

NDP "Opposition" Fundraising Marks Need For Change



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Rebranding the NDP as opposition

Thunder Bay, ON -- Editorial -- The numbers are starting to come in, and for NDP Leader Jack Layton, they don't look all that promising. First, fund-raising figures are down. Down by almost half. During the first quarter of 2009, the NDP raised \$595,611.16 from 10,304 supporters. That figure is almost half of the \$1,119,647.67 that the party raised during the first quarter of 2008. There were 13,339 supporters donating those funds during the first quarter of 2008.

While some in the NDP seem willing to march in lockstep with Layton, it is starting to look like Layton's gambit to form a coalition government impacted the financial support the party gets from its donors. NDP supporters are effectively voting with their wallets.

Next are the polling numbers. The latest Nanos Research poll is showing that the NDP leader's rankings are down. Since the start of the year, Layton, according to Nik Nanos has fallen in the areas of trust, leadership and vision for Canada. The NDP is up by two points in the polls across Canada, but down in Ontario by three points.

Ontario will be the real battle ground during the next election. The Conservatives are up by eight points in Ontario in the Nanos Research findings. For the NDP to be losing in Ontario should be viewed as a critical problem.

Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff has climbed in leadership numbers, but still trails Conservative leader Stephen Harper. The Nanos Research figures show that Ignatieff has leveled off since February, Harper is climbing, but Layton continues to fall.

Harper's leadership numbers are likely what the Conservatives see as their ace in the hole. During the economic downturn, Harper's leadership is still seen by many Canadians as the best among the major party leaders. While there are reported grumblings within the Conservative ranks, the party still managed to raise \$4,362,595.50 from 39,432 supporters during the first quarter of 2009. That figure is down from 2008 by about \$600,000.00, but still double what the Liberals raised.

The NDP fund-raising drop, in the first quarter of the year also represents a huge problem for the NDP. Likely the message is getting clearer. The NDP is likely going to be faced with tough choices to make. If they stick with Layton, the party could be overshadowed in the next election.

What it could be for Layton is that his leadership peaked with the proposed coalition government. Since that effort fell apart in January, the NDP leader has often appeared angry. In Question Period in the House of Commons has seen questions batted away by the Conservatives. Clearly the Conservatives are not taking the NDP as a major threat. Likely, for the Conservatives their internal polling is showing the gap in leadership between Harper and Layton.

The economic downturn, one might think would be a time that the NDP would see their fortunes rise. Party wise, that appears to be the case with the party rising slightly in recent polls. However the party has not climbed above the support figures they saw in the last election.

The leader who told Canadians that he was applying for the job of Prime Minister has now branded the NDP as "opposition". The party is asking supporters to put a link on their blogs where the strongest word isn't NDP, but opposition.

It is interesting, the New Democrats have invited Anita Dunn, the director of communications to the Obama for America Presidential campaign, and a member of Barack Obama's tight-knit inner circle as a keynote speaker at their Halifax Convention. The Obama campaign focused on hope. The Layton campaign appears one of opposition. Stark contrast.

The Obama campaign changed the political map strategically. The entire campaign was one focused on optimism and hope.

Branding themselves as "opposition" the NDP appear to have left hope behind.

The New Democrats might take the time to take a long hard look in the mirror. While Layton appears popular within caucus, the important support is from people who reach into their wallets. Those numbers are down drastically.

In politics, regardless of the party, money talk. The question for the NDP and its leader is simple. Are they listening?

That of course is just my opinion, as always your mileage may vary.

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