

Jun. 11, 2004. 10:49 AM

Liberals keep up anti-Tory message

FROM CANADIAN PRESS

OTTAWA — A top adviser to [Paul Martin](#) says he's not worried despite a new poll suggesting the Conservatives have pulled ahead of the Liberals.

Tim Murphy, echoing a carefully scripted party line, said people are just starting to pay attention to the campaign and the difference between the Grits and the Tories.

"Now people are going to start to focus," he told CBC-TV today. "We expect people to focus on the kinds of things [Stephen Harper](#) stands for — he'd rip up the Kyoto accord, get rid of gun control.

"He wants to invest in tanks and airplane carriers and, we think, not the kinds of things Canadians want to see invested in and we're talking about those issues so they know what the choices really are."

Murphy said Martin will use next week's election debates to focus on choices for the future of the country, such as health care, and drive home his record of sound financial management, including slaying the deficit.

An Ekos poll of 2,117 voters released yesterday put the Conservatives ahead in the campaign with 34 per cent support of decided voters compared with 30 per cent for the Liberals.

The NDP had 19 per cent while the Bloc Quebecois was at 12 per cent.

Two polls published Wednesday put the Liberals slightly ahead of the Conservatives.

The Liberals have responded to the poll decline by rolling out a hard-hitting TV ad campaign. It warns that the Conservatives would scrap the Kyoto climate-change protocol, not protect a woman's right to have an abortion, and sacrifice medicare in favour of tax cuts.

Martin, after spending most of the week abroad attending D-Day ceremonies and the G-8 Summit, was to return to the campaign trail today with a speech in Toronto.

He was expected to drive home the message that the Liberals are the protectors of Canadian values, while the Conservatives can't be trusted to protect social programs.

The once-mighty Liberals have been stunned both by their huge drop in opinion polls and their apparent inability to recover.

Carolyn Parrish, an outspoken Ontario Liberal MP, has called her party's campaign a "comedy of errors," and said she hopes things turn around soon.

David Herle, a top Martin adviser, reportedly told Ontario Liberal candidates Wednesday night that the party is "in a spiral."

Harper has been trying to capitalize on the good poll news, but he has been dogged by controversy over comments by

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The [Ekos poll](#) was conducted Monday through Wednesday for the Toronto Star and Montreal La Presse. It had a margin of error of 2.1 percentage points either way, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error for regional breakdowns is higher because of smaller samplings.

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