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Most favour revamp of gun registry

Canadians want to keep it: Poll

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CanWest News Service

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OTTAWA - Prime Minister Stephen Harper will have a tough time convincing Canadians it's time to completely scrap the country's expensive gun registry program, a new opinion poll suggests.

The Ipsos Reid survey, conducted for CanWest News Service and Global National, indicates two out of three Canadians believe the government should revamp the gun registry system.

"There's nothing ambiguous about this," said John Wright, senior vice-president at Ipsos Reid.

"The concept of a gun registry has taken root across the country. There's a majority, 67 per cent, that's not a small majority, who believe that Stephen Harper shouldn't be doing away with all gun registries."

The poll of 1,001 Canadians was conducted May 9 to May 11, with a 3.1 percentage point margin of error, 19 times out of 20.

The survey comes on the eve of a report to be released Tuesday by Auditor General Sheila Fraser showing how the gun registry system created by the Liberal government was mismanaged.'

Harper is expected to use the findings to start dismantling the program, which has been targeted by core Conservative supporters for years as inefficient and unnecessary.

Although opposition to the registry is strongest in the Western provinces, a majority of people in Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba are now in favour of more gun control, suggests the poll.

In Alberta, 51 per cent of the people surveyed indicated the government should keep a registry system in place.

The support is strongest in Ontario and Quebec, where 71 per cent and 76 per cent of respondents respectively said they were in favour of maintaining a gun control system.

In 2002, Fraser revealed the program's costs had skyrocketed to \$1 billion, from \$119 million when it was created in 1995. Her new findings on Tuesday, are expected to reveal that many of the problems persisted up until 2005, CanWest reported last week.

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GRITS BLAMED

Overall, 54 per cent of Canadians suggested the current program created by the previous government was poorly organized, wasn't working properly and needed to be scrapped, and 56 per cent blamed the Liberals for the mismanagement.

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