

OTTAWA CITIZEN

Majority of Canadians want Harper to lead nation: poll

PM emerges from crisis riding huge wave of support as the leader for uncertain times

BY NORMA GREENAWAY

Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Conservatives would romp to a majority victory with a record 46-per-cent public support if an election were held today, a new Ipsos Reid poll says.

The poll also indicates almost three-quarters of Canadians say they are "truly scared" for the future of the country and a solid majority say they would prefer another election to having the minority Conservative government replaced by a coalition led by Stéphane Dion.

The survey suggests Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean was in tune with public opinion across the country when she agreed yesterday to suspend, or prorogue, Parliament until Jan. 26 at the request of Mr. Harper. Almost seven in 10 of those surveyed Tuesday and Wednesday gave prorogation a thumbs up.

The Tories also were deemed by almost six in 10 Canadians to be the best managers of the economy in these troubling times.

Results of the wide-ranging survey, conducted exclusively for Canwest News Service and *Global National*, paint a picture of a population gripped by fear that is largely giving the Conservatives the benefit of the doubt — for now — to lead the country in such uncertain political and economic times.

"Overall, this is breaking quite clearly to the government as opposed to the coalition," said pollster Darrell Bricker.

46%

of Canadians say they'd vote for Harper if an election were held today

56%

would rather go to the polls again than let the coalition govern

72%

said they are 'truly scared' for the future of Canada

Sixty per cent of those interviewed said they opposed replacing the government with a Liberal-NDP coalition supported by the Bloc Québécois, compared with 37 per cent who favoured the idea. Support for the coalition was highest in Quebec, at 50 per cent, followed by 44 per cent in Atlantic Canada.

The poll indicates the prospect of the Dion-led coalition has prompted Canadians to rethink the value of an election so soon after the Oct. 14 poll. Fifty-six per cent said they would rather go to the polls than be governed by the coalition.

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JULIE OLIVER, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Prime Minister Stephen Harper leaves Rideau Hall yesterday after obtaining a suspension of Parliament from Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean, effectively thwarting a Liberal-led coalition from seizing power. Canadians overwhelmingly approved of the move, a new poll indicates.