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Canada's Conservatives Hold Lead in Daily SES Poll (Update1)

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June 10 (Bloomberg) -- Canada's Conservative Party held the lead over the governing Liberal Party for a fourth day after overtaking the incumbents in the first half of the federal election campaign, according to daily polling by Toronto-based SES Research.

Stephen Harper's Conservatives had the backing of 37 percent of 600 potential voters phoned June 7-9, compared with 32 percent for Prime Minister Paul Martin's Liberals, according to a press release on SES's Web site. The poll has a margin of error of 4.1 percentage points.

Martin, 65, had a 13-point lead in an SES poll May 25, two days after he called the election for June 28. His strategy to offer more health-care spending and paint Harper as a threat to Canadian values has failed to inspire enough voters to forget their displeasure over a government spending scandal.

Harper, 45, has called Liberal suggestions that he wants to upend minority rights such as abortion and gay marriage smears. He has promised to cut taxes, increase defense spending and establish a national drug plan.

Today's result marks the first time Harper's lead was greater than the poll's margin of error. The Conservatives had 37 percent support in yesterday's poll to the Liberals' 33 percent.

Majority a Stretch

Still, Harper probably doesn't have enough support to win a majority of the 308 seats in the House of Commons in the election, the National Post reported today, citing an analysis of recent polling by Barry Kay, a professor at Wilfrid Laurier University. Based on a sample of 6,100 voters taken from four polls, the Conservatives would win 117 seats to the Liberals' 112, the Post reported.

Quebec and its 75 electoral districts may stand between Harper and a majority because his party is running third there.

In a minority government the prime minister would have to seek support from other parties to pass legislation.

The New Democratic Party, which would tax the wealthy to spend more on health care and the environment, is in third place with 17 percent support today, up from 15 percent yesterday.

Best Prime Minister

Harper, who has never served in government, has gained ground on the question of who would make the best prime minister. The Conservative leader, a trained economist, was the choice of 26 percent compared with 30 percent for Martin, who was finance minister of nine years under Jean Chretien. The margin was 7 percentage points at the start of the campaign.

SES says it will release daily polling throughout the campaign. It started with a sample of 600 and will call 200 random voters each day of the campaign, dropping the oldest sample of 200 with each new result. The survey was commissioned by Cable Public Affairs Channel, or CPAC.

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