

Money and Politics: Most Canadians want bans on corporate & union donations, leader ‘top-ups’

Eight-in-ten say the practice of parties paying their leaders extra salary “should be stopped”

May 10, 2016 – When it comes to money in provincial politics, Canadians take a decidedly “less is more” approach.

A new public opinion poll, self-commissioned and paid for by the Angus Reid Institute, finds people in this country strongly opposed to governing parties paying their leaders additional salaries beyond what they earn as publicly elected officials.

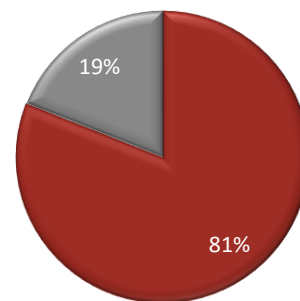
Canadians also voice strong support for bans on corporate and union donations to provincial political parties, similar to the restrictions that have existed at the federal level since 2004.

Key Findings:

- More than eight-in-ten Canadians (81%) say the practice of parties paying their leaders who hold elected office salary “top-ups” should be stopped
- Likewise, six-in-ten (62%) would like to see corporate and union donations to political parties banned in their provinces, while only one-in-ten (10%) believe the practice should be allowed (the remaining 28% are unsure)
- Residents of British Columbia – where both practices are currently allowed – are most likely to be following these issues closely, to view them as important, and to oppose their continuation

Which is closer to your own point of view on this practice of political parties paying leaders salary 'top-ups'?

- This practice should be stopped
- This practice should be allowed to continue



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from May 2 – 3, 2016, among a representative randomized sample of 1,510 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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Leader 'top-ups' widely rejected

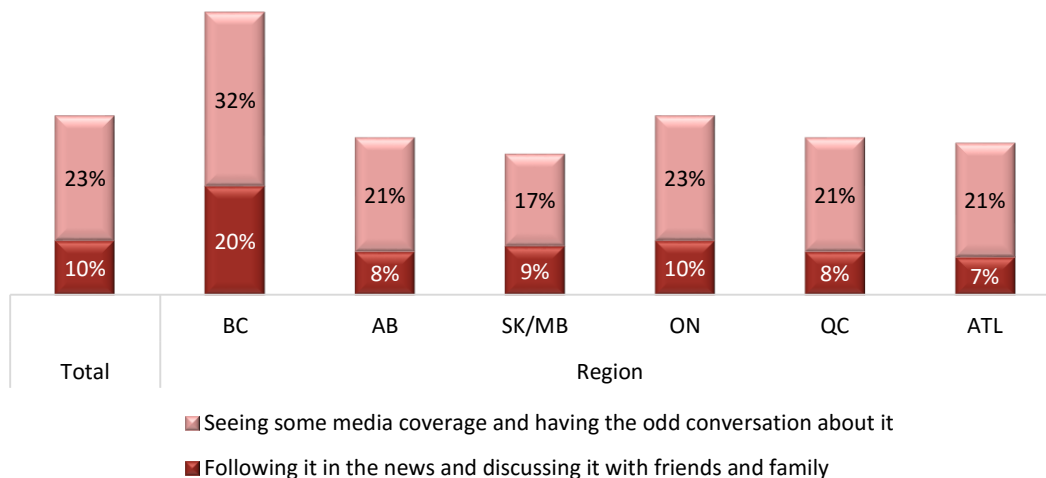
The recently resolved conflict of interest [complaint against Premier Christy Clark](#), who receives an annual \$50,000 salary "top-up" for her role as leader of the BC Liberal Party, has continued to generate headlines over the last several weeks.

Though B.C.'s complaints commissioner has ruled that Clark's stipend [is not a conflict of interest](#), it *is* in conflict with Canadian public opinion on this issue.

The story is reminiscent of criticisms leveled against Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall and then-Alberta-Premier Allison Redford [in 2011 for similar payments](#) received from their parties.

But though the Clark story has [garnered national headlines](#), this survey finds relatively few Canadians outside of B.C. paying close attention to the conflict, as seen in the following graph:

How closely would you say you've been following this issue of elected party leaders receiving salary 'top-ups' from their parties?

