

## Snap Election? Snap out of it, say majority of British Columbians as legislative session looms

*Division, uncertainty grips province; pessimism over standard of living in BC reaches seven-year high*

**June 20, 2017** – As Members of the BC Legislative Assembly gather for an unprecedented 41<sup>st</sup> sitting of the House, they'll do so with the knowledge that most British Columbians are in no mood for another election as a means of solving what could be more political paralysis in the weeks to come.

As BC Liberal and BC NDP politicians prepare to make the case for why they should govern over a hung parliament – people in this province are divided – along political lines – and in some cases among themselves – about the best way to move forward, about policies and priorities.

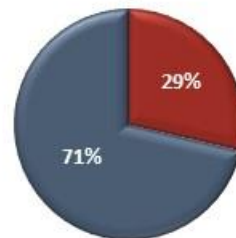
While past BC Liberal voters find a common voice on several pressing issues including the fate of the Site C Dam and the twinning of the TransMountain Pipeline, they are less united on what to do about the possible changes to the approval process for LNG projects.

And while those who voted NDP or for the Greens of BC last month are adamant an NDP minority government is what they want, Green supporters are less warm towards NDP leader John Horgan than NDP supporters are of Green leader Andrew Weaver.

### Key Findings:

- More than one-in-three British Columbians worry their own standard of living will be worse a year from now – a seven year high.
- About one-in-ten (11%) indicate they're experiencing buyer's remorse – and would have voted differently if afforded a "do-over"; of that group, slightly more are for the Liberals than the NDP
- Almost two-thirds of BC residents (63%) say that BC Liberals should concede defeat, rather than use procedures to prevent a Green-supported NDP minority government from leading

There has been some discussion about what should happen next. Which statement is closer to your view?



- B.C. should hold another election right away
- B.C. should let the process play out

### METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from June 15-19, 2017 among a representative randomized sample of 810 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 3.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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- While majorities of the BC Liberal base strongly support continuing with the Site C Dam and the TransMountain Pipeline expansion (72% and 73% respectively) – there is less alignment between NDP and Green voters and indeed, in their *own* camps, on the future of these projects
- A majority of British Columbians (62%) would prefer to see Christy Clark step down as leader of the BC Liberals, including one-third (32%) of her own base

## Index:

### Part 1 – Now What?!

### Part 2 – Mood of the Province

### Part 3 – Leadership

### Part 4 – Priorities under an NDP-Green Alliance?

### Part 5 – How Long will Cooperation Last?

### Part 6 – What about a “do-over”?

## Part 1 – Now What?!

### How did we get here?

BC's 41<sup>st</sup> election ended with no party winning enough seats to claim a majority in the provincial legislature. Indeed, [just 1,566 votes](#) separated the BC Liberals from the BC NDP. Overall, the BC incumbent Liberals won 43 seats, the BC New Democratic Party won 41 seats, and the BC Green Party won 3 seats. After the election, NDP leader John Horgan and Green leader Andrew Weaver came to an agreement where the NDP would form a minority government with the support of the Green MLAs on “supply and confidence matters”, in which the government would fall if there was not majority support.

Since this deal was reached, the governing Liberals have decided to follow constitutional convention and test their government to a vote of non-confidence in the legislature following a throne speech. But before this happens, a Speaker must be elected. The problem is, none of the three parties appear inclined to offer up a candidate from their ranks.

### Time for a snap election?

Against the backdrop of these dizzying turns in political fortunes, endless machinations and procedural wrangling, political watchers and participants alike are equally uncertain about what will happen next.

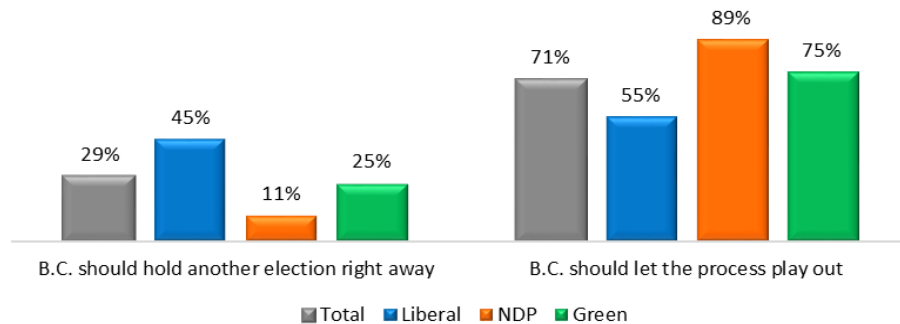
[Some have suggested](#) the best way to deal with this is for British Columbians to return to the polls quickly in a new election; the hope being a more certain result next time around. The electorate's own appetite for this, however, is the opposite of hearty: fewer than one-in-three (29%) favour a snap election. BC Liberal voters are more divided over what to do, while BC NDP and Green voters are not:

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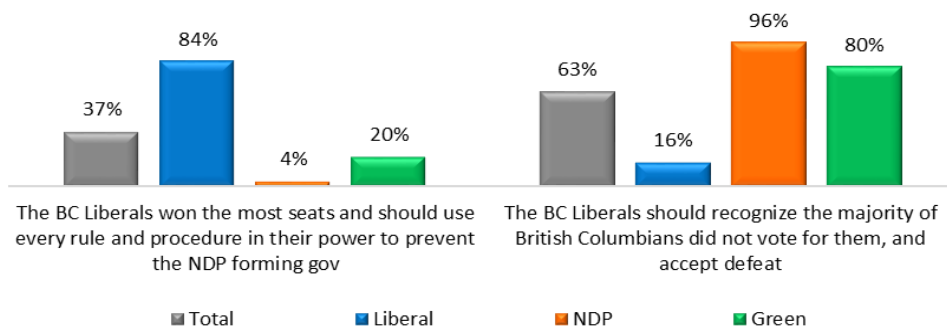
## Which statement is closer to your view?



Putting aside the prospect of a “do-over” at the ballot box, political gamesmanship has been defined over the last two weeks by Premier Christy Clark and stalwart members of her caucus making the case for “stability”. While they have acknowledged they may not be in power for long, they have also hinted they do not intend to make it easy for the NDP, supported by the Greens, to form government. Clark and her team, in turn, have been accused of dragging out an inevitable outcome, and “ragging the puck”.

