

NDP's gain the newest headache for Martin

Layton's New Democrats move ahead as Liberals remain in minority territory

Nov. 12, 2005. 07:31 AM

SUSAN DELACOURT

OTTAWA BUREAU CHIEF

STAR COLUMNISTS

[Graham Fraser](#)

[Richard Gwyn](#)

[Stephen Handelman](#)

[Chantal Hebert](#)

[James Travers](#)

[Ian Urquhart](#)

[Thomas Walkom](#)

OTTAWA—With an election looming ever closer, public support for Paul Martin's Liberals remains mired in minority government territory, according to a new *Toronto Star* poll.

The struggle for a Liberal majority will be more difficult because of the surprising strength of the NDP, the poll, conducted for the *Star* by EKOS Research, shows. It's the New Democrats, in fact, who appear to be reaping the most gains since the last election, with 21 per cent support across the country.

That's a good five-plus percentage points above their 2004 election results, with the NDP neck-and-neck with the Liberals for support in B.C., and well above the Liberals in the Prairies. Moreover, 13 per cent of former Liberal voters and 5 per cent of former Tory voters say they've moved to the NDP.

Country-wide, the governing Liberals stand at just 33 per cent support, well below the 40-per-cent threshold they need to even hope for a majority government, yet just a few percentage points lower than the 36.7 per cent support they won in the last election. About 68 per cent who voted Liberal in the last election said they intend to vote that same way next time.

Nationally, the Conservatives are stuck at 28 per cent, roughly the same as the support level they had in the 2004 election.

A full 87 per cent of Tory voters from 2004 are sticking with their party, EKOS found.

Ontario still seems to be sticking with the Liberals, though more shakily, with 42 per cent support for the governing party, compared to 44.7 per cent in the 2004 election.

The Conservatives have 30 per cent support, compared to 31.5 in the election, and the NDP are at 23 per cent, up from 18 per cent in 2004.

The poll found Quebec to be a "wasteland" for Liberals, according to EKOS president Frank Graves, with the Bloc still hovering at 53 per cent support compared to 25 per cent for the Liberals. The Bloc garnered 49 per cent support in the 2004 vote.

Meanwhile, Canadians would rather see the NDP co-operating with Martin's government and are in no hurry for an early election, the poll found.

Though the three opposition parties are banding together to force Martin's government from office as soon as possible, six out of 10 Canadians don't share their enthusiasm.

A full 62 per cent said they wanted to see Justice John Gomery's second report on the Liberal sponsorship scandal before rendering an electoral verdict next spring, as Martin has promised. Only 24 per cent said "we should have an election as soon as possible this winter" and another 13 per cent said "we don't need to have an election any time soon."

Moreover, NDP Leader Jack Layton appears to be slightly on the wrong side of public opinion with his provocative decision this week to abandon co-operation with the Liberals in favour of forming a united opposition front for an early election. Still, his party is increasing its support over 2004 levels and a healthy 25 per cent of Canadians say the NDP is their second choice.

Fifty-five per cent of respondents said the NDP "deserves credit for working with the Liberal government to get things done." Another 38 per cent said they approved of the NDP joining the other opposition parties in a call for an early election.

The Liberals have 133 seats in the 308-seat Commons. The Tories have 98 seats, the Bloc Québécois 54 and the NDP 18. There are four independent MPs and there is one vacancy.

The poll was conducted from Monday to Wednesday this week, deliberately timed to wait out the initial wave of outrage over Gomery's first report on the sponsorship scandal, released on Nov. 1. EKOS surveyed 1,275 Canadians over the telephone and the national results are considered accurate within 2.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The low appetite for an election might also be explained by the absence of any overwhelming outrage over that first Gomery report. EKOS asked respondents their personal view of the scandal and almost half, 47 per cent, said it was "bad, but no worse than other government scandals." However, 18 per cent said this Liberal scandal was worse than others and 27 per cent said it was the worst of all.

About half the respondents said the Liberal party was most to blame for the scandal. But 23 per cent said it was improper oversight by public servants and 17 per cent blamed dishonest Quebec advertising executives.

In sum, the portrait painted by this most recent EKOS poll shows a country more or less reconciled to business as usual in terms of federal politics — a far cry from the doomsday-like talk emanating from Ottawa these days as the Commons teeters at the threat of collapse.

Most Canadians, in fact, think that the next government will also be a Liberal-led minority government. A full 63 per cent said they expected the Liberals to emerge victorious after the next election and even more, 72 per cent of respondents, believed the next government would be a minority. Of those predicting a minority government, 46 per cent said that would be a good thing for the country.

[Get great home delivery subscription deals here!](#)

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

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

Legal Notice: Copyright Toronto Star Newspapers Limited. All rights reserved. Distribution, transmission or republication of any material 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.

