

# New Brunswick PC Government under pressure from Provincial Liberals: Liberal Party enjoys 11 point lead in decided vote, time for a change sentiment at 56%

Toronto – June 28, 2005 – Liberals are leading the Progressive Conservatives by 11 points among New Brunswick decided voters (46% Liberals – 35% PC – 17% NDP). Voters appear to be choosing the Liberal Party because they feel it is time for a change. Voters say they are not choosing the Progressive Conservative party because of the party's policies (particularly healthcare) and its leader.

The majority of people in New Brunswick want a change, saying that it is time to give a new person and party a chance (56%). Fifty-two per cent of the public also support a provincial election this fall to either confirm Lord's government or elect a new one.

Despite the mood for a change, PC Premier Bernard Lord enjoys a 6 point lead as Best Premier. Looking at leadership favourables, outgoing NDP leader Elizabeth Weir has the strongest favourable rating at 57%. Lord edges out Graham by 6 points in favourables, the same margin as on best Premier. However, Lord also leads in unfavourables with 38%, 21 points higher than Liberal leader Graham.

A second finding that conflicts with the desire of change is the mood of the province. People in New Brunswick feel positively on the direction the province is heading. However, when it comes to issues of concern, health care, jobs and education are the most important to them personally.

New Brunswick clearly appears poised for a close provincial election whenever it comes. While the Tories have a positive mood and good leadership numbers on their side, the Liberals begin with a significant lead across the province, a general positive image for their own leader and a strong desire for change in the electorate.

## About This Survey

The **Innovative Research Group**, Inc. ([www.innovativeresearch.ca](http://www.innovativeresearch.ca)), a Toronto-based research firm, included a set of basic political question in an omnibus survey of 802 randomly selected New Brunswick residents. The survey was conducted between Monday, June 20<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, June 22<sup>nd</sup> and has a margin of error of +/- 3.46%, 19 times out of 20.

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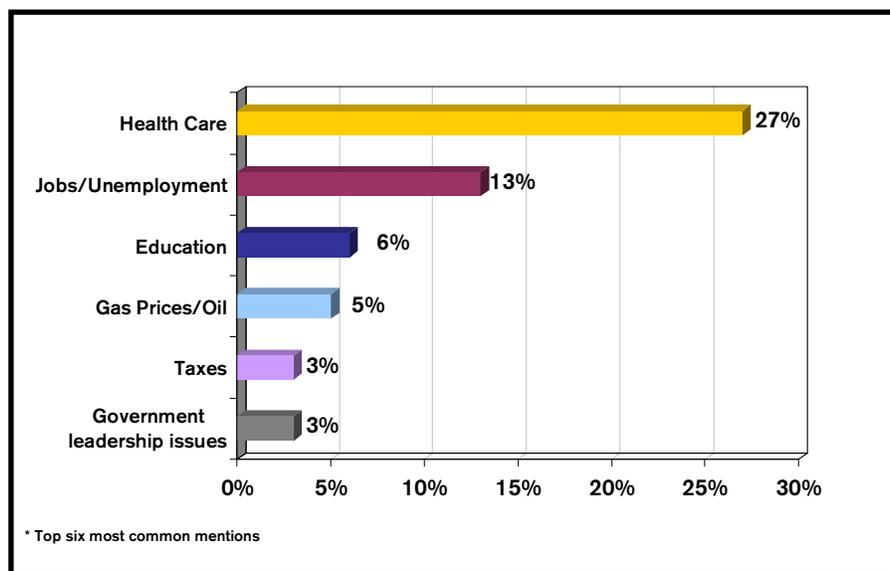
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## Detailed Results

### Political Environment

People in New Brunswick are more positive than negative in their opinion of the direction the province is heading (48% right direction – 44% wrong direction). Past and present Progressive Conservative (PC) voters, people who are younger, live in the Moncton area, and have a favourable impression of Bernard Lord are more likely to feel positive about the direction of the province. English speaking households, past and present NDP voters, and people who are older are more likely to feel the province is heading in the wrong direction.

The top three issues that are of most concern to the people of New Brunswick are health care, jobs and education. Women, people who are 55 years of age or older and those with a university education are more likely to be concerned about health care. People who live in French speaking households, have an income of less than \$40,000 a year or live in the northern part of New Brunswick are more likely to be concerned about jobs.



The majority of people in New Brunswick want a change and say it is time to give a new person and party a chance (56%). People who feel that the province is heading in the wrong direction, who would vote Liberal, NDP or are undecided, and who rate Bernard Lord unfavourably are more likely to say it is time for a change. Progressive Conservative voters and people with a university education are more likely to say that the current government deserves to be re-elected.