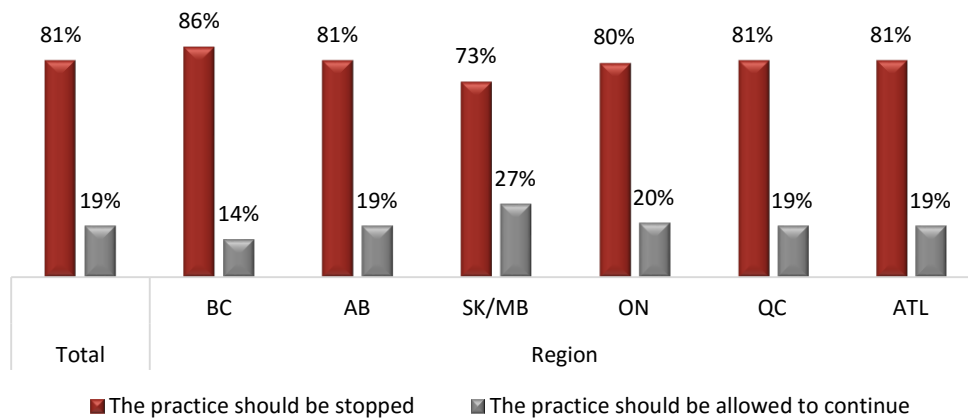


The practice of parties providing their leaders with additional salary on top of what they earn as elected officials used to be more common than it is now. Parties in Alberta, Quebec, and New Brunswick [have stopped providing such top-ups in recent years](#), and the premiers of Ontario, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island, as well as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [have confirmed](#) that they don't receive such payments.

This leaves Clark and Wall as the only premiers currently receiving extra salaries from their parties, though other party leaders who hold elected office receive reimbursement or allowances for specific expenses such as clothing, travel, meals and other expenses. Indeed, B.C. Opposition Leader John Horgan has said he has [received a \\$5,000 clothing allowance](#) as leader of the provincial New Democratic Party.

Large majorities across all regions – including on the Prairies, where Saskatchewan’s Wall recently won re-election and consistently ranks as [Canada’s most popular premier](#) – say the practice ought to stop:

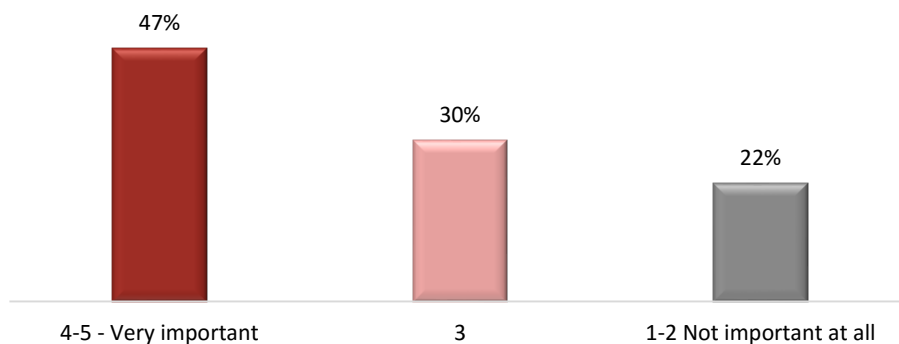
Which is closer to your own point of view on this practice of political parties paying elected leaders salary 'top-ups'?



But how important is this issue to respondents? A relatively low level of awareness of this story outside of B.C. – nearly two-in-five respondents (38%) overall say they haven’t seen or heard anything about it – could be seen as an indication that this issue is largely not on the public’s radar nationally.

