
BC POLITICAL SCENE DECEMBER 1999

- SOLID MAJORITY OF DECIDED BC VOTERS (55%) BACK PROVINCIAL LIBERALS; NDP (17%) AND BC REFORM (18%) TRAIL WELL BACK –**
 - BC PUBLIC MORE CRITICAL OF PREMIER MILLER – 42% DISAPPROVE OF HIS PERFORMANCE AFTER 3 MONTHS IN POWER, UP 9 POINTS –**
 - GORDON CAMPBELL STILL TOPS ALL PARTY LEADERS IN APPROVAL RATINGS (50%) -**
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This BC Angus Reid Group poll is based on a provincial telephone survey conducted between Dec 1st and Dec 12th, 1999 among a representative cross-section of 600 British Columbian adults. These data are statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional, age and sex composition reflects that of the actual BC according to 1996 Census data.

With a provincial sample of 600, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the overall results are within ± 4.0 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult BC population been polled. The margin of error will be larger for other sub-groupings of the survey population.

BC POLITICAL SCENE

This quarter's BC Angus Reid poll finds very little change in the provincial political scene. The Opposition Liberals continue to outdistance all other parties at the top of the polls, with a commanding 38-point lead over the governing New Democrats. And, in the aftermath of its by-election defeat, BC Reform has managed to hold on to its second place spot, albeit way behind the Liberals.

On the leadership front, British Columbians appear to have lost some patience with Premier Dan Miller, expressing a much higher degree of dissatisfaction with his performance this quarter than in the first few weeks after he took over from Glen Clark. BC Liberal leader, Gordon Campbell, meanwhile, has maintained his high standing among the BC population. BC Reform leader, Bill Vander Zalm continues to trail both other party leaders.

BC LIBERALS WELL AHEAD OF ALL OTHER PARTIES (55%), NDP (17%) AND BC REFORM (18%) REMAIN WELL BACK

Currently, a solid majority of BC's decided voters – fully 55% – say they would vote Liberal in a provincial election. The Liberals continue to outdistance both the NDP (17%) and the BC Reform party (18%) by a wide margin, a commanding 20-point gap over the combined support for these two parties. The PDA (2%) and BC Green (8%) parties account for 1-in-10 decided BC voters.

Overall, 18% of people in BC currently express no preference for any of the provincial parties. Of these, only 3% say they are undecided.

Support for the Liberals has remained virtually the same over the summer months, dropping a statistically insignificant 2 percentage points since last September's Angus Reid poll. Meanwhile, NDP support has inched upwards since last quarter, from 15 to 17 percent, though it is the first positive movement for the party in almost 2 years. BC Reform's standing

in public opinion has also moved up marginally, moving from 16% to 18% this quarter. The number of people unable or unwilling to commit themselves to one of the provincial parties has decreased 3 points since June of this year.

In the last quarter, we noticed some movement within the NDP core to return to the fold. This appears to have not continued over the fall months; currently only 38 percent of those who voted NDP in the 1996 provincial election say they would vote for the party in a provincial election, virtually the same number as our September poll (37%).

By comparison, 26 percent of 1996 New Democrats say they would vote for the provincial Liberal party; this is up a significant 8 points since September, indicating there may be some solidifying of the non-NDP vote in BC within the Liberal party. A full 11 percent are now with the Green party, while another 9 percent say they would vote BC Reform. And, 17 percent remain uncommitted at the present time.

Results for regional and socio-demographic groupings are as follows:

- ◆ The BC Liberals continue to obtain strong support across all major regions in the province, but are particularly strong in the suburban Lower Mainland (60%). The party is weakest right now on Vancouver Island where it draws 44 percent of popular support, though it is still well ahead of the New Democrats on the Island (26%).
- ◆ To contrast, NDP support is quite low in all regions relative to the Liberals. The party enjoys much stronger support, however, on Vancouver Island (26%) and in Vancouver/Burnaby (21%) than elsewhere in the province where only one-in-ten people are in the NDP camp.
- ◆ As for BC Reform, its strongest support surfaces among British Columbians who live in the suburban areas outside Vancouver proper (26%), but also among people who live outside of the southwestern corner of the province (23%).

