

PROVINCIAL POLITICAL SCENE

# Leaderless Parties Are Tied as British Columbians Ponder Their Options

*Christy Clark emerges as the favourite among BC Liberal voters, while Mike Farnworth is the preferred choice for New Democrats.*

[VANCOUVER – Dec. 9, 2010] – The two main parties in British Columbia begin the race towards the next provincial election in a dead heat, and two politicians have been identified as popular options for the leadership of the BC Liberals and the New Democratic Party (NDP), a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

The online survey of a representative provincial sample of 804 British Columbian adults also finds that more than three-in-five British Columbians plan to vote to extinguish the harmonized sales tax (HST) in the referendum scheduled for September 2011.

## Political Scene

The announced departure of Gordon Campbell as Premier and leader of the BC Liberals has affected the province's political scene. Support for the governing BC Liberals among decided voters and leaners now stands at 36 per cent (+10 since early November).

Three-in-four British Columbians who voted for the BC Liberals in 2009 (75%) are sticking with the party, up from 55 per cent in the last survey conducted before Campbell revealed his decision to step down.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **Voting Intention: BC NDP 36%, BC Libs. 36%, Green 14%, BC Conservative 6%**
- **41% of BC residents and 51% of BC Liberal voters think Christy Clark would make a good choice to replace Gordon Campbell**
- **34% of BC residents and 43% of BC NDP voters think Mike Farnworth would make a good choice to replace Carole James**

*Full topline results are at the end of this release.*

*From December 7 to December 8, 2010, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 804 randomly selected British Columbia adults who are Angus Reid Forum panellists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.5%. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of British Columbia. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.*

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The BC NDP, which is also going through a leadership change following the resignation of Carole James, dropped from 47 per cent among decided voters and leaners in November to 36 per cent this month. The NDP's retention rate fell from 87 per cent to 76 per cent.

While the NDP was ahead of the BC Liberals in virtually every demographic a month ago, the political scene is now much closer. The BC Liberals are now ahead among men (41% to 35%) and voters aged 18 to 34 (39% to 35%).

The Green Party is third across the province with 14 per cent (+4), followed by the BC Conservative Party with six per cent (-4). Eight per cent of decided voters and leaners would back other parties or independent candidates.

Faced with a choice of selecting either of the two main parties without a discernible leader, the BC electorate is split. In a follow-up question, 14 per cent of all respondents say they plan to vote for the BC Liberals in the 2013 provincial election regardless of their leader, and the same proportion (14%) say they will vote for the BC NDP, not considering who leads the party. Another 16 per cent of respondents do not plan to back either of the two main parties in 2013.

This leaves more than half of British Columbians (57%) who are going to ponder their options. One-in-five (20%) say they are leaning towards voting for the BC NDP in 2013, but their decision hinges on who the leader is. A slightly smaller number of respondents (17%) say they are leaning towards supporting the BC Liberals but are waiting to see who the new leader is. Two-in-five British Columbians (20%) are completely unsure at this point.

### **The Leadership Candidates**

Christy Clark has emerged as a popular option to replace Gordon Campbell, both among British Columbians (41% think she would be a "good choice" for the position) and respondents who voted for the governing party in 2009 (51%).

Kevin Falcon is second among both BC residents (29%) and BC Liberal backers (42%), followed by Mike de Jong (All BC 27%, BC Libs. 40%), George Abbott (All BC 24%, BC Libs. 35%), and Moira Stillwell (All BC 8%, BC Libs. 8%).

At the time the survey was conducted, no BC NDP member had signalled an intention to run for the leadership of the party. The survey included the names of 10 politicians. Mike Farnworth is the top choice among all British Columbians (34% think he would be a "good choice" to replace Carole James) and those who voted for the NDP in the 2009 provincial election (43%).

Gregor Robertson is tied with Jenny Kwan among all British Columbians (27% each), but Kwan has the upper hand among NDP voters (35% to 29%). Adrian Dix is fourth among British Columbians (22%) and third among NDP voters (33%). Six other possible contenders—Moe Sihota, Bob Simpson, John Horgan,

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Derrick Corrigan, Bruce Ralston and George Heyman—were regarded as “good choices” by less than two-in-five British Columbians and NDP voters in 2009.

### **HST Referendum**

Three-in-five British Columbians (64%, -2) say they would vote to extinguish the HST in the referendum scheduled for Sept. 24, 2011. Three-in-ten (30%, +9) would cast a ballot to keep the HST, while six per cent (-7) are undecided.

