

What's on the minds of voters? One thing's for sure, it's not the same as what's on the minds of the Canada's pundit class who are transfixed by the Prime Ministerial two step on the floor of the House of Commons with the New Democrats. Whether it was a hustle set-up by the New Democrats or a tussle instigated by the PM, it may be of interest to some but is not of material importance to most Canadians

Ask Canadians what is their top national issue of concern and they will answer jobs/the economy, healthcare and the environment. The latest tracking on issues, which is an open-ended question, gets answers in the following range: where jobs/the economy tops the list at 26 per cent, followed by healthcare at 10 per cent, the environment at 8 per cent and the deficit/debt at 6 per cent.

What lurks beneath the surface for Canadians is a mix of foreboding, which is one part frustration and one part anxiety, when it comes to their personal and family lives. A new study for Cardus Family conducted in May to be released this week puts a spotlight on how we are trying to manage our own lives, our family and to help our parents.

More than four of ten Canadians (45%) reported caring for at least one parent and they expect the personal burden of their parents' health care to noticeably increase over the next ten years. Seventy three per cent of Canadians rate the importance of managing health care for their parents as an 8, 9 or 10 out of 10. A paltry 19 per cent think we are doing a very good job as a society on this issue. Today the horizon on how we will care for our parents looks bleak and Canadians know that we are not prepared as a society.

The same survey for Cardus Family suggested that Canadians would like to ideally have children (2.7) but that the number one obstacle to having the number of children they want is money. The most frequent single response to having the ideal number of children is simply say that one's current income makes children unaffordable.

Looking at parental care, children and family life – the most important element in the day-to-day lives of Canadians was family life. Not surprisingly, 93 per cent rated family life as an 8, 9 or 10 out of 10 in importance, but scored a dismal 29% in terms of how well as a society we promote a positive family life. Interestingly, three of four Canadians also rated the concept of marriage as positive (61%) or somewhat positive (17%) while less than one in 20 thought marriage was negative (one per cent) or somewhat negative (three per cent).

The key take-away is the disconnect between the importance of these issues and how well (or not well) as a society we are working to create an environment for the lives Canadians want to live.

The point of these findings is to provide context. From a parliamentary perspective, the hustle/tussle was important in terms of the rules, procedures and expected behavior by parliamentarians in the House of Commons. However, how does that stack up against, having a job or worrying about the health care of a loved one? It doesn't. For average Canadians, the tussle in the House is more what they would typically dismiss as partisan political behavior and consider disconnected from the real day to day challenges.

The faster all parties move to address issues that impact the day to day lives of Canadians, the more engagement and attention they are likely to get from Canadians.