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Editorial

Home News Editorial Harper's Conservatives getting closer to the dreaded M-word



Harper's Conservatives getting closer to the dreaded M-word

Posted By GREG WESTON, SUN MEDIA

Posted 18 days ago

After the first third of the federal election, Stephen Harper appears on track towards winning a majority Conservative government, while Stephane Dion is at risk of leading the Liberals into a death spiral.

An exclusive Nanos Research poll for Sun Media shows roughly half of all decided voters are either comfortable or could at least live with a Conservative majority.

Pollster Nik Nanos estimates the Conservatives will need about 43 per cent of the popular vote on Oct. 14 to win a majority, roughly five points more than where the party is today.

Even among those who say they plan to vote Liberal, 38 per cent indicate they are OK with the prospect of Harper's having a majority of the seats in parliament, and de facto complete control over the country's law-making for the next four years.

If even a fraction of those Grit supporters turn their backs on Stephane Dion's increasingly troubled leadership, the country could very well wake up on Oct. 15 with Harper and his crowd in full command of a majority government.

But in an election where nothing is

quite as it seems, this week's Nanos- Sun Media survey suggests that the biggest threat to Harper's winning a majority may not be the once mighty Grits.

Instead, if the Conservatives' long march to the Big M is going to be stopped, it could be in an eleventh-hour ambush by a growing band of NDP resistance fighters.

The latest survey shows that fully 62 per cent of those who say they would vote NDP today are "uncomfortable" with the concept of a Harper majority.

That is a huge increase from a similar Nanos-Sun Media survey in February when only 38 per cent of NDP supporters indicated the idea of a Harper majority sweep gave them the heebie-jeebies.

There's something else.

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In another Sun Media poll last week, Nanos not only asked people how they intended to vote, but why.

Fully 15 per cent of those who said they planned to vote NDP also said they were backing the Dippers "to block another party."

Nanos predicts this election has the potential to end in a rerun of the 2004 campaign when NDP support stamped to

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the Liberals in the final week.

But that scenario assumes the Liberals will again be running a strong second to the Conservatives in the final week of the campaign, and, therefore, be the only party that can stop Harper.

That is anything but certain, as the polling gap widens between the Liberals and the frontrunning Conservatives.

Dion entered the election vastly trailing Harper and even behind the NDP's Jack Layton as the leader Canadians think would make the best prime minister.

This week, in desperation, Liberal strategists eliminated Dion altogether from one of their television ads on leadership, and handed the campaign microphone to Bob Rae.

Unfortunately for the Liberals, Nanos reports that the contrast with Rae caused Dion's leadership poll numbers to suffer their worst single overnight tanking since the campaign began.

No matter who the Liberals put in the leadership window, it seems they may be doomed if they do and doomed if they don't.

On the Harper campaign, the PM still avoids talking about winning a majority, mindful of the panic that caused in the 2004 elections.

Instead, he tells partisan crowds: "We've got to work hard, not just to win, but to get a strong mandate."

Not quite the dreaded M-word, but darn close.

Greg Weston is a columnist for

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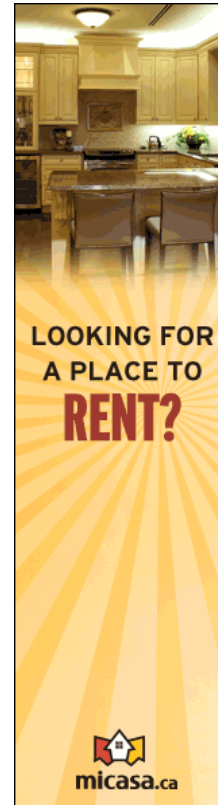
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