

## ***Klein Stumbles but Still on Track to Win Provincial Election***

*Premier Klein's Approval Remains High (56%) but Dips to Lowest Level in a Decade – A Quarter of Albertans Still Unable to Rate Taft or Mason*

*Campaign Hurts Impressions of Klein (-25 momentum) and Benefits Taft (+16) and Mason (+10)*

*But Klein Still on Track to Win a 4<sup>th</sup> Majority Government (44% decided support)*

**Calgary, AB, November 18, 2004** – The most recent poll on the Alberta election shows that Premier Klein continues to earn the highest approval ratings (56%) of any political leader in Alberta. While these ratings continue to be very strong, levels of approval for this leader have dropped to their lowest levels in a decade. Evaluations of the other leaders show that they continue to face awareness problems as 24% could not rate the Liberal Leader Kevin Taft, one-third (32%) could not offer a rating for Brian Mason – Leader of the Alberta NDP and almost one-half (46%) did not know enough about Alberta Alliance leader Randy Thorsteinson to provide a rating.

Klein has been under attack from all corners, and this campaign has clearly had an impact on the fortunes of all three major party leaders. Overall, the Premier is the only leader in the election who has generated negative momentum (-25) since the start of the campaign. The campaign, meanwhile, appears to have had a positive effect for the other leaders. Both Taft (+16) and Mason (+10) head into the last days of the election with positive momentum. Evaluations of Alberta Alliance leader Randy Thorsteinson are less positive at +2.

While Klein's momentum has taken a negative turn, voter support continues to be decidedly behind his party and it appears that none of the other parties have made any major gains during the campaign. Heading into the final days of the campaign 44% of decided voters are behind the Tories. The opposition Liberals now earn the support of 29% of decided voters while the Alberta NDP (12%) and the Alberta Alliance (9%) earn lower levels of support. The Green Party trails the top four parties with the support of 4% of decided voters.

*These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid poll conducted between November 12<sup>th</sup> and November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004. 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  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult*

*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 2001 Census data.*

### **Premier Klein's Approval Remains High (56%) but Dips to Lowest Level in a Decade – A Quarter of Albertans Still Unable to Rate Taft or Mason**

Despite a difficult campaign where the Premier has come under attack from all corners, results show that Klein continues to be the most popular figure in provincial politics. Overall, 56% of Albertans approve of his performance as Premier. The current ratings represent a nine percentage point drop since earlier this fall (65%) and are now at their lowest level in a decade when approval ratings dropped to 54% in 1994. Currently, four-in-ten (41%) of Albertans say they disapprove of his performance (26% Strongly, 14% Moderately).

While ratings for the Premier have shifted during the campaign, evaluations of the other leaders have remained fairly static. In fact, both major opposition party leaders continue suffer from low awareness, and despite a well publicized campaign, 24% of those surveyed were unable to rate Liberal leader and 32% were unable to rate the leader of the Alberta NDP. Otherwise, ratings for Taft and Mason are fairly positive at this time (49% and 42% approval, respectively). Levels of disapproval are also stable with 28% of Albertans saying they disapprove of Taft's performance as Liberal leader and 26% offering a negative rating of Mason's work as NDP leader. The current evaluation also found that awareness of Randy Thorsteinson is very low, as 46% could not rate the Alberta Alliance leader. Currently, 30% approve of this leader's performance and 24% disapprove.

- Approval for Premier Klein is highest among men (60%), Albertans under the age of 35 (61%) and residents of Northern Alberta (65%).
- Liberal leader Kevin Taft earns higher approval ratings from Edmontonians (58%), Albertans with a university education (58%) and those with an annual household income \$30,000 to \$50,000 (56%).
- Approval for Alberta NDP leader Brian Mason is highest in Edmonton (56%) and among those with a university education (50%).
- Approval ratings for Alberta Alliance leader Randy Thorsteinson are consistent across all demographic categories.