Women (66%) are still more likely than men (62%) to express support for abolishing the HST. It is important to note that the proportion of respondents who would vote to keep the new tax has increased for the second month in a row.

### **Analysis**

The recent leadership discussions in the two main parties have clearly benefitted the BC Liberals. The governing party’s retention rate is at 75 per cent for the first time since the HST was unveiled. The NDP posts a lower retention rate this month, but the 11-point drop among decided voters and leaners is a product of disenchanting BC Liberals returning to the party they supported in 2009.

The two parties begin their respective rebuilding processes with their core support practically intact, and with the knowledge that one-in-seven British Columbians are planning to stick with them no matter what. The race is on to capture the half of the electorate that is waiting for ideas, policies and new faces, after 17 years of Campbell and seven years of James.

*This year’s editions of the BC Political Scene can be accessed here:*

[March 2010](#) / [April 2010](#) / [June 2010](#) / [July 2010](#) / [September 2010](#) / [October 2010](#) / [November 2010](#)

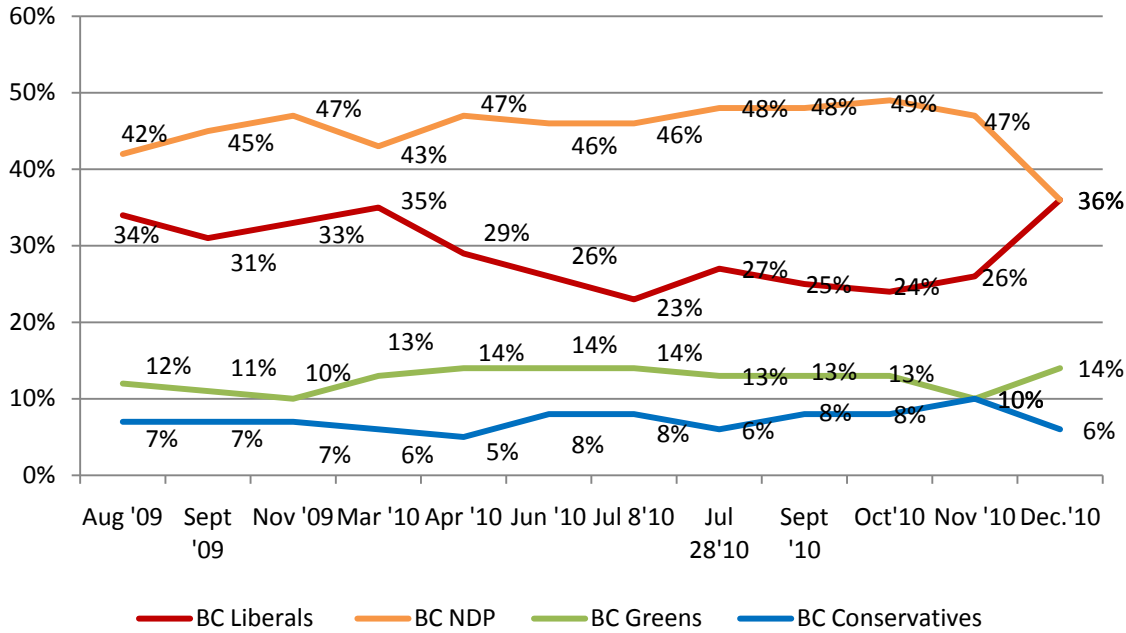
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If a provincial election were held tomorrow in British Columbia, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency? – *Decided voters including leaners*



**BC Political Scene**

If a provincial election were held tomorrow in British Columbia, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency? – *Decided voters including leaners*

	British Columbia	Metro Vancouver	Vancouver Island	Interior	North	May 2009 Election
<b>BC NDP</b>	36%	37%	36%	34%	42%	42%
<b>BC Liberals</b>	36%	39%	34%	31%	38%	46%
<b>BC Greens</b>	14%	13%	15%	18%	5%	8%
<b>BC Conservatives</b>	6%	5%	4%	8%	6%	2%
<b>Other / Independent</b>	8%	6%	11%	9%	9%	2%

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If a provincial election were held tomorrow in British Columbia, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency? – *Decided voters including leaners*

	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	<\$50K	\$50-99K	\$100K+
<b>BC NDP</b>	35%	37%	35%	37%	37%	37%	40%	26%
<b>BC Liberals</b>	41%	31%	39%	33%	37%	24%	36%	57%
<b>BC Greens</b>	13%	16%	18%	18%	8%	20%	14%	7%
<b>BC Conservatives</b>	5%	7%	4%	5%	8%	8%	2%	6%
<b>Other / Independent</b>	6%	9%	4%	7%	10%	11%	8%	4%

