

**Toronto Sun Poll**

**Large Conservative Majority  
Harper's Leadership Advantage Corners Campaign Momentum  
New Layton Charisma in Quebec**

**First of Two Reports**



**COMPAS Inc.  
Public Opinion and Customer Research  
April 13, 2011**

## **1.0. Overview**

### **1.1. Potential for Larger Harper Majority**

Stephen Harper's Conservatives face the prospects of a majority government—and quite possibly a huge majority. The Opposition parties can expect some surprises. These include the rise of the NDP in Quebec, its possible ebbing on the prairies, and the leadership-driven weakness of the Greens.

Falling short of a Kim Campbell-style shellacking, the Liberals nonetheless face the prospect of a historic shut out in French Quebec and being limited to islands of support in Atlantic Canada, English-speaking Montreal, the City of Toronto, parts of southern and Eastern Ontario, and parts of Vancouver.

These are the vote-related findings from the COMPAS Research poll, a representative survey of 2,251 Canadians. Without a major change in the nature of the election campaign, the Conservatives will end up with a lead of 21 percentage points that is potentially growing—more than enough to form a majority government.

Leadership gives the Conservatives overwhelming nation-wide momentum with some new, history-shattering advances for the NDP in Quebec. Harper is so much more favourably regarded than the other party leaders and especially than Michael Ignatieff that the Conservatives' advance is being slowed mainly by the residual strength of the Liberal brand. The leader who can compete best with Harper in public trust is Gilles Duceppe on his home turf of francophone Quebec. In Quebec, Jack Layton's image is rising in this unexpectedly fertile territory for the NDP.

Like the Liberals, the Greens also face the possibility of declining support as a result of comparatively low confidence in party leadership. Leadership is especially important in this campaign because Canadian voters, like voters in



other democracies, have an underlying feeling of unease about the direction of the world economy.

## **1.2. The English Debate Likely Reinforced the Conservatives' Campaign Momentum**

"The fatal mistake of the Liberals," says Dr. Conrad Winn, "is to deny that the credibility of the messenger drives the credibility of the message. Attacks from an Opposition critic in whom the public has limited confidence risk boomeranging against the critic himself unless the critic is very careful."

"The Liberal leader's performance in the English debate will likely weaken his party by attacks that focused too much on Harper's ostensibly bad attitudes and not enough on provable behaviours that the voters deem important and can verify for themselves.

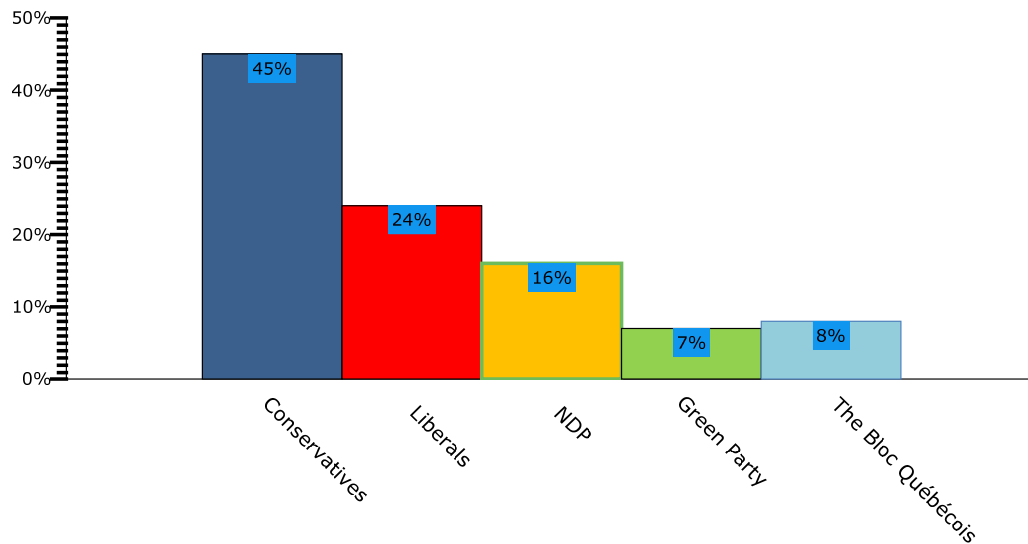
"The NDP leader was more effective in the debate than the Liberal but he too didn't fully understand that more is often less. For example, Layton's jab about Ignatieff's poor Commons' attendance would have been even stronger had he allowed viewers more opportunity to provide their own (negative) interpretation."



