

## PROVINCIAL POLITICAL SCENE

# Clark, Farnworth Remain Favourites to Take Over BC Political Parties

*The BC Liberals and New Democrats are still tied in British Columbia, as the public voices overwhelming support for increasing the minimum wage.*

[VANCOUVER – Dec. 23, 2010] – British Columbians have embraced most of the proposals put forward by the BC Liberal leadership candidates, but are not too keen on allowing people under the age of 18 to cast ballots in provincial elections, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

The online survey of a representative provincial sample of 806 British Columbian adults also shows that Christy Clark and Mike Farnworth have solidified their positions as the frontrunners to lead the province's main political forces.

## Political Scene

The past two weeks did not provide a sizeable boost to either of the two main provincial parties. In all, 38 per cent of decided voters and leaners in British Columbia would support the BC New Democratic Party (NDP) if a provincial election were held tomorrow, while 38 per cent would back the BC Liberals. The Green Party has dropped to 12 per cent, followed by the BC Conservatives with seven per cent.

The BC Liberals are slightly ahead in Metro Vancouver, while the NDP holds small leads in the Interior and the North, and maintains a sizeable advantage in Vancouver Island. Men and respondents over the age of 55 are now more

## KEY FINDINGS

- **Six policies proposed by BC Liberal leadership hopefuls are supported by more than half of British Columbians**
- **46% of BC residents and 66% of BC Liberal voters think Christy Clark would make a good choice to replace Gordon Campbell**
- **40% of BC residents and 49% of BC NDP voters think Mike Farnworth would make a good choice to replace Carole James**
- **Voting Intention: BC NDP 38%, BC Libs. 38%, Green 12%, BC Conservative 7%**

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

*From December 20 to December 21, 2010, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 806 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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likely to cast a ballot for the BC Liberals, while women and younger respondents are more likely to vote for the NDP. The two main parties keep a good retention rate, with 72 per cent of British Columbians who voted for the BC Liberals in 2009 sticking with the party. The NDP's retention rate is higher (82%).

The prospective BC Liberal base for the next election has expanded, with 36 per cent of respondents saying they will vote for the BC Liberals in 2013 (17%) or are leaning towards doing so (19%). The NDP's base is currently at 31 per cent, with 14 per cent of British Columbians saying they will vote for the NDP, and 17 per cent saying they are leaning towards backing the party.

### **The Leadership Candidates**

Almost half of British Columbians (46%) and two thirds of BC Liberal voters in 2009 (66%) think Christy Clark would be a good choice to replace Gordon Campbell as Premier and leader of the BC Liberals. Positive views on Clark's bid have increased markedly since early December. Kevin Falcon is second (28% of British Columbians think he would be a good choice, along with 45% of BC Liberal voters). George Abbott and Mike de Jong garner the backing of one-in-four BC residents and one third of BC Liberal voters, while Moira Stillwell gets a positive review from one-in-ten British Columbians and BC Liberal voters.

Mike Farnworth has expanded his lead among the NDP's leadership hopefuls, with two-in-five British Columbians (40%) and half of NDP voters in 2009 (49%) saying he would be a good choice to replace Carole James. Adrian Dix remains in second place, with a positive review from one-in-four BC residents (24%) and more than a third of NDP voters (37%). The remaining prospective contenders cannot clear the 20 per cent mark among BC residents or NDP voters.

### **Proposals**

The BC Liberal leadership candidates have recently discussed several policy initiatives. The highest level of support from the population is for raising the minimum wage in British Columbia from the current \$8 an hour (90%) and lowering the interest rate on student loans (82%).

The idea of holding the harmonized sales tax (HST) referendum in June 2011, instead of September 2011, is backed by 71 per cent of British Columbians. The plan to change existing legislation so that people can buy wine in British Columbia and send it to people in other provinces gets the backing of three-in-five respondents (64%).

About half of respondents would consent to holding a provincial election before the scheduled date of May 2013 after the new BC Liberal leader is chosen (53%) and putting the HST to a free vote in the Legislative Assembly (52%). The idea that gets the lowest level of support is allowing British Columbians aged 16 and 17 to vote in provincial elections. Only 27 per cent of respondents support this course of action, while two thirds (66%) oppose it.

