

CARP Political Poll Report July 12, 2013

Key Findings

Most CARP members are politically involved, and are concerned about the lack of transparency in government. Their biggest complaints about the political process center on MPs who toe the party line at the expense of constituent needs, and their strongest message to MPs is to think of the country, not themselves. Their vision of Canada is equally balanced between sound economic stewardship and prosperity and opportunity for all.

Government's first priority is seen to be working with, not against the opposition to craft the best legislation, and this spirit of a desire for cooperation for the good of the country runs through this report.

Members are split on whether their MP is a good one or not, good ones being responsive to constituent needs and bad ones toeing the party line. Members are equally likely to primarily cast their ballot for the party platform, the candidate or the party ideology.

Members see this parliament as poor or one of the worst in years, primarily because of the political infighting. Most agree with fixed election dates and don't see a need for an election now, primarily because of the expense.

Members don't see the Senate as a positive contributor to Canada's democracy, but more want to reform it than want to abolish it. Most claim to know what its function is. The effect of the current Senate scandal has been to reduce confidence in all institutions of government, not just the Senate.

Members say government's reluctance to deal with CPP enhancements results from an ideological bias against the idea.

Proportional representation and an end to whipped votes are seen to be solutions to parliamentary problems, the most important quality for an MP is a clear vision for Canada and the best vision for Canada balances economic prosperity and justice for all with a sound, well-managed country.

The Conservatives have bounced back from second place and have taken a slim lead over the Liberals again. The NDP are in distant third place.

Detailed Findings

The vast majority of CARP members are politically involved (80%), but just one fifth select the most involved option (very involved - 20%).

How politically involved are you?

INVOLVED	80%
Very involved, follow politics closely	20%
Involved, stay aware of the news	60%
NOT INVOLVED	20%
Not very involved, I vote and not much more	18%
Not at all involved, politics doesn't appeal to me	2%

Lack of transparency in government is seen to be the most pressing issue facing the country (32%), by twice as many as pick the next option, joblessness and lack of economic growth (15%). Just fewer cite health care reform and funding as our biggest challenge (13%), followed by the Senate scandal (10%).

What is the most pressing problem facing Canada today?

Lack of transparency in government	32%
Stubborn joblessness/poor economic growth	15%
Health care reform/funding	13%
Senate scandal/reforming senate	10%
Pension reform/pension security	8%
Income inequality	7%
Climate change	7%
Regional differences block progress	4%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	2%

Working with (not against) the opposition to craft better legislation is seen as the first priority of government (38%), followed by keeping taxes low and government small (26%). One tenth say balancing all priorities is a priority, while others say following through on election promises is (10% each).

What should be the first priority for a government?

Work with opposition	38%
Keep taxes low/cut waste/cut size of government	26%
Balance/reconcile priorities of all Canadians	10%
Implement election promises	10%
Shared vision of growth and equality	9%
Address priorities of their constituents	3%
Manage foreign affairs/Canada's image abroad	1%
Get re-elected	1%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	2%

One half of members voted for their MP (51%)

Did you vote for the MP who represents your riding?

Yes	51%
No	49%

Close to half say their MP represents the riding and constituents well (48%), but most use the less emphatic descriptor (well - 36%). Three-in-ten say their MP doesn't perform at all well (30%).

Regardless of whether he or she represents the party you voted for, how well does your MP represent the interests of your riding?

WELL	48%
Very well, first thing they think of	12%
Well, MP is responsive	36%
NOT WELL	42%
Not very well, involved in other things	12%
Not at all well, toes party line regardless	30%
DON'T KNOW	11%

Members are relatively equally likely to say they vote primarily for the party platform (32%) or the candidate (29%), while just fewer vote the party ideology (23%). Fewer vote for the leader (14%).

When you vote, do you primarily cast your ballot for the candidate, the leader of the party / Prime Minister, the party platform or the overall party ideology?

Party platform	32%
Candidate	29%
Party ideology	23%
Leader/PM	14%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	3%

There is an even split in opinion on whether a dissident MP should have to leave caucus to speak, with close to half saying yes (47%) and one half saying no (50%).

Do you agree or disagree an MP should leave caucus if he or she wants to take positions that don't agree with his or her party's?

AGREE	47%
Agree strongly	15%
Agree	32%
DISAGREE	50%
Disagree	36%
Disagree strongly	14%
DON'T KNOW	4%

One half say this parliament achieved “not much” (50%) due to fighting between parties and MPs. One quarter call this the worst parliament ever (25%) while just fewer admit some things were achieved (21%). Very few think it the best parliament in years (2%).

Compared to past Parliaments, how much has this session of Parliament achieved for the benefit of Canadians?

Great deal, best parliament in years	2%
Some things achieved, not everything	21%
Not much, MPs too busy fighting	50%
Nothing, worse parliament in years	25%
DON'T KNOW	2%

Two thirds agree with fixed election dates (69%) because they take power out of the PM's hands (36%) and make parliament more predictable (28%). One tenth have no opinion, and just one fifth disagree (20%), mostly because fixed dates make parliament less flexible (14%).

