

BC ELECTION 2001

MAJOR ELECTION ISSUES

HEALTH CARE (58%) TOPS THE LIST OF ISSUES BC PUBLIC WANTS TO SEE DEBATED IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN; EDUCATION (21%) TAXES (19%), AND THE ECONOMY (17%) ALSO SEEN AS IMPORTANT

MAJORITY FEELS LIBERALS WOULD OUTPERFORM NDP ON MOST MAJOR POLICY ISSUES; NDP TRAILS BC GREEN PARTY ON THE ENVIRONMENT



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This BC Ipsos-Reid poll is based on a random provincial telephone survey conducted between April 19th and 23rd, 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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(Vancouver, BC) – As the BC election campaign gets under way, the first Ipsos-Reid/VTV/CKNW/Globe & Mail poll shows British Columbians eager to see a wide range of issues debated during the campaign. However, most people (58%) are keen to see health care issues at the forefront of campaign debates, because these are the issues they care the most about. Many also would like candidates and leaders to talk about and debate taxes (19%), education issues (21%), and the economy (17%). Fewer than 1-in-10 single out their desire to see debates on issues dealing with the deficit (8%), honesty and integrity of politicians (5%), job creation (6%), the environment (6%), and aboriginal issues (3%).

When it comes to who they think would do the best job dealing with their top issue, British Columbians feel the BC Liberals are more up to the task than any of the other provincial parties vying for votes in this election. This is particularly true on health care issues, where 59% of those who think this is the most important issue of the election campaign also believe the Liberals would do the best job on this issue, compared to 27% for the NDP. On education, people who feel this is a key issue are as likely to feel the NDP would do the best job as the Liberals (36% vs. 38%, respectively).

“If this election campaign turns on the issues, and which party can best deliver the goods, there is little doubt that Gordon Campbell and the BC Liberals are well-positioned to capture most of the votes at this stage of the campaign,” observes Daniel Savas, Senior Vice-President at Ipsos-Reid. “The strong endorsement of the BC Liberals is a particularly salient reflection of the public’s negative judgement of the New Democrats, and is a clear signal that British Columbians are looking for new direction in the province.”

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HEALTH CARE TOPS THE LIST OF ISSUES BC PUBLIC WANTS TO SEE DEBATED IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN; EDUCATION, TAXES, AND THE ECONOMY ALSO IMPORTANT

While British Columbians expect this election campaign to focus on a wide range of issues, they single out health care as the number one issue they want to see debated during the campaign. Fully 58% of those surveyed mentioned health care as the issue they care the most about and want political candidates to debate. This is nearly three times more than the percentage of people who select other issues they want the campaign to address.

Overall, in a second tier of campaign issues, 1-in-5 British Columbians identify education (21%), tax cuts (19%), and the economy (17%) as important issues they feel should be debated in this election campaign.

Meanwhile, fewer than 1-in-10 people surveyed targeted a group of other issues for debate: deficit (8%), environment (6%), job creation (5%), honesty and integrity of politicians (5%), and aboriginal issues (3%).

These overall views about important election issues are shared across all regions of the province, and by all socio-demographic groups, with some slight variations. For example, health care issues seem to be more important for a greater number of suburban Vancouver residents, and BC women, while Vancouver/Burnaby residents and middle to high income earners are more preoccupied than others with taxes and the economy.

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Among different party supporters, Liberal supporters are much more likely to want candidates debating issues related to taxes, the economy, and the deficit. NDP supporters are more likely to single out education issues. And, a much greater proportion of those currently intending to vote for the BC Green party want candidates to debate environmental issues.

When it comes to which party British Columbians believe would best deal with their most important issue, 64% of those surveyed say they would turn to the BC Liberals. Far fewer – 19% - would turn to the NDP to deliver on the issue they care most about. This trend is consistent across all regions of the province, among all socio-demographic population segments, and all party supporters.

More specifically, when it comes to **health care**, the number one issue the public wants to be debated during this election campaign, fully 59% say the BC Liberals would do the best job dealing with that issue, compared to 27% who pick the NDP.

When it comes to **the economy** and **taxes**, the BC Liberals stand out well ahead of the NDP; 91% of those who care most about the economy say they would turn to the Liberals (vs. only 4% for the NDP); 86% would look to the Liberals to do the best job on taxes (vs. only 3% for the NDP).

