

Breaking News

Canadians cool to Harper position on climate change.

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Canwest News Service

OTTAWA – Half of Canadians disapprove of the Harper government's policies at the recent international climate summit in Copenhagen while just over a third of the population said they weren't really following the issue, says a new poll.

The survey, conducted last week by the Innovative Research Group for Canwest News Service, found that a total of 60 per cent of respondents were familiar with Canada's position at the conference and that 49 per cent disapproved of the government's approach.

The online poll surveyed 1,065 Canadians from Dec. 17 to Dec. 21, and is considered accurate within three percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Countries agreed to a non-binding accord at the conference to lower concentrations of heat-trapping greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere and prevent average temperatures from rising by more than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. There was also an agreement to establish a new multibillion-dollar fund to help the least developed countries cope with the impacts of climate change – but no specific targets for any of the nations.

Provincial leaders such as Quebec Premier Jean Charest, along with some Canadian mayors and environmental groups, criticized the Harper government at the conference for having weak climate change goals and insufficient policies to lower emissions and crack down on industrial pollution in Canada.

Environment Minister Jim Prentice said the government is taking the issue of climate change seriously, but took a tough position at the negotiating table to protect Canada's economy and national interests.

But only 19 per cent of respondents in the poll said they approved of the government's position.

The poll also showed that public awareness about the international negotiations rose substantially since October, when another survey showed only 35 per cent of respondents had a general or detailed understanding of Canada's climate change position.

The new survey also found that 43 per cent of Canadians said they would be less likely to vote for the Conservatives because of the government's position, while 13 per cent said it would make them more likely to vote for the party.

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