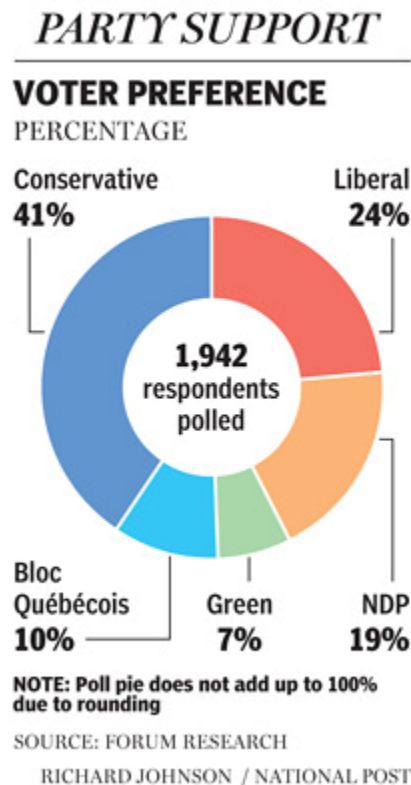


THE VANCOUVER SUN

Tory support stays high, ethics falling flat: Poll

By Kathryn Blaze Carlson, Postmedia News March 28, 2011 10:14 AM



A graphic poll showing which political party Canadians favour.

Photograph by: Richard Johnson, National Post

TORONTO — The first poll since Saturday's election call shows Tory support largely unchanged, calling into question the opposition's early emphasis on ethics.

Despite a weekend of being hammered for their alleged contempt of Parliament, the Conservatives boast the support of 41 per cent of decided voters — 17 points ahead of the Liberals, who are at 24 per cent. The NDP is at 19 per cent, and the Bloc 10 per cent.

The Forum Research poll also breaks it down by seat count, suggesting that if the election were held today, the Tories would surge from 143 seats to 162 seats, the Liberals would drop 17 seats to 61, the Bloc would rise from 44 to 51, and the NDP would be whittled from 36 seats to 34. The poll, conducted over the weekend via telephone with a random sample of 2,095 voters, is within the range of approximately plus or minus 10 seats for each party.

"After two days of talking about contempt, it's clear that there's not a lot of interest in the issue," said Lorne Bozinoff, president of Forum Research, Canada's largest survey firm. "I think that's going to cause a lot problems for the opposition parties."

When voters were asked which was more important, the economy and job creation or ethics in government, 62 per cent cited the economy, while only 38 per cent said ethics was chief on their electoral radar.

"The three parties are all trying to share the same contempt issue, and there's only one party keying in on the economic issue," Bozinoff said, referring to the Conservatives, who tabled their budget on March 22 and are asking Canadians for a majority in order to ensure the country's full economic recovery.

Indeed, Prime Minister Stephen Harper is heading into the campaign with his best chance at a majority yet and, as Bozinoff pointed out, "it doesn't take a lot to shift seats."

"In 2006, the Tories got 36 per cent of the vote; in 2008, they got 38 per cent," he said. "So it's been growing at two points every election. Now we have them at 41 per cent, and that's enough to possibly tip them into majority."

According to the poll, 38 per cent of voters think Harper would make the best prime minister, followed next by NDP leader Jack Layton at 18 per cent. Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff is polling well below his party, at just 15 per cent.

Results of the Forum Research poll are considered accurate +/- 2.2 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

National Post

kcarlson@nationalpost.com