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Harper roars into lead

Martin's personal potshots help Tory to four-point edge By BILL RODGERS, OTTAWA BUREAU CHIEF

Conservative strategists believe Paul Martin's attack on Stephen Harper is backfiring big time. A party strategist tells Sun Media their own internal polling shows a "double-digit shift" in voter popularity from the Grits to the Conservatives.

And a new overnight CPAC/SES tracking survey seems to support the claim, showing the Harper-led Conservatives pulling away from Martin's Grits, both nationally and in seat-rich Ontario, where the poll shows the Conservatives enjoy a 10-point lead over the sagging Grits -- 43% to 33%.

Pollsters also predict the Conservatives could win up to seven ridings in Quebec -- and Jean Fortier is determined to take one of them.

Fortier, the party's star candidate in Quebec, hits the streets of his upper-middle class Ahuntsic riding in the heart of Montreal about three times a day to woo voters.

"People are more undecided than they say in the polls," said Fortier, who is facing Liberal incumbent Elena Bakopanos in the bellwether riding.

Nationally, the poll puts the Conservatives at 35% in decided voter support with the Liberals at 31%. Jack Layton's New Democrats have 16%, followed by Quebec's BQ at 11% and the Green Party at 6%.

But, the number of undecided Canadians is high at 23%.

On the question of who would make the best PM, Martin and Harper are in a statistical tie -- 27% to 26% respectively.

The phone survey of 600 Canadians done June 5-7 has a margin of error plus or minus 4.1%, 19 times out of 20.

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"There's a reason that 42 Liberals voted against same-sex marriage and by continuing on with this raving, lunatic hidden agenda stuff, (Martin's) attacking his own people," said the senior strategist.



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