

BRITISH COLUMBIA POLITICAL SCENE

# BC Liberals, NDP Virtually Even as Views on Carole James Improve

*NDP BC leader posts significant gains on momentum and attributes, while Gordon Campbell fails to get a bounce after televised debate.*

[VANCOUVER – May 8, 2009] - With less than a week to go before voters in British Columbia elect the members of the Legislative Assembly, the two main contenders are locked in a tight race that could be defined by turnout patterns and the soft support for the Green Party, a new Angus Reid Strategies poll for CTV and the *Globe and Mail* has found.

The unique online survey of a representative provincial sample of 1,013 British Columbia adults—which showed each respondent the candidates who will be on the ballot in their specific constituency on May 12—finds that the governing BC Liberals can count on the support of 44 per cent of decided voters next Tuesday (+2 since late April), followed closely by the opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) with 42 per cent (+3). This is the first time in the history of polling in Canada that respondents have been asked to choose from the actual list of candidates in their riding.

The Green Party remains in third place with 10 per cent (-3), followed by the BC Conservative party with two per cent (-1). However, the BC Conservatives are only fielding 24 candidates, and are at 8 per cent in the ridings where they are running. The remaining two per cent of decided voters would cast a ballot for an independent or other candidate in their riding.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **Voting Intention Among Decided Voters: BC Liberals 44%, BC NDP 42%, Green 10%, BC Con. 2%**
- **Voting Intention Among Absolutely Certain Voters: BC Liberals 44%, BC NDP 43%, Green 8%, BC Con. 2%**
- **Preferred Premier: Gordon Campbell 43%, Carole James 30%, Jane Sterk 4%, Not sure 23%**
- **Momentum Score: Gordon Campbell -29, Carole James =, Jane Sterk +4**

Full topline results are at the end of this release

*From May 5 to May 6, 2009 Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among a randomly selected, representative sample of 1,013 adult residents of British Columbia who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. 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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Turnout continues to be one of the key elements in this provincial election. When the views of respondents who are absolutely certain to cast a ballot on May 12 are assessed, the BC Liberals are ahead by a single point (44% to 43% for the BC NDP), with the Greens at eight per cent, and the BC Conservatives at 2% per cent.

## Demographics

The gender gap that was evident in the middle of the campaign has narrowed drastically as the election draws near. Among male respondents, the BC Liberals hold a five-point lead over the NDP (47% to 42%). Among women, the NDP now has a two-point edge over the governing party (42% to 40%).

Across all age demographics, the BC Liberals and the NDP are also very close to each other, with the NDP slightly ahead of the BC Liberals among young voters—aged 18 to 34—and the BC Liberals with a small lead among respondents aged 34 to 54, and those over the age of 55.

The regional breakdowns show the NDP with a commanding lead in Vancouver Island (51% to 40% for the BC Liberals) and a smaller advantage in the Interior (42% to 39%). The numbers show a significant drop for the BC Liberals, who got 45 per cent of the vote in the Interior in 2005.

The BC Liberals remain on top of the NDP in Vancouver and Suburbs (45% to 41%), while in Surrey and the Fraser Valley their lead is larger (49% to 36%). These results are not significantly different from the last election. In Northern BC, the governing party holds a six-point lead (44% to 38%). Still, this is a region where the BC Liberals came close to getting half of the vote in 2005.

Most supporters of either of the two main parties say they are not likely to change their mind before election day, with 71 per cent of BC Liberal voters and 66 per cent of NDP voters planning to keep their current choice until May 12. However, only 33 per cent of Green Party voters are definitely going to vote for that party. The Green Party's share of the vote has dropped since late April, and uncertain Green voters are twice as likely to list the NDP as their second choice (36%) than the BC Liberals (17%).

## Leadership

While the approval rating of the three provincial leaders remains below the 40 per cent mark, an improvement for BC NDP leader Carole James is clearly noticeable. Her approval rating stands at 36 per cent—up nine points since late April—while 42 per cent of respondents (-7) disapprove of her performance.

Premier and BC Liberal leader Gordon Campbell remains stagnant on this question. More than a third of respondents (36%, +1) approve of his performance, and 51 per cent (-2) disapprove. Green Party leader

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Jane Sterk posts a net approval score of -3 (18% approve, 21% disapprove) but three-in-five respondents (61%) do not have an opinion on her.

