

## PROROGATION

# More Canadians Decry Prorogation, as Perceptions on Harper Turn Negative

*Unique survey exposes Canadians to the Liberal Party's recently released advertisements, and finds negligible effect from radio and print campaign.*

[TORONTO - Jan. 13, 2010] - A large proportion of Canadians are disappointed with the Prime Minister's decision to prorogue Parliament, and the electorate's perceptions of Stephen Harper have taken a negative turn, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

In order to gauge the effect of the recently released Liberal Party ads, half of respondents to this poll listened to the "cover-up" radio spot and saw the print version of the ad, while the other half were asked the exact same questions but without being exposed to the Liberal ads during the survey.

The online survey of a representative national sample of 1,077 Canadian adults is the first to test reactions from respondents on the recently released ads.

### Prorogation

Almost half of Canadians (48%) are following the prorogation story "very closely" or "moderately closely", up 14 points since the first week of January. Also, the proportion of respondents who have not followed this story at all dropped from 34 per cent to 22 per cent.

Three-in-five Canadians (61%) disagree with the

### KEY FINDINGS

- **61% (+8) disagree with the decision to prorogue Parliament**
- **Exposure to the Liberal Party's radio and print ads doesn't change perceptions for Canadians**
- **41% think Stephen Harper prorogued Parliament out of self-interest**
- **Harper posts higher scores on negative traits, while Ignatieff sheds some points since October**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

*From January 12 to January 13, 2010, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,077 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.0%, 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 Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.*

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decision to prorogue Parliament (including 44% who "strongly disagree").

The level of disagreement with prorogation increased by eight points in a week, and is particularly high in Ontario and Atlantic Canada.

In all, 56 per cent of Canadians believe Stephen Harper prorogued Parliament because he is doing what is best for his party, a view shared by a majority of respondents in British Columbia (56%) and Ontario (64%).

### **Reasons for Prorogation**

In all, 41 per cent of respondents believe Stephen Harper prorogued Parliament out of self-interest, 24 per cent say he did so because he has something to hide, and 21 per cent think he made the decision to cover up the Afghanistan detainee torture controversy.

Other mentions were to recalibrate the government's agenda after a busy year (20%), to allow Senate committees to be reformed to reflect the new Conservative senators (also 20%) and not to distract from the Winter Olympics (14%).

Respondents who heard the radio ad and saw the print ad were more likely to believe that Harper has something to hide (27%) than those who were not exposed to the ads (22%).

### **Character Traits**

Since January 2009, Angus Reid has tracked the way Canadians relate to the leaders of the two main federal parties on a wide range of character traits.

In the aftermath of prorogation, a majority of Canadians (52%) believe Stephen Harper is secretive, 48 per cent deem him arrogant, 41 per cent say he is intelligent, 37 per cent believe he is out of touch, 34 per cent feel he is uncaring, and 34 per cent find him boring.

Since October, Harper's score has increased on several negative categories, including secretive (+6), arrogant (+4), dishonest (+5), and inefficient (+3).

The exposure to the Liberal ads did not have a marked effect on some of the negative character traits (such as arrogant and secretive), but those who saw and heard the ads were more likely to call Harper out of touch (40%) than those who were not exposed to them (35%).

Two-in-five Canadians (43%) believe Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff is arrogant, 42 per cent say he is intelligent, 37 per cent believe he is out of touch, 36 per cent find him boring, 28 per cent call him inefficient, and 24 per cent claim he is weak.

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Since October, Ignatieff has shed several points on some of the negative character traits, including arrogant (-6), secretive (-6), out of touch (-5) and dishonest (-5).

### **The "Hidden Agenda"**

When compared to the findings of an Angus Reid survey conducted in October 2008—just days before the federal election that resulted in a second Conservative minority government—Canadians are less likely to believe that a Tory majority would recriminalize abortion (24%, down 10 points), repeal same-sex marriage (34%, down five points), implement a process to have an elected Senate (35%, down six points), keep taxes low across the country (30%, down 17 points) and subdue the threat of separatism (25%, down 10 points).

As was the case in October 2008, three-in-five Canadians (62%) foresee a reduction in funding for programs related to the arts and film if the Conservatives form a majority government.

It is important to note that, on this particular question, the views of Canadians who listened to and saw the Liberal ads are not markedly different from the views of those who were not exposed to the advertisements.

### **Analysis**

The level of interest in the prorogation story, and the proportion of respondents who disagree with the Prime Minister's decision, increased over the course of the past week. However, less than half of Canadians agree with the notion that the closure of Parliament was related to self-interest, and lower proportions side with the cover-up argument.

The fear of a Conservative "hidden agenda" is now lower than it was at the end of the 2008 federal election campaign, particularly on issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage.

However, the survey does show that, in stark contrast to the findings of the past few months, Harper is garnering a larger proportion of negative mentions on character traits (particularly secretive and arrogant), while Ignatieff is shedding points on some of these same measures.

The damage to the Prime Minister's image appears to have been done by prorogation itself, as exposure to the ads is not dramatically influencing Canadians.

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**Prorogation**

As you may know, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has prorogued Parliament, that is, suspended all activities and delayed the return of MPs and Senators by 22 sitting days. Have you followed this story in the media?

