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Poll-weary public pining for a majority, analysts say

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OTTAWA—Do you yearn for the days when federal elections were rare events like eclipses or comets, not an annual chore like raking the leaves?

You're not alone.

After three elections in five years, endless election speculation, Parliament Hill dramas, at least \$750 million spent going to the polls and three consecutive minority governments, the bloom, it seems, is off the minority rose.

With another election in the offing, a yearning for more stable government could be the ballot wild card that could add big momentum to the leader who is able to break the current political stalemate and captivate Canadians, analysts say.

While Canadians have fond memories of minority governments from the 1960s, political scientist Paul Nesbitt-Larking blames heated partisanship for spoiling the model these days.

"I have the instinct that the broader Canadian public is looking for some leadership, looking for some vision, wants to be excited about politics again and is just waiting for someone to do that," said Nesbitt-Larking, chair of political science at Huron University College at the University of Western Ontario.

A Harris/Decima poll in July found that two-thirds of Canadians wanted to elect a majority government in the next vote, a view fuelled by a sense that successive minority governments have accomplished about all that can be expected.

But it's one thing for voters to pine for the stability of a majority government and quite another to make it a reality.

"I'm not sure for all the angst that people may have about the political system and about a lot of other things relating to it, I'm not sure that can be easily translated into punishing the politicians in a particularly meaningful way," said Barry Kay, a professor of political science at Waterloo's Wilfrid Laurier University.

Recent polls show the Conservatives and Liberals in a dead heat with neither party having the support needed for a majority.

Liberals up election ante with ad blitz

An election may be weeks, even months away, but the Liberals' campaign enters the warm-up phase on the airwaves today, with a \$2 million series of TV ads intended to showcase leader Michael Ignatieff to Canadians.

But veteran pollster Nik Nanos doesn't rule out a majority and says it hinges on the performance of the largely untested Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff.

"If he can somehow convey some extra advantage related to vision or appeal, his numbers are the ones most likely to be volatile and to move," Nanos said.

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