

## Christy Clark faces a bigger risk than B.C. voters if Adrian Dix stays in front in the polls

Charlie Smith - December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011



*Adrian Dix has been targeted in a B.C. Liberal scare campaign.*

More than halfway into their third term, it's clear that the B.C. Liberals and their leader, Christy Clark, are in serious political trouble.

A recent poll by Forum Research Inc. showed that the B.C. Conservatives under former MP John Cummins had caught up to the B.C. Liberals.

Each had 23 percent popularity, whereas the B.C. NDP was well ahead with 34 percent support from British Columbians.

If these numbers hold up until the May 2013 election, it would probably result in an NDP majority under Adrian Dix.

In light of this, it's not surprising that the B.C. Liberals have responded with a negative TV and online campaign targeted at Dix.

Through its riskydix.ca website, the governing party is trying to convey to the public that electing the NDP carries some risk. The use of unflattering black-and-white photos and claiming that the opponent isn't "coming clean" are standard tactics used by governing parties when they're behind.

Why now? The real risk for the B.C. Liberals is if their traditional supporters feel there's no downside in abandoning them.

This is what happened to the Social Credit Party in 1991 when a viable non-NDP party emerged in the form of the B.C. Liberals. The Socreds were virtually obliterated because the public felt there was no risk in voting for the other party.

Two years later, the same fate befell the federal Progressive Conservatives when their traditional supporters felt there was no risk in voting Reform.

We saw it again in 2001 when NDP supporters abandoned the party en masse to vote for the B.C. Greens. This left the NDP with just two seats in the legislature after the election.

If the next poll shows the B.C. Conservatives running ahead of the B.C. Liberals, then the wheels are probably about to start falling off Clark's party in the same way.

People who don't like the NDP will figure that the best way to stop them will be to transfer their allegiance to Cummins, and he'll probably start gaining more momentum.

This will convince some B.C. Liberal MLAs to sit out the next campaign, making it more difficult for Clark to hold onto existing seats. She'll also have trouble recruiting high-profile candidates, who won't want to be associated with any pending electoral disaster.

If this scenario plays itself out, B.C. Liberals funders will start hedging their bets by giving more money to the B.C. Conservatives.

Clark had better remain on good terms with the management at CKNW Radio because the way things are going for her now, she just might need her old job about 18 months from now.