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Thu, August 19, 2004

**Martin set for a good rebranding****BILL RODGERS, SUN OTTAWA BUREAU**

Prime Minister Paul Martin's image among Canadians remains tarnished in the wake of last June's bruising national campaign, a post-election SES/Sun Media poll suggests. Twenty-one per cent of 1,000 people, surveyed between Aug. 5 and 11, said their impression of Martin as a leader had weakened. Only 11% said it had improved while 64% said their impression of the PM hadn't changed.

"What the polling shows is that Martin has expended some of his personal capital during the recent federal election campaign," said SES pollster Nik Nanos. He expects the Grits will spend the next several months trying to buff up the once-popular leader's public image.

"They're going to be looking at rebuilding the Paul Martin brand in order to get ready to re-launch into another election," Nanos said.

The PM, who led his Liberals to Canada's first minority government in 25 years, is also having a difficult time regaining the high level of confidence he enjoyed from voters last winter. Asked who would make the best prime minister, 36% of Canadians in this month's survey give him the nod, down from 50% during his political honeymoon period in February, but up from 28% in June, when Grit support plunged in the first weeks of the election campaign.

The silver lining for Martin is that his main political opponent, Stephen Harper, remains a distant second choice for Canadian voters. Only 16% of those polled think the Conservative leader would make the best PM.



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