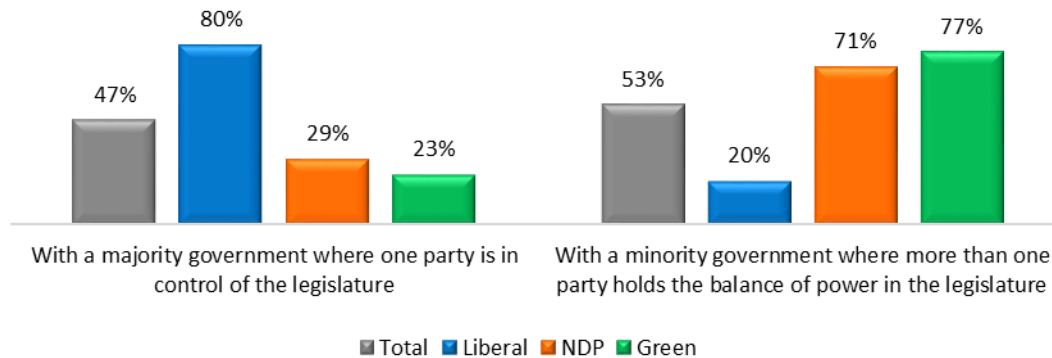
Do British Columbians agree? Once again, opinion falls out along political lines. When asked if the BC Liberals should use “every rule and procedure” at their disposal to block and NDP-led government, the vast majority of their support base says “yes”. NDP voters are near-unanimous that the BC Liberals should “accept defeat”. Greens feel the same way, although a notable number side with the Liberals:

## Which of the following statements is closer to your own view on this prospect of the NDP forming a minority government with the support of the Green Party?



Should the NDP and Greens solve the problem that will be picking a Speaker of the House, and should they form government, its minority status won’t put the majority at ease. Although slightly more than half say the province is better off with a minority, nearly as many would have felt better about a majority government. And yes, political preference drives the answer to this question, too:

## Is BC better off:



## Part 2 – Mood of the province

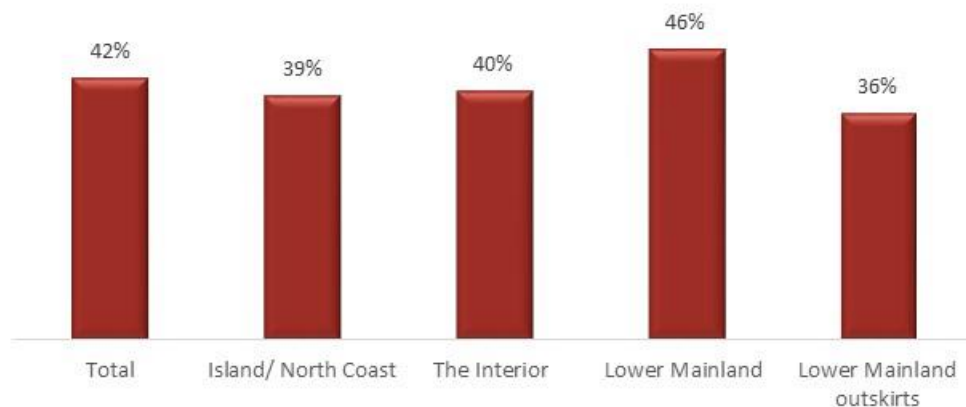
### Pessimism and doubts pervade:

Each party may posture and bluster as much as it likes, but success in their respective game plans cannot be achieved if those strategies are out of step with the mood and mindset of British Columbians.

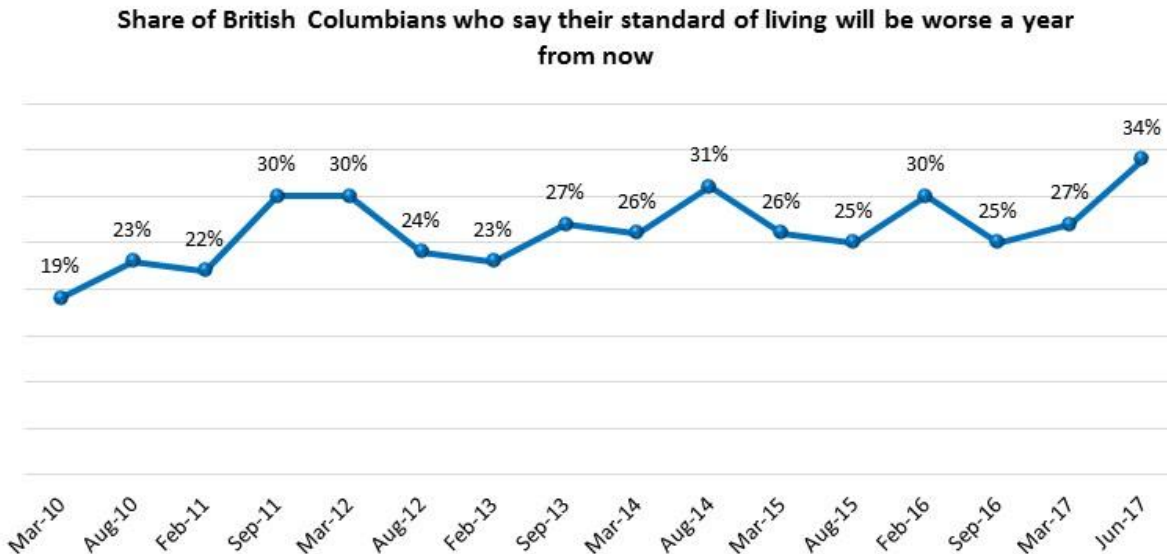
When it comes to the direction the province is heading in these days, the mood is far from buoyant. Indeed, only one-in-four (24%) say BC is on the “right track”. Nearly twice as many (42%) say the opposite, while the rest aren’t sure. People living in and around Metro Vancouver are most likely to say the province is on the “wrong track”.

*\*For a detailed definition of the four regions delineated please visit the end of the report*

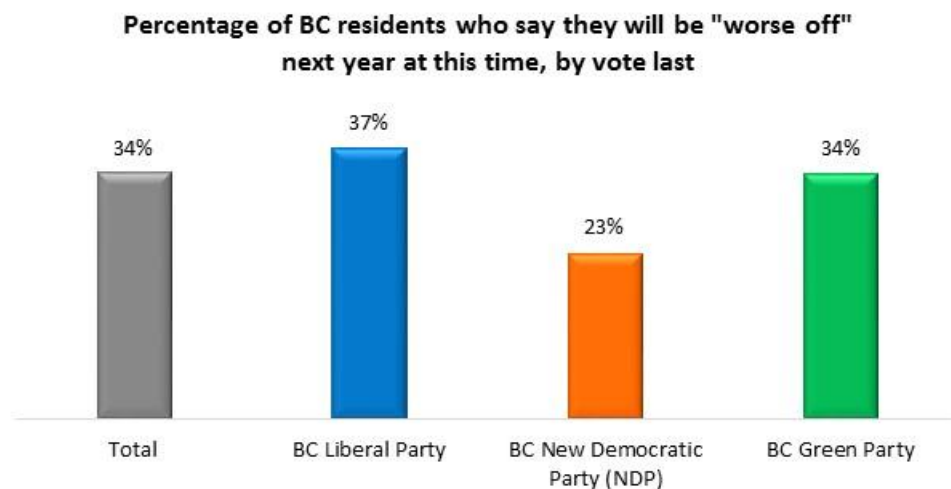
## Share of BC residents who say the province is on the wrong track by region:



