

# BC ELECTION 2001

## ELECTION OUTCOME

**62% OF BC PUBLIC THINK BC LIBERAL SWEEP UNLIKELY; BUT BELIEF IN POSSIBILITY OF SWEEP HAS INCREASED 8 POINTS**

**30% OF BC VOTERS WOULD VOTE STRATEGICALLY TO PREVENT A BC LIBERAL SWEEP; "SWITCHERS" WOULD MOVE TO NDP (34%) AND GREENS (33%)**

**UJJAL DOSANJH SEEN AS BEST OPPOSITION LEADER (46%); CARR (27%) AND DELANEY (18%) TRAIL THE PREMIER**

**TAX CUTS (28%) AND HEALTH CARE (26%) SEEN AS MOST IMPORTANT BC LIBERAL ELECTION COMMITMENTS; 10% MENTION THE OVERALL ECONOMY**



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*This BC Ipsos-Reid poll is based on a random provincial telephone survey conducted between May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</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 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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## BC ELECTION 2001

### ELECTION OUTCOME

(**Vancouver, BC – May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2001**) – As the BC election campaign enters its final week, the second Ipsos-Reid/VTV/CKNW poll shows that despite the likelihood of a BC Liberal landslide victory, the public is still not convinced the Liberals can win all 79 seats. However, this belief has weakened over the past two weeks, to the point where more than 1-in-3 British Columbians (37%) feel it's likely the Liberals can engineer a complete sweep in this election.

However, there is some indication that British Columbians are concerned about the possibility of a Liberal government without an official Opposition party in the legislature. In fact, fully 30% of people surveyed said they'd be prepared to switch their support to another party in order to ensure a strong opposition exists in Victoria; this is about the same number as early in the campaign (28%). However, any strategic voting would be divided between the two leading opposition parties (34% to NDP, 33% to Greens).

In the event of a BC Liberal victory, most British Columbians feel that NDP leader Ujjal Dosanjh would make the best leader of the Official Opposition (46%); fewer would pick Green party leader Adriane Carr (27%) or Unity BC leader Chris Delaney (18%).

"The BC public has all but made up its mind that the Liberals are going to win big in this election. In fact, people are watching this election with some anticipation that the Liberals could make history and sweep all seats in the legislature," observes Daniel Savas, Senior Vice-President at Ipsos-Reid. "However, if voters were to vote strategically to prevent a Liberal sweep, they would have to coalesce around a single party to have any effect on the

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outcome. The fact that the strategic vote is split between the NDP and the Green Party means it's unlikely strategic voting would have the intended impact."

On another issue, should the BC Liberals win this election, BC voters are most hopeful the new government will keep its commitments related to tax cuts (28%) and health care (26%). Other important BC Liberal commitments include improving the economy (10%), education promises (6%) and balancing the budget (4%). Mr. Savas finds it interesting that BC voters rate health care so highly compared to tax cuts. "The BC Liberals' own platform places tax cuts at the top of their list of commitments for the first 90 days. The same list does not even mention health care. Clearly the public expects the BC Liberals to act on health care even if they have not been making specific promises during the campaign."

***62% OF BC PUBLIC THINK BC LIBERAL SWEEP UNLIKELY; BUT BELIEF IN POSSIBILITY OF SWEEP HAS INCREASED 8 POINTS***

Despite the substantial lead the BC Liberals have in the polls, a solid majority of British Columbians (62%) continue to think it's unlikely Gordon Campbell and the BC Liberals can engineer a complete sweep of the 79 seats up for grabs in this election campaign. However, more than a third – 37% – see this as a real possibility, including 12% who say it's "very likely."

The number of people in the province who believe a BC Liberal sweep is possible has jumped 8 points (29% to 37%) since the beginning of the election campaign. Those who think it's "very likely" the Liberals will win all 79 seats has doubled over the past two weeks (6% to 12%). To contrast, the proportion of British Columbians who do not believe the Liberals can



take all the seats has dropped a statistically significant 9 percentage points since the beginning of the campaign (71% to 62%).

Belief in the likelihood of a BC Liberal sweep is consistent across all regions of the province, and all population segments, though it is stronger in some areas. For example, Lower Mainland residents (40% likely) are much more likely than people living on Vancouver Island (28%) to believe the Liberals can win all 79 seats.

***30% OF BC VOTERS WOULD VOTE STRATEGICALLY TO PREVENT A BC LIBERAL SWEEP; "SWITCHERS" WOULD MOVE TO NDP (34%) AND GREENS (33%)***

In the event that BC voters think the Liberals might win all 79 seats in the election campaign, many are prepared to switch their vote and support another party in order to have a strong opposition party in the legislature. This is true for 30% of all voters, a 2-point increase from the beginning of the campaign. More than two-thirds of those polled (68%) would not consider changing their vote to have a strong opposition.

