

**Pre-Election Poll Report
September 14 2009**

CARP's Poll could have predicted that the Opposition would bail. Responses to the September 14th CARP *ActionOnline* Poll showed overwhelming opposition to a fall election even for changes they wanted. Worse for the Opposition parties, there was strong support for the Government's alternative proposal for EI and for a Conservative majority if they were forced into an election. The lead of the Conservatives over the Liberals widened once the prospect of an election became more firm and support for the smaller parties fell away dramatically.

KEY FINDINGS

MEMBERS AGREE WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S PLAN FOR EI, DO NOT WANT TO SEE AN ELECTION FOUGHT OVER IT, AND WILL VOTE CONSERVATIVE IF AN ELECTION IS CALLED

Members prefer a plan whereby EI benefits are extended for long tenure workers to one where qualifying hours are reduced. Despite their support for this plan, however, very few members wish to see an election fought on this issue

Members overwhelmingly do not want a Fall election, and if one were held, the majority would opt for a Conservative majority. When asked what change they would like to see come from an election, there is wide agreement the most pressing issues are increasing CPP/OAS/GIS rates and establishing a Universal Pension Plan.

The majority of members would support the Conservative party if an election were held tomorrow, compared to just one quarter who would support the Liberals. Conservatives have increased in popularity among our readers since CARP started polling earlier this summer.

About half our members have taken part, or plan to take part in the home renovation tax credit scheme, and few believe this scheme will be derailed by an election.

EI Restructuring

Members were presented with the government's plan to extend EI benefits for long tenured workers and those who had not claimed benefits in the past. Two thirds (68%) preferred this proposal to reducing qualifying hours so more out-of-work Canadians can draw EI which would have applied to everyone not just long tenured workers.

The proposal is especially popular in Quebec, among our oldest members, among men and Conservative party supporters and among those already retired. Results were identical on this question even when it is proposed that EI rates would rise, indicating there is little cost-sensitivity to this issue.

Despite their support of the Government’s proposal, fewer than one fifth of our members (18%) believe this issue is worth fighting an election over, should the Opposition not support it.

Desire for an election is highest in Quebec, among older members, men and Liberal and NDP supporters.

Fall Election

Just one-in-ten member sees the need for a fall election (12%), and this is very slightly more common among younger men and Liberal supporters.

When asked their preferred outcome for a Fall election, the majority (53%) wanted a Conservative majority government, followed by one fifth who opt for a Liberal majority (19%). When options are added together, a Conservative government is preferred by close to two thirds (61%), while some form of Liberal government (with or without Coalition partners) is preferred by one third (35%).

Conservative Majority	53%
Conservative Minority	8%
Liberal Minority	9%
Liberal Majority	19%
Liberal/NDP Coalition	6%
Liberal/NDP/Bloc Coalition	1%
Some Other Arrangement	5%

CARP asked members what changes they would most like to see coming out of an election, and the clear front-runner is increasing CPP/OAS/GIS rates (41%). Following this issue, at a clear distance, is establishing a Universal Pension Plan (12%). It is apparent that CARP members are most closely focused on pension reforms as the issues which will motivate them in an election, to the exclusion of issues espoused by the major parties:

Increase CPP/OAS/GIS Rates	41%
Establish Universal Pension Plan	12%
Moratorium on RRIF Withdrawals	9%
Comprehensive Pension Reform	9%
Amend Bankruptcy Law To Protect Pensions	8%
Fix Isotope Shortage	7%
Make TFSAs Retroactive For Pensioners	6%
Ratify Kyoto Agreement	5%
Expand/Simplify Qualifying For EI	2%
Institute “Cap And Trade” Carbon Management	2%

As an issue, restructuring EI, about which the election was to be fought, attracts the attention of just 2% of our members, indicating that Canada's federal politicians have yet to tune into the frequency of CARP members' concerns.

Electoral Preference

A strong majority of our members say they would vote Conservative if the election were held tomorrow (58%) and this level of support nationally has increased steadily through this summer's polling (see below):

	Election Poll 2008	August 8 2009	August 31 2009	September 14 2009
Conservative	49%	47%	51%	58%
Liberal	32%	36%	37%	29%
NDP	13%	10%	8%	8%
Greens	7%	6%	4%	5%

The pattern here is clear. The Conservatives started this election season with a similar level of support as they received in last year's election, but have improved steadily ever since an imminent election became a possibility. By contrast, the Liberals, who have polled higher among our members than their performance in last year's election, and polled higher earlier this summer than now, have seen their approval ratings decline to the level of last year's popular vote (26%), and this is likely driven by the fact the party was seen to be forcing an unnecessary election.

Ontario Results – No Longer a Reverse of National Trends

As CARP has few members in Quebec, projecting national results is problematic, but our Ontario sample is robust enough to permit a fairly detailed projection of Ontario election results. By deriving a correction factor which we can apply to CARP Ontario poll results to bring them into line with actual 2008 Ontario election results, it is possible to make some broad projections of the outcome of an election held in the near future:

	Ontario Election Results 2008	CARP Poll September 14, 2009	Ontario Correction Factor	Ontario Results Projection
Conservative	39%	57%	-20.4%	45%
Liberal	34%	32%	+6.3%	34%
NDP	18%	6%	+38.5%	8%
Greens	8%	4%	+14.3%	5%

This is an indication that, even in the battleground province of Ontario, the Conservative party has made a convincing case since last year's election, while the Liberals have stalled and the NDP have suffered decreasing support.

This analysis is borne out by subsequent public polling results (September 24). To quote *Ekos Politics*:

“The Conservatives now appear to be competitive even among some groups, such as young voters and Toronto voters, once largely beyond their reach. The Liberals meanwhile have lost their secure hold on Ontario, and are increasingly the party of the university educated. The New Democrats appear to be in a slump following their decision to back the government – at least for the moment – and avoid an election in the very near term”.

Support for the Conservatives is highest in Western Canada, among our oldest members, among men and among the retired.

Support for the Liberals is strongest in Quebec and Ontario, among younger members and among women.

Support for the NDP is strongest in Atlantic Canada and BC, among the youngest members, women and those who are not retired.

Support for the Green Party is strongest in Quebec, among younger members, among women and among those who are not retired.

Home Renovation Credit

About one quarter of our members have already used the home renovation credit of up to \$1350 on up to \$10,000 of renovations (26%), and a further quarter plan to take advantage of it (26%). In other words, a slight majority of our members will participate in this benefit. Participation is lowest in Quebec (33%).

Four-in-ten members do not believe the home renovation credit will be cancelled if an election were called (42%), while about one third believe this to be the case (32%).

Belief that the tax credit will be cancelled is highest in Western Canada and among Conservative party supporters

Members surveyed in this poll are, on average, 68 years old.

More than 2,900 CARP ActionOnline readers responded to the poll.