

Canada-Wide Public Opinion Poll on Climate Change

**Public Wants Copenhagen Treaty Delayed to Allow Recovery
from Recession and Stronger Scientific Confirmation**



**COMPAS Inc.
Public Opinion and Customer Research
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Findings

The Canadian public wants signing of a Copenhagen-style climate change treaty postponed. That’s the most surprising finding from a national survey of Canadians on the subject of climate change carried out by COMPAS Research for the Frontier Centre for Public Policy. “After years of public discussion of the issue,” said [Peter/Conrad?], “one might expect people to have adopted opinions on the issue. But barely a third have firm opinions.”

Table 1: (Q1) At a conference in Copenhagen in December, the Canadian government will be asked to sign a treaty that gives power to an international organization to distribute Canadian tax dollars and influence energy policy in Canada. Which of the following four opinions is closest to your own? [RANDOMIZE]

N=1000	Raw %	Combined %	% After DNK/Ref removed	For vs. Against Signing Now
Canada should definitely sign the treaty	25	25	28	28
Canada should postpone making a decision until we are more confident about where the global economy is going	25	51	57	73
Canada should postpone making a decision until a lot more objective, scientific research is carried out on the issue of climate	26			
Canada should definitely not sign the treaty	14	14	16	
Don't know/Refused	11	11	NA	NA



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In practice, few Canadians oppose signing such a treaty under any circumstance (14%) while few also favour going ahead with it (25%), as shown in table 1. The largest cluster (51%) favours postponement of signing--either until we can be more confident that the global economy is coming out of recession (25%) or that there is strong agreement that the scientific research attributing climate change to humans is fully objective (26%).

Among Canadians with an opinion on the issue, 73% favour postponing a decision (57%) or not signing at all (16%) while 28% advocate signing a treaty at Copenhagen.

Surprised by the number of Canadians who are in the middle on the issue, COMPAS interviewers quickly went back to as many of the initial respondents we could find in a short time period to explore attitudes in greater detail. The key findings are that

- ❑ Most people believe that most of those who are leery of signing a treaty because of the recession either feel this way because it could last longer than expected (57%; 78% of those with an opinion) or because a climate change treaty could prevent the global economy from recovering (57%; 78% of those with an opinion), as shown in table 2; and
- ❑ Most people believe that most of those who are leery of signing a treaty until there is more objective, scientific evidence feel this way because they want scientists on both sides of the debate to work together on joint projects to increase certainty that the findings about climate change are objective and scientifically valid (75%; 91% of those with an opinion), as shown in table 3.



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Table 2: Explaining the Opinions of People Who Want to Postpone Signing a Treaty Until the Recession¹

WHY THEY FEEL THIS WAY	%
The recession may last longer than expected	17
A treaty on climate change could prevent the global economy from recovering	17
Both of these viewpoints	40
UNPROMPTED Don't know/Refuse	27

Table 3: Explaining the Opinions of People Who Favour Postponement Until There Is More Objective, Scientific Evidence²

WHY THEY FEEL THIS WAY	%
Governments need to spend a lot more money on climate research to be sure that the findings are true	7
Governments need scientists on both sides of the debate to work together so that we can be sure that their findings are objective and scientifically valid	45
Both of these viewpoints	30
UNPROMPTED Don't know/Refuse	18

¹ “Some people we spoke with said that Canada should wait for the global economy to get out of the recession before signing an international treaty on climate change. In your view, do people who oppose signing a treaty now oppose doing so now because they believe that...”

² “Some people we spoke with said that Canada should wait for more objective, more scientific research to be carried out on climate change before signing a treaty. In your view, do people who want more research before signing a treaty feel this way because they believe that.....”



Methodological Note

Interviewing was carried out by professional interviewers using Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing technology and was completed November 28, 2009. By convention, the representative sample of n=1000 is deemed accurate to within approximately 3 percentage points. By convention, the subset of n=350 respondents interviewed in the followup is deemed accurate to within approximately 5.2 percentage points 19 times out of 20. The principal investigator on this study was Dr. Conrad Winn.