Even more compelling – and some would say alarming – is the seven-point increase over the last three months in the number of people who worry their standard of living will be worse off a year from now than it is today. This represents the highest level of anxiety and pessimism on this front in British Columbia since the spring of 2010:



Who feels this way the most? Politics divides those feeling more and less cynicism. The latest wave of data indicates nearly two-in-five past BC Liberal voters feel this way, dropping to less than one-in-four BC NDP voters – and rising to one-third among those who backed the Greens of BC:

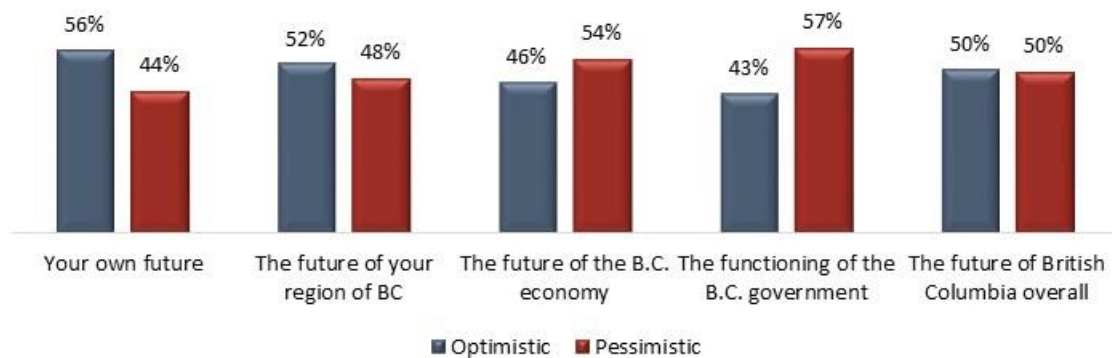


## An NDP government buoys young, urban British Columbians:

Against this backdrop, it is clear that the prospect of a minority NDP government, supported by the Green Party brings hope and optimism for some, and heartburn and headaches for others, largely depending on where they live, which party they voted for, and what aspect of BC's future they're contemplating.

Respondents were asked to consider five possible impacts of an NDP government: on their own futures, and those of their region, the economy, the functioning of government, and on the province overall:

**Let's assume the NDP forms the next B.C. government with Green support.  
Are you optimistic or pessimistic about each of the following?**



What is striking, however, are differences by age. Millennials are significantly more hopeful about outcomes under an NDP minority government on a range of issues than their Gen-X counterparts or Baby Boomers:

Let's assume the NDP forms the next B.C. government with Green support. Are you optimistic or pessimistic about each of the following?						
	Age					
	18-34		35-54		55+	
	Optimistic	Pessimistic	Optimistic	Pessimistic	Optimistic	Pessimistic
Your own future	67%	33%	55%	45%	49%	51%
The future of your region of BC	62%	38%	51%	49%	46%	54%
The future of the B.C. economy	57%	43%	44%	56%	41%	59%
The functioning of the B.C. government	55%	45%	40%	60%	37%	63%
The future of British Columbia overall	62%	38%	47%	53%	45%	55%

And on the prospects of a NDP minority, opinions also divide based on where in the province people live.

**Let's assume the NDP forms the next B.C. government with Green support. Are you optimistic or pessimistic about each of the following?**

	Region							
	The Lower Mainland		Lower Mainland Outskirts		The Interior		Vancouver Island/North Coast	
	Optimistic	Pessimistic	Optimistic	Pessimistic	Optimistic	Pessimistic	Optimistic	Pessimistic
Your own future	59%	41%	47%	53%	49%	51%	66%	34%
The future of your region of BC	56%	44%	45%	55%	45%	55%	59%	41%
The future of the B.C. economy	50%	50%	37%	63%	40%	60%	54%	46%
The functioning of the B.C. government	47%	53%	33%	67%	33%	67%	55%	45%
The future of British Columbia overall	54%	46%	42%	58%	42%	58%	58%	42%

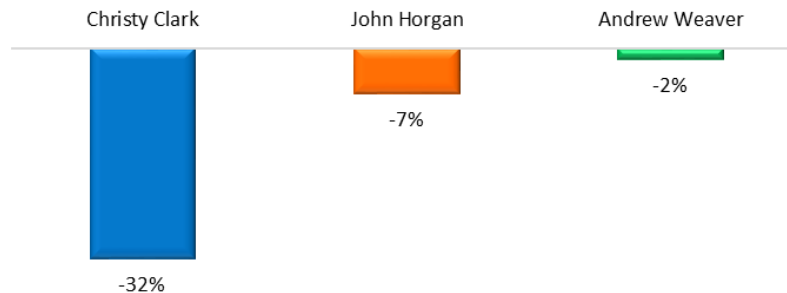
### **Part 3 – Leadership:**

#### **Does anyone have momentum?**

If there was one clear learning from the spring's election, it was that voters had neither warmed to BC Liberal Leader Christy Clark, nor to NDP leader John Horgan. The result of this, arguably, was the failure of either leader to convince enough voters to give them a majority mandate to govern. Five weeks later, a comparison of each leader's momentum score (the number of people who say their view of the leader has improved, minus the number who say its worsened), shows momentum for all in decline, though one fares worse than the rest:



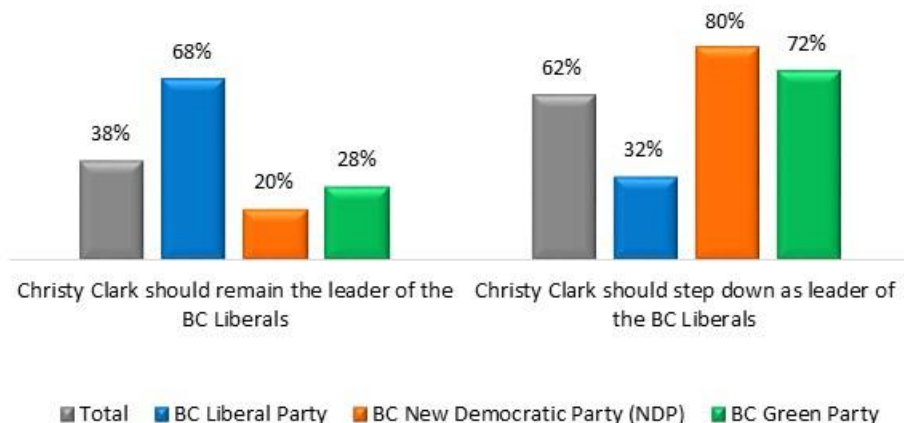
## Momentum scores for BC Party Leaders:



