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# Liberals gain support over Conservatives: poll

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TORONTO -- Canada's opposition Liberals have edged past the governing Conservatives in popularity, five months after suffering a sharp electoral defeat, according to a poll released on Saturday.

A Nanos Research survey put the Liberals at 36 percent, up 3 percentage points from the previous poll last month and 10 points from the October election. After the party's poor electoral performance, it replaced leader Stephane Dion with Michael Ignatieff.

The Conservatives led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, were at 33 percent support among committed voters, down 1 point from February and off nearly 5 points from the election, when they were re-elected with a minority government.

Since the release of the February poll, several weaker-than-expected indicators have confirmed the Canadian economy is in the grip of a severe downturn.

Much of the Liberal support was picked up from the third-place left-leaning New Democrats, who saw their support dip to 13 percent from 16 percent last month and from more than 18 percent in the election.

The poll showed Harper remaining the top choice for prime minister, with 33 percent support, up 1 point from February. Ignatieff was next with 27 percent, down 1 point from a month earlier. No other party leader had more than 12 percent support.

The Nanos Research survey of 1,002 adults was conducted from March 13 to 18 and was considered accurate to within 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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