

Feature Sections

Today's Features

> I.D.

14-day site search

GO

More search options

Stock Quote

GO

☐ Ticker ☐ Name

Mostly Sunny

H 32 / L 22

4 Day Forecast



News

Ontario

Canada

World

Opinion/Editorials

Editorial Board

Letters

National Report

World Report

Obituaries

Editorial Cartoon

Corrections

> Today's Paper

Star Columnists



Special Reports

- > Federal Election
- > Conflict in Iraq
- > French Open
- > Belmont Stakes
- > NBA Playoffs
- > NHL Playoffs
- > [More Specials]

My Email Newsletters

My Scoreboard

My Stock List

My Subscription

Features

- > Brand New Planet
- > Contests/Events
- > Crosswords
- > Ellie
- > Horoscopes
- > Lottery Results
- > Traffic Cams
- > TV Listings

Initiatives

Jun. 8, 2004. 06:34 AM

Martin on the attack as Tories surge

Takes aim at Harper over 'basic values'
Tracking poll puts Conservatives ahead

LES WHITTINGTON
OTTAWA BUREAU

OTTAWA—[Paul Martin](#) stepped up his attacks on Conservative Leader [Stephen Harper](#) yesterday as the momentum in the two-week-old campaign continues to shift to Harper's Tories.

In the face of polls showing the Conservatives surging ever higher, Martin used what had been planned as a day off from the campaign to accuse Harper of intolerance and reckless spending promises.

The Liberals, who have watched their lead in the polls deteriorate into a neck-and-neck race with the Tories, could not have been cheered by a SES/CPAC tracking poll that had the Conservatives, with 34 per cent, actually leading the Liberals at 32 per cent.



CHRIS WATTIE/REUTERS

Paul Martin gets set for a series of interviews in Ottawa yesterday.

CANADA VOTES

- > [Election section](#)
- > [Speak Out: Minority government](#)
- > [David Olive's election blog](#)
- > [GTA riding profiles](#)
- > [Hot Ridings](#)
- > [Voices: Trusting politicians](#)
- > [Voices: Your vote](#)
- > [Conservative platform](#)
- > [Liberal platform](#)
- > [NDP platform](#)

TODAY'S HEADLINES

- > [Graphic: Guide to minority gov'ts](#)
- > [Harper: Hate law flawed](#)
- > [Martin on the attack](#)

Turn your
revs... into
revenue

**Sell your
car now.**

\$56.06

Based on a
3 day, 3 line ad

TORONTO STAR
777-7777
starclassifieds.com
CLASSIFIEDS
Sell Anything.

> ADVERTISEMENT <

- > Classroom Connection
- > Fresh Air Fund
- > Santa Claus Fund

The Star

- > About Us
- > Advertising Sales
- > Affiliates
- > Archives
- > Careers @ the Star
- > Contact Us
- > FAQ
- > Internships
- > News Releases
- > Pages of the Past
- > Photo Sales
- > Subscribe

Search the Web



The survey of 600 people had a margin of error of 4.1 percentage points.

- > [Layton blasts Harper](#)
- > [The minority scenario](#)
- > ['He's not pro-life,' activists say](#)
- > [Notebook: New debate format](#)
- > [No fast scandal answers, PM warns](#)

The turnaround in election fortunes caused the New Democrats to switch their focus yesterday from the Liberals to the Conservatives.

"It's a possibility that they do (have momentum)," NDP Leader [Jack Layton](#) said during an impromptu scrum with reporters aboard his campaign plane.

"I think people need to find out what Mr. Harper stands for because he's going to do what (Prime Minister) [Paul Martin](#) has done for the last decade."

With the stunning turnaround in the opinion surveys prompting talk of a Conservative win on June 28, Martin is acknowledging that the sponsorship scandal — and, in Ontario, Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty's flip-flop on health taxes — have hurt his party with voters.

"There is a bit of cynicism out there, there's no doubt about that, and that may be an understatement," he told reporters yesterday.

"What's really important about this issue of cynicism is that in fact politicians not only keep their word but that they demonstrate that they can keep their word."

Searching for a recovery strategy, the Liberal leader seized on Harper's refusal to rule out using the Constitution's notwithstanding clause to block gay marriage as a fundamental difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives. Such an approach, Martin said, would jeopardize the rights of minorities in Canada.