## **2.0. The Raw Vote—a 21 Point Lead for the Conservatives with the Liberals Weakened**

### **2.1. Overwhelming Conservative Strength Nationally (after 35% Undecided Removed from Calculations)**

Figure 2.1 National Vote



The Conservatives lead by a margin of 21 percentage points over the second-place Liberals with the NDP, Bloc, and Green parties trailing, as shown in fig. 2.1. Because of very favourable public judgments of Conservative Stephen Harper and, to a lesser extent, New Democrat Jack Layton, these figures may underestimate Conservative and NDP support on election day, as discussed below in section 3.0.



## **2.2. Conservatives Lead West of New Brunswick**

The Conservatives lead by at least 25 percentage points in every province west of Ontario and by 17 points in Ontario, as shown in table 2.2.

*Table 2.2: Vote Intentions by Province and Region*

	CONS	LIB	NDP	BLOC	GREEN
BC	46	20	24	N/A	10
AB	70	14	9	N/A	7
SK	55	14	22	N/A	8
MN	63	13	17	N/A	8
ON	49	32	13	N/A	6
QC	25	13	19	37	5
ATL	40	37	16	N/A	7

## **2.3. Quebec—Conservatives Trail Bloc among Francophones with Liberals in 4th Position; Liberals 2nd to Conservatives among Anglophones**

Given the evolving distribution of vote intentions in the province, the Bloc, Conservatives, and NDP could each gain some seats with the Liberals possibly sending a few Anglophone MPs to Ottawa.

In Quebec, the Conservatives trail the Bloc by 12 points but are ahead of the Liberals, who appear to be in fourth place behind the NDP, as shown in fig. 2.3. The Conservatives are vying for first place in Quebec City and Eastern Quebec while the NDP is a contender in Montreal and the rest of Quebec.

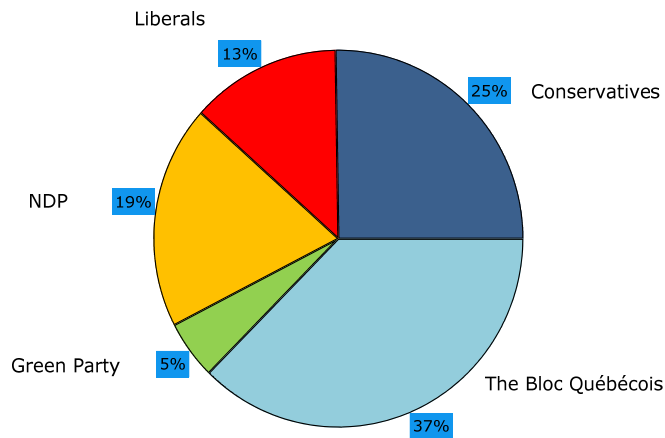
Among Anglophones, the Conservatives are in first place, about 10 points ahead of the Liberals. Among Francophones, the Conservatives are in second place, well below the Bloc and seemingly a notch ahead of the NDP. Meanwhile the Liberals appear to be in distant fourth position.

The NDP and Conservatives are the parties to watch. The NDP is increasing its vote the most—up from 12% in 2008 to 18% today. But the NDP may not be able to reach the threshold necessary to increase its representation significantly. The Conservatives do not need to increase their support much



beyond present levels to gain seats, depending upon the actual geographic distribution. Without increasing its share of the vote, the Bloc could possibly edge up in seats as a result of the Liberals' decline and a more equal distribution of the vote among the federalist parties.

Figure 2.3 Quebec Vote



## **2.4. Ontario—Conservatives Lead in 5 of 6 Regions of the Province**

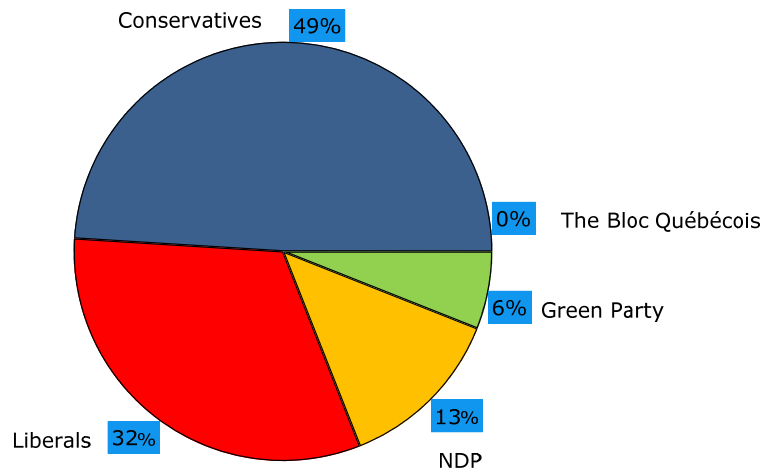
The Conservatives have a massive lead across the province, as shown in fig. 2.4. Except in Toronto, the Conservatives appear to be leading by 15 points or more in every region including the seat rich, multi-ethnic swash known as the Metro-belt around Toronto, the target of Minister Jason Kenney's vote-getting efforts. The NDP appear strong in the North.



