



The Strategic Counsel

Gregg, Kelly, Sullivan & Woolstencroft:
The Strategic Counsel

www.thestrategiccounsel.com

21 St. Clair Avenue East
Suite 1100
Toronto, Ontario
M4T 1L9
Tel 416 975-4465
Fax 416 975-1883

440 Laurier Avenue West
Suite 200
Ottawa, Ontario
K1R 7X6
Tel 613 751-2855
Fax 613 751-2852



A Report To The Globe and Mail and CTV

Perceptions and Views of Canadian Armed Forces Troops in Afghanistan

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Introduction and Methodology

- ◆ Gregg, Kelly, Sullivan & Woolstencroft: *The Strategic Counsel* is pleased to present findings of The Globe and Mail/CTV Polling Program for March 2006.
- ◆ Results are based on nightly tracking among a proportionate national sample of Canadians 18 years of age or older.
- ◆ Interviews were conducted between March 9th and March 12th, 2006.
- ◆ The following table outlines the sample distribution and associated margin of error.
- ◆ Note: Proportions may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Sample Distribution and Margin of Error

	March 9-12	
Region	Sample Size	Margin of Error (±)
Canada	1000	3.1
Quebec	247	6.3
Rest of Canada	753	3.6
Ontario	379	5.0
West	297	5.7

Overall Summary

- ◆ Clearly, there is modest public support for the Canadian troops in Afghanistan. There is broad belief that these troops will have a positive impact on the lives of the Afghan people. At this point, the public accepts the inevitability of some casualties in order to be part of the international effort to achieve security and stability in this region. Moreover, there is tremendous pride in the Canadian military. And in this vein, there are strong emotional connections with the military located in Afghanistan.
- ◆ However, there is evidence of substantial confusion and lack of understanding about the Canadian mission in Afghanistan. Significant opposition exists to this mission, particularly in Quebec. Moreover, there appears to be some confusion about the primary mandate of the mission: most people think it is about peacekeeping which is a traditional role for the Canadian armed forces. Equally important, the Canadian public is almost equally divided about whether the Canadian forces should have an active combat role. Canadians have yet to be conditioned about the new active combat role that Canadian troops are being asked to undertake. This simply underscores the tremendous ambivalence Canadians have about the Afghanistan mission and the potential for this issue to become a major “hot button” for the Harper government as opinions are clearly in the “early stages” of being formed, but may shift with time and as events unfold.
- ◆ The Harper government should be concerned about the state of Canadian public opinion about this mission. Perhaps the most worrisome finding concerns the province of Quebec, where levels of scepticism are deeper and more widespread. This is particularly important given the high political priority being placed on winning Quebec voters. Our February poll indicated that the general public’s support for the mission could change if casualties started to mount. Modest support could become open opposition. These results underscore the need for the Canadian government to educate the public about the challenges and benefits of the mission in Afghanistan.

Overall Summary (cont'd)

- ◆ It is also evident that the Canadian public appetite may be more short-term, and there has been little public education on the nature and duration of the mandate.
- ◆ Another challenge facing the Harper government is parliament itself. Right now, Liberal voters are only modestly supportive of the Afghanistan mission. However, some Liberal leadership candidates may find it politically attractive to oppose/question the mission as a way of differentiating themselves from the Martin/Harper governments. These candidates may use the Afghanistan mission to tie Harper to the Bush administration, given that the Canadian troops are currently operating under US command. Moreover, NDP and BQ voters are clearly less keen on the Canadian mission in Afghanistan. At this point in time, Conservative voters are the strongest supporters.
- ◆ The Afghanistan initiative is capturing the attention of Canadians, but it is also clear they know very little about the specifics, environment, our commitment, and dangers of the mission.
- ◆ In this light, there is a real and meaningful demand or a more fulsome debate about the role of Canadian troops in dangerous conflict zones.

