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Tuesday, November 22, 2005

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## ONTARIANS RESIGNED TO HOLIDAY CAMPAIGN

By James Wallace  
Osprey News Network

There is broad public support in Ontario for a federal election campaign to sort out the political mess in Ottawa, an SES Research/Osprey Media poll has found.

Eight out of ten voters polled supported an election call, though there was disagreement over when, exactly, that should be.

"I think with all the (election) talk over the past two weeks, Canadians have resigned themselves to the fact they will be going to the polls at some time in the near future," said Nik Nanos, president of SES Research.

When asked whether an election should be called "immediately," regardless of whether the campaign runs into the holidays, 16 per cent of voters responded yes.

Another 32 per cent thought an election should be called in January, after the holidays and 35 per cent thought the election should be called 30 days following the release of the second Gomery report, as Prime Minister Paul Martin as proposed.

Just 13 per cent of Ontario voters thought no election should be called at this time.

"The issue isn't whether we should have an election, it's on the timing of an election." Nanos said.

Canada's three opposition parties have threatened to table a non-confidence motion this week which could topple the minority Liberal government by Nov. 28.

That would force Canadians to go to the polls in a general election through the holidays into mid-January.

Ontario, as was the case in the last federal election, is expected to be the battle ground that decides the outcome of the federal campaign. The block of 73 Liberal seats elected from this province formed the core of the Jean Chrétien/Paul Martin governments.

While Ontario voters are prepared to go to polls, there has been considerable speculation over whether an election will substantially alter the national political landscape.

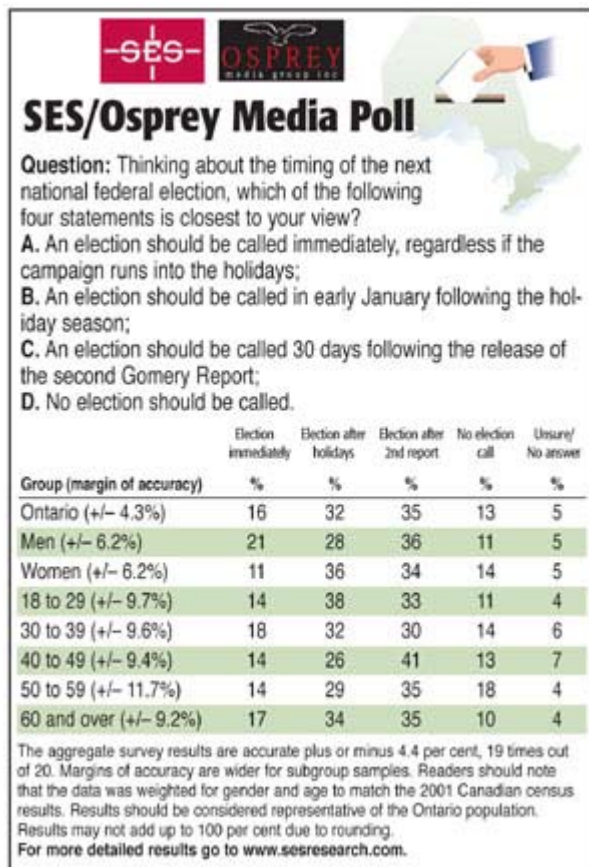
The SES/Osprey poll showed men are more likely than women to want an election immediately – 21 per cent of men compared to 11 per cent of women.

### Special Report

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**Oct. 11 '05** - Ontarians Satisfied with their Roads: poll  
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Women, on the other hand, were more inclined to want to wait until after the holidays and as inclined as men to want a call after Justice Gomery releases his second report in the New Year.



"I think men just want to get it over with," Nanos said.  
 "Women are more inclined to wait and see."

That gender split could help the ruling Liberals, who depend heavily female voters. If women are inclined to give Martin's Liberals the benefit of the doubt, that should be reflected at the ballot box.

"It's one part of the broader picture," Nanos said.

The Liberals have been in power since late 1993 but lost their majority in the June 2004 election in part over the scandal-plagued federal sponsorship program that saw taxpayers' money siphoned into Liberal Party coffers.

Gomery and Auditor-General Sheila Fraser found \$57 million was unaccounted for during the nine-year program intended to promote federalism in Quebec, the RCMP has launched a criminal investigation and the Liberals have repaid taxpayers \$1.4 million Gomery said improperly donated to their party.

Although Chrétien drew fire from Gomery, who concluded the former PM was politically accountable for the sponsorship scandal (an allegation Chrétien denies), he largely cleared Martin.

What impact, if any, the conclusion of Justice Gomery's report or the allegations already in the public domain will have on the upcoming federal campaign are uncertain.

Opinion polls suggest the public isn't obsessed either with

Gomery's report or his findings to date.

However, Nanos pointed out that no party, heading into this election, is exactly poised for an easy campaign.

The federal Liberals have dropped six points in two weeks (down to 34 per cent from 40 per cent), according to an SES poll, Conservative support is unchanged at 28 per cent while the NDP have picked up five points in the same period rising to 20 per cent.

While the Liberals lead, they don't have enough support at this time to form a majority.

The government has just promised \$39 billion in new tax cuts and spending over the next six years (broadly seen by voters, polls suggest, as an attempt to buy votes) and Martin has said the economy will form the focus of his campaign.

While the NDP, which has propped up the Liberals this past year, is gaining some ground, voters deserted the party at the ballot box during the last election when it appeared the Conservatives might challenge for power.

Jack Layton, the NDP leader, will face the same challenge this time, holding onto to any gains he makes, Nanos suggest.

Conservative Leader Stephen Harper, meanwhile, needs to convince Ontario voters that he offers a credible alternative to the Liberals, Nanos said and has begun his campaign by talking about knocking a couple of cents off Canada's GST.

A detailed breakdown of poll can be obtained at [www.sesresearch.com](http://www.sesresearch.com). It was conducted between Nov. 14 and Nov. 16 by telephone with 525 Ontarians and is considered accurate within 4.3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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