"And let me tell you, this goes to basic values and that's what Canadians are going to be judging in this election campaign: What are the values of the parties, what are the values of the political leaders? And I believe that the Charter of Rights (and Freedoms) is a fundamental pillar of our democracy and that you do not weaken it.

"When [Stephen Harper](#) muses about using the notwithstanding clause, I do not agree with him."

The Liberals have been suggesting Harper's willingness to allow free parliamentary votes on abortion and capital punishment indicates the Conservatives have a hidden agenda to crack down on social issues, putting them out of step with many Canadians, particularly left-leaning voters in Quebec.

Ads by Google

[socket sets, Xuehai tool](#)

specializing in making socket sets 1/ 2" Dr 3/ 4" Dr 1"

Dr socket sets
www.xuehaitool.com

[Socket Sets](#)

Pay Only What You Want at eBay Buy Direct From Canadians and

Save!
www.ebay.ca

[Hard Drive Rescue Team](#)

When recovery software doesn't work Use Hardware

Data Recovery!
www.databe.com

[The Eastwood Company](#)

Unique Automotive Tools & Supplies Checkout these

socket sets!
www.eastwoodco.com

But Harper dismissed the Liberal offensive. "The problem with Liberal attacks, what the Liberal party hasn't clued into in this election, is that nobody believes anything they say," Harper said in Quebec city.

Buoyed by the Conservatives' surprisingly upbeat poll numbers, Harper dismissed questions about how he would govern without MPs from Quebec. The Conservatives held none of the province's 75 seats in the Commons at dissolution and, in this election, the separatist Bloc Québécois is expected to win up to 60 seats with the Liberals collecting the rest.

But Harper rejected this scenario, saying he will deal with concerns of Quebecers by "electing members from the province of Quebec.

"I don't intend to lead a minority government. I intend to lead a majority government."

Harper yesterday boasted that he has "good candidates" who will win seats in Quebec.

"Quebecers want a choice that is not corruption or separation for this country."

Harper also turned the tables on Martin, saying the Liberal leader made the "first specific commitment to use the notwithstanding clause ... if the courts went too far in legislating same-sex marriage."

Yesterday, Martin also attacked the Conservatives' spending promises, saying their plan to reduce taxes while boosting military spending would create a "\$50 billion black hole" that would force a Harper-led government to hack health-care spending or run a deficit. And he said Layton would saddle Canadians with massive tax increases.

Martin, who returned from D-Day anniversary ceremonies in France late Sunday night, appeared tired and a bit irritable. A previous schedule had called for the Prime Minister to have a "down day" from the campaign as he readied for today's trip to the G-8 summit of industrialized countries in Sea Island, Ga. Instead, Martin went to a television studio in Ottawa to sit through a series of interviews with television and radio stations across the country.

"I didn't come into this because I want to be prime minister," he said at one point while talking to a Thunder Bay station. "I came into this because I believe certain things very, very strongly and I am going to carry them through."

He also tried to link the integrity question in the election to the Conservatives. Martin asserted that, unlike himself, Harper has no government record to prove he fulfils his promises.

"That's another fundamental difference between [Stephen Harper](#) and myself. He cannot demonstrate that his commitments will be kept, and I can demonstrate that my commitments will be kept because I intend to do it."

Asked repeatedly by interviewers why his party has plummeted in the polls, Martin insisted he always knew he would be in tight race with the Conservatives. But the campaign has "now embarked on a very different stage" now that all three major parties have released their election platforms, he said.

The Liberals are intent on focusing voters' attention on social issues by charging the Conservatives would undercut the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Martin said the federal government has never used the notwithstanding clause in the Constitution to override the Charter and he would never do so.

With files from Tonda MacCharles and Canadian Press

> [Pay less than \\$3 per week for 7 day home delivery.](#)

 [Print Story](#)

 [E-mail Story](#)

[FAQs](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Webmaster](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [My Subscription](#)

[Home](#) | [GTA](#) | [Business](#) | [Waymoresports](#) | [A&E](#) | [Life](#)

Legal Notice: Copyright Toronto Star Newspapers Limited. All rights reserved. Distribution, transmission or republication of any materia from www.thestar.com is strictly prohibited without the prior written permission of Toronto Star Newspapers Limited. For information please contact us using our [webmaster form](#). www.thestar.com online since 1996.