The NDP and BC Green party would be the most likely beneficiaries of any strategic voting that might occur. Of those who would consider switching their party allegiance in order to have a strong opposition party in the BC legislature, 34% would turn to the NDP and 33% would move to the BC Green party. Another 14% would vote for Unity BC, and 2% would vote for the Marijuana party. Thirteen percent do not know which party they would support.



Strategic voters would emerge largely from the BC Liberal support base; 53% are currently in the Liberal camp, while another 21% are with the NDP, and 18% currently support the BC Green party. Possible movements of strategic voters include the following:

- ◆ 42% of those currently intending to vote BC Liberal would switch to the NDP; 34% would go to the BC Green party
- ◆ 59% of those currently intending to vote NDP would move to the BC Green party; 21% don't know. (Due to the small number of NDP supporters who would consider switching, these proportions should be considered directional only)
- ◆ 50% of those currently intending to vote Green would switch to the NDP. (Due to the small number of BC Green supporters who would consider switching, these proportions should be considered directional only)

Those most likely to vote strategically to ensure a strong opposition in the BC legislature include women (34% vs. 26% of men), individuals living in union households (40% vs. 26% non-union). There are no statistically significant variations on a regional basis.

### ***UJJAL DOSANJH SEEN AS BEST OPPOSITION LEADER (46%); CARR (27%) AND DELANEY (18%) TRAIL THE PREMIER***

When asked to forget their current voting intentions and presume a BC Liberal victory in this election, British Columbians choose Ujjal Dosanjh as the best choice for opposition leader. Nearly half of BC voters (46%) say the current Premier would make a better opposition leader than either Adriane Carr or Chris Delaney. Adriane Carr of the Green Party finishes in second at 27% followed by Chris Delaney of Unity BC at 18%. One-in-ten BC (10%) voters are unable to select one of the three as the best opposition leader for BC.



The breakdown by party support is as follows:

- ◆ NDP voters overwhelmingly choose Ujjal Dosanjh as the best leader of the official opposition. Eighty-four percent of NDP voters select Dosanjh compared to 11% for Carr and 5% for Delaney.
- ◆ Six-in-ten (61%) Green Party voters select Adriane Carr as the best choice for opposition leader. A substantial group of Green Party supporters (25%) also feels that Dosanjh would be best in opposition. Very few Green Party voters (7%) select Delaney as the best choice.
- ◆ BC Liberals prefer Dosanjh to Carr or Delaney as the best potential leader of the opposition. Forty-two percent of BC Liberals feel Dosanjh would make the best opposition leader. Carr ranks second among BC Liberals at 28%, followed closely by Delaney at 23%.
- ◆ Sixty-three percent of the very small number of Unity BC supporters in our sample prefer Delaney as best opposition leader.

Other socio-demographic highlights include the following:

- ◆ Although Dosanjh leads in both union and non-union households, his support is higher in union households (54% union vs. 42% non-union). Delaney, on the other hand, does better with non-union households (20% non-union vs. 13% union).
- ◆ In an interesting twist, Ujjal Dosanjh does better in higher income households than in lower income households. Fifty-one percent of higher income households select Dosanjh as the best opposition leader, compared with 38% of lower income households. In fact, Adriane Carr closes to within 3 points of Dosanjh in lower income households (38% Dosanjh vs. 35% Carr).



## ***TAX CUTS (28%) AND HEALTH CARE (26%) SEEN AS MOST IMPORTANT BC LIBERAL ELECTION COMMITMENTS; 10% MENTION THE OVERALL ECONOMY***

If Gordon Campbell and the BC Liberals do as expected and win this election, British Columbia voters are most interested in seeing the Liberals keep their commitments on tax cuts and health care. Twenty-eight percent of BC voters say that tax cuts are the single most important commitment made by the BC Liberals over this campaign. A similar number of BC voters (26%) say they would most like to see the BC Liberals keep their commitments related to health care. Primary health care commitments include generally improving the system, retaining/attracting health care professionals and increasing funding. Many BC voters also mention other campaign commitments such as improving the BC economy (10%), education related promises (6%) and balanced budgets (4%).

Differences across political and demographic groupings are as follows:

- ◆ Twenty-eight percent say that tax cuts are the BC Liberal commitment they would most like to see kept after this election. Some groups are more likely than others to say tax cuts including those from higher income households (36% taxes vs. 24% health), BC Liberal voters (35% taxes vs. 26% health), Vancouver-Burnaby residents (35% taxes vs. 26% health), men (35% vs. 20% health) and younger voters (34% vs. 17% health).
- ◆ Twenty-six percent say the BC Liberals commitments on health care are most important. Health care is most important to uncommitted voters (35% health vs. 15% taxes), women (32% health vs. 22% taxes) and older voters (34% taxes vs. 19% health).



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- 30 -

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