

QUEBEC POLITICAL SCENE

Charest's Image Tarnished in Quebec Over Allegations of Influence Peddling

Parti Québécois opens an 18-point lead in voting intention, though overwhelming majority of Quebecers say this type of alleged corruption could take place regardless of which party was in power.

[MONTREAL – Apr. 15, 2010] – Premier Jean Charest's credibility among Quebecers is in jeopardy following the allegations made by one of his former cabinet ministers, a new *La Presse* / Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

Earlier this week, former justice minister Marc Bellemare revealed that he had been asked to name certain judges based on recommendations made by a major Liberal Party of Quebec donor with links to the construction industry. The Premier has flatly rejected the allegations and threatened to sue Bellemare.

In the online survey of a representative sample of 802 adult Quebecers, 58 per cent of respondents believe Bellemare's version of the events, while 10 per cent side with the Charest government, which claims the allegations are baseless.

Though the allegations have yet to be substantiated, the damage to Charest's image and his party is clear. Nearly six-in-ten respondents (59%) believe Bellemare's claim that the premier was involved in influence peddling and 61 per cent of respondents believe that Liberal Party donors impose decisions on the government.

Even Liberal voters appear to have their doubts,

KEY FINDINGS

- **Voting Intention: PQ 41%, PLQ 23%, ADQ 13%**
- **58% of Quebecers tend to believe Marc Bellemare's allegations are true; 10% believe the Charest government's response that the allegations are lies.**
- **75% of Quebecers say that Charest's decision to call a public inquiry into how judges are named does not go far enough**
- **80% of Quebecers say this type of alleged corruption could happen to any party in power**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From April 13 to April 14, 2010, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 802 randomly selected adults in Quebec who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.4%, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of Quebec. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

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with 39 per cent saying they believe donors impose decisions on the government, 19 per cent saying they don't believe this is the case, and 42 per cent saying they are unsure.

The premier's decision to call a public inquiry into the specific allegations regarding the nomination of judges appears to have done little to satiate the desire of Quebecers to get to the bottom of the issue. Only a quarter of respondents (25%) believe the inquiry is a sufficient step to bring all the facts to light while 75 per cent believe Charest's proposed solution falls short.

The allegations come at a difficult time for the premier, whose government is still dealing with the fallout from a controversial budget tabled last month. More than two-thirds of Quebecers (71%) say their opinion of Jean Charest has worsened in the past three months and his disapproval rating has climbed seventeen points since February (from 53% to 70%).

Altered Political Landscape

Taken together, the budget and allegations have reshaped the political landscape in Quebec. The Liberals are now a distant second, with the support of 23 per cent of decided voters—a 10-point drop since February. Meanwhile, the Parti Québécois has capitalized on the controversies moving from 34 per cent to 41 per cent. The Action Démocratique de Québec (13%, +3) and Parti Vert (10%, +4) have both seen their vote share rise as well.

Damage to Political Class

While the Parti Québécois appears to be making gains in voting intention, some signs suggest that the impact of the current crisis may negatively affect the entire political class. The most cited answer when asked which of the leaders of Quebec's parties would make the best Premier was "None of the above" (34%). Moreover, four-in-five Quebecers (80%) do not believe the current allegations of corruption are unique to the Liberal Party and that the same thing could happen to any of the other parties if they were in power.

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If a provincial election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you most likely to support?

	Apr. 2010	Feb. 2010
Parti Québécois (PQ)	41%	34%
Liberal Party of Quebec (PLQ)	23%	33%
Action Démocratique du Québec (ADQ)	13%	10%
Parti vert du Québec	10%	6%
Québec Solidaire	9%	11%
Other party	5%	5%

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Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of each of the following people?

