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Conservatives ahead in latest poll

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OTTAWA (Reuters) - Canada's ruling Conservatives hold a healthy lead over the opposition Liberals but do not have enough public support to obtain a majority government in the next election, according to a poll released on Friday.

The Segma survey for La Presse put the Conservatives at 36 percent in public support and the Liberals on 30 percent, the same scores that both parties achieved in the January 2006 election.

Segma said voters showed little enthusiasm for either Prime Minister Stephen Harper -- an aloof figure who opponents say harbors a hidden extremist agenda -- or Liberal leader Stephane Dion, who is struggling to maintain control over his party.

Under Canada's first-past-the-post electoral system, a party needs around 40 percent of the vote to win a majority of the 308 seats in the federal Parliament. The Conservatives have 127 seats and the Liberals have 96.

According to the poll, 11 percent of Canadians were very satisfied with the government with a further 48 percent somewhat satisfied.

"This rate of satisfaction is soft. No one is blown away by this government and the Conservatives are therefore not gaining any ground," Segma's Raynald Harvey told La Presse.

The Segma survey of 1,476 adult Canadians was conducted between April 3 and 9 and is considered accurate to within 2.6 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

A smaller Nanos Research survey released on Friday put both the

Conservatives and Liberals at 36 percent. The poll of 827 Canadians was conducted between April 4 and 9 and is considered accurate to within 3.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

(Reporting by David Ljunggren; Editing by Peter Galloway)

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