

**Assessing Harper's Ministers—Honeymoon Over;
Top Performers—Harper, MacKay, Flaherty, and Day;
Most Stable Performers—Harper and Day;
Issue Priorities—Taxes and Trade, Crime and Defence**

**BDO Dunwoody CEO/Business Leader Poll
by COMPAS in the Financial Post
for Publication August 13, 2007**



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1.0. Introduction

On the eve of a major shuffle, according to media reports, the CEOs and business leaders on COMPAS business panel were asked to assess the Prime Minister and key ministers. When their current performance scores are compared to their scores at the time of the first Harper cabinet, the key conclusion is that the cabinet's honeymoon is over. Without exception, the Prime Minister and each of his Ministers has lost points in the eyes of the panel.

Apart from the Prime Minister himself, the top performers today—all earning performance scores of 60% or higher—are the Prime Minister himself, Foreign Minister Peter MacKay, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, and Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day.

The cabinet's most stable performers, having lost fewer points than the others, are Harper himself and Stockwell Day.

Asked which issues the cabinet should prioritize, the panel highlighted taxes and trade along with crime and defence.

These are the key findings from the current web-survey of the panel of CEOs and business leaders undertaken for the *Financial Post* under sponsorship of BDO Dunwoody LLP.

2.0. Cabinet Performers

Harper outperforms his individual ministers and earns higher performance scores than did previous Prime Ministers Paul Martin and Jean Chretien, but his government's honeymoon seems over, as evidenced in scores that is appreciably lower than after taking office, as shown in table 2a.



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Table 2a: Harper's Recent Performance¹

	Mean
August 2007	66
February 2006	74 ²
Net Change	-8

The average minister has lost about 16 performance points since early 2006, as shown in table 2b. The Prime Minister himself and Stockwell Day have lost the fewest points while Lawrence Cannon and Bev Oda have lost the most, as shown in tables 2b and c.

Having lost the fewest points, Day is now among the six highest performing ministers. Maxim Bernier has also joined this group, which includes Jim Flaherty, Tony Clement, and Chuck Strahl.

Panelists convey a general sense of disappointment that the Harper government resembles too closely its predecessors in substance and style. Some verbatim comments from respondents:

We need real leadership not another fat Ostrich spitting out platitudes.

Harper seems to be ignoring or taking [the] west for granted. Policies like income trust are examples that drive western alienation.

Baird's recent environmental announcements on greenhouse gasses are unachievable and place an unfair tax on Canadian industry that has been investing and growing since 1990 (and reducing its emissions). This from a government that promised the opposite.

¹ (Q1) The media report that the Prime Minister is planning a cabinet shuffle. On a 100 point school report-type scale, what score would you give Stephen Harper for his performance as Prime Minister in recent months?

² Question from February 13, 2006 survey: "On a 100 point school report-type scale, what score would you give Stephen Harper for his first cabinet?"



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Tax policy is a joke and undermines the confidence of business in relying on an understanding government, which it is not. There seems to be too little thinking about repercussions about tax changes and more bowing down to policy works. They are not living in the real world.

The record of the Conservative government is no better than the predecessor Liberals in terms of patronage appointments to some of the most important federal Crown corporations. Not only do they not assure the best qualified candidates to lead these organizations, the organizations spend significant amounts of money on the recruiting processes which are ignored. The government also squanders tax dollars in providing unreasonable perquisites to appointees above the fixed rates of remuneration. One would have thought that there was greater integrity and learning from the past.

Table 2b: Evaluations of a Selection of Ministers Today and in February, 2006³ (Listed in Descending Order of Performance)

	Aug 2007	Feb 2006	Net Change
Peter MacKay, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency...	65	83	-18
Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance...	64	81	-17
Stockwell Day, Minister of Public Safety...	60	65	-5
Tony Clement, Minister of Health and the Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario...	59	79	-20

³ Following upon a question about the Prime Minister's recent performance, respondents were asked: (Q2) Please score each of the following appointments on a 100 point school report-type scale." The context was slightly different but the wording was identical to a question asked in February, 2006.



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	Aug 2007	Feb 2006	Net Change
Chuck Strahl, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board...	59	77	-18
Maxime Bernier, Minister of Industry...	58	74	-16
Monte Solberg, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development ⁴	57	77	-20
John Baird, Environment Minister ⁵ ...	57	75	-18
Gary Lunn, Minister of Natural Resources...	56	72	-16
Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities...	54	77	-23
Beverley J. Oda, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women...	50	76	-26

Table 2c: Evaluations of a Selection of Ministers Today and in February, 2006⁶ (Listed from Minister with Least Loss of Score to Minister with Most Loss of Score)

	Aug 2007	Feb 2006	Net Change
Stockwell Day, Minister of Public Safety...	60	65	-5
Gary Lunn, Minister of Natural Resources...	56	72	-16
Maxime Bernier, Minister of Industry...	58	74	-16
Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance...	64	81	-17
John Baird, Environment Minister ⁷ ...	57	75	-18

⁴ In February 13, 2006 survey: "Monte Solberg, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration..."

⁵ In February 13, 2006 survey: "John Baird, President of the Treasury Board..."

⁶ Following upon a question about the Prime Minister's recent performance, respondents were asked: (Q2) Please score each of the following appointments on a 100 point school report-type scale." The context was slightly different but the wording was identical to a question asked in February, 2006.

⁷ In February 13, 2006 survey: "John Baird, President of the Treasury Board..."



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Monte Solberg, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development ⁸	57	77	-20
Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities...	54	77	-23
Beverley J. Oda, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women...	50	76	-26

Table 3a: Agenda Priorities among 14 Specific Areas⁹

	%
Taxation	24
International trade	13
Crime and justice	11
Military preparedness	9
The environment	9
Health	7
Interprovincial trade	5
The west	5

⁸ In February 13, 2006 survey: "Monte Solberg, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration..."

⁹ (Q3) Which of the following policy areas needs the most active attention from the new cabinet given what the government has done to date and how the Constitution assigns responsibility between federal and provincial governments? RANDOMIZE



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	%
Higher education and training	4
Foreign policy	3
Business law and securities regulation	2
Quebec	2
Domestic security	1
Financial support to industry	1
Don't know or no opinion	6

Table 3b: Agenda Priorities among Macro Areas¹⁰

	%
Economy(Tax/Intl Trade/Inter-provincial Trade)	42
Physical security (Crime, Military Preparedness, Domestic Security)	21
Social (Health and Higher Education)	11
National unity (West/Quebec)	7
The Environment	9
Foreign policy	3
Business issues (Securities regulation and financial support)	3
Don't know or no opinion	6

4.0. Methodology

The COMPAS web-survey of CEOs and leaders of small, medium, and large corporations was conducted August 8 – 10, 2007. Respondents constitute

¹⁰ Same data reported in table 3a but clustered.



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an essentially hand-picked panel with a higher numerical representation of small and medium-sized firms.

Because of the small population of CEOs and business leaders from which the sample was drawn, the study can be considered more accurate than comparably sized general public studies. In studies of the general public, surveys of 118 are deemed accurate to within approximately 9.1 percentage points 19 times out of 20. The principal and co-investigator on this study are Conrad Winn, Ph.D and Tamara Gottlieb.

