

## CRIME LEGISLATION

# Canadians Endorse Federal Government's Anti-Crime Proposals

*Enacting mandatory minimum sentences—and scrapping the "faint-hope" clause—are particularly popular throughout the country.*

[VANCOUVER – Jun. 26, 2009] – Many elements of the federal government's proposed legislation on crime find a high level of public support across the entire country, a new Angus Reid Strategies poll has found.

The online survey of a representative national sample of 1,002 Canadians also shows that a majority of respondents favour the concept of mandatory minimum sentences, while a much lower proportion would continue to allow judges to assess the specific merits of each case.

### The "Faint-Hope" Clause

The "faint-hope" clause allows people convicted of murder to apply for early release after 15 years in prison. The federal government has proposed scrapping the "faint hope" clause, meaning that people convicted of murder would not be eligible to apply for early release. Almost three-in-four respondents (72%) agree with the government's move to scrap the "faint-hope" clause, while 23 per cent are opposed. British Columbia (82%) had the highest level of support on this particular question.

### The National Sex Offender Registry

Canada has a National Sex Offender Registry, which was established to enhance public protection by helping police identify possible

## KEY FINDINGS

- **91% support a mandatory two-year jail term for anyone selling drugs at or near a school**
- **82% would include all sex offenders in the national registry**
- **72% would repeal "faint-hope" clause**
- **68% support ending conditional sentences for non-personal injury crimes**
- **At least 63% support mandatory sentences for anyone growing marijuana with the purpose of trafficking**
- **61% think mandatory minimum sentences are a good idea**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

*From June 19 to June 20, 2009, Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among 1,002 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.*

## CONTACT:

Mario Canseco, Vice President, Public Affairs, 604-647-3570, [mario.canseco@angus-reid.com](mailto:mario.canseco@angus-reid.com)

suspects known to be near the offence site. At this time, a convicted sex offender is registered at the discretion of a judge. The federal government has proposed registering all sex offenders, whether a judge believes they should be registered or not. Four-in-five Canadians (82%) agree with this idea, while 14 per cent are opposed. Respondents in Alberta (90%) are clearly supportive of the government's plans.

### **Mandatory Jail Terms for Drug Crimes**

Respondents to this survey were provided with some of the provisions of Bill C-15, which was passed by the House of Commons and must be ratified by the Senate before becoming law. Three-in-five respondents (63%) agree with enacting a mandatory six-month jail term for anyone growing from five to 200 marijuana plants, with the purpose of trafficking.

Support for two other marijuana-related provisions is higher, with 73 per cent agreeing to a mandatory one-year jail term for anyone growing from 201 to 500 marijuana plants, with the purpose of trafficking, and 75 per cent consenting to a mandatory two-year jail term for anyone growing more than 500 marijuana plants, with the purpose of trafficking.

Nine-in-ten Canadians (91%) support a regulation that calls for a mandatory two-year jail term for anyone selling or sharing Schedule I substances (such as cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine) on or near school grounds.

### **Non-Personal Injury Crimes**

Another one of the federal government's proposals seeks to end conditional sentences for non-personal injury crimes, such as theft over \$5,000, robbery, arson, home invasion, kidnapping and impaired driving causing bodily harm. At this time, people convicted of these crimes can serve a sentence of less than two years under house arrest. If the bill passes, people convicted of these crimes would have to serve their time in prison. Two-thirds of respondents (68%) support the proposed course of action—including 80 per cent in British Columbia and 81 per cent in Alberta—while 25 per cent disagree.

### **Mandatory Minimum Sentences**

In all, Canadians appear satisfied with the concept of mandatory minimum sentences. Three-in-five (61%) think this idea is good because it establishes specific penalties that cannot be changed. Conversely, 22 per cent of respondents call mandatory minimum sentences a bad idea, because they take away the discretion of judges to assess the specific merits of each case.

---

#### **CONTACT:**

Mario Canseco, Vice President, Public Affairs, 604-647-3570, [mario.canseco@angus-reid.com](mailto:mario.canseco@angus-reid.com)

### Crime Legislation

The “faint-hope” clause allows people convicted of murder to apply for early release after 15 years in prison. The federal government has proposed scrapping the “faint hope” clause, meaning that people convicted of murder would not be eligible to apply for early release. From what you have seen, read or heard, do you support or oppose scrapping the “faint hope” clause?