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Figure 2.4 Ontario Vote



## 2.5. Manitoba-Saskatchewan—Conservatives Lead by 35-40 Points

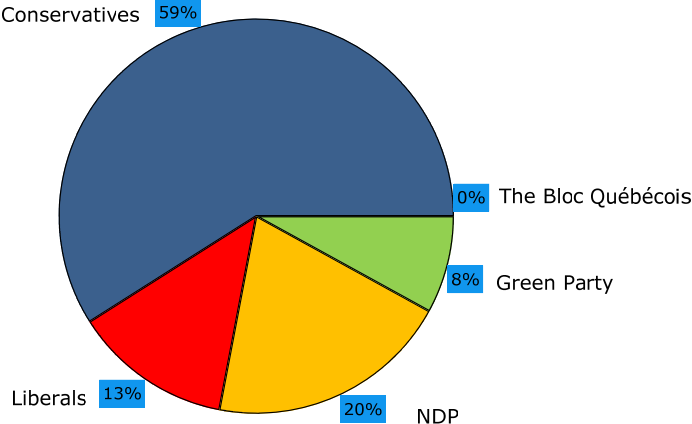
In each of the two provinces, the Conservatives lead by 35-40 points over the second place NDP, as shown in fig. 2.5. Though the subsamples in these two provinces are necessarily small as a reflection of the provinces' small populations, the Conservative lead is so large that there can be no doubt of massive Conservative success on election day.



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Figure 2.5 MB/SK Vote

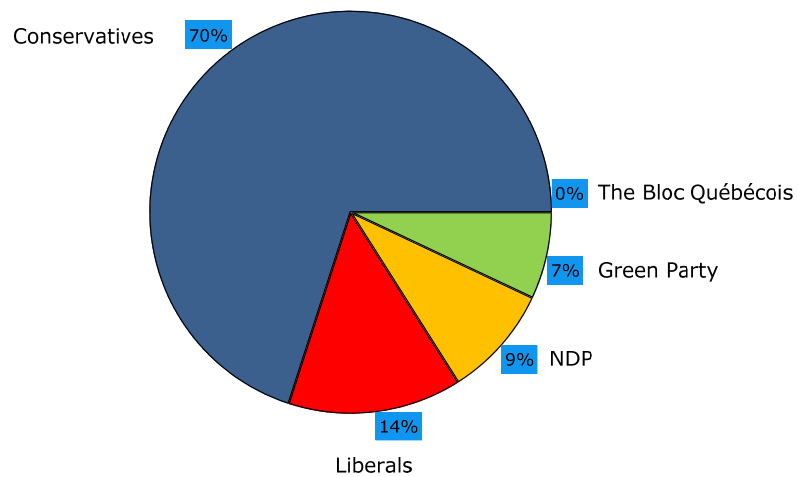




## 2.6. Alberta—50 Point Lead for the Conservatives

Alberta faces the return of a kind of one-party system with a massive lead for the party of its favourite son, as shown in fig. 2.6. The NDP may have some strength in Edmonton and the Greens, among rural ridings but the Conservative vote majority is likely to be even stronger than in 2008.

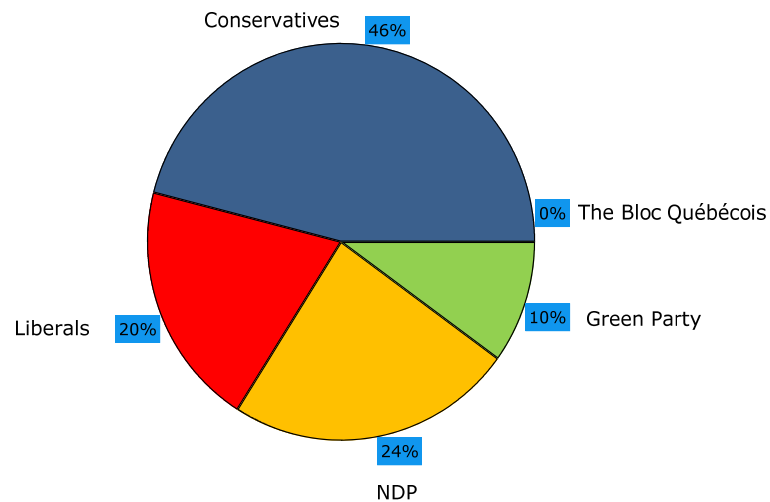
Figure 2.6 AB Vote



## 2.7. British Columbia—20 Point Lead for the Conservatives

With a more than 20 point lead over each of the Liberals and the NDP, as shown in fig. 2.7, the Conservatives could reap the same kind of victory as in 2008.