Do you agree or disagree with having fixed election dates, which means the next federal election will be in October, 2015?

AGREE	69%
Take power out of PM's hands	36%
More predictable	28%
OTHER	5%
Neither agree nor disagree	10%
DISAGREE	20%
Parliament is less flexible/responsive	14%
Leads to long campaigns	5%
OTHER	1%
DON'T KNOW	2%

Most think an election isn't needed now (57%), mostly because of the cost (23%) or because we're doing well economically (16%). Four-in-ten want an election now (43%), because this government is seen to have run its course (17%) and a new vision is needed (14%).

Do you think a federal election is needed in Canada now instead of in 2015?

YES	43%
Government has run its course	17%
Need a new vision for the country	14%
Parliament has become too polarized	10%
Need new blood	2%
OTHER	2%
NO	57%
Elections are expensive	23%
Canada is doing well economically	16%
I support the government	9%
Conservative vision hasn't been achieved yet	3%
OTHER	6%

Three quarters disagree legislation gets enough debate, given bundling and time allocation (74%), and close to half take the most extreme position (disagree strongly - 46%).

Do you agree or disagree current legislation receives enough debate when it is bundled in Omnibus Bills or hurried through on Time Allocation?

AGREE	17%
Agree strongly	2%
Agree	15%
DISAGREE	74%
Disagree	28%
Disagree strongly	46%
DON'T KNOW	10%

Two thirds disagree the Senate performs a valuable function (64%).

Do you agree or disagree Canada's Senate performs a valuable function in our democracy?

AGREE	30%
Agree strongly	4%
Agree	26%
DISAGREE	64%
Disagree	30%
Disagree strongly	34%
DON'T KNOW	6%

Fully 7-in-10 claim they know what the Senate actually does (70%).

Do you know what the Senate does?

Yes	70%
No	31%

The plurality want the Senate to be reformed to be elected and effective (42%), but the abolishers are very close behind (32%). One quarter want stricter screening for Senators (23%), while very few want to leave it as it is (1%).

What should be done with the Senate?

Reform it to be elected and effective	42%
Abolish it	32%
Stricter qualifications/better screening	23%
Leave it as it is	1%
DON'T KNOW	2%

The senate scandal has left 3-in-10 members with less confidence in all politicians (30%), while about half this proportion says the fraud dishonours the perpetrators, not the institution (16%), or has left them with less confidence in the system (15%), in the senate (14%) and confirms the view that the senate should be abolished (14%).

How has the current Senate scandal affected your view of Parliament as a whole?

Less confidence in all politicians	30%
Fraud dishonours senators, not senate	16%
Less confidence in the entire system	15%
Less confidence in the senate	14%
Confirms view senate should be abolished	14%
Less confidence in senators	6%
Doesn't affect my view of parliament	5%
THIS IS NOT AN IMPORTANT ISSUE	1%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	1%

The most important quality for an MP is seen to be a clear vision for Canada (40%). Half this proportion want an independent thinker (22%), while half this proportion want real life experience (12%) or matching political views to their own (11%).

Which of the following is the most important quality for an MP?

Have a clear vision for a better Canada	40%
Independent thinker	22%
Real life/private sector experience	12%
Political views which match mine	11%
Effective local “pothole fixer”	5%
Sits in government	3%
Supports party platform regardless	2%
Cabinet minister/important party position	2%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	3%

Members cite the government’s ideological bias against social supports to explain inaction on pension reform (26%), followed by those who say the economy can’t afford CPP enhancements (20%). About half this proportion blames inaction on lobbying by the financial industry (13%), lack of political will (11%) and the fact MPs have good pensions and needn’t worry (11%).

Finance Minister Flaherty promised to consider enhancements to CPP once there was enough agreement among the provinces, which is now the case? Only the Minister’s consent is needed. Why do you think the Minister refuses to add his consent to enhance CPP?

Government ideological bias against social support	26%
Economy can’t afford increased contributions	20%
Financial industry lobbyists/want RRSP/PRPP fees	13%
Political inertia/lack of will	11%
MPs have good pensions/needn’t worry	11%
Not enough voter outrage/public protest	7%
Biggest champions besides CARP are unions	2%
CPP ENHANCEMENT NOT NECESSARY	2%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	10%

Proportional representation (9%) and an end to whipped votes (23%) are seen to be the best cures for what ails parliament. Few think parliament doesn't need fixing (4%).

Which of the following ideas would provide the best solution to what's wrong with Parliament?

Proportional representation (PR)	29%
No whipped votes/all free votes	23%
Elected senate	8%
Super majority (2/3) to pass bills	8%
Power to recall members	6%
Non answers in QP cited for contempt	4%
Eliminate prorogation	4%
PARLIAMENT DOESN'T NEED FIXIN	4%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	12%

By far the most important priority for MPs in parliament should be enacting good legislation, even when it counters party policy (57%). This is followed by focusing on the country's most pressing problems (32%).

