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LIFE SHOWBIZ COLUMNISTS EDITORIAL

Sun, September 7, 2003

**Gay nuptials split voters  
MPs could be punished: Poll**  
By BILL RODGERS, OTTAWA BUREAU CHIEF

OTTAWA -- Sixty per cent of Canadians who oppose same-sex marriage say they would vote against their MP in the next election if he or she favours the controversial legislation, according to an SES/Sun Media poll. The national survey of 1,000 Canadians, conducted between Aug. 24 and Sept. 2, shows the opposite is true for supporters of same-sex marriage. Sixty-three per cent of Canadians who support it say they would not take it out on their MP if he or she had an opposite view.

Across the country, 45% said there would be a political price to pay on election day, while 55% said the same-sex marriage issue wouldn't affect their vote.

"There's no avoiding this issue," said Nik Nanos, president and CEO of SES Canada Research Inc.

"People are going to have to stand up and clarify their position either way and be prepared to take it on the chin," Nanos added.

The public opinion survey also found that 33% of Canadians do not trust the opinion of the courts, their church or religious leaders, or their MPs on the issue. They say it's a personal decision.

**TRUST THEIR MPS**

Meanwhile, 31% say they would trust the Supreme Court, and 23% would listen to their church or religious leaders. Only 7% said they would trust their MP's opinion on the hot-button issue.

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#### NEWSPAPERS/MAGAZINES



Sun Media Newspapers

Overall, the poll shows Canadians are evenly split on the Chretien government's plan to legalize same-sex marriage. About 47% say such marriages should be allowed but 44% say marriage should be between a man and a woman only. Nine per cent of those surveyed were unsure.

Canadians in Quebec and British Columbia were the most likely to support changing the definition of marriage -- finding 53% support in both provinces. Alberta was the least likely to support it, at 28% while a whopping 63% say marriage should be left alone.

Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Ontario and the Atlantic provinces more closely reflected the national split.

Sixty per cent of Canadians under the age of 30 support same-sex marriage. Support declines with age, with only 32% supporting over the age of 60.

The SES/Sun Media poll also shows those who regularly attend religious services every week were the least likely to support same-sex marriage at just 24%.

The survey is considered accurate to within 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Saint John, N.B., Tory MP Elsie Wayne said she has received thousands of letters, e-mails and phone calls on the issue and the vast majority opposes any change to marriage.

"The silent majority in the largest cities are not in favour of this," Wayne said.

#### ELECTION ISSUE

Alliance House leader John Reynolds warns it will be an issue in the next election. "I wouldn't doubt" that there will be MPs who lose their seats over the issue.

It's a feeling echoed by Toronto-area Grit MP Dan McTeague who believes more than 30 MPs could go down to defeat on same-sex marriage.

"The numbers are very telling," McTeague said, adding, "We have the makings of the perfect political storm."

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