Canadians think Canada has a role in helping to resolve international security and peace problems

- ◆ A modest majority (53%) believe that Canada has a major role in helping to improve international security and peace issues. Still, a large number of Canadians (38%) believe that Canada's role should be minor in helping to improve these situations.
- ◆ Virtually no one (7%) thinks that Canada has no real responsibility in helping to address these types of situations.
- ◆ In nutshell, Canadians feel comfortable with the notion that Canada should be playing a role in improving these situations.

With intensive media coverage over several weeks, Canadians are highly aware of Canadian troops in Afghanistan

- ◆ There is almost unanimous awareness (89%) that Canada has troops in Afghanistan.
- ◆ Again, reflecting intensive media coverage, Canadians claim that they are very/somewhat knowledgeable (63%) about Canada's troops in Afghanistan, while about one-third (37%) say that they are not knowledgeable. Interestingly, Quebecers are much less likely (45%) to claim that they are knowledgeable about the situation in Afghanistan.
- ◆ This suggests that with the media coverage, Canadians (although to a much lesser extent Quebecers) are paying attention to the developments occurring in Afghanistan.

Only a modest majority supports the sending of Canadian troops to Afghanistan

- ◆ About 55% of Canadians support the decision to send troops to Afghanistan, whereas 41% say that they oppose this decision.
- ◆ Western Canadians are clearly the most supportive (61%) of the decision to send troops to Afghanistan, while Quebecers are more likely (53%) to oppose this decision.
- ◆ While these results suggest that Canadians have broad conceptual support for the Afghanistan initiative, support levels for the initiative are modest, and are particularly weaker in Quebec. A substantial minority are opposed to the initiative. It is particularly important to note that Conservative voters are the most inclined (72%) to support the initiative, whereas Liberal supporters are more divided (56% support and 39% oppose). NDP voters are clearly divided on the issue (51% oppose, while 47% support) and BQ supporters are opposed (58% opposed, while 39% favour).
- ◆ At first glance, these results appear to conflict with our first previous polling on the level of support for the decision to send troops to Afghanistan. They do not. The previous question asked Canadians whether, if they were an MP, they would vote in favour of or against sending troops in Afghanistan. Some 62% indicated that they would vote against sending troops to Afghanistan. This is a different measure which taps into the level of responsibility for making a decision that might involve casualties and fatalities. Obviously, there is a much higher level of reluctance to making a decision to send troops to a high risk areas.

Most think that Canadian troops are in Afghanistan for peacekeeping

- ◆ About 70% believe that the main purpose of the Canadian troops in Afghanistan is related more to peacekeeping than combat, whereas only 26% think that its primary role is combat.
- ◆ This suggests that some confusion exists about the primary purpose of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan. It also implies that the Canadian government has some work to be done in better educating the public about the true role and mandate of Canadian troops in Southern Afghanistan.

Most Canadians believe that Canadian troops will have a positive impact on the lives of the Afghan people

- ◆ There is a broad belief (78%) that Canadian troops will have a positive impact on the lives of the local residents. This is consistent with Canadian public opinion which is that the Canadian military only performs positive and good things when it is sent abroad to fulfill international roles.
- ◆ Only 14% think that the Canadian troops will only make the situation worse for the local residents.

At this point, there is a willingness to tolerate casualties to be part of the international effort in Afghanistan

- ◆ At this point in time, about 59% indicate that they are willing to tolerate casualties in Afghanistan in order to help achieve security and stability in the region. Again, the degree of tolerance is much weaker in Quebec where only 47% say they are willing to pay the price of Canadian casualties. Western Canadians are the most likely to indicate that they are willing to pay the price of casualties to play this role.
- ◆ A substantial minority (39%) say they not willing to pay this price to be involved in this broader mission.
- ◆ Liberals and Conservatives voters are the most likely to say that they are willing to pay the price of casualties, while NDP and BQ supporters are almost equally divided.

Canadians are less keen on the 10-year mission to re-build and stabilize Afghanistan

- ◆ About 52% indicate that they would be opposed to a 10-year engagement to re-build and stabilize Afghanistan, while only 44% support this concept.
- ◆ Again, opposition is strongest in Quebec, while support is highest in Western Canada.
- ◆ Clearly, Canadians have much less interest in seeing Canadian troops remaining in this region for an extended period of time. It suggests that they think that the mission should have a shorter life span.

