

Two-thirds of Canadians back long-gun registry: poll

By: Mark Kennedy

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OTTAWA — Two-thirds of Canadians support the controversial long-gun registry and even voters who back Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservatives are split on the issue, a new poll has found.

The national survey conducted exclusively for Postmedia News and Global Television finds that support for the registry stands at 66% nationally. Moreover, support is strong in regions throughout the country — even though Harper has said his party will not “rest” until it abolishes the registry.

But the poll also finds that although Harper is running counter to public opinion on the issue, his stance is only deepening his support among fervent Tories and that the NDP risks losing votes in the next election among Canadians unhappy with that party's internal divisions.

“This has very substantive resonance and support across the country,” Ipsos Reid senior vice-president John Wright said Tuesday of the registry.

“Despite all of its woes about the money spent, it seems most people in this country think that it's a good thing and that if you have a gun it should be registered. Clearly, the police departments and others who have waded in have had an effect.”

The survey, conducted Sept. 27 to Oct. 4, comes in the wake of a highly publicized parliamentary battle in which Conservative MP Candice Hoepfner failed in her effort to abolish the registry. Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff had required several of his MPs who previously opposed the registry to vote to support it in the Commons, and several New Democrat MPs chose on their own to also switch their votes.

The new poll finds that support for the registry is highest in Quebec (81%), followed by Ontario (66%) British Columbia (61%), Atlantic Canada (59%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (57%).

In Alberta, the only place where the majority oppose the registry, the public is split — with half (53%) in opposition and the other half (47%) in support.

Here's what people think of the registry, broken down by their voting intentions:

- Conservative voters: 47% support; 53% oppose.
- Liberal voters: 78% support; 22% oppose.
- NDP voters: 67% support; 33% oppose.
- Bloc Quebecois voters: 88% support; 12% oppose.
- Green party voters: 68% support; 32% oppose.

The poll finds that 23% of Canadians say the results of the recent parliamentary tussle over Hoepfner's bill could have an impact on how they vote in the next election.

Of those voters, roughly half (12%) said they will vote for a party that wants to abolish the long-gun registry while the remainder (10%) said they will vote for a party that proposes to maintain it.

Of the Tory supporters, 18% said it will further drive them toward supporting a party that supports the abolition of the registry, with only six% saying they'd switch their vote to party that wants to maintain it.

Of New Democrats, 14% said it makes them want to vote for a party that advocates killing the registry, while nine% indicate they still want to support a party that supports it.

Wright said the poll's message is simple: Canadians strongly support the registry, but there are enough pockets of discontent in places like the West for Harper to use the issue as a "political wedge" and chip away at the NDP's voter support.

"The Tories are reinforcing their base but they're not opening it up," he said. "If anything, what they're doing is destabilizing other parties and they're hoping to gain from that advantage."

For its poll, Ipsos Reid surveyed 1,064 adults in an online panel. The margin of error is 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

<http://news.nationalpost.com/2010/10/05/two-thirds-of-canadians-back-long-gun-registry-poll/#ixzz16mRyBYXX>

POLLING CANADIANS ON THE GUN REGISTRY

Question: Do you personally support or oppose the gun-registry, which requires all owners of long-barreled guns to register their firearms on a national database.