On the momentum question, James also posted better numbers, with 24 per cent of respondents saying their opinion of the BC NDP leader improved, and 24 per cent saying it worsened. In contrast, Campbell posted a momentum score of -29, with more than a third of respondents (37%) saying their views on the sitting premier have worsened. Sterk once again posted a positive score (+4), but a third of respondents are undecided.

Campbell remains ahead when British Columbians are asked who would be their best Premier (43%), followed by James (30%) and Sterk (4%). Campbell's showing in this question is in tune with his party's numbers among both decided and absolutely certain voters, while James remains below the BC NDP's total in both scenarios.

Despite his lead as the preferred premier, Campbell continues to struggle on certain issues. Campbell is still regarded as being best suited to deal with the economy (50%, compared to 22% for James), and crime (39% to 24% for James). James remains ahead on education (48% to Campbell's 26%) and health care (47% to 27% for Campbell) and has opened a significant lead on the environment (39% to 25%). In each of these categories, James's score improved by at least six points since late April.

British Columbians remain divided on which leader is most likely to possess certain key attributes of leadership. Gordon Campbell is ahead on having a vision for the future of British Columbia (57% to James's 52%), being a strong and decisive leader (53% to James's 27%) and inspiring confidence (33% to James's 25%).

The premier is also ahead on a negative category. Almost three-in-five respondents (58%) believe the sitting premier is patronizing, compared to only 21 per cent for James.

On the other hand James is more likely to be regarded as honest and trustworthy (48% to Campbell's 21%), and as a person who understands the problems of people in BC (54% to Campbell's 35%) and generally agrees with people on the issues they care about (43% to 33%).

### **The Debate**

Among respondents who watched last Sunday's debate, Carole James emerged as the clear winner, with 44 per cent of debate watchers claiming their opinion of the BC NDP leader improved after watching the televised showdown, compared with 23 per cent for Sterk and five per cent for Campbell.

The premier was, by far, the worst performer. Half of respondents (51%) say their opinion of Campbell worsened after watching the debate, compared to 22 per cent for Sterk and 17 per cent for James.

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### **Better off?**

Respondents were asked whether they would personally be better off, worse off, or about the same under three different prospective premiers. The score for Campbell is -16 (14% think they would be better off, 30% believe they would be worse off), while James posted a -15 (24% better off, 39% worse off). Sterk scored -26 (8% better off, 34% worse off).

### **Time for a Change**

Almost half of British Columbians (47%) believe that it is time for a change in BC and that a different party should be elected into power, while 43 per cent feel that the BC Liberals should be re-elected. When Gordon Campbell's name was added to the question, 39 per cent of respondents thought "Gordon Campbell should be re-elected" while 48 per cent said it was time for a different premier.

### **STV**

Awareness of the referendum on electoral reform has risen in the last week with only nine per cent of people "not aware at all" (-8), while those who are "very aware" have increased to 57 per cent (+12). This rise in awareness seems to have lowered the chances of BC-STV being implemented in the next provincial election. Support for the existing system is at 55 per cent (+8) while BC-STV attracts the support of 45 per cent of voters (-8). Amongst those "absolutely certain to vote," the existing system leads with 56 per cent.

### **Issue**

The most important issue facing British Columbia continues to be the economy (39%, +2 since late April), followed by Crime/Public Safety (11%, -2), health care (10%, =) and the environment (9%, -1). Among BC Liberal voters, the economy jumps to 54 per cent as the top issue, while poverty remains a key concern for NDP voters at 13 per cent.

### **Choices**

Overall, 66 per cent of respondents claim to be satisfied (14% very satisfied, 42% moderately satisfied) with the choices they have in this provincial election, while 39 per cent are dissatisfied (15 very dissatisfied, 24% moderately dissatisfied).

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### British Columbia Political Scene

A provincial election will be held in British Columbia on May 12th. We are going to show you a ballot that includes all the candidates registered to run in your home riding. Which one of these candidates will you be most likely to support on Election Day?