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British Columbians did not embrace the idea of political parties allowing British Columbians under the age of 18 to become members and play a role in the selection of the new leaders. Three-in-five respondents (60%) believe people younger than 18 are not allowed to vote in Canada, so they should not play a role in the process to select the province's main political leaders. Conversely, a third of respondents (32%) sided with the argument that political parties are free to set their own guidelines for membership and voting rights, and if they want to allow people younger than 18 to take part, that's fine.

### **HST Referendum**

As the weeks progress, support for abolishing the harmonized sales tax (HST) continues to erode. More than half of British Columbians (54%) would still vote to extinguish the HST, but support is down 10 points since early December. One third of BC residents (35%, +5) would cast a ballot to keep the HST, while 11 per cent are undecided.

While women continue to support abandoning the HST by an almost 2-to-1 margin, the race has tightened considerably among men (48% would extinguish it, 42% would keep it).

### **Analysis**

A large chunk of the BC electorate is waiting to see who ultimately leads the two main parties in the province. However, the month of December has solidified the position of Christy Clark and Mike Farnworth as popular choices to take over the BC Liberals and the NDP respectively.

The proposals from the BC Liberal leadership candidates have resonated with the public, with the exception of the plan to lower the voting age. The one key change from early December is the erosion of support for the abolition of the HST. Men and respondents in affluent households are slowly coming on board with the idea that the tax should be kept, so the final decision on whether to proceed with a free vote in the Legislative Assembly—or hold the referendum at an earlier date—will be particularly important for whoever becomes British Columbia's 35th Premier.

*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](#) / [December 2010 \(1\)](#)

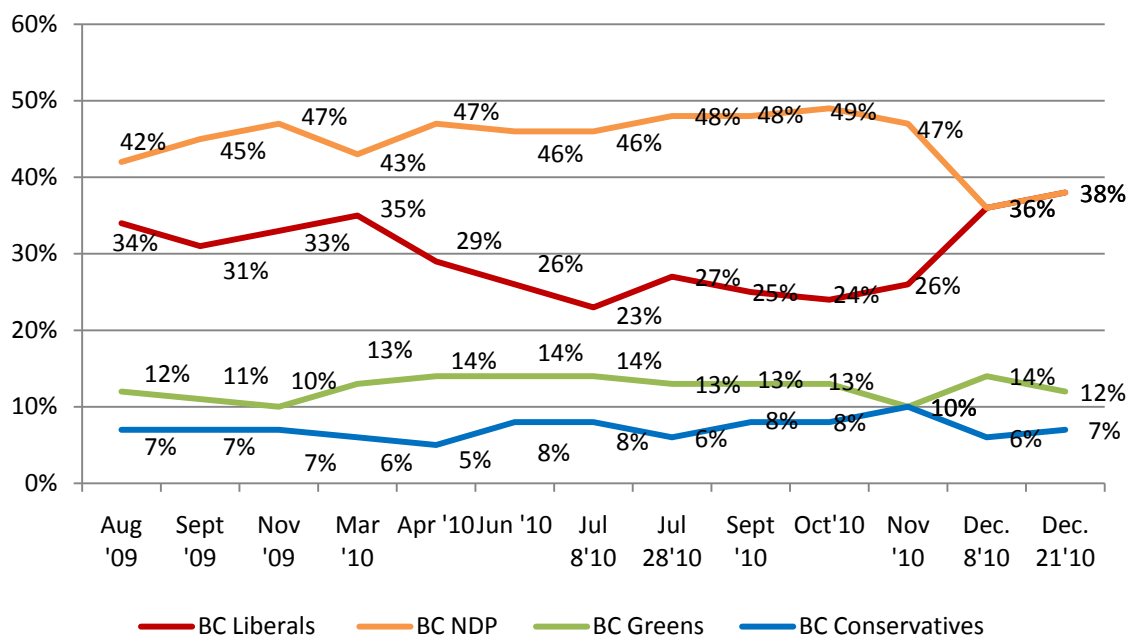
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If a provincial election were held tomorrow in British Columbia, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency? – *Decided voters including leaners*



## 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
BC NDP	38%	35%	43%	39%	35%	42%
BC Liberals	38%	43%	31%	35%	31%	46%
BC Greens	12%	14%	11%	10%	2%	8%
BC Conservatives	7%	5%	9%	10%	19%	2%
Other / Independent	5%	3%	6%	6%	13%	2%

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### 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*