Canadians are divided over whether Canadian troops should have combat roles

- ◆ A bare majority (51%) indicate that the Canadian armed forces should be prepared to see active combat duty. In contrast, 47% oppose Canadian forces having this role.
- ◆ Consistent with the other results in the survey, Quebecers are the most opposed (65%) to Canadian troops having an active combat role, while Ontarians are the most supportive (59%).
- ◆ Again, these results underscore the ambivalence Canadians have about the role and mandate of the Canadian troops in this region.

Strong belief exists that a parliamentary debate will not hurt the morale of Canadian troops in Afghanistan

- ◆ Consistent with our previous polling, there is a strong belief (69%) that a parliamentary debate will not hurt the morale of Canadian troops in Afghanistan.
- ◆ There is a belief that this type of engagement is too important not to be debated and that all Canadians need to understand the challenges being faced by Canadian forces in this region.

Canadians have strong emotional connections with the Canadian forces in Afghanistan

- ◆ Some 73% have a strong emotional connection (one way or another) with the Canadian troops in Afghanistan. This emotional connection cuts across all demographic groups in Canadian society.
- ◆ Moreover, there is also strong sense of Canadian pride in the troops in Afghanistan. Almost one-in-two (47%) indicate that they are “very proud” of the Canadian troops. Another 36% are “somewhat proud”.
- ◆ This suggests that Canadians have a personal and emotional connection with the individual troops in Afghanistan. It also implies that there is going to be a great deal of attention focused on what happens in this region as Canadian forces carry out their missions.

Detailed Tables

How much responsibility does Canada have in trying to improve security problems and conflicts around the world?

	Canada	Region			
		Quebec	Rest of Canada*	Ontario	West
n=	1000	247	753	379	297
	%	%	%	%	%
Major responsibility	53	50	54	54	54
Minor responsibility	38	40	37	36	37
No real responsibility at all	7	8	7	8	7
DK/NA/Ref	2	2	2	2	2

*Note: Rest of Canada includes all provinces except Quebec

Q. Thinking about security problems and conflicts around the world, do you think Canada has a major responsibility, a minor responsibility or no real responsibility to join other countries and play a role in trying to improve these situations?

Base: Total sample

Are Canadians aware that 2000 armed forces troops were recently sent to Afghanistan?

	Canada	Region			
		Quebec	Rest of Canada*	Ontario	West
n=	1000	247	753	379	297
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	89	87	90	88	92
No	11	13	10	12	8
DK/NA/Ref	<1	-	<1	-	<1

*Note: Rest of Canada includes all provinces except Quebec

Q. Were you aware that Canada recently sent approximately 2000 armed forces troops to Afghanistan?
 Base: Total sample

How knowledgeable are Canadians about what our troops are doing in Afghanistan?

	Canada	Region			
		Quebec	Rest of Canada*	Ontario	West
n=	1000	247	753	379	297
	%	%	%	%	%
Total Knowledgeable	63	45	68	68	67
Very knowledgeable	14	7	16	18	12
Somewhat knowledgeable	49	38	52	50	55
Not very knowledgeable	27	45	22	23	22
Not at all knowledgeable	10	10	9	8	11
Total Not Knowledgeable	37	55	31	31	33
DK/NA/Ref	<1	<1	1	1	<1

*Note: Rest of Canada includes all provinces except Quebec

Q. Would you describe yourself as very knowledgeable, somewhat knowledgeable, not very knowledgeable or not knowledgeable at all about what Canada's troops are doing in Afghanistan?

Base: Total sample

Do Canadians support or oppose send these troops to Afghanistan?

