

NDP SURGES AHEAD OF BC LIBERALS

NDP (42%, up 5 points) Continue to Steal Support from BC Liberals (39%, down 2 points) and Greens (12%, down 2 points)

Fewer than Half of NDP Voters (44%) Think NDP Will do a Good Job; Majority (55%) Just Dislike Other Parties

Gordon Campbell's Approval Rating (34%, down 3 points) Falls to New Low; Carole James at 47% Approval as NDP Leader Campbell (40%) and James (38%) Neck and Neck as Choice for Best Premier



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Vancouver, BC – For the first time since June 1996, the NDP have finished ahead of the BC Liberals in an Ipsos-Reid poll. The NDP now have the support of 42 percent of decided voters in the province - three points ahead of the BC Liberals at 39 percent. The Green Party, at 12 percent, is now a distant third choice among BC's voters. The NDP is up five points from December (37%) with gains coming at the expense of both the BC Liberals (41% December) and Green Party (14% December), who are each down two points this quarter.

The NDP might want to avoid patting themselves on the back for their boost in support. Only 44 percent of NDP voters say they are supporting the party because they think the NDP would do a good job governing the province. A majority (55%) are supporting the NDP because they dislike the other options available.

This dislike of other options is reflected in Gordon Campbell's descending approval rating. Only one-in-three (34%, down 3 points) British Columbians now approve of Campbell's performance as Premier – his lowest approval yet. Nearly two-thirds (64%, up 4 points) of the public disapproves of Campbell's performance. NDP leader Carole James has a 47 percent job approval rating (24% disapprove).



Despite James' superior job approval rating, not everyone is ready to see her in the role of Premier. Among those with a preference, Gordon Campbell (40%) and Carole James (38%) are in a dead heat as British Columbians' pick for best Premier.

These are the findings of a BC Ipsos-Reid poll conducted between March 1st and 7th, 2004 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 2001 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 population sub-groups.

NDP (42%, up 5 points) Continue to Steal Support from BC Liberals (39%, down 2 points) and Greens (12%, down 2 points)

The election landslide of May 2001 is now a distant memory. The NDP have not only closed the gap, but have actually opened up a three-point lead over the BC Liberals. While the two parties are now technically in a statistical dead heat, the momentum is clearly with the NDP. What's more, the NDP have moved into the lead by attracting voters from the right (BC Liberals) and the left (Green Party).

The NDP have moved up five percentage points from December (11 points from September) and currently stand at 42 percent support among decided voters in the province. This moves the NDP three points ahead of the governing BC Liberals who have 39 percent support, down two points from December (6 points from September). The NDP have also taken support from the Green Party who now stand at 12 percent, down two points from December (5 points from September). BC Unity has the support of five percent of decided voters, unchanged from December (up 1 point from September). These results exclude the 20 percent (up 3 points) of BC residents who have no party preference or are undecided.



The regional analysis shows a tied race in the Lower Mainland (41% NDP, 41% BC Liberal) and the NDP with a six-point lead in the rest of the province (43% NDP, 37% BC Liberal).

There are several demographic differences in this quarter's results.

- The BC Liberals do better with men (46% vs. 33% women), non-union residents (45% vs. 29% union) and higher income households (51% vs. 25% lower, 30% middle).
- The NDP do better with women (48% vs. 37% men), residents 35 years of age and older (45% vs. 34% 18 to 34 years) and union households (54% vs. 36% non-union).
- The Greens do better with younger voters (20% 18 to 34 years vs. 9% 35+ years) and lower income households (21% lower vs. 9% higher, 12% middle).

Fewer than Half of NDP Voters (44%) Think NDP Will do a Good Job; Majority (55%) Just Dislike Other Parties

While the NDP should be pleased and excited by their upward movement in the polls, they should not mistake their increased support as a ringing endorsement of their party. In fact, only 44 percent of NDP voters say they are supporting the NDP more "because they think they would do a good job governing the province". The majority (55%) of NDP voters are supporting the party more "because they dislike the other party options available".

The numbers for the BC Liberals are the exact opposite as the NDP. Fifty-five percent of their supporters say they are voting BC Liberal more "because they think they would do a good job governing the province". Forty-four percent say it is more "because they dislike the other party options available". Nevertheless, these results indicate that a sizable portion of BC Liberal support is still vulnerable to an attractive alternative.

Overall, BC voters are about equally split between positive and negative reasons for party support. Forty-seven percent select a party more "because they think they would do a good job governing the province" and 51 percent more "because they dislike the other party options available".



Gordon Campbell's Approval Rating (34%, down 3 points) Falls to New Low; Carole James at 47% Approval as NDP Leader

Gordon Campbell's approval rating continues to slide this quarter. Only one-in-three (34%, down 3 points) British Columbians approves of Campbell's performance as Premier. This is Campbell's lowest approval rating yet as Premier. Fewer than one-in-ten (7%) residents "strongly" approve of the job Campbell is doing as Premier, while 27 percent "moderately" approve.

Two-thirds (64%, up 4 points) of BC residents currently disapprove of Campbell's performance as Premier, including 45 percent who "strongly" disapprove and 19 percent who "moderately" disapprove.

This quarter marks the first time Ipsos-Reid has polled British Columbians about Carole James' performance as NDP leader. The initial reviews are positive as twice as many British Columbians approve (47% total, 9% strongly) of her performance as disapprove (24% total, 7% strongly). Three-in-ten (29%) British Columbians have no opinion of her performance as leader.

- Campbell's approval is higher with men (41% vs. 27% women), non-union households (40% vs. 23% union) and higher income households (43% vs. 27% lower, 27% middle).
- James' approval is highest with union households (53% vs. 43% non-union).

Campbell (40%) and James (38%) Neck and Neck as Choice for Best Premier

Gordon Campbell and Carole James are statistically tied as British Columbians' choice for best Premier. Among British Columbians with an opinion, 40 percent think Campbell is the main party leader who would make the best Premier of British Columbia. Carole James is a mere two points behind Campbell at 38 percent. Adriane Carr of the Green Party (13%) and



Chris Delaney of BC Unity (9%) also receive some support as best Premier. These results exclude the 22 percent of British Columbians with no opinion.

- Campbell is chosen most often by men (47% vs. 31% women), non-union households (46% vs. 28% union) and higher income households (48% vs. 30% lower, 32% middle).
- James is chosen most often by women (44% vs. 34% men) and union households (49% vs. 33% non-union).
- Carr is chosen most often by younger residents (21% 18 to 34 years vs. 11% 35+ years).
- Delaney is chosen most often by Lower Mainland residents (11% vs. 5% rest of BC).

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