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## Summer off sees Tories dip in poll

By BILL RODGERS, OTTAWA BUREAU CHIEF

OTTAWA -- The summer disappearing act of Conservative Leader Stephen Harper and his party has some members grumbling as a new SES/Sun Media poll shows the party's popularity dropping in every region but Western Canada. The post-election survey of 1,000 Canadians taken earlier this month has the Conservatives' national support dipping to 26% from the party's 30% showing in the June 28 election.

The drop is even steeper in vote-rich Ontario where support has trailed off to 27% from an election day high of 32%.

"The last time voters heard from the party this summer was when Leader Stephen Harper was musing about stepping down," said one frustrated senior Conservative.

"And at the same time, the words of Randy White were still ringing in voters' ears."

White, a B.C. MP, landed Harper's campaign in hot water days before the election for remarks he made about gay marriage, the notwithstanding clause and the role of the courts.

A spokesman for Harper refused to discuss the poll numbers.

"We're going to stick to our general rule. We're not going to comment on poll numbers," said Carolyn Stewart-Olsen, Harper's press secretary.



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The SES poll shows the Martin Grits with the support of 38% of committed voters. The party has made post-election gains in every region of the country except Quebec. The New Democrats are also up slightly since the June election with 17% of committed voter support.

The Aug. 5-11 phone survey is considered accurate to within 3.1%, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20.



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