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Rosy picture for Charest: poll

Voters see him as best leader, by far. Marois trails premier 44% to 36%, while Dumont's numbers are lagging badly at 12%

L. IAN MACDONALD, Special to The Gazette

Published: Saturday, November 22

Jean Charest's Liberals are close to majority territory in the Quebec election, leading the Parti Quebecois by 44 to 36 per cent, with l'Action démocratique du Québec trailing badly at 12 per cent, in a Nanos Research poll for Policy Options magazine, made available to The Gazette.

Quebec Solidaire and the Green Party each received four per cent in the poll of 505 Quebecers, conducted by telephone between Nov. 14 and 18, with a margin of error of plus or minus 4.4 per cent.

Leaving aside the horse race, Charest dominates a series of questions on leadership, and the Liberals have a clear advantage on the best party brand. Charest's leadership attributes have improved substantially from a Nanos poll conducted in the middle of the last campaign in March 2007, while Mario Dumont's leadership numbers and the ADQ brand have gone south.

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"The underlying indicators on leadership and party brand show the fundamentals for the Liberals look very good," pollster Nik Nanos said. "While the election isn't over, the Liberal fundamentals are very strong."

In comparative research with identical leadership questions in the last campaign, "Charest has substantially strengthened his position," Nanos said. "He enjoys an advantage on all major leadership measures." PQ leader Pauline Marois receives "good, but lower, ratings than Charest." Dumont's leadership numbers have tanked.

"There has been a significant erosion in the positive perceptions of Mario Dumont and the ADQ since the last election," Nanos said.

Charest has a positive perception among 47 per cent of voters, with a negative perception among 22. Marois enjoys a positive perception of 43 per cent, with a negative perception of 27. Dumont has a positive perception of 28 per cent, but a negative perception of 34 per cent.

On the question of "which leader has the best vision for Quebec," Charest leads at 34 per cent, to 25 per cent for Marois, and 15 per cent for Dumont. To the question of "which leader is the most competent," Charest dominates at 48 per cent, to 25 per cent for Marois and eight per cent for Dumont. To the question of which leader is most trusted, Charest leads at 36 per cent, to 25 per cent for Marois and 15 per cent for Dumont.

On the question of which leader "has the character to be premier of Quebec," Charest dominates at 48 per cent, to 24 per cent for Marois and 12 per cent for Dumont. To the question of "which leader has the brightest political future" Charest leads at 45 per cent, to 23 per cent for Marois and 13 per cent for Dumont.

Only on one leadership question, "which leader has views most like your own?" is Dumont close to being competitive, at 17 per cent, trailing Charest at 32 per cent and Marois at 27 per cent.

On all six leadership questions, the voters' perception of Charest has improved significantly, while Dumont's leadership scores have deteriorated across the board since the March 2007 campaign. Marois shows improvement in every leadership question over the scores of André Boisclair, the PQ's leader in the 2007 campaign.

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