## Should Clark stay or go?

With talk of a snap election persisting, and given Clark's momentum numbers, what of the premier's own political future? Just over six-in-ten British Columbians think she should step down as leader of the BC Liberals. And while it is hardly surprising that the vast majority of past NDP and Green voters feel this way, indeed, one-in-three (32%) people who cast a vote for the BC Liberals in May 9 are of the same view:

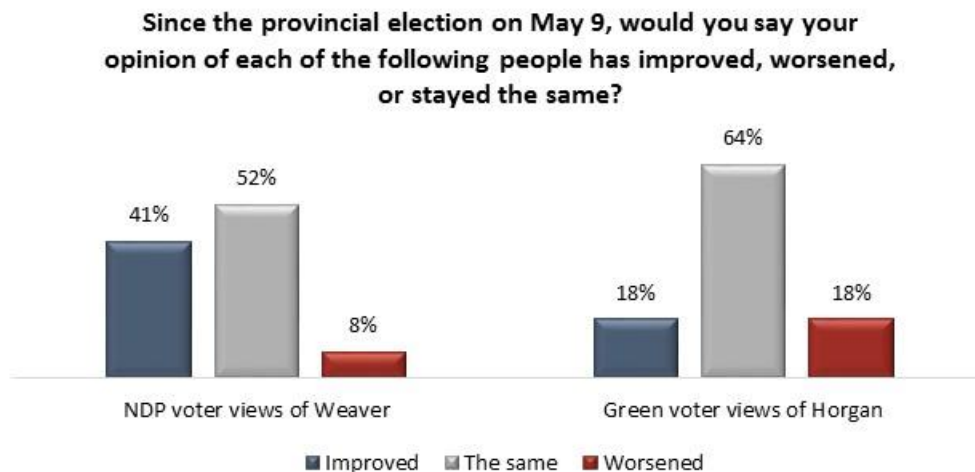
## Which of these options would you, personally, prefer?



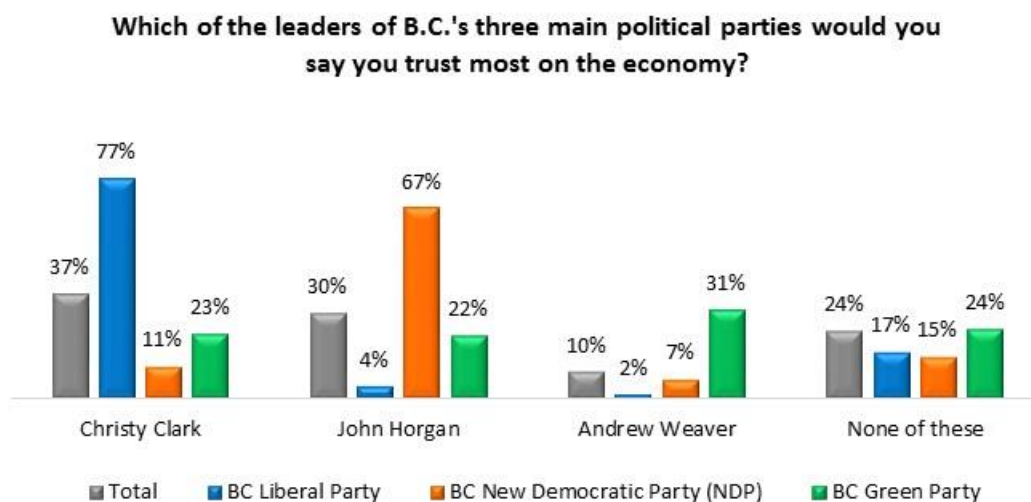
Clark herself has given no indication she has any plans to [step down](#). Indeed, she is a key face and voice of the BC Liberal "stable and steady government" message it has been espousing in past weeks. And while prominent former cabinet ministers have placed the failure to win another majority mandate [squarely on Clark's shoulders](#), there has been no (public) discussion of a Clark ouster among the leadership or the rank and file of the party.

## Hints of Trouble for Horgan?

A deeper look leader momentum also reveals a concerning trend for NDP Leader John Horgan, especially in terms of how he is viewed by Green voters – the base to which his partner in a minority government – Andrew Weaver – is bound to listen. NDP voters give a bounce in momentum to Weaver by means of an improved opinion of the leader. The same generosity of spirit, however, is not applied to Horgan by those who voted Green:

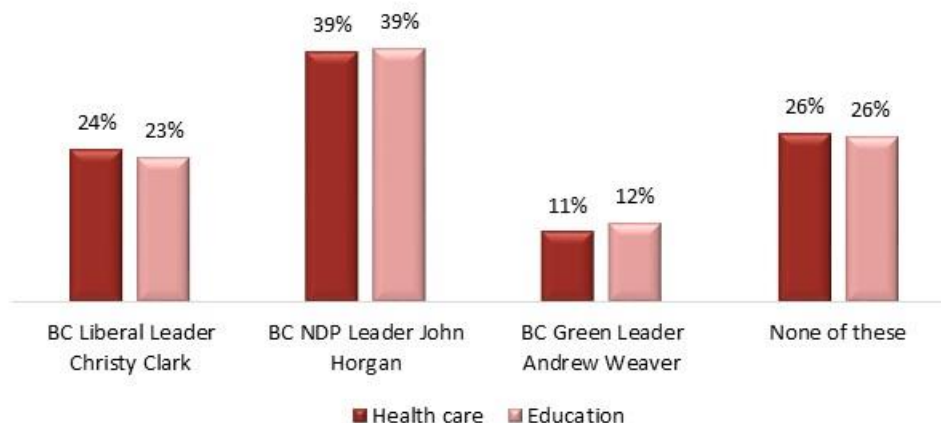


Putting aside her future, Clark is seen as the best leader to handle economic issues. Indeed, BC has fares well in terms of growth and unemployment rate under Clark's government.



