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- Asia
- Australia & New Zealand
- Canada
- Europe
- Germany
- Japan
- Latin America
- U.K.
- U.S.

Markets

Economy/Politics

Commentary

Sports

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Canada's Martin Has Gained Support Since Election, Poll Shows

Aug. 19 (Bloomberg) -- Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin has gained support since his Liberal Party lost control of Parliament in the June 28 election, a poll by Toronto-based SES Research said.

Martin, 65, was the choice of 36 percent of 1,000 Canadians asked which of Canada's four main party leaders would make the best prime minister, an 8 point gain from SES's last election poll on June 24. Conservative Leader Stephen Harper, who leads Parliament's second-biggest party, got 16 percent support, a 5 point decline.

Martin might face an election sooner than he plans should the opposition parties unite to topple him by voting against the legislative agenda he's set to introduce in October or the budget that will follow. Liberals won 135 of the 308 seats in the House of Commons in the June election, short of the 155 needed to pass bills without the support of smaller parties.

New Democratic Party Leader Jack Layton, whose party holds 19 House of Commons seats, was the favorite of 13 percent, a 1 point gain, SES said. Bloc Leader Gilles Duceppe had the backing of 8 percent of voters in the national poll.

Impressions

The Liberals governed with a majority for a decade under Jean Chretien, who retired in December. The party was the choice of almost half of all voters when Martin, Chretien's former finance minister, took over. Martin's image suffered during the election campaign, the poll suggested.

Twenty-one percent of respondents said they were left with a negative impression of Martin after the vote, compared with 11 percent who said their view shifted to positive. That's a ``net impression impact'' of -10, SES president Nikita Nanos said in a press release.

Harper's score was -3, with 18 percent of respondents saying their opinion of the Conservative leader improved during the campaign and 21 percent saying their impression turned negative. Layton's score was 8, based on 22 percent who said they were left with a positive impression and 14 percent who said they were left with a negative view.

The SES telephone poll was conducted Aug. 5 to Aug. 11 and has a margin of error of 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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