

## B.C. poll: Liberals plummet

By Doug Ward, Postmedia News December 21, 2011

NDP 34%

Liberals 23%

Conservatives 23%

The NDP is leading, while support for the governing B.C. Liberals has dipped to a dead heat with the B.C. Conservatives, a new poll has found.

A survey by Forum Research Inc. shows 34 per cent support for the NDP, the Liberals and Conservatives tied at 23 per cent, and the Green party trailing at 15 per cent.

Premier Christy Clark's backers in the B.C. Liberal nomination contest earlier this year believed she could revive the party's brand, which had been battered under her predecessor, Gordon Campbell.

But Forum Research found that Clark has been unable to stop a shift of previous B.C. Liberal voters to the resurgent B.C. Conservatives under new leader John Cummins. "The Conservatives are really cannibalizing the B.C. Liberals right now," said Forum Research president Lorne Bozinoff. "It looks like the NDP could come up the middle."

The findings are consistent with results from other recent polls, which show the Conservatives cutting into B.C. Liberal support.

Bozinoff said the NDP is hanging on to its core support of between 30 and 35 per cent, while the Liberal party has seen a steady erosion of its base.

"The problem for the B.C. Liberals is that they are in the middle and they bleed both ways," said the pollster.

Bozinoff cautioned that the poll is a snapshot of current voter attitudes and that the B.C. Liberals have plenty of time to improve support before the scheduled election on May 14, 2013.

In the last election on May 12, 2009, the Liberals received 46 per cent of the popular vote, followed by the NDP at 42 per cent and the Green party at eight per cent. The Conservatives got two per cent.

The new Forum Research poll found discontent with Clark herself. Fewer than one in three voters approve of Clark's job performance. Twenty-nine per cent of British Columbians approve of Clark compared with 45 per cent who disapprove and 27 per cent with no opinion.

Clark trails NDP leader Adrian Dix, who has an approval rating of 37 per cent, compared with 28 per cent who disapprove and 35 per cent with no opinion.

The survey suggests that the growing popularity of the provincial Conservatives is due to disenchantment with the B.C. Liberals rather than because of Cummins's leadership.

Cummins's approval rating is 23 per cent compared with 32 per cent who disapprove and 45 per cent who have no opinion.

The survey found support for the NDP was higher among voters ages 35 to 64, while support for the B.C. Liberals was higher among those 65 and older.

The telephone survey of 1,045 British Columbians was conducted on Dec. 15. It has a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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