

# BC ELECTION 2001

## PARTY PREFERENCES

***BC LIBERALS HEADED FOR ELECTION LANDSLIDE WITH SUPPORT OF 70% OF DECIDED VOTERS; NDP WELL BACK AT 16%, BC GREEN PARTY IN DOUBLE-DIGIT SUPPORT FOR FIRST TIME (10%)***

***MAJORITY OF LIBERAL VOTERS (57%) SAY THEY ARE VOTING AGAINST THE NDP RATHER THAN FOR THE LIBERALS (42%)***

***LIBERAL VOTERS MORE CERTAIN (65%) ABOUT THEIR CHOICE THAN NEW DEMOCRATS (47%); BC GREEN VOTE IS SOFTEST (28% CERTAIN)***

***BC VOTERS MOST RESISTANT TO NDP; 50% WOULD NEVER VOTE FOR THE PARTY, COMPARED TO ONLY 1-IN-10 WHO WOULD REJECT THE BC LIBERALS, UNITY BC OR GREEN PARTY***



Ipsos Reid



THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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*This BC Ipsos-Reid poll is based on a random provincial telephone survey conducted between April 19<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 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% 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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## **BC ELECTION 2001**

### **PARTY PREFERENCES**

**(Vancouver, BC)** – The latest Ipsos-Reid / CKNW / VTV / Globe & Mail BC election survey shows Gordon Campbell’s BC Liberals well-positioned to trounce Ujjal Dosanjh’s NDP on election day, May 16<sup>th</sup>. The BC Liberals sit at 70% support among decided and leaning BC voters, the highest level ever seen for any party in Ipsos-Reid polling in BC. Meanwhile, support for the NDP, which has not fallen below 39% in any provincial election since 1969, now sits at 16% of decided and leaning voters. “Ujjal Dosanjh has had more than a year at the helm of the NDP and as Premier of BC. His mission to reposition the party in the minds of BC voters appears to have failed,” observes Daniel Savas, Senior Vice-President in Ipsos-Reid’s Vancouver office. “Despite Dosanjh’s best efforts and his continuing personal popularity, support for the NDP is basically back to exactly where it was in the final days of Glen Clark. These findings suggest there may well be no safe NDP seats left in the province.”

The BC Green Party appears to be benefiting from the lack of support for the NDP. Currently, 10% of decided and leaning voters say they will support the Greens, the first time the party has reached double-digit figures in Ipsos-Reid polling. What remains to be seen is whether the Greens will be able to seriously challenge the NDP for status as official opposition. As Mr. Savas observes “It’s one thing to get to 10% support across the province, it’s another thing entirely to have the machinery in place to get that support up to the 40% or 50% required to win an individual constituency. Still, the BC Greens could drain support away from the NDP, and help the Liberals.”

Unity BC now stands at 2% support among decided and leaning BC voters. “Late last year BC Reform was attracting 18% support in our polling. One of the reasons we now see the BC Liberals as high as 70% support is the almost complete consolidation of the centre-right vote under the Liberal banner,” comments Mr. Savas.

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BC Liberals not only enjoy a 54% lead over the NDP, their voters are also the most committed of any party. Sixty-five percent of BC Liberal voters say they are “very certain” to vote BC Liberal on election day. NDP supporters are less firm in their support, with 47% saying they are “very certain” to vote for their party. The BC Green Party has by far the “softest” support; only 28% of Green Party voters say they are “very certain” to vote for the Green Party in this provincial election.

Dissatisfaction among BC voters with the governing NDP is best demonstrated by the 50% who say they could never support the party in this election. Resistance is much lower for the other parties – 13% say they could never support the BC Green Party, 12% say they could never support Unity BC and 11% say they could never support the BC Liberals.

Given these intense negative feelings toward the NDP, it is not surprising that much of the support for the BC Liberals is described as an anti-NDP vote. Fifty-seven percent of BC Liberal voters describe their support as being more a vote against the NDP, compared to 42% who describe their support as more a vote for the BC Liberals. “However, when the votes are being counted on election day, it won’t matter to the BC Liberals whether people are voting for their platform, or against the record of the NDP. A vote is a vote,” observes Mr. Savas. “If the BC Liberals get elected with anywhere near 70% of the vote, it will be tough to argue they lack a strong mandate to implement their platform, even if many of their votes are anti-NDP rather than pro-BC Liberal.”

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***BC LIBERALS HEADED FOR ELECTION LANDSLIDE WITH SUPPORT OF 70% OF DECIDED VOTERS; NDP WELL BACK AT 16%, BC GREEN PARTY IN DOUBLE-DIGIT SUPPORT FOR FIRST TIME (10%)***

In the opening days of the 2001 BC election campaign, the BC Liberals have widened their already substantial lead over the governing NDP. The BC Liberals enjoy the support of 70% of BC's decided and leaning voters. The NDP, at 16% support, has yet to generate any signs of renewed voter interest. The BC Green Party is now within 6 points of the NDP, with the support of 10% of decided and leaning voters. Unity BC is well back at 2% support. These results exclude the 13% of British Columbia voters who express no preference for any of the provincial parties, including 9% who are undecided.