	Canada	Region			
		Quebec	Rest of Canada*	Ontario	West
n=	1000	247	753	379	297
	%	%	%	%	%
Total Support	55	43	59	58	61
Strongly support	11	3	14	15	12
Support	44	40	45	43	49
Oppose	26	32	24	22	25
Strongly oppose	15	21	13	16	10
Total Oppose	41	53	37	38	35
DK/NA/Ref	4	4	4	4	4

*Note: Rest of Canada includes all provinces except Quebec

Q. Overall, would you say you strongly support, support, oppose or strongly oppose the decision to send these troops to Afghanistan?
 Base: Total sample

Do Canadians support or oppose send these troops to Afghanistan? – *By Party Vote*

	Canada	Party Vote					Green/Other/ DK/Won't Vote
		Liberal	Conservative	NDP	Bloc		
n=	1000	245	280	175	103	196	
	%	%	%	%	%		
Total Support	55	56	72	47	39	44	
Strongly support	11	11	18	10	2	7	
Support	44	45	54	37	37	37	
Oppose	26	22	19	32	33	30	
Strongly oppose	15	17	6	19	25	17	
Total Oppose	41	39	25	51	58	47	
DK/NA/Ref	4	5	3	2	3	9	

*Note: Rest of Canada includes all provinces except Quebec

Q. Overall, would you say you strongly support, support, oppose or strongly oppose the decision to send these troops to Afghanistan?
Base: Total sample

What do Canadians perceive to be the purpose of our troops in Afghanistan – peacekeeping or combat?

	Canada	Region			
		Quebec	Rest of Canada*	Ontario	West
n=	1000	247	753	379	297
	%	%	%	%	%
More peacekeeping than combat	70	76	69	68	70
More combat than peacekeeping	26	22	28	27	27
DK/NA/Ref	4	2	3	5	3

*Note: Rest of Canada includes all provinces except Quebec

Q. From what you know, would you say the main purpose of the Canadian troops in Afghanistan is more peacekeeping than combat or more combat than peacekeeping?
 Base: Total sample

How will the presence of Canadian troops in Afghanistan impact the everyday lives of the Afghan people?

	Canada	Region			
		Quebec	Rest of Canada*	Ontario	West
n=	1000	247	753	379	297
	%	%	%	%	%
Total Improve	78	75	79	78	80
Significantly improve	13	12	13	12	15
Somewhat improve	65	63	66	66	65
Somewhat worsen	9	13	9	8	9
Significantly worsen	5	6	4	5	4
Total Worsen	14	19	13	13	13
DK/NA/Ref	8	6	8	9	7

*Note: Rest of Canada includes all provinces except Quebec

Q. And do you think Canadian troops in Afghanistan will significantly improve the everyday lives of the people there, improve their lives somewhat, worsen their lives somewhat or significantly worsen the everyday lives of people who live in Afghanistan?

Base: Total sample

Canadian casualties: is it the price we have to pay, or is the price too high?

	Canada	Region			
		Quebec	Rest of Canada*	Ontario	West
n=	1000	247	753	379	297
	%	%	%	%	%
This is the price we have to pay	59	47	63	61	65
Price is too high, we shouldn't be there	39	51	35	36	33
DK/NA/Ref	2	2	2	3	2

*Note: Rest of Canada includes all provinces except Quebec

Q. As you may know, the Canadian troops have experienced some casualties in Afghanistan. Some people say this is the price we have to pay to be part of international efforts to achieve security and stability in the region. Other people say this is too high a price to pay and if it means Canadian lives will be lost, we shouldn't be there. Which one of these two views best represents your own?

Base: Total sample

Do Canadians support or oppose having troops stationed in Afghanistan for the next ten years?

	Canada	Region			
		Quebec	Rest of Canada*	Ontario	West
n=	1000	247	753	379	297
	%	%	%	%	%
Total Support	44	38	45	42	50
Strongly support	8	4	10	8	11
Support	36	34	35	34	39
Oppose	32	32	31	34	28
Strongly oppose	20	26	19	19	18
Total Oppose	52	58	50	53	46
DK/NA/Ref	4	4	5	5	4

*Note: Rest of Canada includes all provinces except Quebec

Q. The head of Canada's Armed Forces, Rick Hillier has said he thinks it may take up to ten years to rebuild and stabilize Afghanistan. Would you strongly support, support, oppose or strongly oppose Canada having troops stationed in Afghanistan for the next ten years?

Base: Total sample

What should Canada's role be in international conflicts?

