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Sask. Party leads polls

By Angela Hall, Leader-Post October 28, 2011



SASKATOON, SK -- OCTOBER 22/2011--Saskatchewan Party leader Brad Wall unveils the party's platform with supporters and candidates Saturday, October 22, 2011 in Saskatoon. (GREG PENDER/STAR PHOENIX)

Photograph by: Greg Pender, Saskatoon Star Phoenix

A new opinion poll suggests the Saskatchewan Party remains far ahead of the NDP, whose proposals for a potash royalty hike and a resource revenue-sharing deal with First Nations haven't won over the majority of voters.

But the Forum Research poll of 1,254 eligible voters found rent control - another main plank in the NDP platform - to be more popular, with 55 per cent saying they approve of the idea. and 45 per cent indicating disapproval. Even so, Forum Research president Lorne Bozinoff said the Sask. Party's Brad Wall is positioned to win a second consecutive majority over the NDP led by

Dwain Lingenfelter, barring some kind of major blunder as the campaign heads into its final week.

Of the respondents who declared they intend to vote, 66 per cent said they would select or are leaning toward the Sask. Party. Thirty per cent are decided or leaning toward the NDP, three per cent picked the Green party and one per cent chose the Liberal party.

"It's an extraordinary result. You don't find results like this very often where someone has got 66 per cent of the vote," Bozinoff said Thursday. "If that held up, that would be a huge, huge victory."

The Forum Research news release did not include a distinction between decided voters and leaning voters. Results based on the total sample are considered accurate plus or minus 2.8 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

The voting intention results, if they were to hold Nov. 7, could yield 52 seats for the Sask. Party and six seats for the NDP, according to Forum Research. That result would be a gain of 14 seats for the Sask. Party from the 2007 results.

The poll touched on potash royalties and taxes, with 55 per cent of voters indicating they disapprove of increasing those rates and 45 per cent approving.

Female voters, at 48 per cent, were more likely than males, at 42 per cent, to approve of an increase.

The subject has been the major talking point for both parties this election. The NDP has based much of its new platform spending on the expectation it would charge companies a higher royalty on the potash mined in Saskatchewan, arguing the resource belongs to the people and should provide a greater benefit to the public.

The Sask. Party has defended the current royalty structure as being responsible for the major expansion and resulting economic spinoff underway in the province's potash sector.

"I guess the government has made a good rationale for not raising, not changing the royalties and taxes," Bozinoff said. "It's been a big issue, the potash, for several years now and it seems the government has managed that well and people have sort of bought the narrative on that, including the narrative of leaving everything the way it is in terms of the royalty structure."

There was also strong resistance to the idea of "sharing a greater portion of resource revenues with First Nations," with only 27 per cent approving of the idea.

The NDP has committed to negotiating a possible resource revenue-sharing agreement with First Nations communities, an idea the Sask. Party has rejected.

The Sask. Party has also turned down the idea of rent control, but the NDP appears to be on the right side of that issue when it comes to public opinion, Bozinoff said. Younger voters were significantly more likely to favour rent control than older voters.

Saskatoon-based Inshtrix Research also released results of a new online poll Thursday that found 60 per cent of decided voters say they plan to vote for the Sask. Party, 33.3 per cent for the NDP, three per cent for the Green party and 2.8 per cent for the Liberal party.

Inshtrix found that about four in 10 support the idea of initiating a potash royalty review, while 22.5 per cent oppose it. Those who said they were neutral or unsure were not included in the graph accompanying the poll.

Both parties fared well with their post-secondary promises, according to Inshtrix Research.

The Oct. 25 to 26 online poll was conducted with 1,000 randomly selected respondents who are part of Inshtrix's SaskWatch Research panel.

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