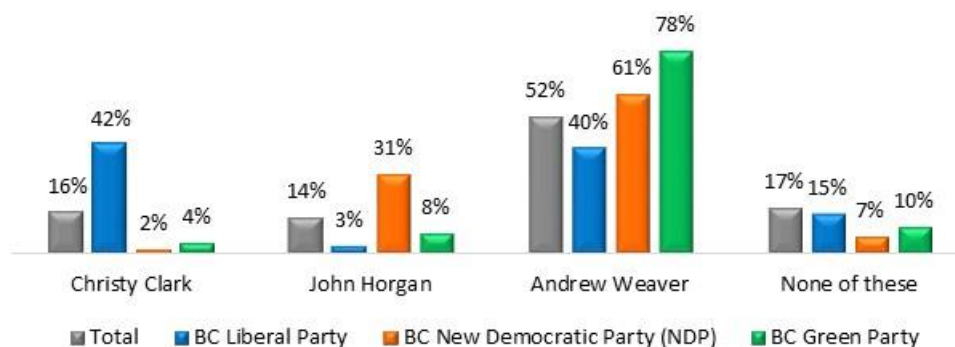
On two more key provincial issues – health care and education, respondents prefer Horgan (for party by party opinion see [comprehensive tables](#)):

**Which of the leaders of B.C.'s three main political parties would you say you trust most on each of the following measures?**



Meanwhile, Andrew Weaver, who has made a firm case against both the Kinder Morgan TransMountain pipeline twinning, liquidified natural gas projects, and the Site C hydroelectric dam, is preferred by half of BC residents, including a significant number of NDP and Liberal supporters, as the leader who would best protect BC's natural environment.

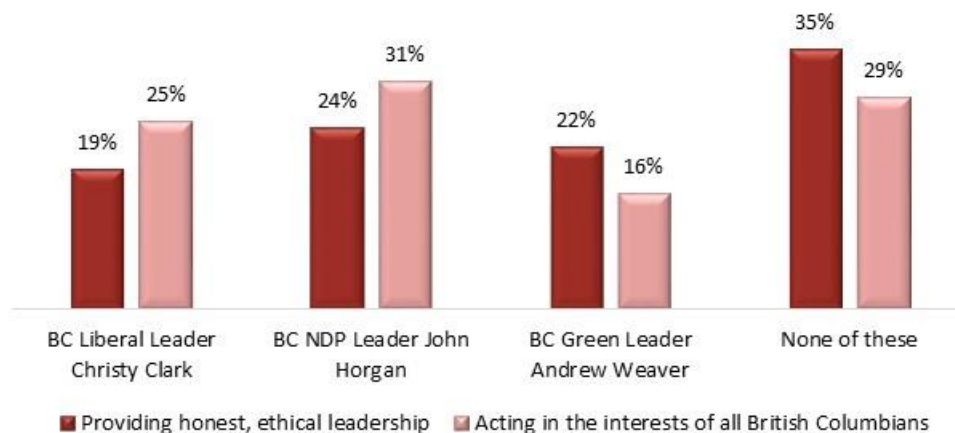
**Which of the leaders of B.C.'s three main political parties would you say you trust most on protecting BC's natural environment?**  
**By vote last**



Two important perspectives help to show just how much of a tangle the province is in when it comes to the question of provincial leadership. Asked which of the three leaders they would trust most to provide

honest, ethical leadership for the province, no one leader reaches even one-quarter support. Each receives the trust of roughly one-in-five, while one-third say none of them are trustworthy. Additionally, no clear winner emerges on who can be trusted to act with the best interests of British Columbians. Horgan edges out Clark, but both share an uneasy proximity with “none of these” leaders:

**Which of the leaders of B.C.'s three main political parties would you say you trust most on each of the following measures?**



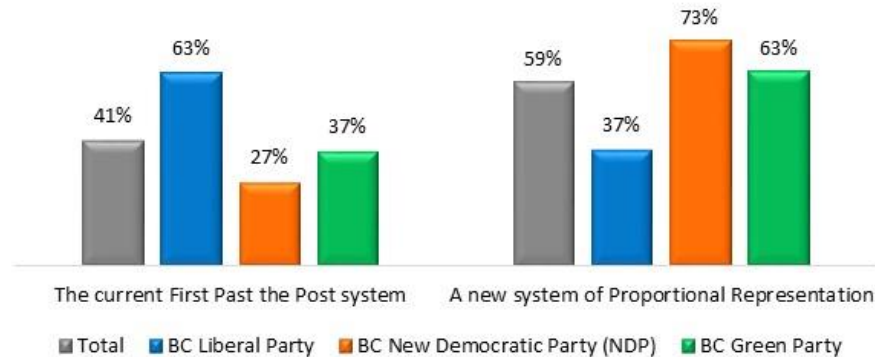
#### Part 4 – Priorities under an NDP-Green alliance

Suppose the plan proposed by John Horgan and Andrew Weaver in their enthusiastic initial news conference does hold. What then do BC residents expect from the new government?

##### Electoral reform

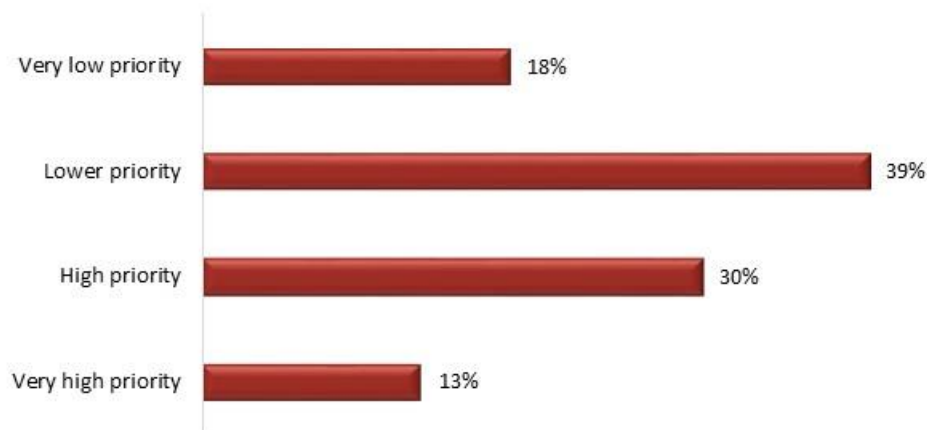
Electoral reform has been proposed as a key priority for that hypothetical NDP-led parliament. Such a proposal would be met with the approval from a majority of British Columbians (59%), including a noteworthy two-in-five (37%) Liberal supporters.

