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## Latest News

## Harper widens seat lead

Analysis of polls puts Tories at 126 and Liberals at 95

Anne Dawson and Sean Gordon; with files from Robert Fife

CanWest News Service

June 22, 2004

BRACEBRIDGE, Ont. - The Conservatives have widened their lead over the Liberals to 126-95 in seat projections for the June 28 election based on an analysis of the latest opinion polls.

With the race so close, Stephen Harper took the day off to prepare for the final sprint, as Prime Minister Paul Martin and NDP leader Jack Layton spent the day trying to woo voters in Ontario.

The Conservative leader met with his advisors and mapped out the final six days of the campaign, which will consist of shoring up his base and trying to pry Ontario seats away from the Liberals.

Mr. Harper is being counselled to strike a more positive, statesmanlike and enthusiastic tone and talk up the party's platform.

"It's basically about hope and change, but we're going to continue to hold the government to account. The central theme is accountability and honest

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CREDIT: Andrew Vaughan, The Canadian Press  
Jack Layton, right, and Liberal Dennis Mills greet each other before their debate in the riding of Toronto Danforth last night.



government," said a campaign official.

Another took a shot at the struggling Liberals. "Most successful campaigns use the final week to push home their positive message and look to the future. The ones infused with the stench of failure get increasingly frantic, negative and fixated on past glories," said Tory strategist Jim Armour.

"We'll obviously be taking the strategy behind door No. 1."

Mr. Martin, campaigning in Southern Ontario, sidestepped questions about his future should the Tories form a minority government. He said he is entirely focused on winning, and he would not discuss scenarios in which he would either serve as the leader of the official Opposition or resign.

"I've said before that this is a tight race, but I feel very good about the way in which the whole race is unfolding," he said after addressing 100 guests at a breakfast meeting at an Ontario resort.

"I feel very good about the realization of Canadians as to the very deep differences between Stephen Harper and myself on health care, child care, the economy and that, in fact, they want a government that reflects their priorities. I feel confident."

The latest tracking from the nightly CPAC-SES polling shows Conservative support down slightly after new Liberal attack ads, comments from Ralph Klein, the Alberta Premier, on health care, and a controversial press release questioning Mr. Martin's stand on child pornography.

The tracking June 18-20 showed the Liberals pulled ahead slightly Friday and Saturday, but by Sunday night the Grits and Conservatives were in a dead heat again.

As of Sunday, the Liberals and Conservatives registered 33% of decided support, compared with the NDP at 18%. The Bloc Quebecois was at 12%, while the Green party had 5%. The poll still shows that about 19% of those asked don't know how they will vote.

The random telephone survey of 600 Canadians has a margin of error of 4.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The most recent breakdown of seats by Wilfrid Laurier University political science professor Barry Kay indicates the Tories would win 126 seats compared with 95 for the Liberals, 27 for the NDP and 60 for the Bloc Quebecois.

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## Latest News

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Dr. Kay uses a "regional swing model" to conduct his poll analysis. He has studied surveys taken by Ekos, Ipsos-Reid, Leger and SES since June 1 to produce his results. He applies regional differences from the previous federal election to an aggregation of polls in the current election and adds in a number of other factors such as incumbency, by-elections and the party leader when conducting his analysis.

Dr. Kay concedes his projections are only as good as the polls from which he extracts his information, but he has produced an accuracy rate of plus or minus five seats per party over the last several federal elections.

When the election was called, the Liberals held 168 seats in the 301-seat House of Commons, while the Conservatives had 73. The Bloc Quebecois held 33 seats and the New Democrats had 14. There were also nine independents and four vacancies. This election will see seven seats added to the Commons.

Campaigning in Toronto, NDP leader Jack Layton made no mention of the \$45-billion in tax increases contained in his platform as he portrayed himself as the most financially responsible of the candidates for prime minister.

Mr. Layton told the Toronto Board of Trade that his party would balance the books, cut taxes and invest in cities.

Instead of discussing the inheritance tax or other proposed hikes to corporate taxes, Mr. Layton's speech made the traditionally right-wing argument that tax cuts trickle down and provide a boost to the economy.

"I do support some tax reduction," he said, pointing to his pledge to exempt incomes under \$15,000 from all taxes and removing the GST from family essentials.

Mr. Layton later made his clearest comments yet about his bargaining position in a minority Parliament, indicating he would abandon his call for an inheritance tax provided the government eases up on debt reduction, invests in cities, stops the privatization of health care and pulls out of talks on missile defence.

"I have noticed that none of the other parties were moving in that direction, so in a Parliament that Canadians might construct with the NDP in a central



role, it wouldn't be much of a surprise if that was not one of the items that was picked up for likely advancement. We haven't emphasized it as a key thrust," said Mr. Layton.

The Tories have also launched a new series of television ads. It shows an arm sporting a white shirt with red cufflinks reaching into a cookie jar, scooping out cookies and being stopped by a blue-sleeved arm that then replaces them. The ads will run in French and English nationally.

## RESULTS

What issue will have the most influence on your vote?

- A) gay marriage 18.0%
- B) abortion 8.8%
- C) environment 12.0%
- D) health care 61.2%

Total votes: 577

To Participate in VoxPolls text message the word "Vote" to VPOLL (87655).

Every cellphone registered with VoxPoll is eligible to win an "all-in-one" BlackBerry (Trademark).


Source: National Post

Ran with fact box "Results" which has been appended to the story.

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