**BC Political Scene**

If a provincial election were held tomorrow in British Columbia, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency? – *Decided voters including leaners*

	Respondents who voted for the NDP in the 2009 Election	Respondents who voted for the BC Liberals in the 2009 Election
<b>BC NDP</b>	76%	9%
<b>BC Liberals</b>	7%	75%
<b>BC Greens</b>	9%	3%
<b>BC Conservatives</b>	1%	7%
<b>Other / Independent</b>	7%	6%

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### BC Political Scene

As you may know, Gordon Campbell has announced he is stepping down as Premier and leader of the BC Liberals, and Carole James has announced her resignation as leader of the BC New Democratic Party (NDP). Thinking about the 2013 provincial election in British Columbia, which of these statements comes closest to your own point of view?

	British Columbia	Metro Vancouver	Vancouver Island	Interior	North
I will vote for the BC Liberals, regardless of their leader	14%	14%	15%	13%	19%
I am leaning towards voting for the BC Liberals, but it depends on who they pick as leader	17%	19%	13%	14%	16%
I am leaning towards voting for the BC NDP, but it depends on who they pick as leader	20%	22%	23%	13%	16%
I will vote for the BC NDP, regardless of their leader	14%	11%	18%	16%	13%
I will vote for a party other than the BC Liberals or the NDP	16%	15%	19%	18%	14%
None of these / Not sure	20%	20%	13%	26%	22%

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**BC Political Scene**

Thinking about each one of these politicians, do you think they would be a good choice or a bad choice to replace Gordon Campbell as Premier and leader of the BC Liberals? - **“Good Choice” listed**

	British Columbians	Respondents who voted for the BC Liberals in the 2009 Election
Christy Clark	41%	51%
Kevin Falcon	29%	42%
Mike de Jong	27%	40%
George Abbott	24%	35%
Moira Stillwell	8%	8%

**BC Political Scene**

Thinking about each one of these politicians, do you think they would be a good choice or a bad choice to replace Carole James as leader of the BC New Democratic Party (NDP)? - **“Good Choice” listed**

	British Columbians	Respondents who voted for the BC NDP in the 2009 Election
Mike Farnworth	34%	43%
Gregor Robertson	27%	35%
Jenny Kwan	27%	29%
Adrian Dix	22%	33%
Moe Sihota	15%	18%
Bob Simpson	12%	18%
John Horgan	10%	18%
Derrick Corrigan	10%	17%
Bruce Ralston	7%	12%
George Heyman	7%	14%

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### BC Political Scene

As you may know, a referendum on the HST will take place on Sept. 24, 2011. The people of British Columbia will be asked to vote Yes or No on the following question:

*Are you in favour of extinguishing the HST (Harmonized Sales Tax) and reinstating the PST (Provincial Sales Tax) in conjunction with the GST (Goods and Services Tax)?*

If this referendum took place tomorrow, how would you vote?

	British Columbia	Metro Vancouver	Vancouver Island	Interior	North
Yes – to abolish the HST	64%	61%	68%	61%	82%
No – to keep the HST	30%	32%	28%	31%	14%
Undecided	6%	7%	4%	9%	4%

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*Are you in favour of extinguishing the HST (Harmonized Sales Tax) and reinstating the PST (Provincial Sales Tax) in conjunction with the GST (Goods and Services Tax)?*

If this referendum took place tomorrow, how would you vote?

	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	<\$50K	\$50-99K	\$100K+
Yes – to abolish the HST	62%	66%	63%	68%	60%	69%	66%	62%
No – to keep the HST	34%	25%	28%	26%	35%	23%	30%	34%
Undecided	4%	8%	9%	6%	5%	9%	5%	4%

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*Angus Reid Public Opinion polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum ([www.angusreidforum.com](http://www.angusreidforum.com)), Springboard America ([www.springboardamerica.com](http://www.springboardamerica.com)) and Springboard UK ([www.springboarduk.com](http://www.springboarduk.com)) online panels, which are carefully recruited to ensure representation across all demographic and psychographic segments of these populations. Panel members pass through rigorous screening and a double opt-in process ensuring highly motivated and responsive members. These premier online survey platforms present respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses. Each survey is actively sampled and weighted to model that characteristics of the universe required and employs the latest in quality control techniques to ensure data validity.*

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**Copies of this poll are available on our website:  
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