

## **BC ANGUS REID POLL - December 17, 1997**

Following are top-line results for the latest BC Angus Reid Poll on BC's political scene. The poll was conducted between December 1st and 12th, 1997 among a representative cross-section of 600 British Columbians. With a sample of this size, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the numbers are within  $\pm 4.0$  percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult BC population been polled.

### **PROVINCIAL POLITICS**

In this Winter's BC Angus Reid quarterly poll, we find a significant shift in political party preferences, with the governing New Democrats dropping out of public favour and the provincial Liberals regaining most of the ground they have lost over the past year. Meanwhile, support for the BC Reform party continues to fall, almost in unison with Liberal gains. The PDA needle has not really moved this quarter, but the Green Party has more than doubled its support in the province.

British Columbians are much less enamoured with the performance of Premier Glen Clark this quarter, while their views of the job Gordon Campbell has been doing as Opposition Leader have improved dramatically. Still, there is a good number of people in the province who have reservations about Campbell's performance. Meanwhile, PDA leader, Gordon Wilson, continues to outshine his two rivals.

This quarter's poll indicates the BC population is revisiting the positive evaluations given the NDP government over the past six months. There is also a strong hint in poll findings that the Liberals are breathing new life into their attempts to win support away from BC Reform, whose support is falling like a stone. However, despite a BC public which is souring on the New Democrats and Premier Clark, there is some indication that the public is not yet fully embracing the Opposition Liberals and its leader. Indeed, as we move into 1998, both parties have challenges to build or rebuild confidence with the BC public; the inconsistency in their support over the past year indicates that no one party is "running away with the show" as far as establishing a lasting impression on British Columbians.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Party Support

The BC Liberal party has rebounded to gain a commanding lead atop the BC public opinion polls of party preference in the province. With this new movement, the party has opened a considerable gap between itself and the governing New Democrats, whose support has suffered a significant drop over the past 3 months. Moreover, Liberal support is more than double its right of centre rival, the BC Reform party.

- Currently, 43 percent of decided voters say they would vote Liberal in a provincial election. The NDP is much farther behind at 24 percent of the decided vote. Support for BC Reform is even lower at 18 percent. Other parties with definite support in public include the PDA at 8 percent, and the Green party at 5 percent. (TABLE 1)
- Fifteen percent of people in the province currently expresses no preference for any of the provincial parties.
- This quarter's BC Reid poll finds the provincial Liberals regaining much of the ground they lost over the past year, all over the fall months. Support for the party has jumped a dramatic 10 percentage points, from 33 percent in September of this year to the current 43 percent level.

Meanwhile, the governing New Democrats find themselves returning to their year low support established in the spring; at 24 percent, party support has dropped a full 6 percentage points since our September sounding.

BC Reform's freefall in public opinion continues this quarter; the party has lost another 6 percentage points, dropping to 18 percent of decided support, its lowest level since March of this year.

Gordon Wilson's Progressive Democratic Alliance remains popular among 8 percent of decided voters, an insignificant 1 percent drop since September.

The Green party is showing some strength among decided voters; its support has jumped 3 percentage points over the past three months, from 2 to 5 percent.

## Party Leaders

On the question of political leadership, Opposition Leader Gordon Campbell has improved his standing with British Columbians over the past few months, while Premier Glen Clark's ratings have moved in the opposite direction. Gordon Wilson continues to outdistance both Clark and Campbell, remaining the most popular political leader in the province. BC Reform party Wilf Hanni is still a relatively unknown player on the provincial political scene.

- Currently, 47 percent of British Columbians approve of Campbell's performance as Opposition Leader. This is up a significant 11 percentage points since September, and puts the Liberal leader back to levels attained earlier in the spring of this year. Still, almost as many British Columbians (45%) disapprove of the job Campbell is doing as Opposition Leader. While this disapproval rating is down significantly from the 54 percent who gave him negative reviews just three months ago, it continues to indicate there is a lack of consensus among British Columbians about his performance on the Opposition benches. (TABLE 2)

Premier Glen Clark's approval rating has dropped to its lowest level since the spring of this year. At 35 percent this quarter, the Premier's rating fallen off a significant 7 percentage points, halting the momentum he has been building for much of 1997. Meanwhile, a full 62 percent of British Columbians polled this December say they disapprove of the job Clark is doing as Premier, which is a full 7 points up from last quarter.

Gordon Wilson retains his top approval rating, with over half (52%) of British Columbians approving of the job he is doing as PDA leader; this is up 4 points since our September sounding of public opinion. His disapproval rating has fallen significantly - by 6 points - to only 22 percent.

Newly anointed BC Reform party leader, Wilf Hanni, is very much unknown on the provincial political stage; 40 percent of those surveyed were unable to give an opinion of his performance as Reform leader. However, among the remaining 60 percent who did express a view, 42 percent disapprove of the job he is doing, while less than half as many say they approve of his performance (18%).