	Approve (Feb. 2010)	Disapprove (Feb. 2010)	Not sure (Feb. 2010)
Premier and Liberal Party of Quebec leader Jean Charest	16% (22%)	70% (53%)	14% (24%)
Parti Québécois leader Pauline Marois	36% (26%)	43% (50%)	20% (31%)
Action démocratique du Québec leader Gérard Deltell	25% (12%)	28% (31%)	48% (57%)
Québec solidaire spokesperson Amir Khadir	37% (19%)	23% (30%)	40% (51%)

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Which of these leaders would make the best Premier of Quebec?

	avril 2010	février 2010
Jean Charest	15%	21%
Pauline Marois	25%	19%
G�rard Deltell	8%	4%
Amir Khadir	8%	5%
None of these	34%	31%
Not sure	11%	20%

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Over the course of the past three months, would you say your opinion of each of the following people has improved, stayed the same or worsened?

	Jean Charest	Pauline Marois	G�rard Deltell
Improved	2%	14%	13%
Stayed the same	23%	56%	50%
Worsened	71%	25%	12%
Not sure	4%	5%	25%

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The lawyer Marc Bellemare has claimed that in 2003 he was forced to name judges under pressure from Liberal Party of Quebec donors while serving as minister of justice in the Jean Charest government. He says that he alerted Premier Charest at the time, but that the latter did not intervene.

Marc Bellemare further claims having witnessed the exchange of important sums of cash between donors and Liberal Party of Quebec officials on two occasions. Some of these donors came from the construction industry, according to the former minister.

The government denies these claims and has said it is ready to sue Mr. Bellemare over these allegations.

According to you, who has more credibility: former minister Bellemare, or the Charest government?

Marc Bellemare	58%
The Charest government	11%
Neither	20%
Not sure	11%

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Quebec Premier Jean Charest announced that he would hold a public inquiry into how judges are nominated in Quebec in light of the allegations made by Marc Bellemare. Which of the following statements comes closest to your point of view with respect to M. Charest's decision?

It is a sufficient response to the allegations made by Marc Bellemare	25%
It falls short of what is needed to fully shed light on the allegations made by Marc Bellemare	75%

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Do you believe Mr. Bellemare when he says that Premier Jean Charest participated in this alleged influence peddling?	
Yes	59%
No	14%
Not sure	27%

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Do you believe that the appointment of judges in Quebec is done in as apolitically a manner as possible?	
Yes	15%
No	54%
Not sure	30%

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Several scandals have affected the construction industry in the last months. If the existence of influence peddling is confirmed, do you believe it is linked to generalized corruption or is it a problem mostly limited to the construction industry?	
Corruption is generalized	80%
Corruption is mostly limited to the construction industry	12%
Not sure	7%

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Do you believe that Liberal Party of Quebec fundraisers impose decisions on the government?

Yes	61%
No	10%
Not sure	29%

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Do you believe that such alleged acts are linked to the Liberal Party of Quebec specifically, or are the alleged acts just as likely to occur with any party in power?

Linked to Liberal Party of Quebec specifically	13%
Just as likely to occur with any political party	80%
Not sure	8%

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Angus Reid Public Opinion is a practice of Vision Critical—a global research and technology company specializing in custom online panels, private communities, and innovative online methods. Vision Critical is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Public Opinion team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995

Vision Critical is now one of the largest market research enterprises in the world. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.

Angus Reid Public Opinion polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum (www.angusreidforum.com), Springboard America (www.springboardamerica.com) and Springboard UK (www.springboarduk.com) online panels, which are carefully recruited to ensure representation across all demographic and psychographic segments of these populations. Panel members pass through rigorous screening and a double opt-in process ensuring highly motivated and responsive members. These premier online survey platforms present respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses. Each survey is actively sampled and weighted to model that characteristics of the universe required and employs the latest in quality control techniques to ensure data validity.

Since 2006, Angus Reid has covered eight provincial elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes.

Angus Reid, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election. More information on our electoral record can be found at:
<http://www.visioncritical.com/record-of-accuracy>

More information on the way Angus Reid conducts public opinion research can be found at
<http://www.visioncritical.com/what-we-do/practices/angus-reid-public-opinion/>

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**For more information, please contact
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:
<http://www.visioncritical.com/category/global-opinions-and-trends>**

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