## Leadership

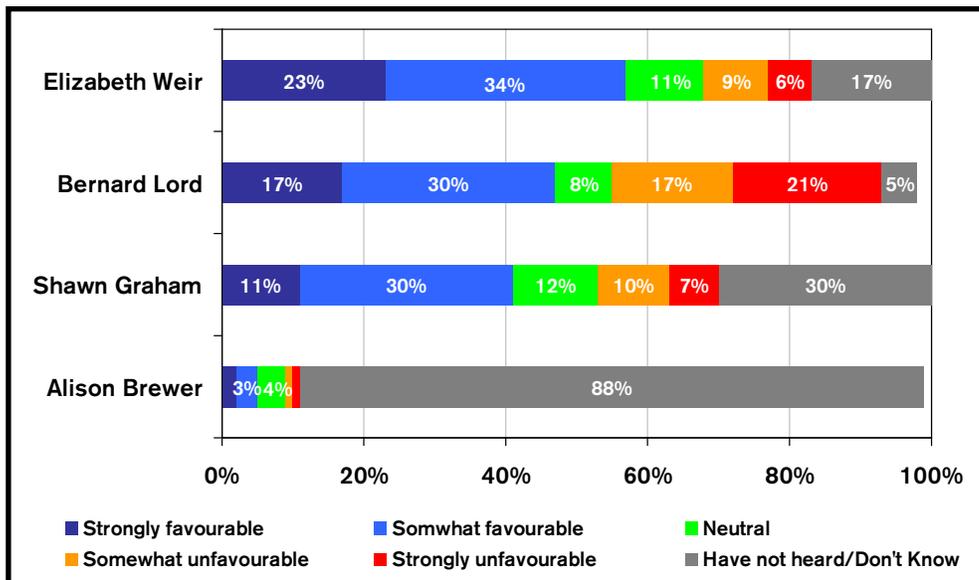
There are several dimensions when looking at leadership. The first is the favorable rating, and the second is the rating of which leader would be better as Premier of New Brunswick. The most well known leader is Bernard Lord, only 3 per cent have not heard of him. The most well-liked leader is Elizabeth Weir with a 57 per cent favorable rating.

Bernard Lord is well-known and has a net positive image (47% favorable – 38% unfavorable). However, he receives a higher intensity rating from those who do not like him (21% *strongly* unfavourable) than those who do (17% *strongly* favourable).

Shawn Graham is well-known, but not as known as Bernard Lord. Graham’s favorable rating is not as high as Lords but his unfavorables are substantially less (40% favourable – 17% unfavourable).

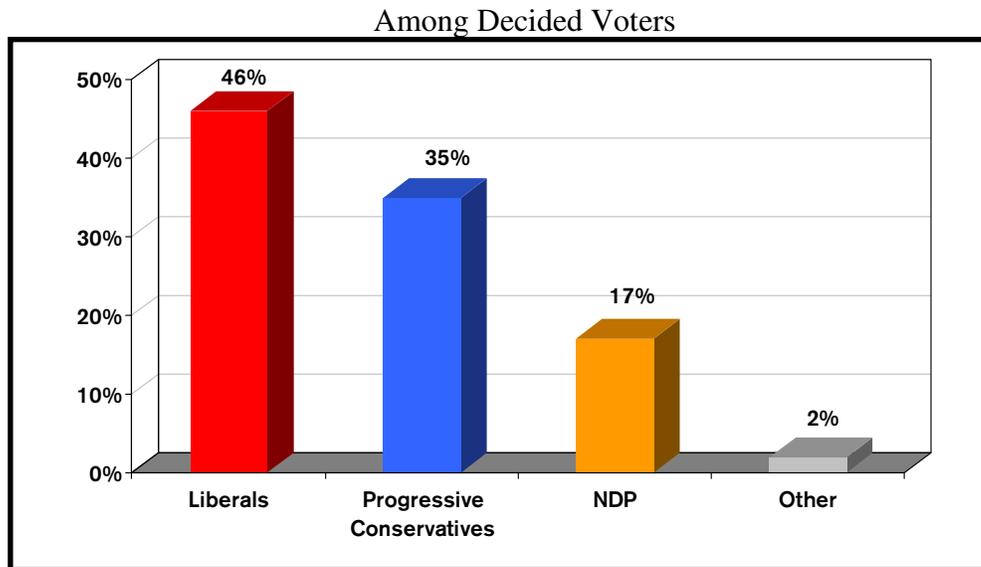
Elizabeth Weir is the most well liked out of the three party leaders, she is also well-known (57% favourable – 15% unfavourable; 24% *strongly* favourable). Alison Brewer is generally unknown among the people of New Brunswick (74% have not heard about her).

When asked directly which leader would make the best premier of New Brunswick, 33 per cent say Bernard Lord, 27 per cent Shawn Graham and 10 per cent Alison Brewer. As expected voters of the three parties, are more likely to feel that their party leader would make the best Premier. Part of reason for the gap in leadership between Lord and Graham may be because Lord is better known than Graham.



