

BC LIBERALS WEATHERING THE STORM

MARCH 2002

***BC Liberals (48%) Still Dominate Party Race; NDP (28%)
Continue to Rise***

Government Approval (45%) Bottoms Out

MacPhail's Approval (49%) Pushes Ahead of Campbell's (45%)



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Vancouver, BC – A new Ipsos-Reid poll taken following the provincial budget and a number of key fiscal initiatives, finds the BC Liberals maintaining solid support. Currently, 48 percent of decided voters are behind the BC Liberals, down a statistically insignificant 2 percentage points since December. Moreover, government approval, at 45 percent, appears to have bottomed out following steady declines over the last six months (Sep 70%, Dec 49%, Feb 43%). On the leadership front, Gordon Campbell's personal approval rating of 45 percent matches that of his government as a whole.

There is also some good news in the poll results for the NDP and especially the party's leader, Joy MacPhail. Her personal approval rating as party leader jumps to 49 percent, up 10 percentage points from December, and 4 points ahead of Gordon Campbell. NDP vote support has risen to 28 percent, up 7 points from December.

"The BC Liberals seem to be weathering the storm" says Daniel Savas, Senior Vice President in Ipsos-Reid's Vancouver office. "When you consider the nature and depth of recent government initiatives, the fact the party has lost relatively little ground is a sign that many British Columbians have taken to heart the government's message of short-term pain for

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long-term gain.” Nevertheless, Mr. Savas cautions the Liberals not to rest on these results, “All this could change in the long term if the reforms the Liberals are implementing do not have the intended positive effect on the province. Should this happen, we could well see a strengthening of the opposition voice in the province.”

These are the findings of a BC Ipsos-Reid poll conducted between March 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 Liberals (48%) Still Dominate Party Race; NDP (28%) Continue to Rise

Currently, 48 percent of BC's decided and leaning voters say they would be most likely to support the BC Liberals in a provincial election. The Liberals continue to hold a commanding lead over the opposition NDP at 28 percent and Green Party at 16 percent. Support for BC Unity stands at 3 percent, while 5 percent support other parties. Overall, 14 percent of BC residents currently express no preference for any of the provincial parties, including 6% who are undecided and 8% who say they would not vote for any of the parties.

Support for the BC Liberals has dropped a statistically insignificant 2 percentage points over the past three months, moving from 50 percent in December to the current 48 percent level. While the Liberals remain well ahead of other parties, the NDP continues to grow. NDP support has moved up 7 points this quarter, from 21 percent in December to 28 percent today

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and is now well ahead of its standing in the May 2001 provincial election (22%). Meanwhile, support for BC Unity has fallen back significantly from our December poll (8% to 3% currently). The Green Party's standing has changed only marginally, from 17 percent in December to 16 percent today, a statistically insignificant difference.

- Support for the BC Liberals is strongest with men (57% vs 39% women), non-union households (53% vs. 38% union) and with middle/upper income households (52% \$30K+ vs. 32% <\$30K).
- NDP support is strongest with women (35% vs. 22% men) and with union households (40% vs. 23% non-union). North/Interior residents are also more likely to support the NDP (35% North/Interior vs. 26% Lower Mainland, 27% Island).

Government Approval (45%) Bottoms Out

This Ipsos-Reid poll marks the end of a six month decline in public approval of the BC Liberal government. Forty-five percent of British Columbians now approve of the overall performance of the BC Liberal government. This is up a statistically insignificant 2 percentage points from February (43%) and halts the drops seen from September (70%) and December (49%). Government approval includes 17 percent who “strongly approve” and 28 percent who “moderately approve” of the BC Liberal performance.

A slim majority (54%) of BC residents disapproves of the government's performance, down 2 percentage points from December. The intensity of disapproval remains high, however, as 39 percent “strongly disapprove” of the government's performance, while 15 percent “somewhat disapprove”.

- Government approval is higher with men (51% vs 39% women), non-union households (51% vs. 33% union) and with middle/upper income households (49% \$30K+ vs. 31%



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<\$30K).

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MacPhail's Approval (49%) Moves Ahead of Campbell's (45%)

Public approval of the performance of NDP leader Joy MacPhail stands at 49 percent, a jump of 10 percentage points from December. This places her 4 percentage points ahead of Premier Gordon Campbell's approval rating of 45 percent. Campbell's approval rating has fallen by 6 percentage points since December.

While approval of the two leaders is within a scant 4 percentage points, the gap is much wider when we look at disapproval. Fifty-three percent of British Columbians now disapprove of the performance of Premier Campbell (up 7 points from December), compared with 38 percent who disapprove of MacPhail's performance (down 4 points from December).

- MacPhail's approval is highest with union households (55% vs. 46% non-union) and with university graduates (56% vs. 40% high school or less).
- Campbell's approval rating is highest with men (51% vs 39% women), non-union households (51% vs. 34% union) and with middle/upper income households (48% \$30K+ vs. 33% <\$30K).

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