

News

Dion attacks Tories, NDP

By CHRISTINA SPENCER, Sun Media



Federal Liberal Leader Stephane Dion examines a training mannequin as he tours a training facility for nurses at Algonquin College during a campaign stop in Ottawa. (THE CANADIAN PRESS/Adrian Wyld)

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OTTAWA — Using a community college nursing school as his backdrop, Stephane Dion tried to stanch the bleeding of Liberal support today by attacking both the "right-wing" Stephen Harper government and the "old-fashioned socialist" views of the NDP.

Michael Ignatieff, Dion's deputy, delivered a similar attack in a speech to the Economic Club of Canada in Toronto, attended by former Liberal prime minister Paul Martin. Meanwhile, Bob Rae — another party "star" — prepared to deliver a key foreign policy address tomorrow bashing both the Tory and NDP approaches to world affairs.

As they gird for national debates Wednesday and Thursday, the Liberals are trying to stitch up support that had been hemorrhaging to both the Tories and the NDP. They are focusing on their traditional image as a party of the political centre, painting the others as extremes and emphasizing the Grit "team."

"Parties of the right, Conservative governments, always mismanage the economy," Dion warned as he toured a training lab for nurses at Algonquin College in Ottawa. "Conservative ideology never works."

At the same time, he said Liberals will create "a strong economy to create jobs, not the old-fashioned socialist approach of Mr. Layton, who comes with something that

clearly doesn't make sense."

In his own speech, Ignatieff said Harper "has been surfing for two-and-a-half years on the surpluses left behind by (Paul Martin)."

"Now the surf board has landed on the beach and (Harper) looks around and he doesn't like what he sees. He doesn't know what to do."

One political scientist said while Dion's team approach and criticism of Harper on the economy might be good tactics, they could be too little, too late.

"The three of them (Dion, Ignatieff and Rae) should have been campaigning together from beginning to end, they should have been passing the baton" and emphasizing the "Liberal brand," said University of Toronto political scientist Nelson Wiseman.

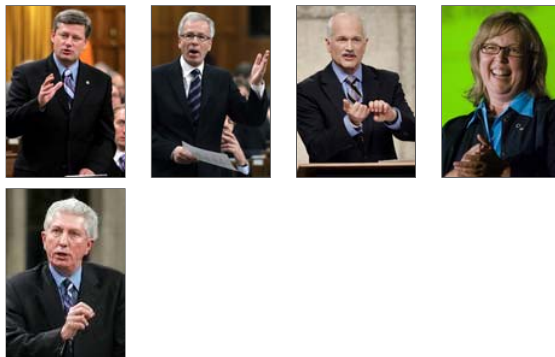
As to the Liberal attacks on the NDP, "they're too freaked out about the NDP; the NDP isn't going to overtake them," said Wiseman.

The NDP polled 17.5% of the popular vote in the 2006 election, Wiseman noted. It is at 20% in the latest Nanos Research tracking poll.

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