Which of the following should be the key priority for the MP's in Parliament?

Enacting good legislation, even if contradicting policy	57%
Focus on Canada's most pressing problems	32%
Represent local constituents first	8%
Passing government legislation	2%
Supporting party ideology	1%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	1%

Stephen Harper is seen to be the most effective parliamentarian in Ottawa (22%) followed by Tom Mulcair (14%), Elizabeth May and Jim Flaherty (13% each)

Who of the following is the most effective Parliamentarian serving in Ottawa?

Stephen Harper	22%
Tom Mulcair	14%
Elizabeth May	13%
Jim Flaherty	13%
Justin Trudeau	8%
Tony Clement	1%
Marc Garneau	1%
SOMEONE ELSE	9%
DON'T KNOW	20%

The message most members would send their MP is thinking of the country instead of self (38%), followed by working with the opposition to improve legislation (26%) and not sacrificing constituent interests to the party line (10%).

If you could send one message to your elected representative, what would it be?

Think of country first, not yourself or party	38%
Work with opposition to improve legislation	26%
Don't sacrifice constituents' needs to party line	10%
Think of now, not next election	7%
Work with government to improve legislation	7%
Civil behaviour in parliament	5%
Try to achieve something lasting	3%
Stop reading cheat sheets/talking points in QP	2%
OTHER/DON'T KNOW	1%

One third of members describe their MP as conscientious (32%), while just fewer think the opposite (more concerned with party line - 20%). Just fewer have an “invisible” member (16%) who doesn’t speak.

Regardless of the behaviour of the rest of Parliament, how would you describe your MP?

Very conscientious/works hard for constituents	32%
More concerned with party line than constituent needs	20%
Invisible/doesn’t rise to speak/backbencher	16%
No vision for the greater good	5%
Constantly campaigning for re-election	5%
Cabinet minister/critic/important position/busy	4%
Tries to achieve greater good for all	4%
Stop reading cheat sheets/talking points in QP	2%
OTHER/DON’T KNOW	15%

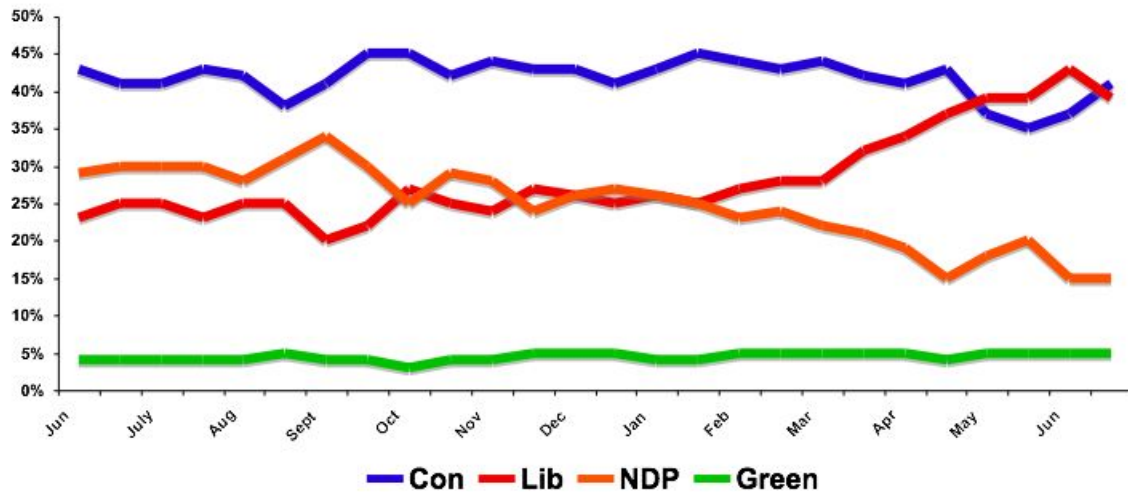
Two visions compete - one of prosperity and social justice for all (35%) and one of a successful business (31%). Fewer think it should be the best place to grow old (11%)

What is your vision for the future of Canada?

Economic prosperity and social progress shared by all	35%
Well-managed, safe, secure economic enterprise	31%
Best place to grow old	11%
Sustainable society dedicated to preserve environment	9%
Global beacon of justice and tolerance	7%
Return to our roots as peacekeepers	3%
OTHER/DON’T KNOW	3%

Electoral Preference

The Liberals surpassed the NDP as second place party in CARP members' electoral preference in February, and passed the Conservatives as first place party in the past month, only to have the Conservatives catch up again. The Liberals are now at 39%, the Conservatives at 41%, the NDP at 15%, and the Greens at 5%.



More than 1700 CARP Poll™ panel members responded to this poll between June 28 and July 1, 2013. The margin of error for a probability sample this size is about plus or minus 2%, 19 times out of 20