	Decided Voters	Respondents who are absolutely certain to vote on May 12
BC Liberals	44%	44%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	42%	43%
Green Party	10%	8%
BC Conservative Party	2%	2%
Independent / Other candidate	2%	3%

### British Columbia Political Scene - TREND

A provincial election will be held in British Columbia on May 12th. We are going to show you a ballot that includes all the candidates registered to run in your home riding. Which one of these candidates will you be most likely to support on Election Day? – **Decided Voters**

	March 2009	April 2009	May 5-6, 2009
BC Liberals	43%	42%	44%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	37%	39%	42%
Green Party	13%	13%	10%
BC Conservative Party	4%	3%	2%
Independent / Other candidate	3%	3%	2%

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## British Columbia 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**

	Regional Breakdowns				
	Vancouver and Suburbs	Vancouver Island	Interior	Surrey and Fraser Valley	North
<b>BC Liberals</b>	45%	40%	39%	49%	44%
<b>New Democratic Party (NDP)</b>	41%	51%	42%	36%	38%
<b>Green Party</b>	10%	7%	10%	12%	10%
<b>BC Conservative Party</b>	1%	0%	7%	2%	0%
<b>Independent / Other candidate</b>	3%	2%	2%	1%	7%

## British Columbia 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**

	Gender		Age			Income			Education		
	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	<\$50K	\$50-99K	>\$50K	HS or less	Coll/ Tech	Univ+
<b>BC Liberals</b>	47%	40%	43%	43%	45%	35%	47%	55%	44%	45%	42%
<b>New Democratic Party (NDP)</b>	42%	42%	45%	41%	42%	46%	43%	35%	42%	40%	45%
<b>Green Party</b>	8%	12%	10%	11%	8%	14%	7%	8%	7%	11%	10%
<b>BC Conservative Party</b>	2%	3%	0%	2%	3%	3%	2%	1%	3%	3%	1%
<b>Independent / Other candidate</b>	1%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%	4%	1%	2%

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<b>Approval for Party Leaders</b>			
Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of...?			
	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>	<b>Not sure</b>
<b>Premier and BC Liberals leader Gordon Campbell</b>	<b>36% (+1)</b>	<b>51% (-2)</b>	<b>12% (-1)</b>
<b>BC New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Carole James</b>	<b>36% (+9)</b>	<b>42% (-7)</b>	<b>22% (-3)</b>
<b>Green Party leader Jane Sterk</b>	<b>18% (+1)</b>	<b>21% (+2)</b>	<b>61% (-3)</b>

<b>Momentum for Party Leaders</b>				
Over the course of the past two months, would you say your opinion of the following party leaders and parties has improved, stayed the same or worsened?				
	<b>Improved</b>	<b>Stayed the same</b>	<b>Worsened</b>	<b>Not sure</b>
<b>Gordon Campbell</b>	<b>8% (=)</b>	<b>54% (-3)</b>	<b>37% (+4)</b>	<b>4% (-1)</b>
<b>Carole James</b>	<b>24% (+14)</b>	<b>46% (-2)</b>	<b>24% (-11)</b>	<b>6% (-2)</b>
<b>Jane Sterk</b>	<b>14% (+1)</b>	<b>43% (+3)</b>	<b>10% (+4)</b>	<b>32% (-9)</b>

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### Preferred Premier

Of the following provincial party leaders, which one do you think would be the best Premier of British Columbia?

<b>Gordon Campbell</b>	<b>43% (+3)</b>
<b>Carole James</b>	<b>30% (+7)</b>
<b>Jane Sterk</b>	<b>4% (-1)</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>23% (-9)</b>

### State of the Province

Overall, do you think British Columbia is on the right track, or the wrong track?

<b>Right track</b>	<b>38% (+4)</b>
<b>Wrong track</b>	<b>38% (+2)</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>24% (-7)</b>

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<b>Time for Change</b>	
Half Sample - Thinking about British Columbia, which one of these two statements comes closest to your own point of view?	
<b>It is time for a change in government in British Columbia—a different provincial party should be elected into power</b>	<b>47% (-3)</b>
<b>It is not time for a change in government in British Columbia—the BC Liberals should be re-elected</b>	<b>43% (+6)</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>10% (-4)</b>

<b>Time for Change</b>	
Half Sample - Thinking about British Columbia, which one of these two statements comes closest to your own point of view?	
<b>It is time for a change in government in British Columbia—a different premier should be elected into power</b>	<b>48% (+2)</b>
<b>It is not time for a change in government in British Columbia—Gordon Campbell should be re-elected</b>	<b>39% (+1)</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>13% (-2)</b>

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### The Leaders and the Issues

Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with each of the following issues?