	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
<b>Yes, very closely</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Yes, moderately closely</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Yes, but not too closely</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>No, I have not followed this story at all</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>27%</b>

**Prorogation**

As you may know, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has prorogued Parliament, that is, suspended all activities and delayed the return of MPs and Senators by 22 sitting days. Have you followed this story in the media?

	Jan. 12-13	Jan. 5-6
<b>Yes, very closely</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Yes, moderately closely</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Yes, but not too closely</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>No, I have not followed this story at all</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>34%</b>

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Prorogation							
Do you agree or disagree with the decision to prorogue Parliament?							
Region							
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
<b>Strongly agree</b>	5%	7%	14%	4%	5%	2%	1%
<b>Moderately agree</b>	14%	21%	25%	23%	13%	7%	10%
<b>Moderately disagree</b>	17%	16%	16%	17%	19%	19%	8%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	44%	40%	26%	25%	50%	43%	65%
<b>Not sure</b>	19%	16%	19%	30%	13%	28%	16%

Prorogation		
Do you agree or disagree with the decision to prorogue Parliament?		
	Jan. 12-13	Jan. 5-6
<b>Strongly agree</b>	5%	7%
<b>Moderately agree</b>	14%	12%
<b>Moderately disagree</b>	17%	15%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	44%	38%
<b>Not sure</b>	19%	28%

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<b>Prorogation</b>			
Why do you think Stephen Harper prorogued parliament?			
	<b>Total, Jan. 12- 13, 2010</b>	<b>Respondents who heard the radio ad and saw the print ad</b>	<b>Respondents who were not exposed to the ads</b>
<b>Out of self-interest</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>To cover up the Afghanistan detainee torture controversy</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Because he has something to hide</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>To recalibrate the government's agenda after a busy year</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>To allow Senate committees to be reformed to reflect the new Conservative senators</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Not to distract from the Winter Olympics</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>None of these</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>12%</b>

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**Prorogation**

Suppose for a moment that the Conservative Party forms a majority government after the next federal election. How likely do you think each of the following situations is to happen under a Conservative majority government? – “Very likely” and “Moderately likely” listed

	<i>Total, Oct. 8-10, 2008</i>	<b>Total, Jan. 12-13, 2010</b>	<b>Respondents who heard the radio ad and saw the print ad</b>	<b>Respondents who were not exposed to the ads</b>
<b>Abortion is recriminalized</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>The legislation that allows same-sex couples to marry is repealed</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>The role of private health care providers is expanded</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Funding for programs related to the arts and film is reduced</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>62%</b>
<b>A process is implemented to allow Canadians to elect their senators</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Taxes are kept low across the entire country</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>The threat of separatism in Quebec is subdued</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>24%</b>

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**Prorogation**

Here are some words that people may use to describe Stephen Harper. Please choose up to six words that you think describe him.

	<i>Total, Oct. 13-14, 2009</i>	<b>Total, Jan. 12-13, 2010</b>	<b>Respondents who heard the radio ad and saw the print ad</b>	<b>Respondents who were not exposed to the ads</b>
<b>Down to earth</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Arrogant</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>Open</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Secretive</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>Efficient</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Inefficient</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Compassionate</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Uncaring</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Honest</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Dishonest</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Strong</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Weak</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Exciting</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Boring</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>In touch</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Out of touch</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Intelligent</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Foolish</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>13%</b>

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**Prorogation**

Here are some words that people may use to describe Michael Ignatieff. Please choose up to six words that you think describe him.

	<i>Total, Oct. 13-14, 2009</i>	<b>Total, Jan. 12-13, 2010</b>	<b>Respondents who heard the radio ad and saw the print ad</b>	<b>Respondents who were not exposed to the ads</b>
<b>Down to earth</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Arrogant</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>Open</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Secretive</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Efficient</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Inefficient</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Compassionate</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Uncaring</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Honest</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Dishonest</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Strong</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Weak</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Exciting</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Boring</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>In touch</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Out of touch</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>Intelligent</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>Foolish</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>16%</b>

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**Prorogation**

Based on everything you have seen, heard or read about Stephen Harper's decision to prorogue Parliament until after the Winter Olympics, do you believe he is doing what is best for the country or doing what is best for his party?

	<b>Total, Jan. 12- 13, 2010</b>	<b>Respondents who heard the radio ad and saw the print ad</b>	<b>Respondents who were not exposed to the ads</b>
<b>Doing what is best for the country</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Doing what is best for his party</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>Neither</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>14%</b>

**Prorogation**

Based on everything you have seen, heard or read about Stephen Harper's decision to prorogue Parliament until after the Winter Olympics, do you believe he is doing what is best for the country or doing what is best for his party?

<b>Region</b>							
	<b>Total</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>MB/SK</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>PQ</b>	<b>ATL</b>
<b>Doing what is best for the country</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Doing what is best for his party</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>Neither</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>7%</b>

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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 Strategies 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](http://www.angusreidforum.com)), Springboard America ([www.springboardamerica.com](http://www.springboardamerica.com)) and Springboard UK ([www.springboarduk.com](http://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.*

*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.*

<http://bit.ly/4zxf1S>

*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.*

*More information on the way Angus Reid conducts public opinion research can be found at <http://bit.ly/3z0u1l>*

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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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