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NL Election 2015: Windsor Lake Liberal Cathy Bennett leads Ryan Cleary by 58 points.

By David Coletto

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VOCM News commissioned Abacus Data to conduct surveys in four provincial electoral districts. Today, we report the results of a survey of 500 eligible voters living in Windsor Lake.

Liberal candidate and incumbent MHA Cathy Bennett has very large 58-point lead over PC candidate and former NDP MP Ryan Cleary in the district of Windsor Lake. 74% of committed voters in the district say they will vote for Ms. Bennett, followed by Mr. Cleary at 16% and NDP candidate Don Rowe in third at 10%. 23% of respondents were undecided or not voting.

Windsor Lake is a new district that includes parts of the former electoral districts of Cape St. Francis, St. John's East, St. John's North, and Virginia Waters. Cathy Bennett won a April 9, 2014 by-election in Virginia Waters defeat the PC candidate by 40 votes.

Along with vote intentions, we also measured the mood of voters in the district, their perceptions of the party leaders, and what issues were most important to them.

Here's what we found:

- 77% think it is time for a change in government (2 points below the provincial average).
- The economy and jobs (39%), and health care (21%) are the top issues in the district, similar to provincial level findings and results in the three other districts we surveyed.
- 78% would consider voting Liberal (4 points above provincial average), 34% would consider voting NDP (3 points below provincial average) and 40% would consider voting PC (8 points above the provincial average).
- Liberal Leader Dwight Ball has the most favourable image in the district with 55% having a positive impression of him and only 10% viewing him negatively. PC Leader Paul Davis also have a net positive impression, although somewhat less positive than Mr. Ball. Forty-two percent view Mr. Davis positively while 21% view him negatively. NDP Leader Earle McCurdy is viewed positively by 19% of eligible voters and negatively by 30%. Mr. Ball's

net impression score is somewhat stronger than the provincial average (NL +40, Windsor Lake +45) while Mr. Davis' numbers are considerably stronger (NL +7, Windsor Lake +21). Mr. McCurdy's numbers are weaker in Windsor Lake than they are provincially (NL +4, Windsor Lake -11).

- Despite trailing the Liberals in Windsor Lake, most eligible voters in the district think the province is headed in the right direction (58%), six points higher than the provincial average.
- 86% of voters think the Liberal Party will win the provincial election and 73% think the Liberal candidate will win locally in Windsor Lake. Province-wide, 76% of respondents said they believed the Liberals would win the election.
- 49% of those we surveyed voted Liberal in the recent federal election, 26% voted NDP and 10% voted Conservative. 89% of those who voted Liberal federally are planning to vote for Ms. Bennett and the Liberals provincially (9% are voting for Mr. Cleary) while only 26% of federal NDP voters say they are planning on voting for the NDP candidate in the district (16% are voting PC while the majority (58%) are voting Liberal).
- Only 25% of those who voted PC in 2011 are planning on voting PC this time. 73% are voting Liberal and 1% say they will vote NDP.

The Upshot

Ryan Cleary made a splash when he announced that he was going to run for the provincial Progressive Conservatives soon after he was defeated in his re-election bid as the NDP MP for St. John's South - Mount Pearl in the October Federal Election. Mr. Cleary's entry into the race in Windsor Lake has not improved the PC Party's chances of winning the district as Liberal candidate and incumbent MHA Cathy Bennett has a commanding 58-point lead over Mr. Cleary.

And although we didn't ask respondents their opinion of Mr. Cleary directly, evidence suggests he may be pushing away supporters.

First, many of the underlying perceptions mirror what we have seen in the other three districts we have surveyed and in the province-wide survey we completed earlier this month. Three quarters of eligible voters want change, yet most think the province is headed in the right direction. And while Dwight Ball is the most popular leader in the district, a large plurality of eligible voters also have a favourable impression of PC Leader Paul Davis.

So what is different in Windsor Lake? It is probably a Cleary effect. Two data points provide some clues.

Mr. Cleary is having little success attracting those who voted Conservative and NDP federally. 48% of those who voted Conservative federally in October say they would vote for the provincial Liberals now while 58% of those who voted for the NDP federally are going to vote Liberal

provincially. Mr. Cleary and the PCs are only attracting 46% of past federal Conservative voters and only 16% of past federal NDP voters.

Finally, and perhaps most instructive, 73% of those who said they voted PC in the 2011 provincial election are now planning to vote Liberal. That level of voter attrition from the Tories is 20 to 30 points higher than in the other districts we surveyed.

This all suggests that Mr. Cleary was not the prize the PCs thought and voters in Windsor Lake might be rejecting his choice to change political stripes.

Download the full results deck here: <http://abacusdata.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Abacus-Newfoundland-and-Labrador-Political-Survey-Windsor-Lake-Nov-2015.pdf>

Methodology

The random live-interview telephone survey was conducted with 500 eligible voters living in the provincial electoral district of Windsor Lake. The survey was completed from November 12 to 16, 2015.

The margin of error for a probability-based random sample of 500 respondents using a probability sample is +/- 4.5%, 19 times out of 20.

The data was statistically weighted according to census data to ensure that the sample matched population of the electoral district.

Note the small sample sizes when reviewing results in subgroups.

For more information about the poll's methodology or the results, please contact David Coletto, CEO at david@abacusdata.ca or at 613-232-2806.

Abacus Data Inc.

We offer global research capacity with a strong focus on customer service, attention to detail and value added insight. Our team combines the experience of our Chairman Bruce Anderson, one of Canada's leading research executives for two decades, with the energy, creativity and research expertise of CEO David Coletto, PhD. For more information, visit our website at <http://www.abacusdata.ca/>

If a provincial election was held today, which political party would you vote for in your local electoral district?

Would you vote...

Sample size 500

Comparable MoE: $\pm 4.5\%$, 19 times out of 20

Fields dates: November 12 to 16, 2015

		PC candidate Ryan Cleary	Liberal candidate Cathy Bennett	NDP candidate Don Rowe	UND/NV	Raw	Weighted
	Windsor Lake	12%	57%	8%	23%	500	503
Gender	Male	13%	55%	10%	23%	242	239
	Female	11%	59%	6%	24%	258	264
Age	18 to 39	11%	61%	10%	17%	81	143
	40 to 49	10%	61%	6%	23%	223	205
	60+	15%	48%	8%	30%	188	155
Education	HS or less	16%	58%	12%	14%	55	140
	College	11%	56%	6%	28%	109	187
	University	10%	57%	6%	26%	328	176

If a provincial election was held today, which political party would you vote for in your local electoral district?

Would you vote...

Sample size 362

Comparable MoE: $\pm 5.3\%$, 19 times out of 20

Fields dates: November 8 to 12, 2015

		PC candidate Ryan Cleary	Liberal candidate Cathy Bennett	NDP candidate Don Rowe	Raw	Weighted
	Windsor Lake	16%	74%	10%	362	385
Gender	Male	16%	71%	13%	183	185
	Female	15%	78%	7%	179	200
Age	18 to 39	14%	74%	12%	64	119
	40 to 49	13%	79%	7%	164	157
	60+	22%	67%	11%	134	109
Education	HS or less	19%	68%	14%	45	120
	College	15%	77%	8%	77	135
	University	14%	78%	9%	240	130