

# BC LIBERALS BREAK THE DEADLOCK

*Rising Government Approval Slowly Paying Dividends for BC Liberals*

*Leadership Numbers Essentially Unchanged*



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### *Rising Government Approval Slowly Paying Dividends for BC Liberals*

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**Vancouver, BC** – With only two months to go until the next provincial election, the BC Liberals have moved into a clear lead over the NDP according to a new BC Ipsos-Reid poll. The BC Liberals (46%, up 2 points from Dec) have opened up a 7-point lead over the NDP (39%, down 2 points) among the province's decided voters. This follows three consecutive quarterly polls (Jul, Sep, Dec 2004) in which the BC Liberals and NDP were effectively tied in voter support. The Green Party sits at 12% support (unchanged).

BC Liberal fortunes have been boosted by rising public approval of the provincial government's overall performance. Nearly half (48%) of British Columbians say they approve of the overall performance of the BC Liberal government. This is up 9-points from September 2004 (39%) and is the government's highest approval rating since December 2001 (49%).

All the leadership numbers are essentially unchanged from December 2004. Gordon Campbell has a 42% approval rating as Premier (up 2 points), while Carole James has a 50% approval rating as NDP leader (down 2 points). Meanwhile, Gordon Campbell maintains his edge as British Columbians' choice as best Premier. Among those with an opinion, 47% (down 1 point) select Campbell as the party leader who would make the best Premier of British Columbia. Carole James is next best at 36% (up 1 point), followed by Green Party leader Adriane Carr at 17% (down 1 point).

*These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid telephone poll conducted March 7<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005 with a randomly selected sample of 800 adult British Columbia residents. 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 BC adult population 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 BC population according to the 2001 Census.*

## ***Rising Government Approval Slowly Paying Dividends for BC Liberals***

Approval of the BC Liberal government's performance is on the rise. Currently, half (48%) of British Columbians say they approve of the overall performance of the BC Liberal government since they were first elected in May of 2001. This is an increase of 9-points from six months ago (39% in Sep 2004) and the highest recorded approval rating for the BC Liberals since December 2001 (49%).

While approval is rising, the BC Liberals don't have a lot of strong advocates. Only 13% "strongly" approve of the government's performance, while one-third (35%) moderately approve. In contrast, the level of "strong" disapproval (33%) is much higher than "moderate" disapproval (17%).

- Overall government approval is highest with men (55% vs. 42% women), non-union households (52% vs. 39% union) and higher income households (56% vs. 44% middle, 36% lower).

Rising government approval is paying dividends for the BC Liberals in terms of voter preferences. The BC Liberals have made slow but steady gains over the last few quarters (37% Jul, 40% Sep, 44% Dec, 46% today) and now have a 7-point lead over the NDP. The Liberals have the support of 46% (up 2 points from Dec) of decided voters, compared to 39% (down 2 points) for the NDP and 12% (unchanged) for the Green Party. These results exclude the 13% of British Columbians who are undecided or express no preference.

A gender gap and regional gap continue to exist in British Columbia. The BC Liberals have a 23-point advantage with men (55% Lib vs. 32% NDP), while the NDP have a 7-point advantage with women (45% NDP vs. 38% Lib). Regionally, the BC Liberals have a 14-point advantage in the Lower Mainland (51% Lib vs. 37% NDP), while the two parties are in a statistical tie in the rest of the province (41% NDP vs. 40% Lib)

- The BC Liberals also do better with non-union households (51% vs. 37% union) and higher income households (56% vs. 41% middle, 28% lower).
- The NDP also do better with union households (49% vs. 34% non-union) and lower income households (46% vs. 42% middle, 33% higher).

- The Greens do better with voters outside the Lower Mainland (16% vs. 8% Lower Mainland), younger voters (16% 18 to 34 years vs. 11% 35-54 years, 7% 55+ years) and lower income households (21% lower vs. 11% middle, 9% higher).

## *Leadership Numbers Essentially Unchanged*

Leader approval and best Premier numbers are basically unchanged from December.

Gordon Campbell has a 42% (up 2 points) approval rating as Premier, including 11% (up 1 point) who “strongly” approve and 31 percent (up 1 point) who “moderately” approve of his performance. A majority of British Columbians (56%, down 3 points) continue to disapprove of Campbell’s performance, including 37% (down 2 points) who “strongly” disapprove and 18 percent (down 2 points) who “moderately” disapprove.

Exactly half (50%, down 2 points) of British Columbians approve of the job Carole James is doing as NDP leader, including 7% (down 1 point) who “strongly” approve and 42 percent (down 3 points) who “moderately” approve of her performance. James’ disapproval rating currently stands at 30% (down 3 points), including 12% (down 1 point) who “strongly” disapprove and 18 percent (down 2 points) who “moderately” disapprove.

- Campbell’s approval rating is higher in the Lower Mainland (46% vs. 35% rest of BC), with men (49% vs. 35% women), non-union residents (45% vs. 35% union) and higher income households (51% vs. 27% lower, 36% middle).
- James’ approval rating is higher with women (53% vs. 46% men) and union household residents (56% vs. 46% non-union).

In terms of which party leader would make the best Premier, Gordon Campbell (47%, down 1 point) leads Carole James (36%, up 1 point) among residents with an opinion. Adriane Carr is selected as best Premier by 17% (down 1 point) of British Columbians. These results exclude the 14% of residents who are undecided about which party leader would make the best Premier.

- Campbell is more likely to be picked as best Premier by Lower Mainland residents (51% vs. 42% rest of BC), men (54% vs. 40% women), non-union residents (51% vs. 40% union) and higher income households (55% vs. 32% lower, 42% middle).

- James is more likely to be picked as best Premier by women (43% vs. 29% men), union household residents (43% vs. 32% non-union) and lower/middle income residents (42% vs. 29% higher).
- Carr is more likely to be picked as best Premier by younger voters (25% 18 to 34 years vs. 15% 35-54 years, 13% 55+ years) and lower income residents (24% vs. 18% middle, 16% higher).

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