Figure 2.7 BC Vote



## **3.0. Campaign and Momentum**

### **3.1. Momentum Favours the Conservatives and, to a Lesser Extent, the NDP**

The Conservatives have the momentum in the campaign because their supporters are more resolute and voters as a whole have more confidence in Harper than in any of the other leaders, as discussed below. The NDP have upward potential because their leader is perceived more favourably than the Liberal and Green party leaders and favourably by many Bloc voters.

### **3.2. Commitment to Conservatives is Stronger**

Interviewees who respond that they are undecided about how they intend to vote are then asked to whom they are “leaning.” This second question is known as the leaner question.

Among respondents who reveal their vote intention at the first question, Harper leads by more than 2:1 but this falls short of 4:3 among those responding to the leaner question. The dramatically greater Conservative lead in response to the first question reveals a far higher level of enthusiasm and commitment among Conservative than Liberal voters. From this pattern, barring any change in campaign dynamics, a reasonable inference is that the Liberal turnout on election day may be lower than the Conservative turnout.

### **3.3. Leadership--Harper Is Chosen Best Court Judge and especially Most Trustworthy Manager of Other People's Money and Strongest Unit Commander on the Battlefield**

#### **3.3.1. Harper's Potent Leadership**

The Conservatives have the campaign momentum because their leader is so much more favourably regarded. Respondents were asked which of the leaders they would favour in the following hypothetical situations:



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As my last questions, I'd like to ask you about the personalities and character of the 5 party leaders. For example, which one of them would you trust most to manage your own or your family's money?

Which one would make the best judge in a law court dealing with criminals?

If a young friend of yours were serving with the Armed Forces in a battlefield in Afghanistan, which one of these leaders would you have preferred as unit commander in charge?

Harper emerges as an exceptionally strong battlefield commander in the eyes of the public, a very strongly honest manager of personal money, and a strong criminal court judge, as shown in table 3.3 and figures 3.3a, b, and c. In each instance, the share choosing Harper approximates or exceeds the share voting for the Conservatives. Meanwhile Layton is chosen more often than Ignatieff. From these findings, a reasonable conclusion is that the Liberal machine will need to organize turnout on election day. To the extent that Liberal organizers are unable to outperform the other parties in getting their voters to the polls, the NDP and especially the Conservatives may each do better on election day than the polls suggest because their voters are more motivated.

*Table 3.3: Which Leader Would Be Best as a...*

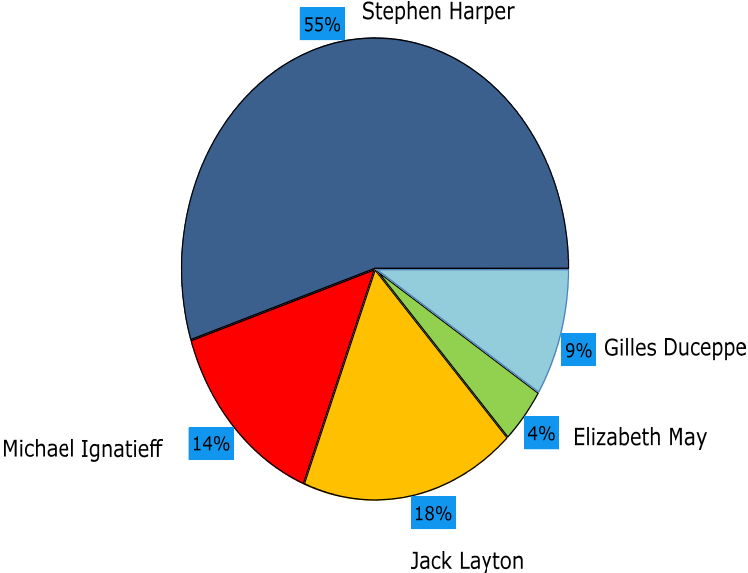
	HARPER	IGNATIEFF	LAYTON	MAY	DUCEPPE
Battlefield commander	56	14	18	4	8
Trustworthy to manage money	49	13	24	5	10
Best criminal court judge	44	18	23	6	9



