



BC Angus Reid Poll

BC Politics After Glen Clark Resignation

GORDON CAMPBELL AND THE LIBERALS STILL HOLD COMMANDING LEAD IN THE POLLS REGARDLESS OF WHO LEADS THE NDP

NARROW WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY OPENS FOR BC NDP NOW THAT CLARK HAS STEPPED DOWN

UJJAL DOSANJH AND GORDON WILSON LEAD THE RACE TO SUCCEED GLEN CLARK AS BC PREMIER; NEW LEADER WOULD GIVE BOOST TO PARTY FORTUNES

The BC Angus Reid poll was conducted August 24th, 1999 among a representative cross-section of 601 British Columbians. The findings were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's age/gender composition reflects that of the actual BC population according to 1996 Census data. With a sample of this size, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the numbers are within ± 4.1 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult BC population been polled.

BC POLITICS AFTER CLARK RESIGNATION

In the immediate aftermath of Glen Clark stepping down as Premier of BC, the province's political scene appears to have changed very little, with the front running Liberals holding a commanding lead in the party race. However, there are indications that with Clark no longer as party leader, there is renewed interest in the NDP from across the political spectrum, notably among those who have voted for the party in the past. This suggests the NDP has an opportunity to rebuild support it has lost among the BC public over the past 3 years.

When it comes to who might succeed Glen Clark as party leader and Premier, there is a close 2-way race developing between Attorney-General, Ujjal Dosanjh, and Finance Minister, Gordon Wilson. Former Finance Minister, Joy MacPhail, is also showing some strength, and could be a kingmaker should she decide to enter the contest. The leadership race is particularly tight among New Democrats, suggesting the leadership battle will be anything but a coronation.

Regardless of who becomes NDP leader and Premier, the BC public still throws strong support behind Gordon Campbell and the Liberals. Indeed, while each of the potential replacements for Clark do give the party a boost in popularity, the BC Liberals still walk away with majority support from the people of BC.

British Columbians Feel BC Will Be Better Off Now That Clark is Gone

- ◆ Almost three-quarters of British Columbians – 73 percent – believe BC will be better off now that Glen Clark has resigned as Premier. A small proportion of the public (6%) say we will be worse off in this province, while 18 percent feel Clark's resignation will make no difference.
- ◆ Politically, while it is to be expected that Liberals (84%) and BC Reformers (79%) would be glad to see Clark out of the picture, a majority of NDP supporters (53%) also express some optimism about the future now that Clark is gone.
- ◆ This same sentiment is prevalent across all regional and socio-demographic segments of the population, but is particularly strong with: Lower Mainland residents (77%); higher income earners (78%). Interestingly, fully 75 percent of union members feel better about the future outlook for the province now that Clark is gone, 2 points *higher* than non-union members (73%).

Party Race Remains Unchanged, But Number of Undecided Voters Is Up

- ◆ The NDP does not appear to have benefited from any boost in popular support in the aftermath of the Clark resignation. A solid majority of BC's decided voters – fully 56 percent – continue to say they would vote for the provincial Liberal party in a provincial election. The Liberals remain well ahead of both the NDP (16%) and BC Reform (17%) parties. PDA (2%) and BC Green party (8%) supporters form a third more marginal block of voters in the province.
- ◆ 23 percent of people in BC currently express no preference for any of the provincial parties. Of these, 16 percent say they are undecided.
- ◆ Support for the Liberals has dropped a marginal 2 percentage points since June, moving from 58 percent to the current 56 percent level. NDP support remains unchanged at 16 percent. BC Reform's standing in public opinion has gone up 3 points since the summer (14% to 17%).
- ◆ The number of people unable or unwilling to commit themselves to one of the provincial parties has gone up a significant 5 percentage points, from 18 to 23 percent in the past 3 months. This is largely due to a 7 point jump in the number of people who say they are undecided (9% to 16%).

BC Public Has Renewed Interest In NDP Now That Glen Clark Has Stepped Down, But Majority Would Never Support Party

- ◆ A quarter of British Columbians – 23 percent – say they are now *more likely* to support the NDP in a provincial election now that Glen Clark has resigned. Sixteen percent say it makes no difference to them, while another 20 percent say they would never vote for the party anyway.
- ◆ Politically, it would appear that Clark's resignation has generated renewed interest in the party from all corners of the political spectrum. While 54 percent of current NDP supporters say they are now more likely to vote for the party, which is to be expected, we also find 15 percent of Liberals and 20 percent of BC Reform supporters willing to take a second look at the NDP. And, 36 percent of people currently with other parties are now more likely to vote NDP, as are 18 percent of those currently undecided.
- ◆ Among the various population segments, renewed interest in the NDP is strongest among: Vancouver/Burnaby (29%) and Island (28%) residents; men (26%); young (26%) and middle-aged (28%) British Columbians; and union members (29%).

