

BC GOVERNMENT APPROVAL CONTINUES TO SLIDE

BC Liberal Approval (43%) Continues Downward Trend; But Most (71%) BC Liberal Voters Still Approve

BC Public Divided on Freezing Health Care Spending (49% Approve vs. 50% Disapprove)

Majority (58%) Approve of Contracting Out Non-Clinical Hospital Services



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Vancouver, BC – A new Ipsos-Reid/Vancouver Sun/Global BC survey (conducted prior to the Throne Speech and Premier Campbell’s 30 minute television address) shows public approval of the performance of the BC Liberal government continuing a downward slide. Currently, 43 percent of the BC public approves of the provincial government’s performance, down 6 percentage points from December (49%) and down a dramatic 27 percentage points from September (70%). A possible silver lining for the BC Liberals is that they still hold the approval of seven in ten (71%) BC Liberal voters from last spring’s election.

“It’s been a long time since this government has been able to deliver any good news and that’s coming through loud and clear in these numbers” says Daniel Savas, Senior Vice President in Ipsos-Reid’s Vancouver office. “But as long as the Liberals continue to get the support of their voter base, we shouldn’t expect any drastic change of course.”

The survey also reveals the BC public is divided on the prudence of the BC Liberal plan to freeze health care spending until additional spending can be justified through additional government revenues (49% approve vs. 50% disapprove). “I think this shows that while British Columbians are receptive to the need to hold the line on spending, they are uncertain

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about whether the long-term impact on the system will be positive or negative,” says Mr. Savas. However, in certain areas there is greater agreement among British Columbians. A majority (58%) approves of the government’s move towards contracting out non-clinical hospital services.

These are the findings of a BC Ipsos-Reid poll conducted between February 4th and 11th, 2002 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.

BC Liberal Approval (43%) Continues Downward Trend; But Most (71%) BC Liberal Voters Still Approve

Public approval of the overall performance of the BC Liberal provincial government has fallen to 43 percent, down 6 percentage points from December (49%) and down 27 points from September (70%). Two in ten (19%) British Columbians “strongly approve” and a quarter (24%) “moderately approve” of the government’s performance.

Meanwhile, a majority (56%) of BC residents disapproves of the performance of the BC Liberals, an increase of 8 percentage points from December (48%) and 31 percentage points from September (25%). Fully four in ten (40%) British Columbians now “strongly disapprove” of the government’s performance, up 10 percentage points from December (30%). Sixteen percent “moderately disapprove” of the BC Liberal’s overall performance since taking power in May 2001.



- Overall approval is higher with men (49% vs. 38% women), with older residents (52% 55+ years vs. 40% 18 to 54 years) and with higher income households (52% \$60K+ vs. 37% <\$60K).
- Traditional gaps by union status have re-emerged, with the BC Liberals drawing 51 percent approval from non-union households as compared to 28 percent approval from union households. Seven in ten (72%) residents of union households now disapprove of the performance of the BC Liberals since taking office.

Despite the downward trend in their public approval, the BC Liberals can still count on the support of most of their voters from last spring's election. Seven in ten (71%) BC Liberal voters say they approve of the government's performance, including four in ten (38%) who "strongly approve". Three in ten (29%) BC Liberal voters now disapprove of their government's performance, including 15 percent who "strongly disapprove".

BC Public Divided on Freezing Health Care Spending (49% Approve vs. 50% Disapprove)

The BC public is almost evenly split in their assessment of the BC Liberal plan to freeze health care spending at current levels. One-half (49%) approves and one-half (50%) disapproves of the provincial government "freezing health care spending at current levels until increased spending can be justified through additional government revenues".

Despite the even split in overall approval, the intensity on this issue appears to favour those who disapprove of freezing health care spending. Three in ten (32%) BC residents "strongly disapprove" of freezing spending compared with two in ten (19%) residents who "strongly approve" of a spending freeze.

- Approval of the health care spending freeze is higher with men (57% vs. 41% women), older residents (57% 55+ years vs. 46% 18 to 54 years) and with residents of union



households (54% vs. 38% union households).

- Seven in ten (68%) BC Liberal voters from the last election say they approve of the health care spending freeze.

This result is significantly different than an Ipsos-Reid survey conducted back in June 2001, when seven in ten (71%) British Columbians approved of the BC Liberal plan to freeze spending on health care and education until new spending could be justified by additional government revenues. (Note: The June 2001 asked about both health care and education spending, while the February 2002 survey asks only about health care spending).

Majority (58%) Approve of Contracting Out Non-Clinical Hospital Services

Six in ten (58%) British Columbians approve of the provincial government “contracting out the delivery of non-clinical hospital services such as housekeeping, security and food services to private companies”. One quarter (25%) “strongly approve” and a third (33%) “moderately approve” of the plan to contract out some hospital services.

Four in ten (41%) BC residents say they disapprove of contracting out delivery of these non-clinical hospital services, including 27 percent who “strongly disapprove” and 14 percent who “moderately disapprove”.

- Approval of contracting out non-clinical hospital services is higher with men (63% vs. 53% women) and with middle/higher income households (62% \$30K+ vs. 45% <\$30K).
- Non-union households are also much more likely to approve of contracting out these services (66% vs. 42% union households).
- Almost eight in ten (77%) BC Liberal voters from the last election approve of the provincial government contracting out the delivery of some non-clinical hospital



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