

# Majority (79%) of Canadians Support a 'Poppy for Medicine' Program for Afghan Farmers

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## Majority (79%) Support a 'Poppy for Medicine' Program for Afghan Farmers

**Toronto, ON** – A new Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Senlis Council finds that eight in ten (79%) Canadians support a “poppy for medicine” program medicine’ which would allow Afghan farmers to switch their current poppy crop away from the production of illegal narcotics and towards the production of legal medicines. Similarly, eight in ten (79%) support the implementation of a pilot project for the ‘poppy for medicine’ program In fact, seven in ten (70%) Canadians believe that Prime Minister Harper should support a pilot project in Afghanistan for the next planting season.

Currently, many farmers in Afghanistan with little or no other source of income, cultivate poppy crops that are then used to produce raw opium which can sold for the creation of illicit narcotics. Despite a counter-narcotics policy of forced poppy crop eradication , the latest U.N survey indicates that opium cultivation for heroin in Kandahar was up by 32% from 2006, with overall poppy cultivation levels at an all-time high for the second successive year. The UN report also noted the growing link between opium cultivation and the Taliban insurgency indicating a growing financial relationship between opium farmers and Taliban in southern Afghanistan.

While just over half (54%) of Canadians either ‘strongly’ (26%) or ‘somewhat oppose’ (28%) the eradication of poppy fields as this ‘causes many farmers to lose their only livelihood and means to feed their families’, a full majority (82%) either ‘strongly’ (66%) or ‘somewhat’ (15%) oppose the use of chemicals to kill Afghan poppy crops.



Finally, three quarters (73%) of Canadians indicate that they would 'definitely' (36%) or 'probably' (37%) use Afghan-made, 'fair trade' morphine if it matched World Health Standards.

*These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of The Senlis Council from Aug 14 - 16, 2007. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1000 adults Canadians was interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure that the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data.*

### ***Majority (54%) of Canadians oppose destruction of Afghan poppy crop...***

A majority (54%) of Canadians either 'strongly' (26%) or 'somewhat oppose' (28%) the eradication of poppy fields, as this 'causes many farmers to lose their only livelihood and means to feed their families'. Conversely, less than half (43%) of Canadians 'strongly' (16%) or 'somewhat support' (26%) the destruction of Afghan poppy fields.

- Opposition to the eradication of Afghan poppy fields is most common among residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (62%), Alberta (60%) and Ontario (57%).
- It seems that British Columbians (52%), Quebecers (49%) and Atlantic Canadians (44%) are more middling in their opposition.

- Younger Canadians (62%) are most likely to express opposition to this policy, followed by 35-54 year olds (55%). Older Canadians (45%) are the least likely to oppose the current policy.
- Men (55%) are slightly more likely than women (53%) to oppose the current policy.

Furthermore, just 15% of Canadians ‘strongly’ (7%) or ‘somewhat support’ (8%) the use of chemicals to kill Afghan poppy crops, while the vast majority (82%) either ‘strongly’ (66%) or ‘somewhat oppose’ (15%) this practice.

- Opposition to the use of chemicals to kill poppy crops is highest among British Columbians (86%), Albertans (84%), Quebecers (82%), and Ontarians (81%). Residents of Atlantic Canada (76%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (77%) make up the low-end of opposition.
- Women (84%) are more likely than men (79%) to oppose the use of chemical sprays in the destruction of Afghan poppy crops.

### *Eight in ten (79%) support ‘poppy for medicine’ program...*

As an alternative to destroying their crops, eight in ten (79%) Canadians either ‘strongly’ (43%) or ‘somewhat’ support (35%) a ‘poppy for medicine’ program, which would ‘allow farmers to switch their crop away from the production of illegal narcotics, and towards the production of legal medicines’. On the other hand, just two in ten (20%) Canadians ‘strongly’ (13%) or ‘somewhat oppose’ (6%) the idea of a ‘poppy for medicine program’.



- Residents of British Columbia (85%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (82%), Atlantic Canada (80%) and Quebec (79%) are most likely to support a 'poppy for medicine' program. Albertans (70%) are least likely, followed by Ontarians (77%).
- Support for a 'poppy for medicine' program is strongest among those with some post-secondary education (80%), those with a university degree (83%) and women (81%).
- Men (77%) and Canadians with some (69%) or a completed (78%) high school education are less likely to support this initiative.

Similarly, eight in ten (79%) 'strongly' (42%) or 'somewhat support' (37%) the implementation of a pilot project for the 'poppy for medicine' program, while just 18% 'strongly' (12%) or 'somewhat oppose' (6%) the implementation of a pilot project of this nature.

- Almost nine in ten (88%) Atlantic Canadians and a strong majority (84%) of Quebecers support a pilot project for a 'poppy for medicine' program. In fact, 51% of Atlantic Canadians 'strongly' support a pilot program.
- Ontarians and British Columbians (76%) are equally supportive, while residents of the Prairie Provinces (73%) and Alberta (72%) are more reluctant.
- Women (79%) and men (78%) are almost equally supportive of a pilot project.

In fact, seven in ten (70%) Canadians believe that Prime Minister Harper should support a pilot project in Afghanistan for the next planting season, while just one quarter (24%) believe that he should oppose such an action.

- Eight in ten (79%) British Columbians want to see Prime Minister Harper take action, either saying he should ‘strongly’ (41%) or ‘somewhat’ (38%) support a pilot project. Albertans are most wary. Only 64% think Stephen Harper should lend his support.
- Younger Canadians (78%) are most likely to want Prime Minister Harper to act. Older Canadians are the least enthusiastic, with only 65% saying he should support a pilot project.

### ***Most (73%) Canadians would use Afghan-made morphine...***

Interestingly, three quarters (73%) of Canadians say that they would ‘definitely’ (36%) or ‘probably’ (37%) use Afghan-made, ‘fair trade’ morphine if it matched World Health Standards. Taking a more cautious stance, one in ten say that they would ‘probably not’ (10%) use this product, and one in seven (14%) indicate that they would ‘definitely not’ use Afghan-made morphine, even if it met World Health standards.

- British Columbians (85%) are by far most likely to ‘definitely’ (53%) or ‘probably’ (32%) use Afghan-made morphine if it matched World Health Standards, distantly followed by Atlantic Canadians (74%).
- Albertans (68%) are least likely to use Afghan-made morphine. Still, only a minority (30%) would ‘probably’ (13%) or ‘definitely’ (17%) refuse to use it.
- Younger Canadians (77%) and middle-aged Canadians (76%) are most likely to support use of the ‘fair-trade’ morphine. Older Canadians (64%) are least likely.
- Men and women (73%) are equally likely to use it.



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