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Sun, November 7, 2004

## Missiles shot down Poll shows Canucks against defence shield; NDP stance gains support

By BILL RODGERS, Parliamentary Bureau Chief

PRIME MINISTER Paul Martin could pay a heavy political price if his Grit government agrees to join the U.S. missile defence shield. Almost two-thirds of Canadians oppose such a move, according to an SES national poll conducted between Oct. 26 and Nov. 1. The poll shows only 29% of Canadians support joining the American defence shield while 58% are strongly or somewhat opposed. Thirteen percent of the 1,000 Canadians polled were undecided or unsure where they stood.

## EXODUS FEARS

"If Martin gets too cosy with the Americans, it could drive Liberals to the NDP," said SES pollster Nik Nanos. "He has to watch his left flank."

Jack Layton and his New Democrats have mounted strong opposition to what appears to be a general willingness on the part of the Martin government to sign on to the missile defence shield.

Martin has promised to hold a debate and a vote in

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Sun Media Newspapers

the House of Commons on the controversial issue, but Defence Minister Bill Graham has said both would likely come after the government signed an agreement with the U.S.

Layton insists the PM must accept the wishes of Canadians and Parliament.

"Canadians would find it deeply disturbing if Mr. Martin were to go ahead with missile defence even if Parliament were to vote against it. That would be quite shocking," he said.

Layton urged Canadians to rally together and speak out against the "weaponization" of space.

There are signs Layton's position on the issue is starting to pay dividends for the federal New Democrats. The SES poll shows that in Quebec, where support for the separatist Bloc Quebecois has dropped 8 points, the NDP has picked up 4%, while the Grits have gained 3% and the Tories 1%.

## TORIES CAUTIOUS

The Conservatives, who were expected to get behind Martin on the U.S. missile defence shield, are starting to show signs of nervousness. Defence critic Gordon O'Connor said last week that Tories want to see the details before supporting any missile defence deal.

The Martin government had been counting on the support of the 99 Conservatives in the Commons to offset MPs in the Liberal caucus who will oppose joining the U.S. program in a free vote.

The poll is accurate to within +/-3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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