## Vote

Presently, the Liberals are leading the Progressive Conservatives by 11 points among people who have decided who they are going to vote for. Voters who have a university degree, earn more than \$40,000 a year or who live in the northern part of New Brunswick are more likely to vote Liberal. Voters who are 55 years of age or older, or who live in the Moncton area or southern New Brunswick are more likely to vote for the Progressive Conservatives. There is not one specific demographic of the population that is more likely to vote for the NDP.



<b>Liberals (46%)</b>	<b>Progressive Conservatives (35%)</b>
University Educated	55 years or older
Northern NB	Moncton
More than \$40,000	Southern NB

When taking into account undecided voters, the Liberals lead the Progressive Conservatives by eight points. There are 13 per cent of voters who are undecided of who to vote for. Voters who have less than a high school education are more likely to be undecided. This is good news for the Liberals as undecideds typically break towards the challenger (non-incumbent).

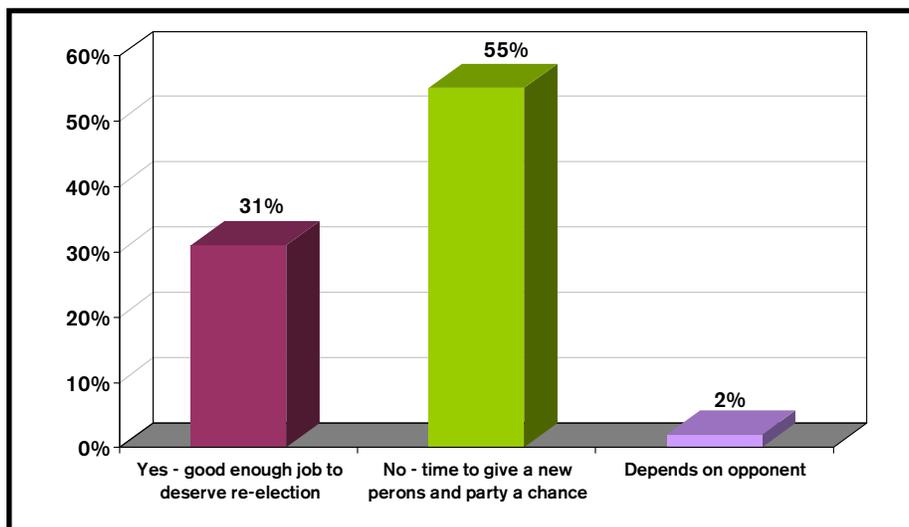
The number one reason why people are voting for a particular party is that they like and support its policies and platforms. Liberal voters feel that it is time for a change, that they dislike the government in power and that they have always voted for the Liberal party. Progressive Conservative voters feel that the government/party has been doing a good job, they have always voted for the party and it is the lesser of the evils. NDP voters say that it is because of good leadership and government, its time for a change, and the party is the lesser of the evils that they are voting for the party.

There are several reasons that stand out why voters are not voting for the Progressive Conservatives. Voters who say they would vote Liberal report that the reasons they are not voting PC are because of the party's policies, the management of the health care system and Bernard Lord. NDP voters say they are not voting for the PC party because of the party's policies and health care. This provides the Liberals with the opportunity to focus on the issue of health care and woo some of the NDP voters, if they can persuade them that voting for the Liberals would be the best thing for health care in the province.

Reasons why Progressive Conservative voters are not voting for the Liberal party include dislike the party leader, think they are dishonest and liars, the scandal and Gomery inquiry, and they have a bad track record. NDP voters are not voting for the Liberal party because of the scandal and Gomery inquiry, they are too similar to the Progressive Conservatives and because they have been in power a long time.

### **Desire for an Election**

People in New Brunswick would support a fall election. When asked directly if they would support a provincial election this fall that would either confirm Lord's government or elect a new government, 52 per cent support an election. People who are younger are more likely to support an election than those who are older.



## Survey Questions

### A. POLITICAL MOOD

- A1. In your opinion, what is the most important issue facing New Brunswick today, the one that concerns you personally the most? [RECORD FIRST MENTION ONLY – do not read list - use as hard codes only]

Medicare/healthcare  
Education/schools  
Taxes/tax reform/GST – general  
Environment/pollution  
Economy – general/recession  
Gas prices/oil  
Poverty/the poor/welfare/homeless  
Jobs/unemployment  
Deficit/government spending  
Roads/infrastructure  
Social services – pensions/daycare/housing  
Crime/violence  
Government/politics/leadership issues  
Moral issues (abortion, legalize marijuana)  
Trade/export/international trade/NAFTA/MAI  
Labour issues/teacher’s strike  
National unity  
Other – specify  
None  
Don’t know/no opinion

- A2. Generally speaking, do you feel things in New Brunswick are going in the right direction, or do you feel things have gotten off on the wrong track? And do you feel strongly or somewhat strongly about that?