	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	<\$50K	\$50-99K	\$100K+
BC NDP	35%	40%	37%	42%	33%	45%	38%	23%
BC Liberals	42%	34%	32%	38%	43%	25%	40%	60%
BC Greens	10%	14%	20%	10%	8%	15%	11%	9%
BC Conservatives	8%	7%	7%	6%	9%	8%	7%	6%
Other / Independent	5%	5%	4%	4%	7%	7%	4%	2%

### 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
BC NDP	82%	11%
BC Liberals	5%	72%
BC Greens	7%	4%
BC Conservatives	0%	8%
Other / Independent	6%	5%

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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	17%	21%	16%	11%	8%
I am leaning towards voting for the BC Liberals, but it depends on who they pick as leader	19%	21%	12%	24%	17%
I am leaning towards voting for the BC NDP, but it depends on who they pick as leader	17%	19%	16%	13%	18%
I will vote for the BC NDP, regardless of their leader	14%	12%	17%	19%	9%
I will vote for a party other than the BC Liberals or the NDP	12%	11%	16%	12%	9%
None of these / Not sure	20%	17%	24%	20%	39%

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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 Changes since Dec. 8**

	British Columbians	Respondents who voted for the BC Liberals in the 2009 Election
Christy Clark	46% (+5)	66% (+15)
Kevin Falcon	28% (-1)	45% (+3)
George Abbott	25% (+1)	34% (-1)
Mike de Jong	23% (-4)	34% (-6)
Moirra Stillwell	10% (+2)	10% (+2)

## 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 Changes since Dec. 8**

	British Columbians	Respondents who voted for the BC NDP in the 2009 Election
Mike Farnworth	40% (+6)	49% (+6)
Adrian Dix	24% (+2)	37% (+4)
Derrick Corrigan	13% (+3)	20% (+3)
Leonard Krog	12%	19%
John Horgan	10% (=)	20% (+2)
Harry Lali	10%	14%
Norm Macdonald	10%	14%
Bruce Ralston	9% (+2)	15% (+3)
George Heyman	9% (+2)	15% (+1)
Nathan Cullen	9%	11%

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**BC Political Scene**

As you may know, several BC Liberal leadership candidates have recently discussed several policy initiatives. From what you have seen, read or heard, do you support or oppose each one of these initiatives?

	Support	Oppose	Not sure
Raising the minimum wage in British Columbia from the current \$8 an hour	90%	7%	3%
Lowering the interest rate on student loans	82%	12%	6%
Holding the HST referendum in June 2011, instead of September 2011	71%	18%	11%
Changing existing legislation so that people can buy wine in British Columbia and send it to people in other provinces	64%	11%	25%
Holding a provincial election before the scheduled date of May 2013 after the new BC Liberal leader is chosen	53%	33%	14%
Putting the HST to a free vote in the Legislative Assembly	52%	33%	15%
Allowing British Columbians aged 16 and 17 to vote in provincial elections	27%	65%	8%

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**BC Political Scene**

As you may know, British Columbians as young as 14 can become members of the BC Liberals and participate in the process to elect the party's leader. British Columbians as young as 12 can become members of the BC NDP and participate in the process to elect the party's leader. Thinking about this, which one of the following statements comes closest to your own point of view?

	British Columbia	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Political parties are free to set their own guidelines for membership and voting rights, and if they want to allow people younger than 18 to take part, that's fine.	32%	37%	27%	33%	34%	29%
People younger than 18 are not allowed to vote in Canada, so they should not play a role in the process to select the province's main political leaders.	60%	58%	63%	58%	58%	65%
Not sure	8%	5%	10%	8%	9%	6%

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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
<b>Yes – to abolish the HST</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>74%</b>
<b>No – to keep the HST</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>17%</b>

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

	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	<\$50K	\$50-99K	\$100K+
<b>Yes – to abolish the HST</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>No – to keep the HST</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>7%</b>

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*Angus Reid Public Opinion is a practice of Vision Critical—a global research and technology company specializing in custom online panels, private communities, and innovative online methods. Vision Critical is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Public Opinion team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995*

*Vision Critical is now one of the largest market research enterprises in the world. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.*

*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.*

*Since 2006, Angus Reid has covered eight provincial elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes.*

*Angus Reid, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election. More information on our electoral record can be found at:*

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**For more information, please contact  
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

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

**<http://www.angus-reid.com>**

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