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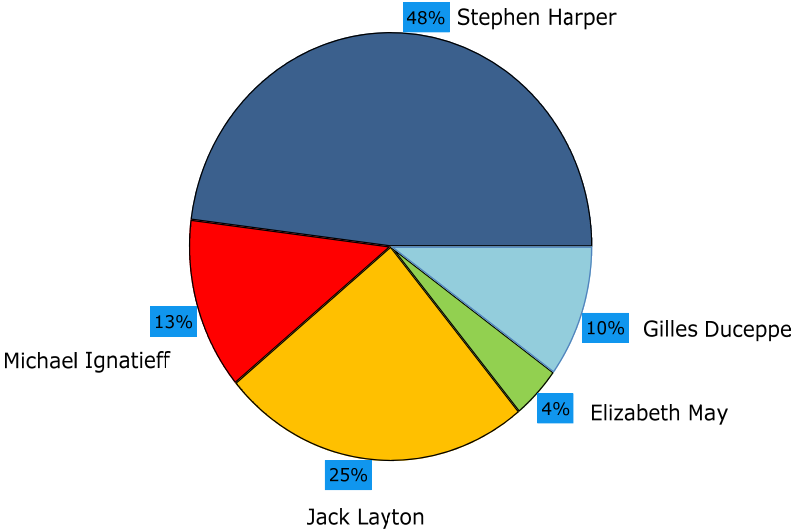
Battlefield Commander



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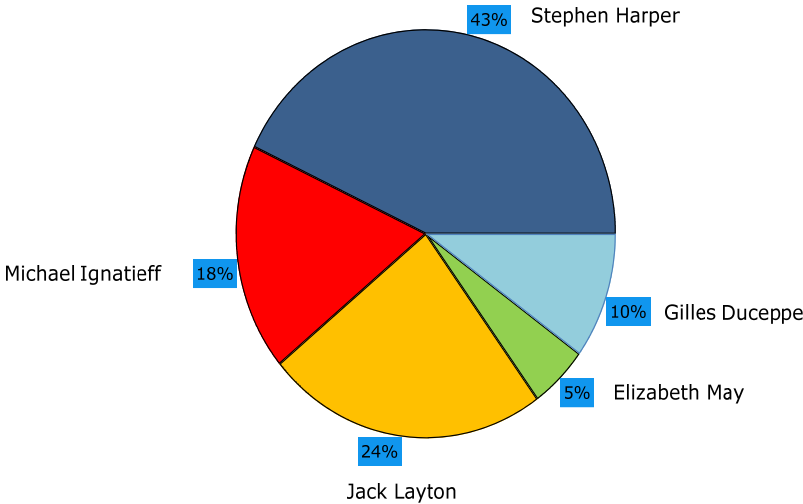
Trustworthy to Manage Money



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Best Criminal Court Judge



### **3.3.2. Teflon—Harper's Leadership Advantage Explains Opposition Campaign Failure**

With every year in power, governments normally wear out their welcome. The Parliamentary Opposition has today a series of issues that might normally accelerate the customary decline of any government—the intrinsically high cost of modern combat aircraft, inevitable bureaucratic mishaps, predictable Parliamentary aides with colourful pasts, and a series of Parliamentary events that the Opposition has sought to characterize as illegal. Yet, Opposition attacks have not been succeeding.

“The fatal mistake of the Liberals,” says Dr. Conrad Winn, “is to deny that the credibility of the messenger drives the credibility of the message. Attacks from an Opposition critic in whom the public has limited confidence risk boomeranging against the critic himself unless the critic is very careful.”

### **3.3.3. Voters Who Admire Other Parties' Leaders**

Harper outperforms all other leaders in part by holding the loyalty of his supporters—nine out of 10 Conservative voters choose him as the best battlefield commander, manager of others' money, or criminal court judge. The corresponding percentages for Ignatieff are 53-66, for Layton 54-85, May 25-39, and Duceppe 49-71. By their own supporters, Ignatieff is seen as a weak commander and semi-strong judge, Layton as strong manager of others' money and weak commander, May as weak in all three leadership roles, and Duceppe as weak commander and semi-strong in the other two roles.

Voters who admire a leadership feature in a leader of a party they do not intend to support have the following patterns:

- Liberals swing to Layton and May for money management, Layton for leadership in the courts, and Harper for leadership in the battlefield;
- New Democrats swing to Harper and the others for military leadership;
- Both Greens and Bloc voters swing to Layton for money management and leadership in the courts and to Layton and especially Harper for military leadership.





## **4.0. Methodology**

A carefully stratified, representative sample of n=2151 voters was interviewed by professional interviews over the telephone during the period April 6-11, 2011. By convention surveys of this size are deemed accurate to within 2.1 percentage points 19 times out of 20. The principal investigator on this study was Dr. Conrad Winn.