Both the BC Liberals and the BC Green Party are at unprecedented levels of support in Ipsos-Reid polling in British Columbia. The BC Liberals (70%) are up 7 points from their previous record of 63% support, seen just 6 weeks ago in a March 2001 poll. And, this is the first time Green Party support has reached double-digits; support for the party is up 3 points from a month ago. Meanwhile, the NDP has languished near or below 20% in the polls since March of 1998, and the party's support is down 4 points from March of this year.

Unity BC support has collapsed to just 2% from 7% in March 2001. It is now apparent that Unity BC has failed to capture the hearts, or votes, of former BC Reform supporters. In December 2000 – the last time BC Reform was included in an Ipsos-Reid poll - BC Reform had the support of 18% of decided and leaning and voters.

The BC Liberals have also shown the greatest gains of any party compared to the last provincial election in May 1996. BC Liberal support has increased by 28 points, from 42% in the 1996 election to

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70% today. The BC Green Party has also increased support, moving up 8 points from 2% in the 1996 election to 10% today. The NDP has lost well over half its vote support from the last election. In May 1996, the NDP garnered 39% support from BC voters, 23 points better than the 16% support seen today. Finally, current Unity BC support of 2% is 7 points lower than the 9% support its BC Reform predecessor captured in the 1996 election.

Party preferences by region and socio-demographic groupings are as follow:

- ◆ The BC Liberals hold a substantial lead in all regions of British Columbia, with support ranging from a high of 75% in suburban Vancouver to a low of 61% on Vancouver Island.
- ◆ In the race for second place, the Green Party leads the NDP in Vancouver/Burnaby (16% Greens vs. 13% NDP) and is competitive with the NDP on Vancouver Island (16% Green vs. 21% NDP). The NDP leads the Green Party by wider margins in suburban Vancouver (15% NDP vs. 6% Green) and in the Rest of BC (18% NDP vs. 5% Green).
- ◆ The BC Liberals have traditionally experienced a gender gap, drawing greater support from males than from females. This gap has almost disappeared with the BC Liberals drawing the support of 72% of decided male voters and 69 percent of decided female voters.
- ◆ Although the BC Liberals lead the NDP in both non-union and union households, their lead is greater in non-union households (75% BC Liberal vs. 13% NDP) than in union households (61% BC Liberal vs. 24% NDP).
- ◆ The BC Liberals draw slightly more support from households with incomes of \$60,000 or more (76% BC Liberal) than from those with incomes under \$60,000 (66% BC Liberal).



## ***MAJORITY OF LIBERAL VOTERS (57%) SAY THEY ARE VOTING AGAINST THE NDP RATHER THAN FOR THE LIBERALS (42%)***

A majority of BC Liberal voters describe their support as being more a vote against the NDP than a vote for the BC Liberals. Fifty-seven percent of BC Liberal voters say they are primarily voting against the NDP, while 42% are voting for the BC Liberals. This overall pattern is consistent across all regions and among all population segments.

1996 NDP voters who have switched party allegiances, and are supporting the BC Liberals this time around, are those most likely to be voting against the NDP. Seventy-three percent of these 1996 NDP voters describe their current support of the BC Liberals as a vote against the NDP, compared to 27% who are voting for the BC Liberals.

Conversely, 1996 BC Liberal voters who have stayed with their party are primarily voting for the BC Liberals. Fifty-seven percent say their support is a vote for the BC Liberals, compared to 41% who say it is a vote against the NDP.

## ***LIBERAL VOTERS MORE CERTAIN (65%) ABOUT THEIR CHOICE THAN NEW DEMOCRATS (47%); BC GREEN VOTE IS SOFTEST (28% CERTAIN)***

A key indicator of party strength is how committed party supporters are to voting for their party. On this measure, the BC Liberals have the “hardest” supporters of any provincial party. Fully two-thirds – 65% – of BC Liberal voters say they are “very certain” they will support a BC Liberal candidate in the upcoming election.



Vote strength among NDP voters is somewhat softer than that for the BC Liberals. Roughly half – 47% – of NDP voters say they are “very certain” to vote NDP.

Meanwhile, the BC Green Party will have to work hard to reinforce the commitment of its supporters. Only 28% of current BC Greens say they are “very certain” about their preference. Nearly one-half – 47% – are “not very certain” or “not at all certain” of their vote for a BC Green Party candidate.

***BC VOTERS MOST RESISTANT TO NDP; 50% WOULD NEVER VOTE FOR THE PARTY, COMPARED TO ONLY 1-IN-10 WHO WOULD REJECT THE LIBERALS, UNITY BC OR GREENS***

One-in-two (50%) British Columbian voters say they would never consider supporting the NDP in the upcoming election. Rejection rates are much lower for other provincial parties. The Green Party would not be considered by 13% of BC voters, while about 1-in-10 BC voters could not see themselves voting for Unity BC (12%) or the BC Liberal Party (11%).

BC Liberal and Green Party voters are divided in their degree of openness to voting NDP. Sixty-eight percent of BC Liberal voters absolutely reject voting NDP in this election. The comparable rate is much lower among Green Party voters, with 30% saying they would never consider supporting the NDP. One modestly encouraging sign for the NDP is that only 29% of the small pool of undecided and uncommitted voters say they would never support the NDP.



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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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