	Gordon Campbell	Carole James	None of these / Not sure
Economy	50% (+2)	22% (+6)	29% (-7)
Environment	25% (-2)	39% (+11)	35% (-10)
Health Care	27% (+1)	47% (+6)	26% (-6)
Education	26% (+1)	48% (+6)	26% (-7)
Crime	39% (+1)	24% (+9)	37% (-10)

### Qualities and Characteristics

Thinking about the following qualities and characteristics, please say whether you think they apply to Gordon Campbell / Carole James? – Apply listed

	Gordon Campbell	Carole James
Is patronizing	58%	21%
Has a vision for the future of British Columbia	57% (=)	52% (+9)
Is a strong and decisive leader	53% (-1)	27% (+6)
Understands the problems of BC residents	35% (+4)	54% (+9)
Generally agrees with you on issues you care about	33% (+4)	43% (+8)
Inspires confidence	33% (+4)	25% (+5)
Is honest and trustworthy	21% (+2)	48% (+7)

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### The Next Premier

Thinking now about your personal situation, would you be personally better off, about the same, or worse off, if each of the following leaders were Premier?

	<b>Gordon Campbell</b>	<b>Carole James</b>	<b>Jane Sterk</b>
<b>Better off</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>About the same</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Worse off</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>38%</b>

### Choices

Thinking about the different leaders and parties, how satisfied are you with the choices you have in this provincial election?

<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Moderately satisfied</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Moderately dissatisfied</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Very dissatisfied</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>5%</b>

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<b>The Debate</b>	
The provincial leaders debate was broadcast this past Sunday evening. Did you watch the debate?	
<b>Yes, all of it</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Yes, some of it</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>66%</b>

<b>The Debate</b>				
After watching the debate, would you say your opinion of each of the following people has improved, stayed the same, or worsened? - Respondents who watched all or some of the debate				
	<b>Improved</b>	<b>Stayed the same</b>	<b>Worsened</b>	<b>Not sure</b>
<b>Gordon Campbell</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Carole James</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Jane Sterk</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>13%</b>

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### Referendum on Electoral Reform

Which electoral system should British Columbia use to elect members to the provincial Legislative Assembly?

	April 29-30, 2009	May 5-6, 2009
<b>The existing electoral system (First-Past-the-Post)</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>55%</b>
<b>The single transferable vote electoral system (BC-STV) proposed by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>45%</b>

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<b>Most Important Issue Facing BC</b>	
What do you think is the most important issue facing British Columbia today?	
<b>The Economy</b>	<b>39% (+5)</b>
<b>Crime / Public Safety</b>	<b>11% (-2)</b>
<b>Health Care</b>	<b>10% (=)</b>
<b>Environment</b>	<b>9% (-1)</b>
<b>Poverty</b>	<b>7% (+1)</b>
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>7% (+2)</b>
<b>Homelessness</b>	<b>3% (-2)</b>
<b>Drug Traffic / Drug Use</b>	<b>3% (=)</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>2% (-1)</b>
<b>Tax relief</b>	<b>2% (=)</b>
<b>Housing</b>	<b>2% (=)</b>
<b>Aboriginal affairs</b>	<b>1% (=)</b>
<b>Municipal Funding, Services, &amp; Powers</b>	<b>1% (=)</b>
<b>Day Care / Child Care</b>	<b>1% (=)</b>
<b>Energy / Electricity</b>	<b>1% (=)</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>3% (-1)</b>

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*Angus Reid Strategies is a full-service polling and market research firm which 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 Strategies team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995.*

*Angus Reid Strategies, along with its sister company, Vision Critical, is now the largest Canadian-owned market research enterprise. 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 Strategies polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum online panel ([www.angusreidforum.com](http://www.angusreidforum.com)), which is recruited via an industry-leading process that incorporates a randomized, widespread invitation approach and a triple opt-in screening procedure. The panel is maintained through state-of-the-art sampling techniques and frequent verifications of personal identity, contact information, and demographic characteristics. This premier online survey platform presents respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses.*

*Angus Reid Strategies, 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.*

*[http://angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.10.15\\_Election.pdf](http://angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.10.15_Election.pdf)*

*Since 2006, Angus Reid Strategies has covered six 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.*

*[http://angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.03.28\\_Anniversary\\_1.pdf](http://angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.03.28_Anniversary_1.pdf)  
[http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.12.09\\_QuebecElection.pdf](http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.12.09_QuebecElection.pdf)*

*More information on the way Angus Reid Strategies conducts public opinion research can be found at <http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/ARS.ARF.WP.pdf>*

- 30 -

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

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:  
[www.angusreidstrategies.com](http://www.angusreidstrategies.com)**

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