**B.C. could keep the First Past the Post system or adopt a new system that allocates seats roughly in proportion to the total number of votes a party receives. Please indicate which of these two broad options you prefer for B.C.**



Whether this should be a priority out of the gate however, is another story. Just one-in-ten (13%) say this is a top priority, and overall, a majority (58%) say that this issue should be given a lower priority:

**And how much of a priority do you personally consider changing B.C.'s electoral system to be? Would you say this is a:**

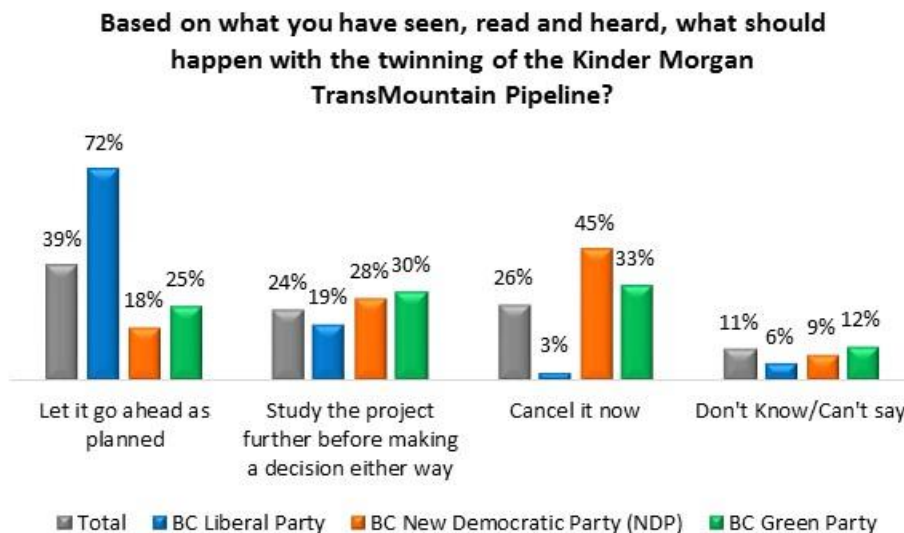


## What to do about resource and energy projects?

Throughout the campaign the three parties offered, at times, starkly differing views on the future of energy and resource projects in the coming years. Those contrasts extend to their bases on three specific projects.

## TransMountain Pipeline

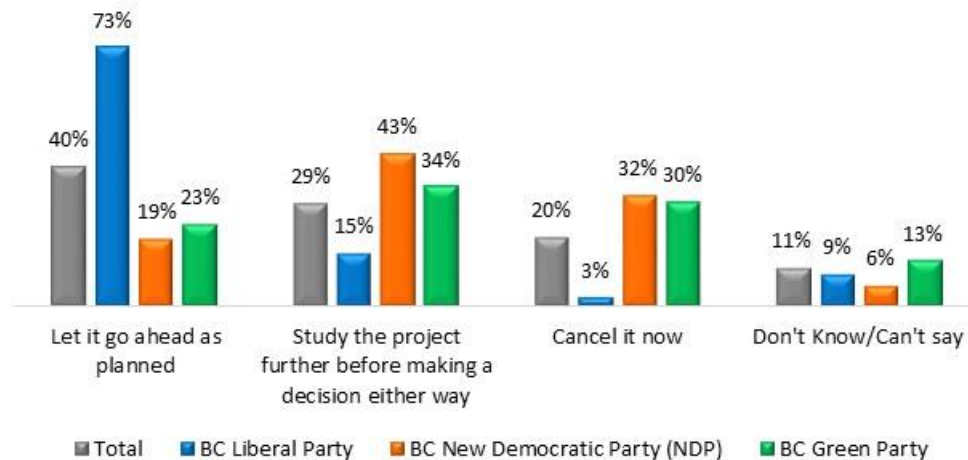
If BC Liberal supporters had their way, the provincially and federally approved Kinder Morgan TransMountain pipeline twinning project would continue moving forward. Indeed, seven-in-ten (72%) say that it should proceed as planned. Provincially that support number drops to 41 per cent, hindered by a majority of Green and NDP supporters who say that the project should either be studied further or cancelled outright:



## Site C Hydroelectric Dam

The same unified BC Liberal support is reported for the Site C Hydroelectric Dam. Seven-in-ten (73%) say the project should go ahead, compared to one-in-five (19% and 23%) from the other two parties. The \$9B project has been a source of immense debate between Christy Clark and John Horgan – [a war of words](#) has broken out in recent weeks between the two. The NDP and Green's have proposed a review of the project over the next six weeks. This is the path preferred by four-in-ten (43%) NDP supporters and one-third of (34%) Greens, though the Premier has expressed concerns that a delay could [cost the province \\$600M](#).

**Based on what you have seen, read and heard, what should happen with the Site C Hydroelectric Dam?**



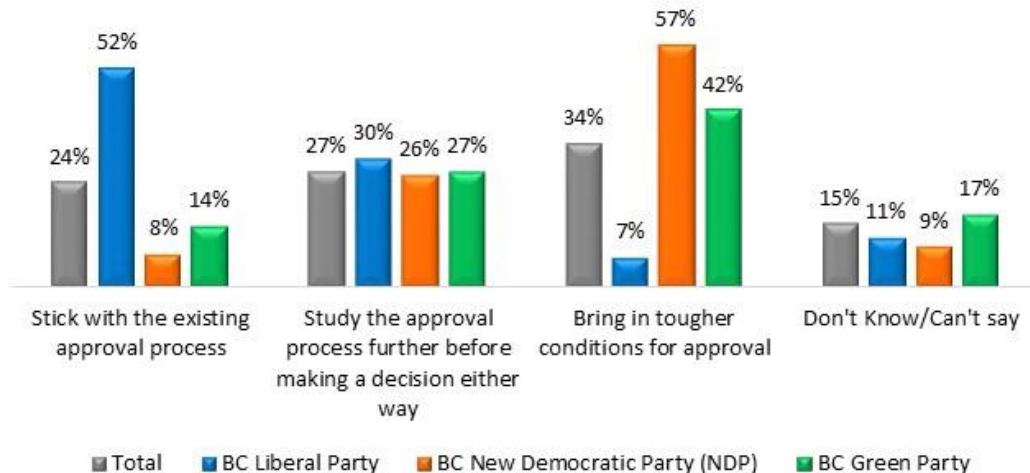
## LNG projects

There are [19](#) liquified natural gas projects in various stages of development in the province. And while the approval process is, according to some, [reportedly onerous](#), others – including Horgan – say tougher conditions need to be applied in order to ensure the best interests, both economic and environmental, are secured for the province. It would appear that there is a strong amount of agreement with the latter.

