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## PM's image lacks lustre

**BILL RODGERS**, Free Parliamentary Bureau Chief

2004-08-19 02:30:14

OTTAWA -- Prime Minister Paul Martin's image among Canadians remains tarnished in the wake of 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 per cent said it had improved, while 64 per cent 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 Liberals 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 relaunch 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 per cent of Canadians in the survey give him the nod, down from 50 per cent during his political honeymoon period in February, but up from 28 per cent in June when Liberal support plunged in the first weeks of the election campaign.

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Martin's main opponent, Stephen Harper, remains a distant second choice. Only 16 per cent of those polled think the Conservative leader would make the best PM, down five points from June, but double the eight per cent he scored last February.

Thirteen per cent believe NDP Leader Jack Layton would make the best PM.

The poll is considered accurate to within 3.1 per cent, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20.

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