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Canada Ruling Conservatives Fall to Lowest Support of Campaign

By Alexandre Deslongchamps

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Oct. 8 (Bloomberg) -- Canadian Prime Minister [Stephen Harper](#)'s Conservative Party fell to its lowest level of support since the start of a campaign ahead of elections on Oct. 14.

The Conservatives were at 33 percent for the first time after dropping a percentage point in the latest daily survey by Nanos Research, an Ottawa-based pollster. The Liberals, led by [Stephane Dion](#), are within 4 percentage points at 29 percent, down 2 points from yesterday. The poll's margin of error is 2.8 percentage points.

The Liberals may be benefiting from Dion's attacks on Harper in two televised debates last week, where he said the prime minister doesn't have a sufficient plan to manage the economy. Dion said yesterday that Conservatives "always mismanage the economy" because they don't understand the role of government during economic slowdowns.

"Maybe if Stephen Harper spent less time distorting me and my plan, he would have been able to come forward with a real platform, not a brochure," Dion said today in a speech to the Empire Club in Toronto. "There is no time to waste, we need shovels in the ground."

Dion today repeated accusations that Harper is out of touch with voters who are anxious about their savings as the country's stock market plummets. The prime minister, 49, said yesterday the decline in stock prices may present "good buying opportunities."

Dion More Popular

Dion, 53, is himself now more popular than Harper for the first time since the campaign began, according to a Harris/Decima poll of 1,278 Canadians conducted Oct. 4-7. Forty-one percent of voters have a favorable image of Dion, compared with 40 percent for Harper, while 48 percent dislike Dion against 51 percent for Harper, the survey [showed](#).

Harris/Decima found the Liberals had 27 percent support and the Conservatives had 31 percent, matching the lowest of the campaign for that poll, which has a 2.7 percentage point margin of error. The 4 percentage point gap is the smallest yet in the Harris/Decima daily tracking poll.

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Harper called elections on Sept. 7 saying Parliament was too gridlocked for his agenda to succeed. The Conservatives were 27 seats short of a majority and some polls during the campaign showed Harper was either at or close to the 40 percent typically needed to gain a majority of districts.

Canada's main stock index has fallen 14 percent this month as raw-materials and energy shares slid along with commodity prices on concern tighter credit will cause a recession. The S&P/TSX index dropped 15 percent in September for its biggest monthly drop in a decade.

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