## **FEDERAL POLITICS**

The federal Liberal party has improved its standing atop the federal political scene in British Columbia, while the Reform party continues to struggle to maintain the level of support it won in the province during the last election campaign. British Columbians remain quite satisfied with the job the Chrétien government is doing governing the country. Meanwhile, despite being less likely to vote Reform than on election day, most people in the province are bullish about how the Reform party is performing as the Official Opposition in Ottawa.

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

### **Federal Voting Intentions**

- Currently 46 percent of decided voters in BC say they would vote Liberal in a federal election, compared to only 28 percent who would choose the Reform party. The NDP (16%), Progressive Conservatives (6%), and Green party (4%) remain well back. (TABLE 3)

The federal Liberals' popularity has jumped another full 6 percentage points over the fall months, moving from 40 percent in September to the current 46 percent standing. Overall, Liberal support has increased 12 percentage points since its June 1997 election victory.

Reform party support, meanwhile, has dropped 7 points in the polls, from 35 percent in September, to its current 28 percent standing. This means Reform has seen its support among the BC public fall a full 13 percentage points since the June election.

Standings for both the NDP and PC party have not changed significantly since last quarter.

Overall, 8 percent of British Columbians are currently undecided as to which federal party they would support.

## **Evaluation of Liberal and Reform Party Performance**

- British Columbians continue to give the governing Liberal party a strong vote of confidence for the way they are governing the country; 66 percent approve of the job they are doing, compared to 31 percent who disapprove. The Liberals' approval rating has inched up 3 percentage points since September, while the number of people more critical of the job the party is doing has moved downward by the same proportion. (TABLE 4)

Contentment with the Liberals does not appear to be at the expense of the Reform party. A full 58 percent of people surveyed in the province approve of how the party is performing as the Official Opposition in Parliament. Far fewer, only 33 percent, disapprove. Both measures remain virtually unchanged since September.

TABLE 1

<b>PROVINCIAL PARTY PREFERENCE (Decided Voters Only)</b>								
Party	Election 1996	June 1996	Sept. 1996	Dec. 1996	March 1997	June 1997	Sept 1997	Dec 1997
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
NDP	39	42	37	29	24	27	30	24
Liberal	42	39	44	52	44	34	33	43
BC Reform	9	9	12	11	18	28	24	18
PDA	6	6	4	3	9	6	9	8
Green	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	5
Other	4	3	3	4	2	2	2	1
Undecided*	-	13	19	23	19	16	15	15
Question: Thinking of how you feel right now, which of the following parties' candidate would you be most likely to support if a provincial election were held here in B.C. tomorrow? Would it be (READ PARTY):  * Not included in the party support numbers, which explains why the total is greater than 100%								

TABLE 2

PROVINCIAL LEADER PERFORMANCE RATINGS				
Rating (Base=600)	Clark	Campbell	Hanni	Wilson
	%	%	%	%
<b>Approve</b>				
December 1997	35	47	18	52
September 1997	42	36	- *	48
June 1997	39	44	- *	45
March 1997	30	48	- *	48
December 1996	32	53	- *	46
September 1996	41	51	- *	49
<b>Disapprove</b>				
December 1997	62	45	26	22
September 1997	55	54	- *	28
June 1997	56	44	- *	26
March 1997	66	44	36	27
December 1996	66	40	42	31
September 1996	53	41	39	26
Question: Thinking of (PARTY LEADER), would you say you generally approve or disapprove of the way he has performed as (POSITION)?				
* Wilf Hanni only became leader of BC Reform in August of 1997.				

TABLE 3

<b>FEDERAL PARTY PREFERENCE (Decided Voters Only)</b>				
Party	Election 1997	June 1997	Sept 1997	Dec 1997
	%	%	%	%
Liberal	28	34	40	46
Reform	41	41	35	28
NDP	17	16	17	16
PC	6	6	6	6
Green	N/A	2	2	4
Other	4	1	-	1
Undecided*	-	7	9	8
Question: Thinking of how you feel right now, if a federal election were held tomorrow, which of the following parties' candidates would you be most likely to support? Would it be (READ PARTY)?  * Not included in the party support numbers, which explains why the total is greater than 100% .				

TABLE 4

<b>PERFORMANCE RATING OFFEDERAL LIBERAL GOVERNMENT AND REFORM OPPOSITION</b>		
	Liberal Government	Reform Opposition
<b>Approve</b>		
December 1997	66	58
September 1997	63	57
<b>Disapprove</b>		
December 1997	31	33
September 1997	34	34



Question: From what you may have read, seen, or heard since the federal election held on June 2 of this year, do you generally approve or disapprove of the job the (Liberal government is doing governing the country; Reform party is doing as the Official Opposition)?