

## Choose a leader who has charisma, Greens advised

DANIEL LEBLANC  
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OTTAWA — The Green Party is still more akin to a movement than a political party and needs to elect a charismatic leader today if it wants to become a more potent force in Canada, said a pollster who addressed Green supporters yesterday.

The party is holding its convention in the national capital, with delegates electing a new leader this morning. Whoever wins among candidates David Chernushenko, Jim Fannon and Elizabeth May will be expected to transform the goodwill surrounding the party into votes in the ballot box and MPs in the House of Commons.

In a presentation at the convention, pollster Nik Nanos of SES Research said the party is still weak in terms of organization but that its ideas have a large appeal in the West and in Central Canada.

Atlantic Canadians, Mr. Nanos said, will be the “last people to get on the bus.”

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Over all, he said, the Green Party is seen as a viable political option by about one-third of Canadians. Yet the party attracts the support of only about 5 per cent of voters at election time. It is by far the weakest performance of the main political parties in Canada, although that could change with better organization, Mr. Nanos said.

He said that Green supporters care about a variety of issues — only one in five actually lists the environment as a main priority — and that the party must continue developing a wide array of policies to keep growing.

The rest, he said, hinges on distributing literature to households across the country, knocking on doors and targeting specific ridings.

“Without organization, it just won't happen,” he said in his speech to party supporters. “The ball's in your court to convert that goodwill and that vision into a ballot-box vote.” The key, Mr. Nanos said, will be the first victory by a Green MP in an election.

“The tipping point is the first member,” he said.

Speaking to reporters afterward, Mr. Nanos said that to achieve its goals, the party must choose a leader who will reach voters, especially younger ones who are most inclined to supporting the party.

“The leader's charisma goes a long way, both in attracting younger voters and mobilizing members,” he said.

In an interview, Ms. May said that she has the ability to do that.

“I do think I have for many decades engaged and involved and motivated and mobilized grassroots engagement in issues, and now I'm bringing that grassroots engagement into the party, and that's what the party needs,” Ms. May said.

Mr. Chernushenko said the Green Party cannot pin all its hopes on attracting the support of people who traditionally do not vote and are disenchanted with the political system.

“It's far easier for me to go out and turn a New Democrat or a Conservative or a Liberal or a Bloc [Québécois] into a Green voter, than to go and get someone who has decided, ‘The government doesn't speak for me, why bother, my vote doesn't count,’ ” he said.

“In terms of demographics, there is huge potential for us in youth, but there is just as big a potential in baby boomers reaching retirement and in seniors.”

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