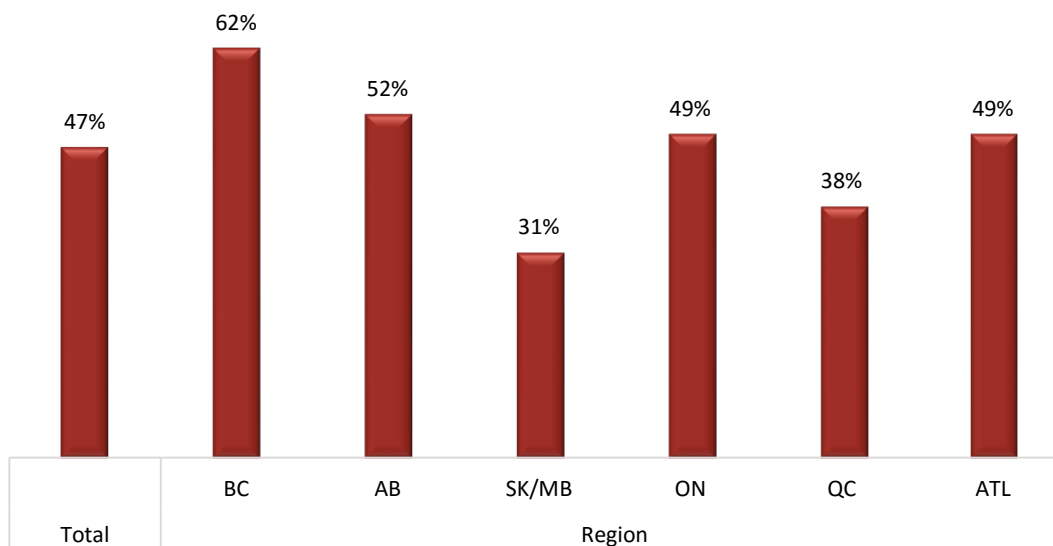
That said, when asked how important they personally find this issue to be, nearly half (47%) of all Canadians say it rates as a 4 or a 5 on a five-point scale, with a 5 meaning the issue is “very important.” This is more than twice as many rate the issue as a 1 or a 2, as seen in the following graph:

Thinking about policy issues in Canada today, how important do you personally consider this issue of political leaders receiving additional salary from their party to be?



B.C. residents take a stronger position than those who live in other regions. As the following graph indicates, nearly two-thirds of British Columbians (62%) choose one of the top two numbers on the scale, including 43 per cent who choose a 5 ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

Importance of this issue by region (those choosing a 4 or a 5 shown)



Strong support for banning corporate and union donations

Last year, Alberta [became the fourth province](#) to adopt political financing laws banning corporations and unions from donating to political parties. Quebec has had similar laws since the 1970s, and Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and the federal government also prohibit corporate and union donations.

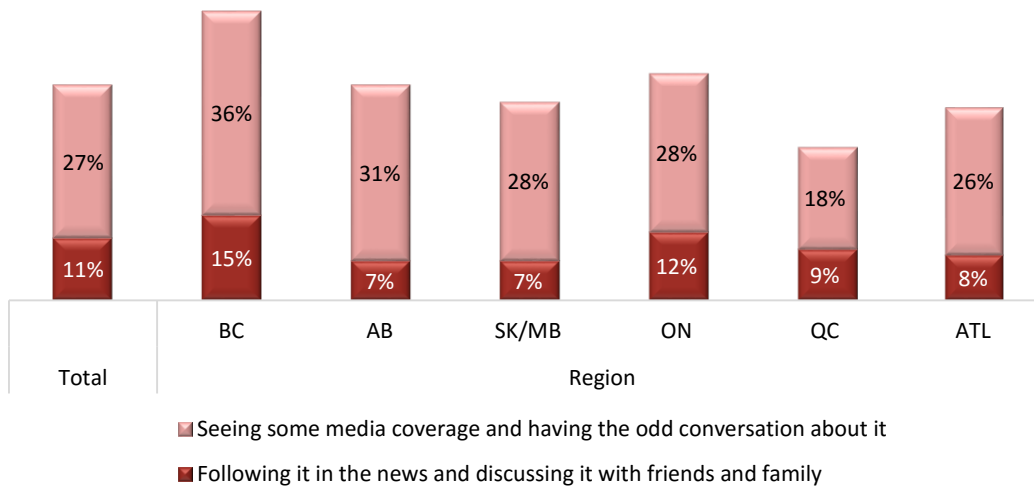
Other governments – notably those of Ontario and British Columbia – have come under fire this year for their leaders hosting private fundraisers at which individuals or corporations pay for face-time with the premiers.