## **Campaign Hurts Impressions of Klein (-25 momentum) and Benefits Taft (+16) and Mason (+10)**

The election has been uncharacteristically rocky for Klein as he has come under attack not only for the direction of his government, but also for comments he has made during the campaign. To date, it appears that the current campaign has negatively affected impressions of the Premier. Specifically, 36% of Albertans say their impression of Klein has 'worsened' since the campaign began and only 11% feel their opinion of him has 'improved'. Conversely, Kevin Taft has enjoyed a positive campaign with 23% of those surveyed saying their impression of the Liberal leader has 'improved' and 7% say their impression of him has 'worsened.' Brian Mason has also seen his fortunes change with 17% of Albertans saying their view of him has changed for the better while 7% say their impression has changed for the worse. Impressions of Thorsteinson are mostly unchanged with 8% saying their opinion of him has 'improve' and 6% say it has 'worsened' since the start of the campaign.

The net result of the campaign is that Premier Klein has emerged as the only leader in the campaign with negative momentum (-25). The campaign, meanwhile, has generally been positive for both Taft (+16) and Mason (+10) as they head into the final weekend with positive momentum. Overall, the campaign has had only marginal impact on impressions of Thorsteinson (+2).

- Momentum for Premier Klein is more negative among Albertans with a university education (-35), those with an annual household income of \$50,000 to \$70,000, Albertans aged 35-54 (-33) and among Edmontonians (-33).
- Momentum for Kevin Taft is highest among those with a university education (+26), Albertans over 55 (+20) and residents of Southern Alberta (+23).
- The leader of the Alberta NDP, Brian Mason, currently enjoys more momentum among Edmontonians (+18), among Albertans with an annual household income of \$50,000 to \$70,000 (+14), among those with a university education (+13), and those over the age of 55 (+12).
- Momentum for Alberta Alliance leader Randy Thorsteinson is highest in Southern Alberta (+6)

## **But Klein Still on Track to Win a 4<sup>th</sup> Majority Government (44% support)**

Despite stumbles during the campaign, the Premier appears to be headed towards his fourth straight majority government. Levels of decided support remain very strong at 44% as the election winds down. While this represents an six percentage point drop since the beginning of the campaign, decided support

for the Tories is still 15 points higher than support for the Liberals (29%) and over 30 percentage points higher than the NDP (12%), the Alberta Alliance (9%), or the Green Party (4%). Currently, about one-in-ten (10%) Albertans are undecided about which party to support.

The slight drop in decided voter support does not signal a significant change for the Alberta political scene as no other single party has capitalized on this drop to make major gains. In fact, support for the Liberals or the Alberta NDP has only increased moderately (+3 and +2 respectively). Decided support for the Alberta Alliance, meanwhile, is consistent with results at the beginning of the campaign. Furthermore, support for the Tories increases slightly when only the opinions of those who say they will definitely vote are considered. In this light, the Tories earn the support of 47% of certain and decided voters, the Liberals receive the support of 29%, while the Alberta NDP (11%), the Alberta Alliance (8%) and the Green Party (4%) trail behind.

While these results clearly indicate that Klein and the Tories appear poised to win their fourth straight majority government, steady gains in support made by the provincial Liberals over the past year may translate into a few more seats in areas of the province where the Tories have lost ground, especially in Edmonton where the two parties have been in a dead heat for most of the election.

- Support for the Progressive Conservatives is highest among Albertans with an annual household income of more than \$70,000 (51%) those with some post-secondary education (48%) and among residents of Southern Alberta (53%).
- The provincial Liberals earn higher levels of decided voter support from residents of Edmonton (34%) and Calgary (31%), those with a university education (40%), and from Albertans aged 35-54 (34%).
- The Alberta NDP receives their highest levels of support from Albertans over the age of 55 (15%), among those with an annual household income of \$30,000 to \$50,000 (18%), those with a high school education or less (16%) and Edmontonians (19%).

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