

Harper would solidify his lead in the West, sweep Ontario, and overtake the Liberals in Quebec if an election were held today, as shown in table 2b.

Table 2b: (Q2-3) If a federal election were now, would you vote for the... IF UNDECIDED Then, which party would you lean to?

	All	West	ON	QC
The Conservatives led by Stephen Harper ²	51	62	53	32
The Liberals led by Stephane Dion	20	13	24	19
The NDP led by Jack Layton	10	12	10	7
The Bloc led by Gilles Duceppe	8	0	0	35
The Green Party led by Elizabeth May	6	7	8	1
UNPROMPTED Undecided	6	7	5	6
Excluded from Calculations:				
UNPROMPTED Would not vote	7	6	5	8
UNPROMPTED Refuse to answer	3	5	3	3

3.0. Explaining Why the Striking Change in Public Opinion

3.1. Opposition Perceived as Power Hungry and Insincere

The public rejects the Opposition's portrayal of its motives as concern that Harper is mismanaging the economy, as shown in table 3a.

² Would not vote and Refuse to answer excluded from calculation.



Table 3a:(Q4) The Opposition parties just signed an agreement to defeat Harper's Conservative government and replace it with Stephane Dion as Prime Minister, Liberal and NDP cabinet ministers, and the Bloc Quebecois as partner. Do you think the Liberals, NDP, and Bloc are motivated...

	All	West	ON	QC
By a desire for power	54	68	56	35
Mainly by a desire for power	4	4	5	2
Both	6	3	6	10
Mainly by this belief	0	0	0	0
By an honest belief that Harper is a bad manager of our economy	28	17	22	51
Don't know	7	6	10	3
Refuse to answer	1	2	1	1

3.2. Alarm about Bloc Influence and Unchastened Liberals Seeking Power

Two key factors driving the transformation of public opinion are alarm about the influence of the Bloc in deciding the fate of the Canadian government and concern that the Liberals seem unchastened and have learned no lessons as a result of their setbacks in the October election, as shown in table 3b.

The Opposition parties can take some comfort from the fact that the majority agrees that the Harper government financial update was wrong to propose ending party subsidies and was inadequate in its spending plans. However, the majorities agreeing with the Opposition on these two matters are small. Only a 6:5 majority believes that the Harper spending plans were insufficient. By contrast, those who oppose the Bloc's role as king maker outnumber their opponents by a factor of 2.5:1. Thus, 66% agree that "It is wrong for a party committed to the break up of Canada to decide who forms the government of Canada" while 26% disagree, as shown in table 3b.



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Table 3b: (Q5) Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following opinions about the situation. RANDOMIZE

	Agree	Disagree	DNK	REF
It is wrong for a party committed to the break up of Canada to decide who forms the government of Canada				
All	66	26	6	2
West	77	13	7	3
ON	71	20	7	2
QC	41	55	3	1
After a sharp decline in Liberal support in the election and an increase in Conservative support, the Liberals are wrong to try to gain power by teaming up with the NDP and Bloc				
All	61	35	4	*
West	69	25	5	1
ON	66	31	3	0
QC	46	50	4	0
The Liberals, NDP and Bloc are trying to cheat the voters, who made clear their choices in the recent election				
All	56	38	5	2
West	64	30	3	3
ON	60	33	6	2
QC	37	59	3	2
Under the circumstances the Harper government was wrong to try to end public subsidies for parties and politicians				
All	50	33	17	*
West	45	34	20	1
ON	45	34	21	0
QC	59	35	6	0
The spending plans of the Harper government were too little too late given the economic situation in the world today				
All	46	39	15	*
West	36	46	18	1
ON	44	40	15	1
QC	62	28	10	0



3.3. High Confidence in Harper as Prime Minister, Low Confidence in Ignatieff, Dion, and Others

The Conservatives are benefiting from sharply higher confidence in Harper as Prime Minister in the present economic circumstances than in any of the Opposition leaders or prominent hopefuls, as shown in table 3c.

Table 3c: (Q7) Given the situation in the economy and in Parliament, in whom do you have the most confidence as Prime Minister? RANDOMIZE

	All	West	ON	QC
Stephen Harper	48	61	53	24
Michael Ignatieff	14	8	8	29
Stephane Dion	8	5	9	11
Jack Layton	11	8	12	11
Bob Rae	4	5	6	3
Gilles Duceppe	3	1	0	9
None	13	11	13	13
Excluded from Calculations:				
Don't know	5	6	5	4
Refuse to answer	1	1	1	1

4.0. One of Three Canadians Turned Off Voting by Events in Parliament

About one in three Canadians feels that the events of this week do not justify the effort to vote, as shown in table 4.



Table 4: (Q8) Thinking of the events in Parliament this week, do they lead you to thinking that voting in elections is worth the effort?

	All	West	ON	QC
Definitely	52	59	49	54
Probably	12	12	11	15
UNPROMPTED No change	1	1	1	1
Probably not	18	16	20	11
Definitely not	15	10	17	18
UNPROMPTED Don't know	1	3	2	0
UNPROMPTED Refuse to answer	*	0	1	1

5.0. Methodology

The representative sample survey of n>500 voters was interviewed by professional interviewers using CATI December 2-4, 2008. By convention, samples of this size are deemed accurate to within 4.5 percentage points 19 times out of 20. The principal investigator was Dr. Conrad Winn, reachable at 416-460-5844.

