



By **CHRISTINA SPENCER, NATIONAL BUREAU**

The Liberals' "green shift" hasn't been a big lift.

So says a Nanos/Sun Media poll conducted after federal Liberal Leader Stephane Dion recently unveiled his environment plan.

The poll shows Canadians trust the federal Grits more than other parties to manage environmental issues, but the Liberal lead over the Conservatives is slim: 21% to 18%.

In polling terms, that's a virtual tie because of the margin of error in the survey.

"What it shows is there's no momentum at this point coming off the 'green shift,' " said pollster Nik Nanos. "The fact that they are in a statistical tie has to be a bit disappointing for the Liberals.

"The environment as an issue is probably not enough at this time to propel the Liberals ahead of the Conservatives."

Dion announced his plan in June. It would place more of a tax burden on carbon dioxide emissions, while lowering other taxes.

The Tories swiftly labelled the policy a tax grab. Relentless Conservative attacks -- Prime Minister Stephen Harper called the scheme "crazy economics," for instance -- partly explain why Dion has not been able to capitalize more on his green initiative, Nanos said.

Still, the poll isn't particularly good news for the Conservatives, either. Although westerners had more faith in the Tories to handle the environment than they did in the Liberals, Dion's party was more trusted in Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic region.

Further, about 30% of those polled, including in the West, were either unsure or felt no political party was trustworthy when it came to environmental concerns.

QUIET ON HEALTH FRONT

Voters appeared to trust the two parties almost equally when it came to dealing with health care. The Liberals were favoured by 25%, the Tories by 23%.

Although health care is consistently the No. 1 concern of Canadians, Nanos noted that neither party discusses

it much. One-third of Canadians were unsure or felt no party could be trusted on the issue.

The best news for the Liberals lies in their rankings on the tricky issue of national unity. They were the party most trusted to handle this issue by 29% of those polled; only 25% had more faith in the Conservative approach.

"When the prime minister talks about autonomy and flexible federalism, it makes voters a little nervous in regards to national unity," Nanos said.

"National unity might be (Dion's) opportunity. He has a track record, and he has a position that is clear and different from the prime minister."

The Nanos poll of 1,002 Canadians was conducted from June 23 to July 2 and is considered accurate to within +/- 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

