



**PRESS RELEASE**  
**FEDERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN 2004:**  
**MAJORITY PROSPECTS FADING**  
May 28, 2004

<b>National Federal Voting Intentions</b>	
<b>(n=1,306)</b>	
Liberal Party of Canada	38.0%
Conservative Party of Canada	30.4%
New Democratic Party	18.1%
Bloc Quebecois	10.7%
Other	2.8%

Ottawa, ONTARIO. Paul Martin Liberal's are seeing the prospects of a fourth successive Liberal majority fading as reinvigorated campaigns from both the right and the left are shrinking Liberal centre ground. A dizzying 40-point lead from the time he took office has shrunk to a scant eight points.

*OVERVIEW:*

EKOS President, Frank Graves, offered the following on the findings: "Paul Martin's Liberals find themselves hanging on to a narrow national advantage over an advancing Harper-led CPC. A minority Liberal government would seem to be an optimistic conclusion for Paul Martin given the trajectory of current forces. In the crucial Ontario arena, the Liberal lead over the CPC has shrunk to five percentage points with a resurgent NDP completing a tightly competitive and unpredictable political landscape."

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### **What is behind the decline in Liberal fortunes?**

According to Mr. Graves, “Mr. Martin’s precipitous decline from the most trusted politician in Canada, poised to win a huge majority to his currently perilous position, on the razor’s edge of minority government or opposition leader is a remarkable turn of affairs.” Mr. Graves suggests that the principal forces behind this decline are:

- the continued corrosive effects of the ethics and accountability controversy surrounding the sponsorship scandal (particularly in Quebec);
- “A broad questioning of whether Mr. Martin has revealed the right stuff to justify leading the country;
- and a recent decline in the Liberal fortress of Ontario, largely induced by the collateral damage of Dalton McGuinty’s recent budget – which is clearly one of the most poorly received budgets in contemporary political history.”

### **What is the impact for the June 28 election?**

“The coalescence of these forces,” Mr. Graves notes, “and the renewal of the CPC, which has seen the unstable CA and PC parties reborn from near political oblivion, is producing the tightest race since 1988.” Indeed, Graves continued, “The NDP is also faring much better under Jack Layton, with the prospects of real influence within a minority government cluttered with right and centre right offerings. In Quebec, the BQ and Gilles Duceppe have awakened from a near-death experience to be dominating the Quebec scene (with a coincidental rise in the recently moribund sovereignty movement).”

“For these reasons,” Mr. Graves stated, “voters are actually seeing this race as offering better and clearer choices than the last federal election and the zest and appetite for change is strongest amongst the growing cadre (majority) of Canadians who feel it is time for a new party in Ottawa.” Adds Graves, “Yes, there is also a sense of cynicism and a view that things won’t really change.”

### **Can the Liberals still win a majority?**

With close to one in two voters allowing that they may change their current voting intentions, a month left in the campaign, core elements of some party platforms still to be released as well as debates and continuing advertising campaigns there are, however, some signs that Paul Martin can still turn things around. As Graves points out, “He continues to enjoy a broad advantage as best leader for the country and Canadians decisively say they want a choice which works best for the country as a whole.” Further, voters still think the Liberals are ticketed for government in Ottawa (albeit with minority government status). “In fact,” notes Mr. Graves, “there is a striking lag in the public’s overall sense of the outcome of the election and their newly negative outlook on the Liberals.” There is also some sense that the situation in Quebec is improving modestly for Mr. Martin’s Liberals.

On balance, however, Mr. Graves explains that, “the current inventory of attitudes and expectations, particularly when placed in the dynamic context of trends and momentum, suggests serious perhaps insurmountable obstacles to a majority Liberal government.” “In fact,” Graves continued, “the plausibility of a Stephen Harper-led government is rising dramatically; a conclusion which has yet to catch up with a fractious and turbulent electorate who seem to be insistent on a change in Ottawa.”

### *METHODOLOGY:*

These data are based on telephone interviews conducted May 25-27, 2004 with a random sample of 1,306 Canadians aged 18 and over. A sample of this size provides a margin of error of +/- 2.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when the results are sub-divided (i.e., error margins for sub-groups such as regions).

All the data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample’s regional, gender and age composition reflects that of the actual population of Canada according to Census data.