1 Strongly right direction  
2 Somewhat right direction  
3 Somewhat wrong track  
4 Strongly wrong track  
8 Don’t Know  
9 Refused

A3. If a **PROVINCIAL** election were held today, which party would you vote for: **(RANDOMIZE AND READ LIST)** the Progressive Conservative Party, the Liberal Party, the New Democratic Party, or another party?

The Progressive Conservative Party	01	<b>(SKIP TO **)</b>
The Liberal Party	02	<b>(SKIP TO **)</b>
The New Democratic Party	03	<b>(SKIP TO **)</b>
Other(please specify)	88	<b>(SKIP TO **)</b>
(VOLUNTEERED) Undecided/DK	98	<b>(CONTINUE)</b>
(VOLUNTEERED) Refused	99	<b>(CONTINUE)</b>
None/would not vote	23	<b>(SKIP TO **)</b>

A4. In that case, which party do you lean toward slightly? **(RANDOMIZE AND READ LIST)**

The Progressive Conservative Party	01
The Liberal Party	02
The New Democratic Party	03
Other(please specify)	88
(VOLUNTEERED) Undecided/DK	98
(VOLUNTEERED) Refused	99
None/would not vote	23

A5. **(IF 1, 2 OR 3 TO A3 OR A4)** And why are you voting for that party?

A6. **(IF NOT PC TO A3 OR A4)** Is there any particular reason holding you back from voting PC?

A7. **(IF NOT Liberal TO A3 OR A4)** Is there any particular reason holding you back from voting Liberal?

A8. Would you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose a provincial election this fall that would either confirm the Bernard Lord PC government for another term in office or elect a new government?

1	Strongly support
2	Somewhat support
3	Neutral (VOLUNTEERED)
4	Somewhat oppose
5	Strongly oppose
8	Don't know (VOLUNTEERED)
9	No response (VOLUNTEERED)

A9. In talking to people about politics and elections, we often find that they do not get a chance to vote. Did you happen to vote in the June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2003 New Brunswick provincial election?

Yes ( <b>GO TO A10</b> )	1
No ( <b>GO TO A11</b> )	2
Can't recall ( <b>GO TO A11</b> )	97
Don't Know ( <b>GO TO A11</b> )	98
Refused ( <b>GO TO A11</b> )	99

**ONLY ASK A10 IF YES TO A9**

A10. And which party did you vote for: (**READ AND RANDOMIZE PARTY NAMES**) the Liberal Party, the Progressive Conservative Party, the New Democratic Party, or some other party? .

- 1 Liberal
- 2 Progressive Conservative
- 3 NDP
- 4 Other
- 8 Don't know (**VOLUNTEERED**)
- 9 Refused (**VOLUNTEERED**)

Now, I would like to read you the names of several individuals who have been mentioned in the news recently. For each one, please tell me whether you have heard of that person and, if so, whether you have a favourable or unfavourable impression of that person. If you do not recognize the name, just say so. (**RANDOMIZE AND READ LIST**) Would that be strongly favourable/unfavourable impression or just a somewhat favourable/unfavourable impression?

- 1 Have not heard of them
- 2 Strongly favourable
- 3 Somewhat favourable
- 4 Neutral/Neither favourable nor unfavourable
- 5 Somewhat unfavourable
- 6 Strongly Unfavourable
- 8 Don't know (**VOLUNTEERED**)
- 9 Refused (**VOLUNTEERED**)

- A11. Bernard Lord
- A12. Shawn Graham
- A13. Elizabeth Weir
- A14. Alison Brewer

A15. Elizabeth Weir has announced that she is retiring as leader of the New Brunswick NDP. So far there is only one candidate running to replace her, Alison Brewer. Assuming Alison Brewer becomes leader of the NDP, which of the following leaders would make the best Premier of New Brunswick? **(READ AND RANDOMIZE LIST)**

- 1 Bernard Lord of the PC Party of New Brunswick
- 2 Shawn Graham of the New Brunswick Liberals
- 3 Alison Brewer of the New Democratic Party
- 4 None **(VOLUNTEERED)**
- 8 Don't Know **(VOLUNTEERED)**
- 9 Refused **(VOLUNTEERED)**

A16. Now thinking about Bernard Lord and the provincial PC government - do you think that Bernard Lord and the PC government have done a good enough job to deserve re-election, or is it time to give a new person and party a chance?

- 1 Yes – good enough job to deserve re-election
- 2 No – time to give a new person and party a chance
- 3 Depends on opponent **(VOLUNTEERED)**
- 8 Don't know **(VOLUNTEERED)**
- 9 Refused **(VOLUNTEERED)**