

# **BC POLITICAL SCENE**

## **BC REID EXPRESS POLL**

**MARCH, 2001**

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PROVINCIAL ELECTION; 63% SUPPORT THE PARTY,  
COMPARED TO 20% FOR NDP***

***CAMPBELL TAKES TOP SPOT IN LEADER APPROVAL  
RATINGS FROM DOSANJH (54% VS. 49%)***

***BC PUBLIC MUCH MORE LIKELY TO SEE CAMPBELL (49%)  
AS BEST PREMIER THAN DOSANJH (37%)***



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*This BC Ipsos-Reid poll is based on the BC Reid Express provincial omnibus telephone survey conducted between March 5th and 12th, 2001 among a representative cross-section of 800 British Columbian adults. These data are statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional, age and sex composition reflects that of the actual BC population according to 1996 Census data. With a provincial sample of 800, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the overall results are within +3.5 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.*

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### **MARCH 2001**

**(Vancouver, BC)** – The most recent Ipsos-Reid BC Reid Express poll on BC's political scene shows the provincial Liberals poised to win big in the upcoming election campaign. At 63% popular support, the Liberals have experienced a significant jump in support, placing them well ahead of all other parties. With the governing New Democrats at 20%, the party is still struggling to establish positive momentum. The newly minted Unity BC party has yet to appear on the public's radar screen. "The increase in support for the Liberals shows the party has successfully attracted the lion's share of supporters from the now defunct BC Reform party. It suggests further that Gordon Campbell and his Liberals have been successful in building the broad-based coalition in BC needed to win power." observes Daniel Savas, Senior Vice-President in Ipsos-Reid's Vancouver office. "However, it should be noted that the current level of support for the NDP is well below what the party historically obtains in a provincial election, so we should expect some increase in the party's numbers as the election campaign unfolds. Right now, we just don't know how much of the NDP core vote will return."

The BC public's evaluation of party leaders brings more good news for the Liberals. It shows that Gordon Campbell has been successful in winning the hearts of the BC population; he's reached new highs in public approval ratings, and is the clear favourite to be the Premier of the province. By comparison, Ujjal Dosanjh's star appears to be shining less brightly now that he's had a year in the Premier's chair. While he's still much more popular than his party, British Columbians are increasingly critical of the job he's doing. "Clearly, the downturn in public support for Premier Dosanjh will not help the NDP cause as it prepares for the

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upcoming election,” comments Mr. Savas. “By comparison, the BC population seems increasingly more comfortable with the Liberal leader, and is ready to embrace him and his party.”

## ***BC LIBERALS TAKE COMMANDING LEAD INTO PROVINCIAL ELECTION; 63% SUPPORT THE PARTY, COMPARED TO 20% FOR NDP***

Currently, 63 percent of BC’s decided and leaning voters say they would vote Liberal in a provincial election. The Liberals hold a commanding lead over the governing NDP (20%) as the province prepares for an election call in the next few weeks. Far fewer people support other parties – Unity BC (7%), BC Green party (7%), and others (3%) – though they do account for 17 percent of decided and leaning BC voters. Overall, 12% of people in BC currently express no preference for any of the provincial parties, including 6% who are undecided.

Support for the provincial Liberals has leapt up a statistically significant 12 points since our December 2000 poll (51% to 63%). Meanwhile, NDP support has moved up 3 points during the same period (from 17% to 20%). As the new entrant to BC’s provincial political scene, Unity BC has managed to pick up much less support than its right-of-centre predecessor, BC Reform. At 7 percent, Unity BC stands a full 11 points lower in the party standings than BC Reform in December (18%). The number of people in the province who are supporting the BC Green party has moved down slightly from 9 to 7 percent. The number of British Columbians who are uncommitted in their voting preference has remained constant over the past 3 months (11% in December to 12% in March).

Over the last quarter, we notice a significant increase in the number of former NDP voters prepared to vote again for the party. Currently, 51 percent of those who voted NDP in 1996 say they would vote for the party in a provincial election; this is up 13 points since December when 38 percent said they were prepared to vote NDP.

