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# NDP buoyed by jump in support

Liberal slip sparked a gain for Layton

Green party also sees boost in polls

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OTTAWA BUREAU

OTTAWA—Federal New Democrats have been buoyed by a poll that shows they're gaining support at the expense of the scandal-plagued Liberals.

Voter support for the NDP is 20.5 per cent, up five points from last June's election, in the wake of damning allegations from the Gomery inquiry last week.

But as the NDP woos disenchanted Liberals, party leader Jack Layton should keep an eye on his rear-view mirror. The Green party got a boost as well — it's at 5 per cent nationwide, according to a *Toronto Star* poll conducted by EKOS Research — and an influx of cash thanks to new election financing rules.

And in the battle for environmentally conscious voters, each party is trying to paint itself as the greenest.

Layton says the NDP Kyoto strategy, unveiled in January, has won acclaim from environmental groups, and he touts his own long record on the issue.

"I've been working on environment issues for 20 years," said the former Toronto councillor.

But Tom Manley, deputy leader of the Green party, says the NDP environmental plan falls short.

"They don't have a solution to sustainability any more than the Liberals do," Manley said in an interview.

The Green party is looking to woo support from across the political spectrum but the NDP in particular feels the pressure, he said. "If we're going to take a couple of points from them, that hurts," he said.

Manley said new political financing has made a "world of difference" for the growing party. Under election financing laws, each political party gets \$1.75 for every vote it got in the last election, a move that will pump about \$1 million into the Green party coffers this year.

The new cash, up dramatically from the one-time annual budget of \$35,000, has allowed the party to keep a staff on a payroll instead of having to close up shop between elections, he said.

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Still, despite the Green party's optimism, it's the NDP that has been capitalizing on Liberal misfortunes and is now poised to do "surprisingly well," said EKOS president Frank Graves.

"They are up slightly since February, but more importantly, they now lead as the second-choice party for those whose voting intention may change."

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