However, among those who care most about education, a similar number of British Columbians would turn to the Liberals (38%) as to the NDP (36%).



MAJORITY OF BC PUBLIC FEELS LIBERALS WOULD OUTPERFORM NDP ON MOST MAJOR POLICY ISSUES; NDP TRAILS BC GREEN PARTY ON THE ENVIRONMENT

A majority of British Columbians believes that Gordon Campbell and the BC Liberals would do the best job handling a full range of policy issues from ensuring good health care services to managing the provincial economy to giving people hope for the future. Far fewer British Columbians single out Ujjal Dosanjh and the New Democrats as the party most likely to deliver on these and other issues. Meanwhile, most put Adriane Carr and the BC Green party ahead of the NDP and the Liberals when it comes to protecting BC's environment.

While the BC public expresses more confidence in the Liberal party's ability to handle issues in most policy areas, the Liberals are seen to be particularly competent when it comes to some key "bread and butter" issues. For example, two-thirds or more of people surveyed feel the Liberals would do the best job of all other parties in creating a good climate for business and investment in BC (80%), managing the provincial economy (72%), reducing the provincial debt (71%), and finding the best balance between tax cuts, debt reduction, and social spending (63%). Generally, positive views of the BC Liberals in all of these areas surface more readily among Vancouver/Burnaby residents, men, and higher income earners.

The Liberals are also given strong ratings by the BC public for their ability to do the best job on two top campaign issues: ensuring good health services (56%) and education (53%) are provided to British Columbians. They are well ahead of the NDP on both these issues (29% health care, 32% education). This is true across all regions and population sub-segments.

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And, when it comes to the public's outlook for the future direction of the province, 65% of those surveyed believe it's the Liberals, more than any other party, that can give "British Columbians hope for the future". This is true for people in all areas of the province, and across all population segments.

Policy Issue	Who would do the best job handling this issue?*			
	Gordon Campbell & Liberals (%)	Ujjal Dosanjh & New Democrats (%)	Adriane Carr & BC Green party (%)	Chris Delaney & Unity BC (%)
MAJOR CAMPAIGN ISSUES				
Ensuring good health care services	56	29	6	2
Ensuring good education	53	32	5	3
BREAD & BUTTER ISSUES				
Managing the economy	72	13	4	3
Providing good climate for business & investment	80	9	3	3
Balancing tax cuts, debt reduction, social spending	63	19	5	5
Reducing provincial debt	71	12	3	4
Understanding problems of average British Columbian	50	24	10	6
PUBLIC MOOD ISSUES				
Honest/Trustworthy Government	49	15	15	4
Providing hope for future	65	14	9	5
LAND USE ISSUES				
Negotiating land claims	34	36	11	7
Protecting BC's environment	24	24	46	3
* Note: Horizontal Totals do not add to 100%, because "Don't know" responses are excluded from this table.				

While fewer British Columbians feel Ujjal Dosanjh and the New Democrats would do the best job handling the full range of policy issues, there are nevertheless some areas where the

NDP has some strength. These include: negotiating land claims with BC's aboriginal peoples (36%), understanding the problems facing the average British Columbian (24%), and protecting BC's environment (24%), ensuring good health care (29%) and education (32%) services are provided to the public. However, except for aboriginal issues, the NDP trails other parties in each of these areas.

British Columbians believe that Adriane Carr and the BC Green party are best able to protect BC's environment. Over a four-in-ten of those surveyed (46%) have the most confidence in the Greens on this issue, compared to a quarter of British Columbians who turn to the NDP (24%) and the BC Liberals (24%).

Views on who would do the best job negotiating land claims settlements has a distinct regional bent to it. People who live in the Southwestern corner of the province tend to feel the NDP is best able to handle this particular issue, while those living in the rest of BC would turn to Gordon Campbell and the Liberals.

On environmental issues, the BC Greens hold the advantage over all other parties in all areas of the province, but are particularly strong in Vancouver/Burnaby and on Vancouver Island, where 52% and 52%, respectively, feel this party would do the best job dealing with protecting BC's environment.



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For more information on this news release, please contact:

Daniel Savas
Senior Vice-President
Ipsos-Reid
(604) 893-1610 (office)

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