	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ONT	PQ	ATL
<b>Support</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>67%</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>3%</b>

### Crime Legislation

Canada has a National Sex Offender Registry, which was established to enhance public protection by helping police identify possible suspects known to be near the offence site. At this time, a convicted sex offender is registered at the discretion of a judge. The federal government has proposed registering all sex offenders, whether a judge believes they should be registered or not. From what you have seen, read or heard, do you support or oppose including all sex offenders in the National Sex Offender Registry?

	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ONT	PQ	ATL
<b>Support</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>78%</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>4%</b>

**CONTACT:**

Mario Canseco, Vice President, Public Affairs, 604-647-3570, [mario.canseco@angus-reid.com](mailto:mario.canseco@angus-reid.com)

### Crime Legislation

The House of Commons has passed Bill C-15, which sets the following mandatory jail terms for drug crimes. Do you agree or disagree the proposed mandatory jail terms for each of these drug crimes?

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
A mandatory six-month jail term for anyone growing from five to 200 marijuana plants, with the purpose of trafficking	63%	31%	5%
A mandatory one-year jail term for anyone growing from 201 to 500 marijuana plants, with the purpose of trafficking	73%	23%	4%
A mandatory two-year jail term for anyone growing more than 500 marijuana plants, with the purpose of trafficking	75%	21%	4%
A mandatory two-year jail term for anyone selling or sharing Schedule I substances (such as cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine) on or near school grounds	91%	6%	3%

**CONTACT:**

Mario Canseco, Vice President, Public Affairs, 604-647-3570, [mario.canseco@angus-reid.com](mailto:mario.canseco@angus-reid.com)

### Crime Legislation

Some people believe mandatory minimum sentences are a good idea, because they establish specific penalties that cannot be changed. Other people think mandatory minimum sentences are a bad idea, because they take away the discretion of judges to assess the specific merits of each case. Overall, which side do you tend to agree with the most?

	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ONT	PQ	ATL
<b>Mandatory minimum sentences are a good idea</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>57%</b>
<b>Mandatory minimum sentences are a bad idea</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>10%</b>

### Crime Legislation

The federal government is proposing to end conditional sentences for non-personal injury crimes, such as theft over \$5,000, robbery, arson, home invasion, kidnapping and impaired driving causing bodily harm. At this time, people convicted of these crimes can serve a sentence of less than two years under house arrest. If the bill passes, people convicted of these crimes would have to serve their time in prison. From what you have seen, read or heard, do you support or oppose ending conditional sentences for non-personal injury crimes?

	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ONT	PQ	ATL
<b>Support</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>3%</b>

**CONTACT:**

Mario Canseco, Vice President, Public Affairs, 604-647-3570, [mario.canseco@angus-reid.com](mailto:mario.canseco@angus-reid.com)

*Angus Reid Strategies is a full-service polling and market research firm which is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Strategies team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995.*

*Angus Reid Strategies, along with its sister company, Vision Critical, is now the largest Canadian-owned market research enterprise. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.*

*Angus Reid Strategies polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum online panel ([www.angusreidforum.com](http://www.angusreidforum.com)), which is recruited via an industry-leading process that incorporates a randomized, widespread invitation approach and a triple opt-in screening procedure. The panel is maintained through state-of-the-art sampling techniques and frequent verifications of personal identity, contact information, and demographic characteristics. This premier online survey platform presents respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses.*

*Angus Reid Strategies, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election.*

*[http://angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.10.15\\_Election.pdf](http://angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.10.15_Election.pdf)*

*Since 2006, Angus Reid Strategies has covered eight provincial elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes.*

*[http://angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.03.28\\_Anniversary\\_1.pdf](http://angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.03.28_Anniversary_1.pdf)*

*[http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.12.09\\_QuebecElection.pdf](http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.12.09_QuebecElection.pdf)*

*[http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2009.05.13\\_BCElection.pdf](http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2009.05.13_BCElection.pdf)*

*[http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2009.06.10\\_NSElection.pdf](http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2009.06.10_NSElection.pdf)*

*More information on the way Angus Reid Strategies conducts public opinion research can be found at <http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/ARS.ARF.WP.pdf>*

- 30 -

**For more information, please contact  
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:  
[www.angusreidstrategies.com](http://www.angusreidstrategies.com)**

---

**CONTACT:**

Mario Canseco, Vice President, Public Affairs, 604-647-3570, [mario.canseco@angus-reid.com](mailto:mario.canseco@angus-reid.com)