



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia: Canada's Hottest Election Race *Tight Three-Party Race on West Coast May Decide National Balance of Power*

British Columbia Federal Voting Intentions (n= 349)

Conservative Party of Canada	33.7
Liberal Party of Canada	31.4
New Democratic Party	29.9
Green Party	4.1

Late Night for Canadians January 23rd

Once again, all eyes will be on British Columbia on election night as the province's hotly contested three-way race will likely determine who rules Canada when the next Parliament meets. A new poll conducted by EKOS Research Associates shows the Conservatives with the narrowest of leads over the Liberals and NDP in the province.

"The three parties are in a statistical tie," said EKOS President Frank Graves. "But when you look beyond the top line numbers, the New Democrats have more potential to grow in British Columbia than the Conservatives, with the Liberals somewhere in between. The Conservatives will have difficulty repeating some of their past successes in the province in this election."

"The poll also reveals the flagging fortunes of the Green Party," Graves said. "When the campaign began, the party was showing relatively strongly in B.C., perhaps even strongly enough to dream of winning a seat. But it seems to have been squeezed out of the equation by the intensity of the contest among the major parties."

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In Vancouver, the NDP enjoys the status of front-runner, followed by the Conservatives and then the Liberals. In the rest of the province the Tories are ahead, trailed by the Liberals, then the NDP. But everywhere the race looks intense.

The Conservatives can draw some comfort from the fact that their voters are the most committed. However, supporters of the other parties are least likely to cite them as a possible second choice. That means that while the Tories are unlikely to slip much below their current level of support, they will also have trouble growing much beyond it.

The New Democrats benefit from the relative popularity of their leader, Jack Layton, in the province, particularly compared with Stephen Harper, who has yet to connect with many British Columbians. Their vote is also more concentrated than the Liberals', which may help them win some seats.

The Liberals are in the inverse position to the New Democrats. Because their support is spread around the province, they run the danger of losing seats to New Democrats in Vancouver and to Conservatives elsewhere. On the other hand, if they are able to capitalize on fear of Harper and the Conservatives among New Democratic Party voters, they could stampede many of them into their camp on election day.

"Whatever happens, the days of British Columbians going to the polls knowing the result has been decided are over for now," said Graves. "This time, Canadians elsewhere will be looking to see what British Columbians have in store for them."

METHODOLOGY:

These data are based on telephone interviews conducted December 6 to 8, 2005 with a random sample of 401 residents of British Columbia aged 18 and over. A sample of this size provides a margin of error of +/- 4.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when the results are sub-divided (i.e., error margins for sub-groups such as men and women).

All the data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional, gender and age composition reflects that of the actual population of British Columbia according to Census data.