

By **KATHLEEN HARRIS**, NATIONAL BUREAU CHIEF

Most Canadians fear the worst for the nation's economy, with almost half waiting for the financial sky to fall in coming months.

Despite a strong dollar and employment rate, the exclusive Nanos Research-Sun Media poll reveals only 13% of Canadians are pinning their hopes on a rosier economic picture in the next six months.

A gloomy 47.7% predict a weaker performance, while another 34.6% believe the economy will plateau and 4.7% aren't sure what to think.

"An economic chill pretty much sums it up," said pollster Nik Nanos. "People are worried about the economy and they think interest rates are going to go up."

BRACING FOR BAD NEWS

Canadians remained mostly optimistic about the economy through 2007 and were "guardedly optimistic" about the future in early 2008. But after repeated alarm bells from politicians, economists and media reports, the tide has finally turned.

"It looks like Canadians are getting ready to hunker down for bad news," Nanos said.

Much of the pessimism is fuelled from Ontario, where 58% anticipate a weaker economy as a series of manufacturing plants shut down across the province. Quebecers have the rosier outlook for the country, while Westerners are more likely to foresee a looming slump ahead.

The Nanos-Sun Media poll also finds middle-aged Canadians more fretful about the future than the younger set. More than 55% of those aged 40-49 predict a weakening economy, compared to 42% in the 30-39 age group.

Nanos, who will be tracking Canadians' views on the economy every three months, said politicians would be wise to note the eroding public confidence and take action.

"I think Canadians would be open to hearing competing ideas about how jobs could be made more secure and how we can create prosperity. That's the perfect election issue because it's a pocketbook issue and it drives voting behaviour," he said.

"If I were any one of the political leaders or parties, I'd be looking at acknowledging there is anxiety out there and using it as an opportunity to put forward a vision for creating prosperity."

CALLS FOR SUPPORT

As calls grow louder for more federal support for the floundering auto and forestry sectors, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty maintains the best approach is to create a low-tax environment that allows all businesses to flourish. Cuts to income tax and GST will also act as a stimulant to keep the economy rolling, he said.

The Nanos Research-Sun Media poll surveyed 1,004 Canadians by telephone from May 7-11. It is considered accurate within plus or minus 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.



World Vision

Myanmar Cyclone

**Children are vulnerable.
Your help is urgently
needed.**

Donate Now

The advertisement features a photograph of a young child in a white shirt leaning on a wooden structure, likely a roof, amidst debris. The background shows a scene of destruction with twisted metal and damaged buildings. The text is overlaid on the image, with the World Vision logo in the top right corner. The main headline 'Myanmar Cyclone' is in a large, bold, yellow font. Below it, a message in white text reads 'Children are vulnerable. Your help is urgently needed.' At the bottom right, there is an orange button with the text 'Donate Now' in white.