Just one-in-four British Columbians (24%) say that the current process should be allowed to continue, while a majority want to see the process either studied further before more action is taken, or immediately strengthened:



**The NDP campaigned on introducing tougher conditions to approve LNG projects. Based on what you have seen, read and heard, what should happen with LNG project approvals?**



## Spending priorities

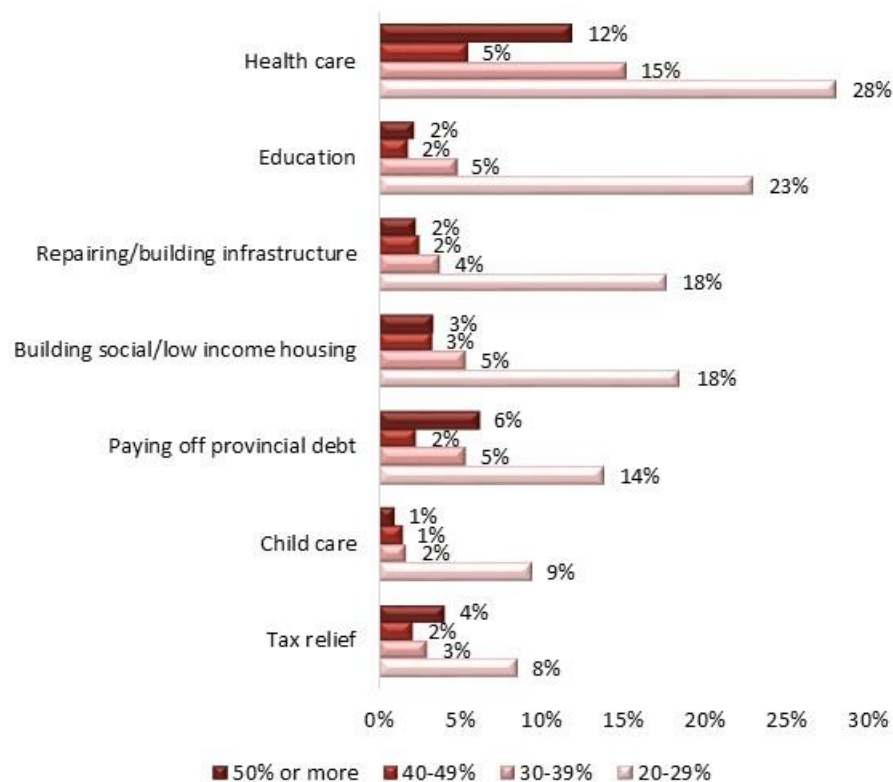
The most recent budget in BC forecasted a surplus of \$295 million. The government in control of the purse strings will have an opportunity to establish its spending priorities, but how do British Columbians want to spend that money?

The Angus Reid Institute asked respondents to consider a number of broad spending areas, and to allocate a percentage of the budget to each priority. Aggregating these responses finds strong support for health care spending over all other priorities.

Nearly three-in-ten (28%) BC residents say that between 20 and 29 per cent of the surplus should be spent in this area, and another 15 per cent support 30 to 39 per cent expenditure. Additionally, just over one-in-ten (12%) say the government should spend half or more on this issue. No other option receives close to this support level.

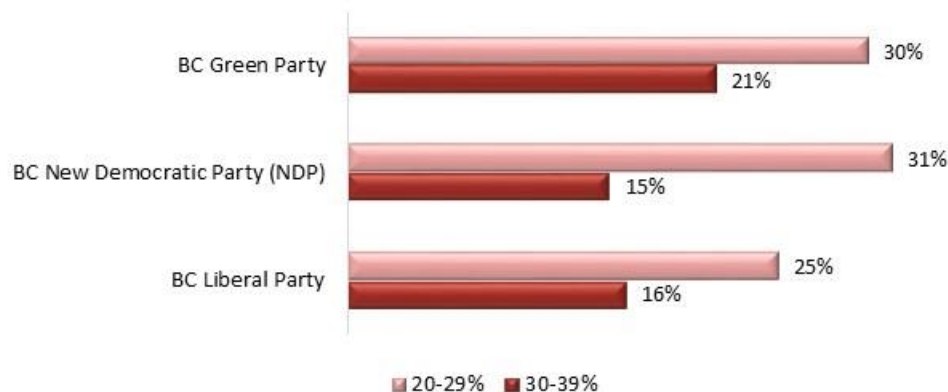


**In the latest budget the B.C. government forecasted a surplus of \$295 million. Please indicate what percentage of the surplus should be spent on some options suggested:**



One of the reasons health care spending is reported so high is tripartisan support. At least one-quarter of supporters for each party say 20 to 29 per cent of the surplus should be spent on this file:

## Support for health care expenditure by party

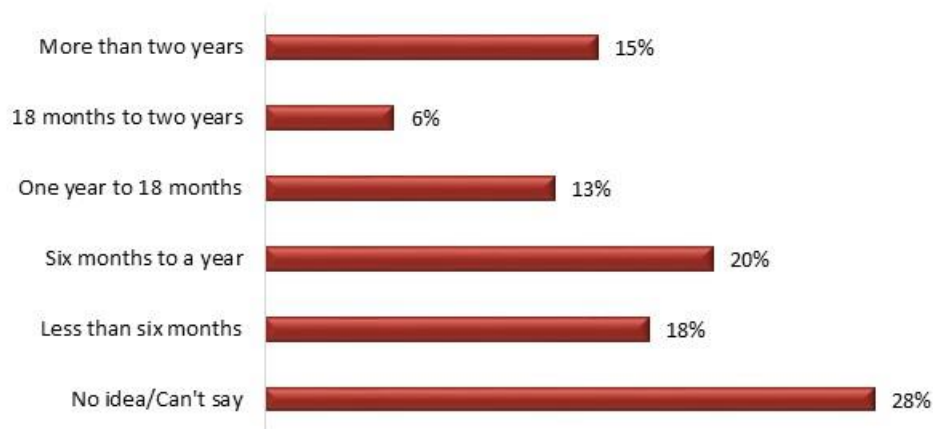


At the other end of the priority spectrum, six-in-ten (59%) say less than 10 per cent should be spent on tax relief, while half (50%) say the same amount should be allocated to paying off the debt. Child care, which has [been a priority](#) for BC NDP leader John Horgan, receives low support as well, comparatively.

## Part 5 – How long will cooperation last?

If (and indeed it remains an “if”) an NDP minority supported by the Greens gets the opportunity to take root, how long will last? British Columbians aren’t overly optimistic about a long relationship: just 15 per cent say such an alliance could last more than two years. And while one-in-four say they aren’t sure, this leaves more than half of respondents saying that the NDP-Green pact is too tenuous to last much longer than 18 months.

