

Canadian Liberals hold narrow opinion poll lead

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TORONTO (Reuters) - The Liberals hold a narrow lead over the Conservatives, but neither party has a good chance of winning a majority government in a new election, according to two polls published on Saturday.

Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff has hinted recently his party may try to oust the government and force an election. The Conservatives were re-elected in 2008 with a stronger minority and rule with the tenuous support of other smaller parties.

A Nanos poll showed the Liberals with 37 percent likely voter support, compared to 32 percent for the Conservatives, while an Ipsos Reid poll put the figures at 36 percent to 33 percent in favor of the Liberals. Both polls are accurate to within 3.1 percentage points, 95 percent of the time.

"Support for the federal Liberals continues to incrementally trend upwards," Nanos said in a statement, noting that support for the Liberals was up from April's 36 percent, while support for the Conservatives was down from 33 percent.

"Considering the economy is in the midst of a significant downturn, the Conservatives have generally done well in maintaining their overall support. While they continue to trail the Liberals it's not realistic for an incumbent government to expect their polling numbers to improve in this economy."

Pollsters generally say that a party needs 40 percent voter support to have a chance of a winning a majority in the Canadian Parliament.

The Ipsos poll showed a large majority of Canadians -- 68 percent -- saw no need for a new election at present and that just over half thought the nation was "headed in the right direction," despite a deep recession and political bickering on how fast to spend billions of dollars in economic stimulus.

The Nanos survey showed support for the left-wing New Democrats at 16 percent, up from 15 percent in April, while Ipsos Reid put support for the New Democrats at 12 percent, down from 14 percent.

(Reporting by Janet Guttman; editing by Paul Simao)

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