- ◆ When asked more broadly their likelihood of voting for the NDP in the next provincial election, a full 46 percent of the BC public say they would at least consider voting for the party. This includes a small core – 8 percent – who say they would vote NDP regardless of who leads the party, and over a third (37%) who might consider voting for the party depending on who the new leader is and what their policies are.
- ◆ Importantly, a majority of the BC public – 53 percent – would never support the NDP, regardless of who is leading the party. This is consistent with a September 1998 poll which found that 49 percent of British Columbians saying they would never vote NDP.
- ◆ Politically, it is quite significant that 57 percent of British Columbians who currently do not express a preference for any political party (23% of BC public), would consider voting for the NDP. Moreover, over a quarter of current Liberal (27%) and BC Reform (29%) party supporters say they would consider voting for the NDP in a provincial election.
- ◆ Among those most likely to consider voting for the NDP, we find more people in the following regional and socio-demographic groups: Vancouver/Burnaby residents (57%); young (51%) and middle-aged (55%) British Columbians; people living in union households (62%).

Dosanjh and Wilson In Front In Bid To Replace Clark; BC New Democrats Leaning Toward Wilson While BC Public Favours Dosanjh

- ◆ In considering who should replace Glen Clark, Finance Minister, Gordon Wilson, and Attorney-General, Ujjal Dosanjh, are the clear front runners as the gate to the leadership race track opens. Fully 47 percent of British Columbians pick Dosanjh as their first or second choice to replace Clark, while 39 percent choose Wilson. A third (33%) pick former Finance Minister, Joy MacPhail, while a quarter look to federal MP, Nelson Riis (24%).
- ◆ BC New Democrats, however, are leaning more towards supporting Gordon Wilson; 52 percent of party supporters choose Wilson as their first or second choice; a full 37 percent pick him first over all others. Meanwhile, 47 percent of NDP supporters would prefer to see Ujjal Dosanjh as their new leader (28% first choice).

New NDP Leader Would Give Party A Boost In Popularity, But Campbell Liberals Remain Well In Front Regardless Of Who Leads NDP

- ◆ Gordon Campbell and the BC Liberals retain majority support among the BC public regardless of who wins the NDP leadership race. Still, the NDP would improve its current standing among British Columbians from the current 16 percent to just over a quarter of decided voters with either Gordon Wilson (27%) or Ujjal Dosanjh (26%) as their new leader. A majority of decided British Columbians – 53 percent – would support the provincial Liberals in either of these two scenarios.
- ◆ Joy MacPhail (20%) and Nelson Riis (20%) would have less of an impact on party fortunes. In both cases, 57 percent of decided voters would support the Gordon Campbell Liberals.

For further information contact:

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TABLE 1

PROVINCIAL PARTY PREFERENCE (Decided Voters Only)															
Party	May 1996	June 1996	Sept 1996	Dec 1996	Mar 1997	June 1997	Sept 1997	Dec 1997	Mar 1998	June 1998	Sept 1998	Dec 1998	Mar 1999	June 1999	Aug 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
NDP	39	42	37	29	24	27	30	24	20	23	18	18	18	16	16
Liberal	42	39	44	52	44	34	33	43	47	42	46	46	52	58	56
BC Reform	9	9	12	11	18	28	24	18	17	20	20	18	18	14	17
PDA	6	6	4	3	9	6	9	8	9	8	10	10	4	3	2
Green	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	5	5	6	5	5	6	6	8
Other	4	3	3	4	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	1
Undec'd*	-	13	19	23	19	16	15	15	17	17	18	15	19	18	23

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 BC tomorrow? Would it be (READ PARTY):

** Not included in the party support numbers, which explains why the total is greater than 100%*

TABLE 2

LIKELIHOOD OF VOTING NDP	
	%
Regardless of who leads the party, I'll probably still vote NDP in the next provincial election	8
Depending on who the new leader is and what their policies are, I might consider voting NDP	37
Regardless of who leads the party, I would never consider voting NDP in the next provincial election	53
<i>Question: And, which one of the following views best describes your current views of the NDP here in BC?</i>	

TABLE 3

LEADERSHIP PREFERENCE				
	Overall		New Democrats	
	First Choice	First & Second Choices	First Choice	First & Second Choices
	%	%	%	%
Ujjal Dosanjh	31	47	28	47
Gordon Wilson	23	39	37	52
Joy MacPhail	14	33	11	43
Nelson Riis	10	24	10	24
<i>Question: As you are likely aware, the NDP is expected to choose a new leader sometime this fall, the new leader will become Premier of BC. Of the following people, who would be your first choice as new NDP leader and Premier?</i>				
<i>And, who would be your second choice?</i>				

TABLE 4

PARTY SUPPORT UNDER DIFFERENT NDP LEADERSHIP SCENARIOS (Decided Voters Only)					
	NDP today	NDP under Ujjal Dosanjh	NDP under Gordon Wilson	NDP under Joy MacPhail	NDP under Nelson Riis
	%	%	%	%	%
NDP	16	26	27	20	20
Liberal	56	53	53	57	57
BC Reform	17	17	15	17	17
Other	11	7	5	6	6
Undecided*	23	17	17	19	18
<i>Question: If a provincial election were held here in BC tomorrow, and you were voting for candidates under the following party headings, which one would you be most likely to vote for?</i>					
<i>* Not included in the party support numbers, which explains why the total is greater than 100%</i>					