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Poll gives PCs 62%; Liberals only 23%

TORONTO (CP) – The federal Progressive Conservative party has jumped to a record 62 per cent in popular support while the Liberals have plunged to an all-time low, a Gallup poll released today indicates.

The poll said the Conservatives, under new leader Brian Mulroney, had risen 12 percentage points from the 50-per-cent support they received in a similar poll last month. The Liberals were the choice of 23 per cent of decided voters polled, while the NDP had support from 14 per cent.

With the latest result, the Conservatives topped the previous record showing of 60 per cent in the 10-year-old history of the monthly Gallup poll. That mark was set in July, 1958, in the aftermath of John Diefenbaker’s sweeping election victory that March.

The latest poll, taken only days after Mulroney won an Aug. 29 byelection in the Nova Scotia riding of Central Nova and before he entered the Commons, was based on in-home interviews with 1,039 eligible voters.

Such polls are generally considered accurate plus or minus four percentage points 19 out of 20 times, meaning Conservative support could be as high as 66 per cent or as low as 58 per cent and Liberal support as high as 27 per cent or as low as 19 per cent.

The results would be affected further with a shift either way in the number of undecided voters polled.

Gallup says the number of undecided respondents increased by eight percentage points to 34 per cent.

"The Gallup shows a massive repudiation of the Liberal party," Mulroney said in an interview.

"It is a historic situation. It shows growing confidence in the Conservatives in all areas of the country and in all linguistic groups and it is an urgent appeal for a new government."

So massive was the surge, the Conservatives tied the Liberals among those polled in Quebec, where they won only 12 per cent of the popular vote in the 1980 federal election.

The Conservatives held a 2-to-1 margin over the Liberals in Ontario and were supported by two of every three of those polled in the West.

But Senator Keith Davey, a senior Trudeau advisor, said he does not believe the Gallup results.

"It is not what our poll is showing," he said, adding the Conservatives "have nowhere to go but down."

The article EM8303 reprinted above is used in Figure 2.12 of the STAT 332 Course Materials.

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