BC PUBLIC MORE CRITICAL OF PREMIER MILLER; MEANWHILE HALF THE BC POPULATION APPROVES OF GORDON CAMPBELL'S PERFORMANCE AS OPPOSITION LEADER, CONTINUING A YEAR-LONG TREND

BC Liberal leader, Gordon Campbell, continues to lead all other party leaders in approval ratings. With 50% of British Columbians saying they approve of the job he is doing as provincial Opposition leader, Campbell is 10 points ahead of new NDP Premier, Dan Miller (40%), and 19 points ahead of acting BC Reform leader, Bill Vander Zalm (31%).

Campbell's approval rating remains virtually unchanged since September (49%) while more people now approve of Premier Miller than was the case three months ago (40% vs. 36%). Meanwhile, about the same number of British Columbians approve of Vander Zalm's performance as BC Reform leader as was the case in September (31% vs. 32%)

Slightly fewer British Columbians disapprove of Gordon Campbell's performance this quarter (43% vs. 45% in September); while only a marginal shift, this is the lowest level of disapproval for Campbell in over a year. By comparison, the BC public is much more disappointed with the job Premier Dan Miller is currently doing than was the case 3 months ago; 42 percent now disapprove of his performance compared to only 33 percent in September. There has been no change in the 55 percent of British Columbians who disapprove of Bill Vander Zalm in his role as leader of the BC Reform party.

Leader evaluations among regional and socio-demographic groupings reveal the following:

- ◆ BC Opposition leader, Gordon Campbell, enjoys solid approval ratings across all regions of the province, and from all population segments, with slightly higher numbers among Vancouver/Burnaby residents, men, younger British Columbians, university graduates, and those with higher household incomes.
- ◆ Premier Miller's performance is rated fairly evenly across all regional and socio-demographic groups, with very little variation.

- ◆ Bill Vander Zalm is most positively evaluated by people living in suburban Vancouver, men, and people with less formal education.

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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	Sept 1999	Dec 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
NDP	39	42	37	29	24	27	30	24	20	23	18	18	18	16	16	15	17
Liberal	42	39	44	52	44	34	33	43	47	42	46	46	52	58	56	57	55
BC Reform	9	9	12	11	18	28	24	18	17	20	20	18	18	14	17	16	18
PDA	6	6	4	3	9	6	9	8	9	8	10	10	4	3	2	2	2
Green	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	5	5	6	5	5	6	6	8	7	8
Other	4	3	3	4	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	-
Undec'd*	-	13	19	23	19	16	15	15	17	17	18	15	19	18	23	21	18
<i>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):</i>																	
<i>* Not included in the party support numbers, which explains why the total is greater than 100%</i>																	

TABLE 2

PROVINCIAL LEADER PERFORMANCE RATINGS			
Rating (Base=600)	Miller	Campbell	Vander Zalm
	%	%	%
Approve			
December 1999	40	50	31
September 1999	36***	49	32
June 1999	19	50	27
March 1999	21	49	31
December 1998	27	46	34
September 1998	31	49	31*
June 1998	34	43	-
March 1998	32	44	18*
December 1997	35	47	18*
September 1997	42	36	_*
June 1997	39	44	_*
March 1997	30	48	_*
December 1996	32	53	_*
September 1996	41	51	_*
Disapprove			
December 1999	42	43	55
September 1999	33	45	55
June 1999	79	44	52
March 1999	77	44	49
December 1998	70	47	46
September 1998	66	42	48
June 1998	63	46	-
March 1998	66	47	38*
December 1997	62	45	26*
September 1997	55	54	_*
June 1997	56	44	_*
March 1997	66	44	_*
December 1996	66	40	_*
September 1996	53	41	_*
<p>Question: Thinking of (PARTY LEADER), would you say you generally approve or disapprove of the way he has performed as (POSITION)?</p> <p>* Wilf Hanni was leader of BC Reform in August of 1997.</p> <p>** Bill Vander Zalm took over as Reform leader in May of 1998.</p> <p>*** Dan Miller took over as Premier at the end of August 1999.</p>			