In Ontario, Premier Kathleen Wynne has [cancelled all such fundraisers](#) and vowed to introduce legislation similar to Alberta's.

In B.C., Clark has [defended fundraisers of this type](#), arguing that the names of donors are made public annually, and saying her government will look into disclosing those names in “real-time.”

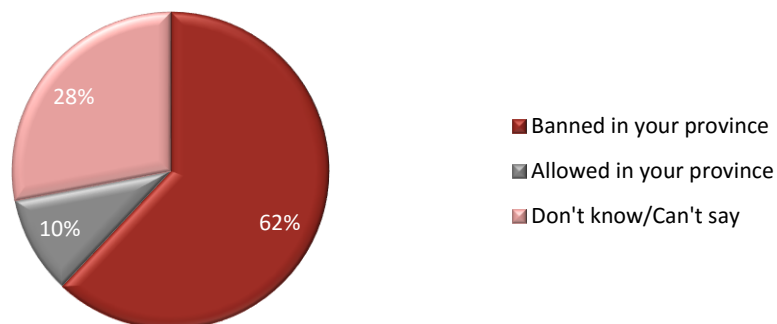
Canadians are more uniformly paying attention to these stories than they are to the issue of leader “top-ups”, but B.C. residents are again the most engaged, as seen in the following graph:

How closely would you say you have been following this issue of calls to ban corporate and union donations to political parties?



Asked to leave aside their own province's laws (if any) on this issue, and consider the topic as a whole, Canadians are fully six times as likely to say corporate and union contributions to political parties should be banned in their province as to say they should be allowed, as seen in the following graph:

How would you like to see your own province handle this issue? Should corporate and union donations be:

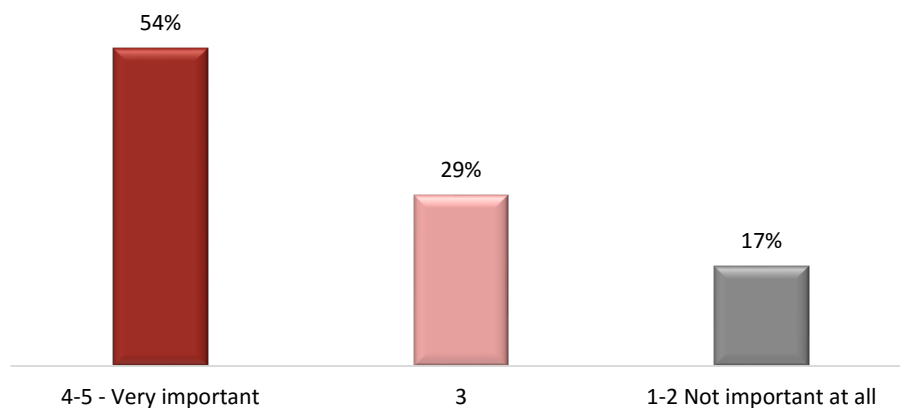


Support for a ban is strongest in B.C. (71%), and weakest in Atlantic Canada (54%), though it should be noted that Atlantic residents aren't necessarily in favour of allowing these types of political contributions.

Rather, the region has the highest proportion of uncertain respondents (39%, [see comprehensive tables](#)).

Canadians are also inclined to view this issue as important, with a full majority (54%) ranking it as a 4 or a 5 on the five-point importance scale – three times as many as place the issue at a 1 or a 2:

Thinking about policy issues in Canada today, how important do you personally consider this issue of corporate and union donations to political parties?



Again, B.C. residents are most likely to choose a number at the top of the scale (65% choose a 4 or a 5), while Ontarians, despite also being in the midst of a province-wide debate on the influence of money in provincial politics, are in the middle of the pack (56% choose a 4 or 5 – lower than in the Prairies and Alberta, but higher than Quebec and Atlantic Canada, [see comprehensive tables](#)).

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

For detailed results by region, age, gender, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).