Meanwhile, 32 percent of 1996 New Democrats would now vote for the provincial Liberal party, up 7 points from December; 5 percent are with the BC Green party (-8), and 9 percent remain uncommitted (-9). To contrast, 91 percent of 1996 Liberals are still with the party in 2001. The party also captures 74 percent of 1996 BC Reform party supporters. Only 17 percent of Reformers currently support Unity BC.

Party preference results for regional and socio-demographic groupings are as follows:

- ◆ The BC Liberals obtain strong support across all major regions in the province, but are particularly strong in the Lower Mainland (66% in suburban communities, 63% in Vancouver/Burnaby). The party is slightly weaker in the Interior (61%), but still holds a strong lead over the NDP (19%) and Unity BC (10%).
- ◆ BC Liberal support is also more solid among: upper income households (72% vs. 43% low income), and non-union households (69% vs. 54% union). The gender and generational gaps present in previous polls for the Liberals have all but disappeared, with men and women of all ages prepared to vote Liberal in similar numbers.
- ◆ To contrast, NDP support is much lower in all regions relative to the Liberals. And, party support is quite even across the province. NDP support is higher among individuals living in union households (30% vs. 14% non-union), and lower income households (26% vs. 17% upper income)
- ◆ For Unity BC, support is higher in the Interior, and among individuals with less formal education and living in lower income households.

## ***CAMPBELL TAKES TOP SPOT IN APPROVAL RATINGS FROM DOSANJH (54% VS. 49%)***

Opposition Leader, Gordon Campbell, has jumped ahead of NDP Premier, Ujjal Dosanjh, for the top public approval rating. With 54 percent of British Columbians approving of his performance, Campbell has opened a 5-point gap between himself and Dosanjh (49% approval). Chris Delaney, leader of the newly-minted Unity BC party obtains a much lower approval rating (14%), though more than two-thirds of the BC public (68%) knows little of him.

Gordon Campbell's approval rating continues to move upward, this time 3 percentage points, from 51 percent in December to his current 54 percent level. This is close to the highest approval rating Campbell has obtained from British Columbians since he became Liberal party leader more than 7 years ago (he obtained 57% in March of 1995). Meanwhile, 42 percent of people currently disapprove of his performance, which is up 2 points over the past three months.

To contrast, Premier Dosanjh's approval rating has dropped 4 points since our December Ipsos-Reid poll (53% to 49%). This is the third consecutive quarter his approval numbers have experienced a downward trend. Meanwhile, the number of British Columbians who disapprove of the job he is doing as Premier has jumped 8 full points in the past three months (40% to 48%).

Leader approval ratings for regional and socio-demographic groupings are as follows:

- ◆ Gordon Campbell obtains solid approval ratings in all major regions in the province. He leads Dosanjh in all areas except on Vancouver Island where he trails by 6 points (52% vs. 58% for Dosanjh).
- ◆ Campbell's performance ratings are also stronger among men (60% vs. 48% for women), and individuals in non-union households (58% vs. 45% union).
- ◆ Ujjal Dosanjh's performance numbers are strongest on Vancouver Island (58% to 52% for Campbell). He receives greater support among women (54% vs. 43% for men), and individuals living in public sector union households (60% vs. 46% private sector and 46% non-union).

***BC PUBLIC MUCH MORE LIKELY TO SEE CAMPBELL (49%) AS  
BEST PREMIER THAN DOSANJH (37%)***

Gordon Campbell significantly outdistances Ujjal Dosanjh as the party leader British Columbians believe would make the best Premier of BC. While close to half (49%) of those surveyed chose Campbell, only a third (34%) selected Dosanjh. Far fewer picked Unity BC leader Chris Delaney (7%), and 11 percent were undecided.

Campbell's current popularity is a significant shift from 3 months ago when 37% of the BC population said he'd be the best person to sit in the Premier's chair. For Dosanjh, there has been a 3-point drop in the proportion of people in BC who see him as the most suited party leader to be Premier (37% in December to 34% currently).



- 30 -

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