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Paper Making

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RING, ring.
"Hello ... I'm calling from ComQuest Research Group, a national market research company. We are conducting a survey to determine people's attitudes toward current events. The survey takes approximately 10 minutes ..."

Please don't hang up. It's *The Globe and Mail's* polling company calling, and a computer has selected your household as one of 1,500 to represent average Canadians.

The news department of *The Globe and Mail* has been conducting its own polls since 1984 to help us identify trends and tell Canadians more about themselves. We decided early this summer that polling would be an important part of our coverage of the federal election campaign. The major political parties all conduct private polls; the results of our

own polls can help our readers to better understand the reasoning behind each party's strategy.

Planning for the poll that was published on Thursday and Friday (September 16 and 17) of this week began about a month ago with a conference call between parliamentary reporter Hugh Winsor, poll supervisor Jim Matsui and me.

After several rewrites and a night of "pre-testing" with 25 telephone interviews, we settled on 13 election-related questions. Some were new. Some were repetitions of questions we had asked in previous polls so we could track how public opinion was changing.

ComQuest's computer randomly chose a selection of listed telephone numbers that would give us a good cross-section of Canadian society. For seven evenings, 60 interviewers in Toronto and 40 in Montreal dialled out, starting with calls to Atlantic Canada and finishing each night about seven hours later with calls to British Columbia, where the local time was 10 p.m.

When the interviewers reach a home, they ask for one specific person – the resident who has most recently had a birthday and who is also at least 18. If there is no answer at the number, or if the person we want to speak to isn't there, the interviewers arrange to call again, sometimes as many as six times, to help make sure the polling "sample" is truly representative of Canadians.

Just a few years ago, poll results used to take weeks to assemble. ComQuest's interviewers sit at a computer terminal on which they record your answers.

The final calls for this poll were made to British Columbia at 1 a.m. Toronto time on Wednesday. A ComQuest staffer stayed up all night printing tables from the computer. Mr. Matsui spent the morning checking for mistakes, then delivered the results to us at *The Globe*.

Hugh Winsor's story analyzing the poll was being published on our presses across the country on Wednesday (September 15) night, less than 24 hours after our last calls were made.

The article EM9336 reprinted above is used in Figure 8.4 of the STAT 220 Course Materials, in Figure 3.4 of the STAT 231 Course Materials, in Figure 3.1a of the STAT 332 Course Materials and in Statistical Highlight #78.