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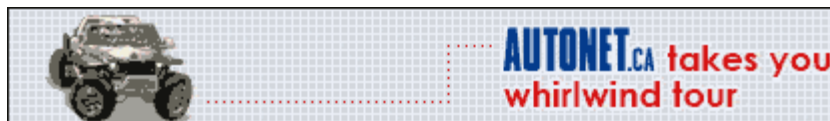
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Thu, February 10, 2005

Support for Grits slipping, poll showsBy **BILL RODGERS**, Parliamentary Bureau

The same-sex marriage debate and an almost daily dose of Adscam could be having an effect on the fortunes of Canada's two main political parties, a new poll conducted by SES suggests. Liberal voter support has slipped three points to 38% across the country, but they've lost a whopping 10% in vote-rich Ontario.

The Conservatives have gained three points nationally, rising to 29% and their support in Ontario has jumped six points to 32%.

The poll shows Grit support in the country's most populous province has plunged to 44% compared to the 54% support it enjoyed in an SES poll taken last October.

QUEBEC BUCKS TREND

Quebec is the only region where federal Liberal support grew in the latest poll -- up four points to 36%. They still trail the Bloc by nine points.

SES pollster Nik Nanos is cautious about what's causing the swings in central Canada, saying it's likely to be a combination of factors.



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"It could be that the Liberals might be picking up support in Quebec because of their position on same-sex (marriage) and then, maybe the Conservatives (are) picking up a few more points in rural and small-town Ontario (for their opposition on the issue)," Nanos said.

The SES survey of 1000 Canadians shows Jack Layton's New Democrats remaining steady nationally with 17% of voter support followed by the Bloc Quebecois at 11%, based solely on its popularity in Quebec. The Green Party stands at 5%.

The number of uncommitted voters in the poll was 12%

The SES random telephone survey was conducted between Jan. 28 and Feb. 2 and is considered accurate within 3.1%, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20.

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