

Grits pull away from opposition, poll says

Posted 2 days ago

Ontario's opposition parties need to step up their game if they want to knock the Liberals off their throne, an exclusive Sun Media/Nanos Research poll reveals.

Pollster Nik Nanos said the Liberals now enjoy a 15-point advantage over their nearest rival, up from 11 points in the October general election.

The Dalton McGuinty government is a "default" position for many voters who don't see the opposition as being proactive on important issues of the day such as the province's economic slowdown, he said. "They're not wearing anything as a government," Nanos said. "It's classic

. . . free ride politics."

The Nanos Research poll found the Ontario Liberals now have the support of 45 per cent of decided voters, the John Tory Conservatives are at 30 per cent, the NDP at 14 per cent and the Green Party at 10 per cent.

The Liberal surge has come at the expense of the NDP which is in a statistical tie with the Green Party in this poll, he said.

"When the NDP numbers start to soften in Ontario, the Liberals start moving up which speaks to the importance of Howard Hampton starting to gear things up," Nanos said. "The poll's not great news for the Hampton New Democrats."

Hampton, who has led the party through three provincial elections, said earlier this month he will soon let his party know whether he plans to stay on to fight a fourth general election.

The Conservatives, under the leadership of John Tory who did not gain a seat in the last election, are also struggling to make an impact, he said.

The 30 per cent support garnered in the poll is "on the bottom line of the trend line for the Conservatives," Nanos said.

Any effective strategy for the Conservatives would need to include bringing their leader Tory back into the legislature where he would gain a higher profile, he said.

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