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# News Canada

Sat, February 10, 2007

## Polls cool ballot fever Grits, Tories in dead heat

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By ALAN FINDLAY, NATIONAL BUREAU



OTTAWA -- Federal election fever is getting a splash of cold water from recent polling, despite heightened speculation around Parliament Hill of a spring vote.

Tory ads denouncing Liberal boss Stephane Dion's leadership, growing political brinkmanship over Canada's commitment to the Kyoto Protocol and speculation over the coming budget have insiders talking about a third election in four years.

All party leaders have indicated they're preparing for a spring campaign, even if they're not hoping for one.

But a new SES Research poll released yesterday shows the Tories and Liberals stuck in a dead heat in public support -- 33%.

### OUT OF WHACK

Other surveys out this week appear to show a similar theme, with the exception of a Leger Marketing poll putting the Tories in front of the Liberals by 7% (38% to 31%).

SES president Nik Nanos said this week's polling is the first read on the public's reaction to the Tories' major ad campaign aimed at branding the Liberals' rookie leader.

Any desire by the Conservatives to force an election would require the ads to gain greater traction

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among undecided voters and show them pulling ahead of the Liberals.

'COLD WATER'

Nanos says the results pour "freezing cold water" on such scenarios.

"Things are still up for grabs," he said.

University of Toronto political scientist Nelson Wiseman said he sees no advantage for any of the parties to force an election. The Tories can't win a majority, according to the polls, the Liberals aren't ready, the Bloc Quebecois is losing support and the NDP has nothing to gain, he said.

"My gut feeling is the Liberals and Conservatives are very close together," said Wiseman.

The parties might all be scurrying toward the start line of a campaign, but Conservative strategist Goldy Hyder said there doesn't seem to be an advantage to any party right now to force an election this spring.

"It's one thing to load the electoral gun and entirely another thing to actually fire it," he said.

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