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# Canada Tories headed for win despite debates: poll

Sun Oct 5, 2008 10:58pm EDT

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OTTAWA (Reuters) - The first major opinion poll taken after Canada's election debates showed on Sunday that the ruling Conservatives were headed for a strengthened mandate but still would fall short of a majority of seats in Parliament.

The Ekos survey put the Conservatives, led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, at 35 percent and the Liberals back at 25 percent. The New Democratic Party (NDP), to the left of the Liberals, stood at 19 percent.

Debates in French and English on Wednesday and Thursday respectively "appear to have failed to shake up the election race, despite what some regarded as effective performances by opposition

party leaders," Ekos said late on Sunday.

The automated telephone survey was conducted on Friday through Sunday.

Another poll, a Nanos survey taken partly before the more widely watched English debate, had the Conservatives ahead by just 34 percent to 30 percent for the Liberals. The poll spanned Thursday through Saturday.

The Liberals seized upon the fact that the leftist NDP, which had been doing so well that it had a shot at taking second place in the October 14 election, was 11 points behind in the Nanos survey at 19 percent.

"Can someone tell me how in these numbers the NDP finishes second?" Liberal spokesman Jae Epworth asked in an e-mail.

The Liberals and the NDP are closer in other polls, and the Liberals further behind the Conservatives, who took power from the Liberals with a minority of seats in Parliament in the January 2006 election.

A Harris-Decima survey released on Sunday by Canadian Press that covered Wednesday through Saturday put the Conservatives also at 34 percent but the Liberals down at 24 percent and the NDP at 20 percent. **Continued...**

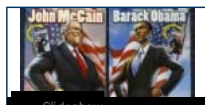
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