	Canada	Region			
		Quebec	Rest of Canada*	Ontario	West
n=	1000	247	753	379	297
	%	%	%	%	%
Should not be actively engaged in combat situations	47	65	41	39	44
Have to be prepared to participate in active, armed combat duty	51	33	57	59	54
DK/NA/Ref	2	2	2	2	2

*Note: Rest of Canada includes all provinces except Quebec

Q. Some people say that Canada's role in international conflicts should be limited to peacekeeping and humanitarian missions – that is, we should not be actively engaged in combat situations. Others say that this is unrealistic and that our armed forces have to be prepared to participate in active, armed combat duty. Which one of these two views best represents your own?

Base: Total sample

Should there be a debate to decide if our troops should stay in Afghanistan beyond next year?

	Canada	Region			
		Quebec	Rest of Canada*	Ontario	West
n=	1000	247	753	379	297
	%	%	%	%	%
This type of debate hurts the morale and undermines the efforts of troops overseas	27	20	29	28	33
Decision is too important not to be debated and all Canadians need to fully understand the challenges	69	76	67	68	66
DK/NA/Ref	4	4	4	4	1

*Note: Rest of Canada includes all provinces except Quebec

Q. There has also been some discussion about whether or not there should be a debate and vote in Parliament to decide if our troops should stay in Afghanistan beyond next year. Some people say that holding this type of debate hurts the morale and undermines the efforts of our troops overseas. Others say this kind of decision is too important not to be debated and that all Canadians need to fully understand the challenges facing our troops in Afghanistan. Which one of these two views best represents your own?

Base: Total sample

Do Canadians have emotional feelings about our troops in Afghanistan?

	Canada	Region			
		Quebec	Rest of Canada*	Ontario	West
n=	1000	247	753	379	297
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	73	77	71	72	68
No	26	22	27	27	31
DK/NA/Ref	1	1	2	1	1

*Note: Rest of Canada includes all provinces except Quebec

Q. When you think of Canadian troops in Afghanistan, do you have any emotional feelings one way or another?
 Base: Total sample

Do Canadians feel proud?

	Canada	Region			
		Quebec	Rest of Canada*	Ontario	West
n=	725	189	536	272	201
	%	%	%	%	%
Total Proud	83	76	86	84	86
Very proud	47	28	54	55	52
Somewhat proud	36	48	32	29	34
Not very proud	7	13	4	5	4
Not proud at all	6	6	7	9	6
Total Not Proud	13	19	11	14	10
DK/NA/Ref	4	5	3	2	4

*Note: Rest of Canada includes all provinces except Quebec

Q. Do you tend to feel very proud, somewhat proud, not very proud or not proud at all?
 Base: Among those who indicate they have emotional feelings about Canadian troops in Afghanistan

How would Canadians vote today?

	Canada				Region																
					Quebec				Rest of Canada*				Ontario				West				
	2004	2006	Feb	Mar	2004	2006	Feb	Mar	2004	2006	Feb	Mar	2004	2006	Feb	Mar	2004	2006	Feb	Mar	
	Results	Results	16-19	9-12	Results	Results	16-19	9-12	Results	Results	16-19	9-12	Results	Results	16-19	9-12	Results	Results	16-19	9-12	
N=			762	885			188	216			574	669			287	339			232	266	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Liberal candidate	37	30	28	28	34	21	19	15	38	33	31	32	45	40	38	39	27	23	21	21	
Conservative candidate	30	36	39	32	9	25	31	21	37	40	41	35	32	35	36	30	46	49	49	45	
NDP candidate	16	18	19	20	5	8	10	10	19	21	22	23	18	19	20	20	20	22	25	24	
Bloc Quebecois candidate	12	11	9	12	49	42	37	48	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Green Party candidate	4	5	5	9	3	4	3	7	5	5	6	10	4	5	6	11	5	5	5	10	

*Note: Rest of Canada includes all provinces except Quebec

Q. If you had to vote again today, which party's candidate would you be supporting in your local area?
 Q. In that case, which party's candidate would you be leaning towards?
 Base: Total sample