

BC ELECTION 2001

SPECIFIC ELECTION ISSUES

BRITISH COLUMBIANS HOLD MIXED VIEWS ON BUDGET PRIORITIES FOR A NEW GOVERNMENT, BUT 64% BELIEVE TAX CUTS WILL PROVIDE ENOUGH REVENUE TO PAY FOR SERVICES

62% OF BRITISH COLUMBIANS SUPPORT REFERENDUM TO DECIDE WHAT SHOULD AND SHOULD NOT GO INTO TREATIES WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

62% OF BC PUBLIC REJECTS TWO-TIER HEALTH CARE, WITH 47% STRONGLY AGAINST THE IDEA



Ipsos Reid



THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Public Release Date: April 25, 2001 – 11:59p.m. (PDT)

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 election poll shows British Columbians holding fairly definite views on two key election issues that divide the Liberals and the NDP in this election – tax cuts and a referendum on aboriginal treaties. Importantly, people lean much more strongly towards Liberal positions. They give solid support to significant personal tax cuts (64%), despite some mixed views on a new government's budget priorities, and back a referendum on what should and should not go into treaties with BC's aboriginal peoples (62%).

On a third issue – health care - there is a broad consensus among British Columbians that two-tier health care is *not an option* for reforming the health care system (62% against).

“These findings are significant because the BC public opinion seems to be running in lock step with the BC Liberal platform on some key policy issues, which only shows how successful the party has been in selling its message in the period leading up to the election,” observes Daniel Savas, Senior Vice-President at Ipsos-Reid. “This means the New Democrats will have a very difficult time winning the tax cut battle they want to wage against the Liberals. In reality, the results show, the outgoing government has few real opportunities to take support away from the Liberals by playing to any of the major issues.”

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BC PUBLIC MIXED ON NEW GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET PRIORITIES, BUT 64% BELIEVES TAX CUTS WILL PROVIDE ENOUGH REVENUE TO PAY FOR SERVICES

British Columbians express somewhat mixed views when it comes to deciding what they feel a new BC Government's main priority should be in developing its first budget. While 42% think the new government should spend more on government programs, such as health care and education, 31% think it should cut taxes. And, 26% want the new government to focus its main energies on reducing the overall provincial debt.

However, fully 64 percent of those surveyed believe that a significant reduction in personal taxes would be a good idea, because it "would help generate economic activity in BC and provide the government the revenue it needs to pay for services such as health care and education." On the other hand, 34% of the BC public thinks a significant cut in personal taxes would be a bad idea, because "the government would not have enough money to pay for services such as health care and education, and would therefore need to cut these services."

These overall views are shared across all regions of the province, and among all population sub-segments. However, certain groups of people tend to express views more or less strongly. For example, the idea of tax cuts is less appealing to lower income earners, and women, who are also more likely to favour more spending on government programs as a top budget priority. Meanwhile, men and higher income earners support the idea of a tax cut, and believe this should be the new government's top priority.

Politically, Liberal party supporters are much more likely than others to identify tax cuts as a main budgetary priority (41% vs. 8% of New Democrats), and to support the idea of a

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significant personal tax cut to generate economic activity (79% vs. 29% of New Democrats). It's also interesting that fully 63% of British Columbians who *did not* vote in the last provincial election support the idea of tax cuts.

62% OF BRITISH COLUMBIANS SUPPORT HOLDING A REFERENDUM TO DECIDE WHAT SHOULD AND SHOULD NOT GO INTO TREATIES WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

The majority of British Columbians are prepared to support the idea of holding a referendum to determine what should and should not go into treaties being negotiated with BC's aboriginal peoples. In all, 62% say it's a good idea to put the current process of negotiating treaties on hold in order to hold a referendum of this kind. They believe this will give all British Columbians a chance to have a say in treaties, and would set a standardized set of rules for negotiating treaties, making it easier to settle future land claims.

On the other hand, 36% of those surveyed think it's a bad idea to hold this kind of referendum. They feel this will lead to more roadblocks and increased confrontation, and aboriginal peoples would lose confidence in the treaty process and walk away from the table, which would only make it more difficult to settle land claims in the future.

These overall views are shared across the province, and among all population subgroups. However, certain people in BC are more strongly in favour of holding a referendum. These include suburban Vancouver and Interior residents (66% and 68% respectively), and Liberal party supporters (72%). Among those most strongly against a referendum include Vancouver/Burnaby residents (47%) and NDP and BC Green party supporters (60% and 67%, respectively).

62% OF BC PUBLIC REJECTS TWO-TIER HEALTH CARE, WITH 47% STRONGLY AGAINST THE IDEA

When it comes to health care reform, British Columbians reject outright the idea of setting up a two tier system in BC as a way to control costs and provide people with greater and more timely access to services. Fully 62% disagreed with BC developing “two levels of health care services, a basic one the government funded for everyone, and another one, where those who could afford it paid the full amount and received whatever kind of services they wanted.” Almost half – 47% - expressed strong disagreement with this idea. To contrast, just over a third (37%) agreed with the idea, including 13% who strongly agreed.

While opposition to two-tier health care is still quite strong, findings from an Ipsos-Reid poll in March of 2000 indicates some softening of attitudes among British Columbians. Last year, 64% of British Columbians rejected two-tier health care, only slightly higher than our election poll (62%). However, strong disagreement with the idea has dropped 6 points in the past 12 months (53% strongly disagree in 2000 vs. 47% today).

Though opposition to setting up a two-tier health care system is widespread across BC, touching all regions and population sub-segments, BC women, and people living in public sector union households are more strongly opposed to the idea. Men, higher income earners, and people in private sector union and non-union households are more likely to support two-tier health care.

Politically, all party supporters are against two-tier health care in BC, but Liberal party supporters are those most likely to back the idea, while New Democrats and Greens are most opposed.



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