## How long do you think the NDP and Greens of BC will be able to work together?

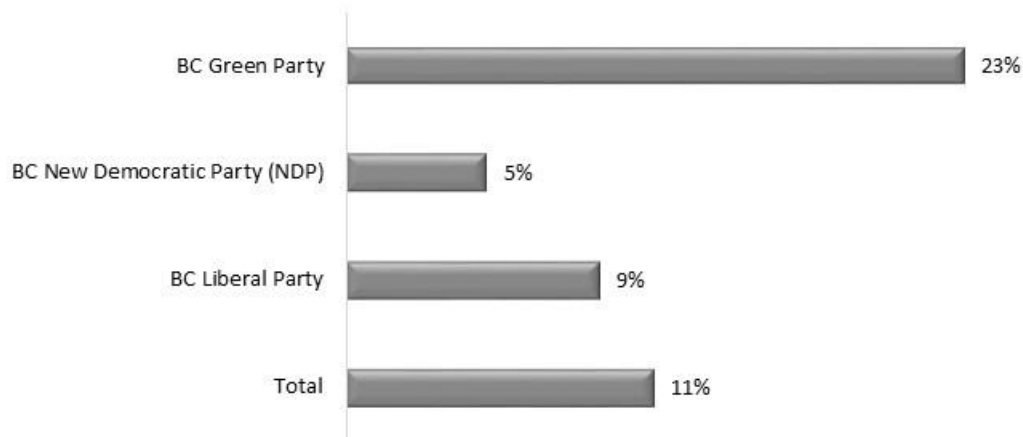


Only one-in-three NDP supporters (33%) and 15 per cent of Green supporters see the government lasting this long ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

## Part 6 – What about a “do-over”?

This hung parliament appears to have some voters feeling regretful. A relatively small number, one-in-ten voters (11%) overall say that if they had the option to go back and have a re-do, they wouldn't vote for the same candidate in their constituency. But in such a close election, hindsight has left many British Columbians feeling like they could have been a difference maker. This feeling is most pronounced among Green Party voters – nearly one-quarter (23%) of whom say they would switch.

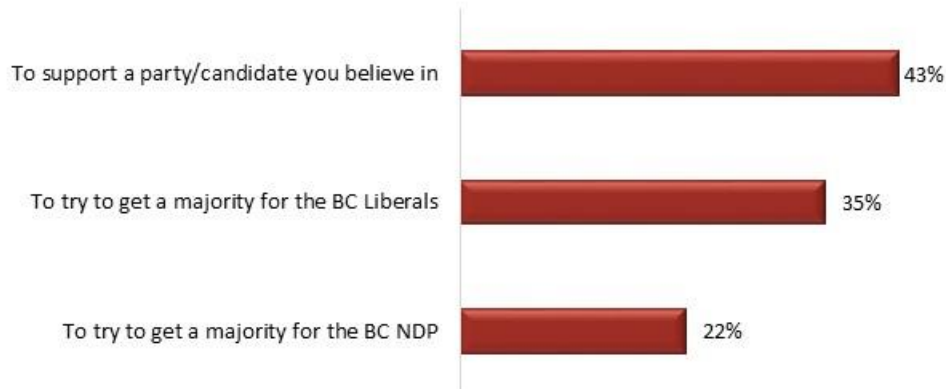
**Percentage of those who voted who say "I would change my vote"  
if they could go back in time and re-do the 2017 BC election**



Within that 11 per cent, four-in-ten (43%) say that they would take the opportunity to vote their conscience rather than vote strategically. These changers would have preferred to let the cards fall where they may have, knowing they were supporting the candidate they believed in this time.

Given a do-over, however, one-in-three self-identified “vote changers” (35%) would have aimed for Liberal majority – more than those who say they’d have switched to ensure a majority for the NDP (22%).

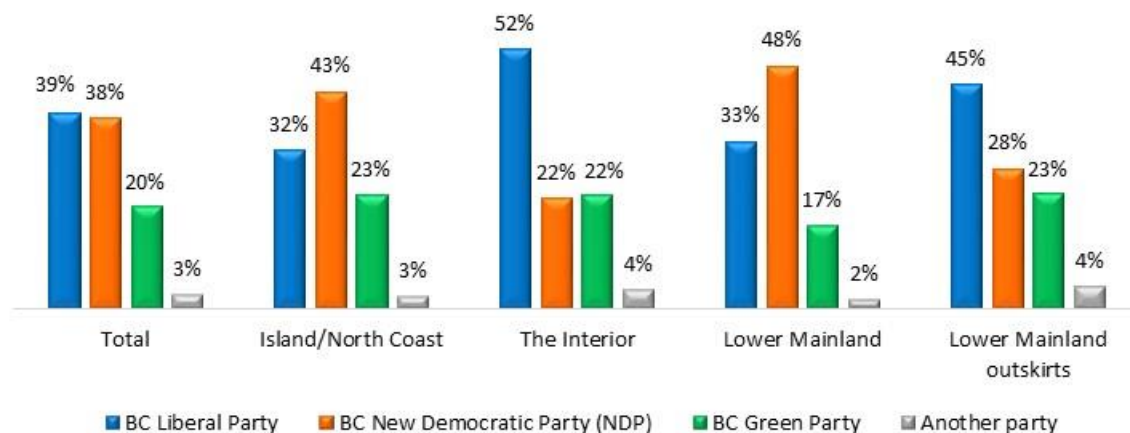
**What is the reason you would change your vote if you were re-doing this B.C. election? Would it be:**  
(note: n=83)



## Virtually no change in vote intention

Perhaps given that nine-in-ten (89%) British Columbians would not change their vote if they had the chance, the vote intention outlook based on a hypothetical election six months down the road looks much the same as the one that got BC into this situation. After winning the popular vote 41 per cent to 40 per cent over, the Liberal Party leads by a one-point margin: 39 to 38 per cent.

**Suppose there were another B.C. election in the next six months. In such an election, which party's candidate would you be inclined to support? Would it be the candidate representing the:**



For this analysis, the Angus Reid Institute divided British Columbia into four regions – Vancouver Island/North Coast, the Interior, the Lower Mainland, and Lower Mainland Outskirts.

**The Lower Mainland** region is made up of Vancouver, Burnaby, New Westminster, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Richmond, and the Central and Northern portions of Surrey.

**Lower Mainland Outskirts** is comprised of South Surrey, Langley, Abbotsford, Mission, Pitt Meadows, Maple Ridge, Chilliwack, Hope, White Rock, Delta, West Vancouver, and the southern portion of the Sunshine Coast.

**The Interior** includes the Thompson-Okanagan region, the Kootenays, the Cariboo region, and Northern B.C. aside from some coastal areas included in the following group.

**Vancouver Island/North Coast** encompasses all of Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, Powell River and the northern portion of the Sunshine Coast, and much of the central and north coast, including the Bulkley Valley and Skeena regions.

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

*For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).  
For detailed results by party support, [click here](#)*