

The Summer of Disconnect

With no federal or territorial election in sight, Yukoners are feeling more disconnected to any political party than usual. In a recent DataPath poll of 349 Yukoners, when asked about which party they would support in a territorial election, 39% were undecided, up from 30% in the spring, (with a typical average of about 20%). The same trend in non-committed voters is seen at the Federal level with 20% of Yukoners undecided, up from 15% in the spring and a typical average over the years of about 15-17%. "With some many Yukoners feeling undecided on political preferences, it is hard to say exactly how an election would turn out." commented Donna Larsen, partner in DataPath Systems. Typically undecided voters either don't vote, or they vote in similar patterns to the decided voters, so polls are a good indication of election results. However, with so many undecided voters, the trends become more important than the actual percentages. At the territorial level, one trend is a continuous drop in Yukon Party support over the past 4 polls over the past year, from a high of 47% support in the Spring of 2009 to a low now of 22%. However, another trend is that no other single party is picking up the entire drop, as it is split between the two other parties. Of the 25 percentage points lost by the Yukon Party, the Liberal were able to gain the most, up 12 points, from 27% in spring 2009 to 39% now, and the NDP was up 10 points from 16% to 26%. Another consistent finding is that during this one year timeframe, satisfaction with the Yukon Party has dropped (from 31% satisfaction to 13% satisfaction). Yet, neither the Liberal Party nor the NDP has shown any significant increase in satisfaction. The Yukon Party's satisfaction ratings, even with a large drop, are still similar with the satisfaction ratings

for the Liberal Party (14%), and stronger than satisfaction with the NDP (6%). "What this means is that the Yukon Party has not been able to regain the confidence of Yukoners, but neither has any other party." commented Donna Larsen

This is further supported by what the single issue Yukoners feel is the most important in the territory. Concerns for the economy are at an all time low, with only 12% of Yukoners rating this as the top issue. This puts the economy in at the third highest ranked issue. Above that, in the second position is the environment (14%), and the top item is poor government at 17%. Until this time last year, the economy and the environment held the top 2 positions with little competition. However, in spring of 2009, poor government jumped to a top issue and peaked at 19% in the summer of 2009. Another new issue for residents is social issues. Alcohol and drugs jumped to 11% (from 4 -5% in past polls) and other social issues rose from 3% to 7%. "Once people are feeling confident with the economy and environment, social issues start to rise as concerns." 19% of Yukoners feel the economy is in healthy or peak condition, up from 10% in spring 2009, and 19% of Yukoners feel they are much better or somewhat better off than they were last year, up from 16% in spring 2009. So, in general Yukoners are happy and feeling OK with life in general, but are not attributing that confidence to the government.

This is also true for federal issues. Yukoner's support of Stephan Harper shows his approval rating dropping, from 48% approving of his performance in October 2009 to only 31% approval now. (49% disapprove and 20% don't know). That said, Mr. Harper is still Yukoners top choice when it comes to which leader would make the best Prime

Minister. 33% support Harper, while only 31% support Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff. Support for the NDP's Jack Layton is at 17% and the Green Party's Elizabeth May is at 15%. The only shift over the past year had been an increase for the NDP's leader (up 7 points) at the expense of the Green Party. While Harper may have a slight lead over the other leaders, the Yukon's Liberal MP Larry Bagnel continues to see his support growing, and has a commanding lead with 62% of Yukon voters planning to support him if an election were held today. When asked why they support their Yukon candidate, those supporting Mr. Bagnel were more likely to say it was due to "what they feel he can do for the Yukon" (56%), while those voting for other parties were more likely to feel it was because of "what their candidate could do for Canada" (75%).

The survey was conducted by DataPath Systems; an independent Yukon-based market research company. 340 telephone and online surveys were conducted with 182 Whitehorse residents and 158 non-Whitehorse residents between July 15 – 26, 2010. The data is weighted to accurately represent Yukoners based on the community they live in, their age and gender based on census data. Percentages are statistically valid to +/- 5.5%, 19 times out of 20 (95% confidence). This was a non-commissioned study, paid for by DataPath Systems.

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