

BC NDP Maintains 14-Point Lead Over Governing BC Liberals

Carole James recovers some lost ground, while two-thirds of British Columbians disapprove of Gordon Campbell's performance.

The opposition BC NDP has maintained their strong lead over the governing BC Liberals, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative provincial sample of 800 British Columbians, Carole James's New Democratic Party (NDP) has the support of 47 per cent of respondents (+2 since September).

Gordon Campbell's BC Liberals have the support of one third of voters (33%, +2).

The BC Green Party is a distant third with 10 per cent (-1) while the BC Conservatives remain at seven per cent.

The BC NDP is ahead in all regions of the province, including the Interior, which traditionally votes Liberal. However, the NDP strength at the moment is built on their support with women (55% to 27%), because the two main parties are essentially tied with men (39% for the BC Liberals to 38% for the BC NDP).

The BC Liberals do maintain a significant advantage with their core—voters in households earning more than \$100,000 a year—with 49 per cent, compared to 33 per cent for the NDP.

Approval Ratings

The good news for Premier Campbell is that while his approval numbers are still very low (only 23% of respondents approve of his performance, and 67% disapprove), they are actually an improvement from early September when seven-in-ten (70%) disapproved of the way he was handling his duties. This slight gain is reflected in his momentum score, which has moved from an abysmal -69 to a merely awful -56.

In September, the BC NDP's lead was based on dissatisfaction with Campbell and not approval of James. The last few months have seen British Columbians begin to warm to the leader of the opposition.

While 39 per cent of people disapprove of Carole James's performance, one-third (33%) approve, a significant improvement over since September (when 45% disapproved and 29% approved). Carole James's momentum score has improved as well, and is now a neutral -3 (up from -5 in September).

Green Party leader Jane Sterk remains invisible to most British Columbians with about three-in-five (62%) not having an opinion on her.

HST and Government Re-Election

The introduction of the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) remains a very unpopular policy. A clear majority of British Columbians (61%) strongly disagree that an HST should be introduced, and another 16 per cent moderately disagree.

Only 18 per cent of respondents endorse the HST, although people who are university educated (28%) and are in the highest income bracket (24%) are more likely to agree with the policy.

Overall, the sentiment for change has stayed more or less the same in the last two months. Less than one in five British Columbians (19%) think the BC Liberal government has done a good job and deserves to be re-elected (+2 since September), while another nine per cent (+1) think the BC Liberals have done a good job, but a new party should be elected.

Altogether, 72 per cent think the BC Liberals have done a poor job, out of which 58 per cent (-2) think a new party should be elected, and 14 per cent think the government should be re-elected.

Analysis

The damage caused by the twin blows of the HST and budget deficit that rained down on the BC Liberal government in August has been long-term. Despite a slow economic recovery, the government's support numbers have not moved significantly. Even more worrying for the BC Liberals is the fact that British Columbians seem to be warming to Carole James.

While Premier Gordon Campbell has long been personally unpopular, the government was buoyed by credibility on economic

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issues and the lack of popularity of Ms. James. The BC Liberals lost their economic credibility advantage over the summer, and there are signs in this poll that James might soon become popular enough to be an asset to the NDP, rather than a liability. If this happens, it will be a significant hurdle on the BC Liberal road to recovery.

[Full Report, Detailed Tables and Methodology \(PDF\)](#)

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