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Wed, June 9, 2004

Liberals trail Tory machine ... and strategists blame attacks

By BILL RODGERS, Parliamentary Bureau

CONSERVATIVE strategists claim Paul Martin's attack on Stephen Harper is backfiring big-time. A party strategist told Sun Media that their own internal polling shows a "double-digit shift" in voter popularity from the Grits to the Conservatives

And a new overnight CPAC/SES tracking survey seems to back up the claim, showing the Harper-led Conservatives pulling away from Martin's Grits, both nationally and in seat-rich Ontario.

In the country's biggest province, the poll shows the Conservatives enjoy a 10-point lead over the sagging Grits -- 43% to 33%.

Nationally, the poll puts the Conservatives at 35% in decided voter support with the Liberals trailing at 31%. Jack Layton's New Democrats have 16% support, followed by the Bloc Quebecois at 11% and the Green Party at 6%.

But the number of undecided Canadians remains high at 23%.

TIE FOR BEST PM

On the question of who would make the best prime minister, Martin and Harper are in a statistical tie -- 27% to 26% respectively.

COMMENTS



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A bagful of controversy

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Sun Media Newspapers

The random telephone survey of 600 Canadians conducted June 5 to 7 has a margin of error plus or minus 4.1%, 19 times out of 20.

A Conservative strategist says Liberal efforts to scare Canadians away from the Harper-led party by pushing hot-button issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage is actually driving more socially conservative-minded Liberals away.

"There's a reason that 42 Liberals voted against same-sex marriage and by continuing on with this raving lunatic, hidden agenda stuff, (Martin's) attacking his own people," said the senior strategist.

'POURING GAS'

Conservative deputy leader Peter MacKay says the Liberals have overplayed the fear factor.

"It's simply not credible," he said. "They're pouring gas on every social issue and trying to light it up."

Conservatives say their polling between June 4 to 8 shows support for Liberals among church-going Catholics dropped 12 points while their support among the same group jumped 25%.

Martin, described in news reports as a "devout Catholic," was blasted yesterday by Calgary's Catholic Bishop F.B. Henry.

In a letter to all city parishes, Henry said the PM's "recently clarified position re: abortion and same-sex unions is a source of scandal in the Catholic community and reflects a fundamental moral incoherence."

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