

ALBERTA POLITICAL SCENE

LATE MARCH 2002

After One Year Anniversary Provincial Tories Continue at Top of Polls (50%) - Liberals (31%) and New Democrats (11%) Well Behind

Personal Approval of Premier Klein (57%) and his Government (54%) is Down 13 Points in Recent Months – But 63% Still Say Klein and Government are on the “Right Track”

Healthcare (54%) Continues Seven Year Stretch at Top of Issue Agenda But Education Not Far Behind (47%)



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Edmonton, AB – A year after their convincing election victory, the results of an Ipsos-Reid poll conducted for CTV, The Globe and Mail, and QR77 show that support for the Klein government is still high. If an election were held in the province tomorrow, 50% of decided voters would support the Progressive Conservatives. Despite being down 5 points since January, support for the PCs is almost 20 points ahead of the Liberals (31%) and almost five times the number who would support the New Democrats (11%). Ten percent of Albertans are currently undecided about who they would vote for.

Approval of the government (54%) and of Premier Klein (57%) have both dropped 13 points since January (67% and 70% approval respectively) and are now among their lowest levels since the government was first elected in 1993. Despite this dip, most Albertans (63%) say that Klein and the PC government has Alberta on the “right track”. On the issue front, healthcare continues its very long stretch as Albertans’ (54%) most important issue but education (47%) has surged in recent months.

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“The results of this poll reflect the turmoil seen in Alberta politics over the last few months,” says Tim Olafson Senior Vice-President of Ipsos-Reid in Calgary. “The government has dealt with a number of tough issues since January including the Mazankowski report, the teachers’ strike, and the recent budget. Our polling has shown that Albertans were divided on all three issues and it’s now showing up in the government’s numbers. But, at the end of the day, people should remember that these are still the kind of approval ratings that most politicians dream of.”

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid poll conducted between March 21st and March 25th, 2002. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 800 adult Albertans. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire population in Alberta been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual provincial population according to the 1996 Census data.

After One Year Anniversary Provincial Tories Continue at Top of Polls (50%) - Liberals (31%) and New Democrats (11%) Well Behind

A year after the March 12, 2001 election, the Progressive Conservatives continue to maintain a strong lead over the other parties. If an election were held tomorrow, 50% of decided voters would support the PCs compared with 31% who would support the Liberals, and 11% who would support the New Democrats. While the Tories are down 5 points since January (and 12 points from the 62% of the popular vote that they captured in the election), their current level of support is consistent with what they received throughout their two previous mandates.

- The Tories are leading in every region of the province with their lowest support in Edmonton (41%).
- Men (55%) are more likely than women (45%) to support the PCs.
- Albertans aged 55 and older (57%) are more likely than those under 55 (48%) to support the Klein Tories.

Personal Approval of Premier Klein (57%) and his Government (54%) is Down 13 Points in Recent Months – But 63% Still Say Klein and Government are on the “Right Track”

In the face of some tough issues, Ralph Klein and his government have seen a 13 point slide in their approval ratings since January 2002 and are now among the lowest the premier and his government have received since first being elected in 1993. Premier Klein’s personal approval rating currently sits at 57% with one quarter (23%) of Albertans saying they “strongly approve” of the premier’s performance and another third (34%) who say they “moderately approve”. This is off his all-time high of 79% approval reached in July 2001. While the numbers are low by Klein standards, this level of approval rating is still good

compared with other politicians across the country. The story is similar for the government's approval rating which currently sits at 54% (13% "strongly approve" and 41% "moderately approve"), 24 points off their July 2001 high of 78%.

Approval for the opposition leaders has remained constant since January 2002. Official opposition leader Ken Nichol's approval rating stands at 48% - 9 points below the Premier's but consistent with his approval since becoming Liberal leader after the March 2001 election. Only 5% "strongly approve" of his performance as leader of the official opposition while 43% "moderately approve". Meanwhile, Raj Pannu receives 52% approval (9% "strongly approve" and 43% "moderately approve") for his performance as leader of the New Democrats – up 15 points from February 2001 (37%).

Despite this slip in approval, Albertans still seem to be on- side with Klein and his government. Almost two-thirds (63%) say that the provincial government of Ralph Klein and the Progressive Conservatives has Alberta on the "right track". This includes a quarter (25%) who say the premier and the government are "strongly on the right track" and almost four in ten (38%) who say they are "somewhat on the right track". In contrast, one third (35%) say Klein and the PCs are on the "wrong track" (19% "strongly wrong track", 16% "somewhat wrong track").

- Edmonton (47%) is the only part of the province where Ralph Klein receives less than majority approval. Approval is much higher in the rest of the province (62%).
- Similarly, Edmonton (45%) is the only part of the province where the government receives less than majority approval. Approval for the government is much higher in Calgary (55%) and the rest of the province (61%).
- Men (63%) are more likely than women (50%) to say they approve of the government's performance.

- Albertans under the age of 35 (62%) are more likely to approve of Ralph Klein's performance than those aged 35 and over (49%).

Healthcare (54%) Continues Seven Year Stretch at Top of Issue Agenda But Education Not Far Behind (47%)

Albertans' most important issue agenda has mirrored the issues the government has been tackling over the last few months – health, education and the budget. Healthcare (54%) continues its remarkable 7-year dominance as the most important issue facing Alberta today. Healthcare has been the number one issue since the spring of 1995. It hit a high of 79% around when the Mazankowski report was delivered in January 2002 and has not been lower than 41% - a level it hit in July 2001. Education (47%) remains in second place after increasing 15 points since before the teachers' dispute (but up only 2 points since the end of January 2002). Rounding out the top three is a newcomer - taxes at 17% (up 9 points since January 2002) and the subject of much discussion after the provincial budget.

- Women are more likely than men to say healthcare (63% vs. 44%) and education (55% vs. 38%) are the most important issues.

-30-

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