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JANE TABER AND THE GLOBE'S PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU SET THE AGENDA



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Thursday, January 28, 2010 10:53 AM

Will Canadians want to 'throw the bums out' in a spring election?

Jane Taber

The latest seat projections from EKOS Research show Stephen Harper's reigning Tories as the Official Opposition with Michael Ignatieff's Liberals sitting on the government bench in the House of Commons.

Pollster Frank Graves calls this shift "eye-popping." And he believes "aversion to an election has declined significantly."

"There is a lot of throw-the-bums-out sentiment starting to percolate out there," he says.

Plugging his [new poll numbers](#) into his seat projection model, Mr. Graves has the Liberals winning 119 compared to 110 for the Tories if an election were held today. The NDP would win 30 seats, the Bloc could garner 46 and Elizabeth May's Green Party would win one seat – in Ontario – with two more going to "other" parties or independents, according to Mr. Graves' projection.

Last week, he had the Tories with 117 seats compared to 114 for the Liberals. The Tories now have 145 seats to 77 for the Liberals in the 308 seat House of Commons.

Mr. Graves says this could well open the door to a spring election, based on the Conservative budget that is to be delivered March 4.

"It is eye-popping to note that the CPC have gone from a seat projecting in the fall which pegged them at 177 to 110 and opposition status," he says. "This is by no means a prediction of any future election, but it is a whiplash-like shift in any hypothetical parliament based on today's voter preferences."

As to a spring election, Mr. Graves believes the game may have changed.

Last fall, Canadians were dead set against a trip to the ballot box. Indeed, the Liberal vow to take down the government last fall cost them dearly in the polls.

Mr. Graves now says the opposition parties have three months to develop and build upon "this anti-democratic theme" sparked by Mr. Harper's decision to prorogue Parliament. At the same time, he says the opposition needs to

"construct a plausible narrative of what would be better and different if the government were actually displaced."

"That's what is missing right now," he says, adding that the possibility of doing that "has now come into focus" for the Liberals.

Interestingly, a new [Angus Reid poll](#) also released today shows that 57 per cent of Canadians believe a federal election this year is "very likely" or "moderately likely". It shows, too, that 61 per cent of Canadians disagree with the government's decision to prorogue.

Although recent data, including today's EKOS poll, shows the Liberals and Conservatives tied in support nationally, Angus Reid has the Tories four points ahead – 33 per cent for the Conservatives compared to 29 per cent for the Liberals. The NDP are at 19; the Bloc is showing 10 per cent support and the Green Party is at seven per cent.

The online survey of 1,005 Canadian adults was conducted between Jan. 25 and Jan. 26.

(Photo: Deddeda Stemler for The Globe and Mail)

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