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Death-row cases deserve aid: Poll

Survey finds 45 per cent of Canadians say Ottawa must intervene, despite Tories' recent reversal

Apr 04, 2009 04:30 AM

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BRUCE CAMPION-SMITH
 OTTAWA BUREAU CHIEF

OTTAWA – Canadians are inclined to think Ottawa should intervene to help Canadians jailed abroad avoid the death penalty, a new poll shows.

The poll, done for the *Star* and *La Presse* by Nanos Research, found that 45 per cent of Canadians believe that the federal government has a duty to seek the transfer of Canadians facing the death penalty in a democratic country to a prison here to avoid capital punishment.

And it found that the Conservatives' decision to now decide its intervention on a case-by-case basis – a reversal of long-standing federal policy – risks alienating voters.

"The challenge for the Harper Conservatives is that their current position likely reinforces negative stereotypes in parts of the Canadian populace. Their handling of this could be an obstacle to future growth in their popular support," pollster Nik Nanos said.

Given that Canada itself does not have the death penalty, it had been Canadian policy to seek clemency for Canadian citizens facing the sentence abroad. But that changed under the Conservatives, who no longer automatically go to bat for each and every capital punishment case.

The federal court last month slammed the government's 2007 decision to suddenly abandon years of efforts to assist Canadian Ronald Smith, who is facing the death penalty in Montana. The court called the federal decision arbitrary, unfair and a breach of his right to due process. Yesterday, the foreign affairs department said it will comply with the ruling and won't appeal it.

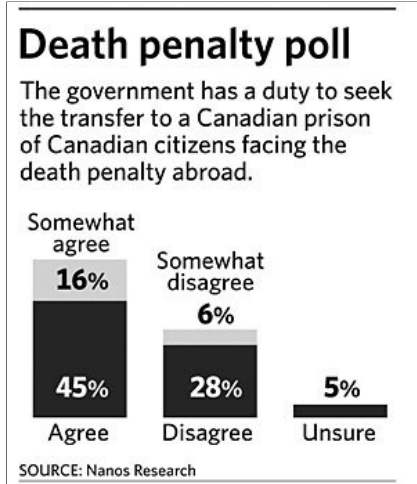
That court decision was in line with public attitudes, the poll reveals.

"The polling suggests that there is still an appetite for the Government of Canada to intervene in cases where a Canadian faces the death penalty in a foreign country," Nanos said.

And while the decision not to intervene in a case likely resonates well among core Conservatives and Western Canadians, it's not popular outside the West, with Quebecers most supportive of intervention, he said.

The poll found that 28 per cent disagreed with Canadian intervention in capital cases. Opposition ran highest in Western Canada where it stood at 38 per cent.

The telephone poll of 1,002 Canadians 18 and older was done between March 13 and March 18. It is considered accurate plus or minus 3.1 per cent, 19 times out of 20.



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BUTT OUT !

Do we want the Saudis telling us that we are not cutting off enough hands of thieves or flogging enough adulterers, or stoning enough litterers? Then we should butt out of their legal system. Do the crime, be prepared to accept the punishment thereof.

Submitted by WJM at 9:21 AM Sunday, April 05 2009

[Agree](#) 4 | [Disagree](#) 1 | [Alert a Moderator](#)

Canada shouldn't butt in if the trial was fair

Canada has no right to interfere with a sentence of death awarded to a Canadian in another country if the trial was fair and there is no doubt that the murderer is guilty of first degree murder. Everyone knows that if you are in a country where capital punishment is the what the court will order for you if you intentionally kill someone, that is what you are going to get. After you have been sentenced, it's too late to begin asking Canada to step in and rescue you.

Submitted by Dahn Batchelor at 8:59 AM Sunday, April 05 2009

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Nonsense

The life of a Canadian is no more valuable than anyone else's period. Everyone is responsible (or at least they used to be) for their own actions. We can't have it both ways, many times when a Canadian goes abroad and commits a crime and receives little or no punishment, we want to retri them here because we didn't agree with the sentence.

Submitted by Pete at 12:17 PM Saturday, April 04 2009

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Actually I prefer....

...the satisfaction of knowing that these persons will never come back to Canada where their partners in crime are usually freed to roam the streets in an obscenely short period of time and maim and kill again. Just because we're soft on crime doesn't mean we should impose our failure on the world! Some countries actually value innocent human life more than the lives of murderers. Keep up the good work!

Submitted by 7thGenCanadian at 11:15 AM Saturday, April 04 2009

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get a rope

The Harper gang always panders to the lynch mob mentality.

Submitted by E.B. at 10:24 AM Saturday, April 04 2009

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No, no, no.

You know full well that dangerous killers convicted in other countries and returned here will be out in the general population much sooner. If the government want to intervene for a stay of execution, fine. But don't lobby to bring them home.

Submitted by Maxbear at 9:45 AM Saturday, April 04 2009

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