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Conservatives Lead Liberals in Canada Election Race (Update1)

June 9 (Bloomberg) -- Canada's Conservative Party kept its 4 percentage-point lead over the governing Liberal Party in the campaign for the June 28 federal election, daily polling by Toronto-based SES Research showed.

Stephen Harper's Conservatives, who promise tax cuts, were the choice of 37 percent of 600 potential voters surveyed by telephone June 6-8, compared with 33 percent for the Liberals under Prime Minister Paul Martin, SES said in a press release. Yesterday, the lead was 35 percent to 31 percent. The poll's margin of error is plus or minus 4.1 percentage points.

The Conservatives need to add more support to form a majority government because they have little backing in Quebec, SES chief executive Nikita Nanos said in an interview. A party needs to win more than half of the 308 seats in the House of Commons to pass bills on its own.

"It's within the realm of possibility but it's not probable at this time," Nanos said. "They would have to make even a small breakthrough in Quebec but we don't see that in the numbers."

Quebec sends 75 representatives to the House of Commons. The candidate that wins the most votes in each district becomes its representative. The most popular party in Quebec is the Bloc Quebecois, led by Gilles Duceppe, which only runs candidates in that province and wants it to separate from Canada.

Caught and Passed

The Conservatives eclipsed the Liberals at the start of this week after trailing them by 13 percentage points in the first SES poll published May 25. Harper has gained votes while blaming the Liberals for longer wait surgery times under the country's taxpayer-funded health program and for "wasteful" spending on advertising and a national gun registry.

Harper, 45, has also narrowed the gap with Martin, 65, on the question of who would make the best prime minister. Twenty-five percent of people asked in the latest survey chose Harper, up from 17 percent at the start of the campaign, while Martin's support has slipped to 27 percent from 31 percent.

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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