

Manitobans happy with change in government, but suspect PC's may have a 'hidden agenda'

Most think former premier Greg Selinger will be remembered as 'below average' or 'poor'

May 25, 2016 – One month into his Progressive Conservative Party's new majority mandate, Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister enjoys [the second-highest approval rating](#) of any provincial leader in Canada.

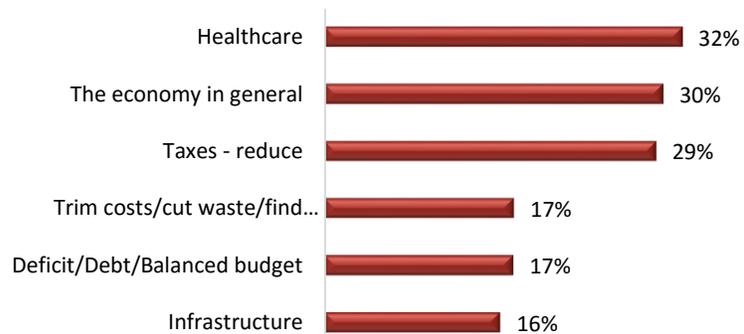
But Pallister doesn't take office with the same level of popularity as new leaders in other provinces have enjoyed after winning a change in government.

A new public opinion survey of 450 Manitoba adults, self-commissioned and conducted by the Angus Reid Institute, may provide a partial explanation for this. While Manitobans are broadly pleased with the outcome of last month's election and the departure of much-maligned New Democratic Party premier Greg Selinger, more than half (57%) think the PCs have a "hidden agenda" – making plans for governing they didn't mention during the campaign.

Key Findings:

- Manitobans are more likely to be pleased (43%) than upset (36%) with the outcome of last month's provincial election. One-in-five (21%) express a neutral opinion of the outcome
- Three issues rise to the top of Manitobans' list of priorities for the new government: healthcare (32%), tax relief (29%), and the economy more broadly (30%)

What two priorities from the list below would you say the new Manitoba PC government should focus on? (select up to two)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from May 9 – 13, 2016, among a representative randomized sample of 450 adult Manitoba residents who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 4.6 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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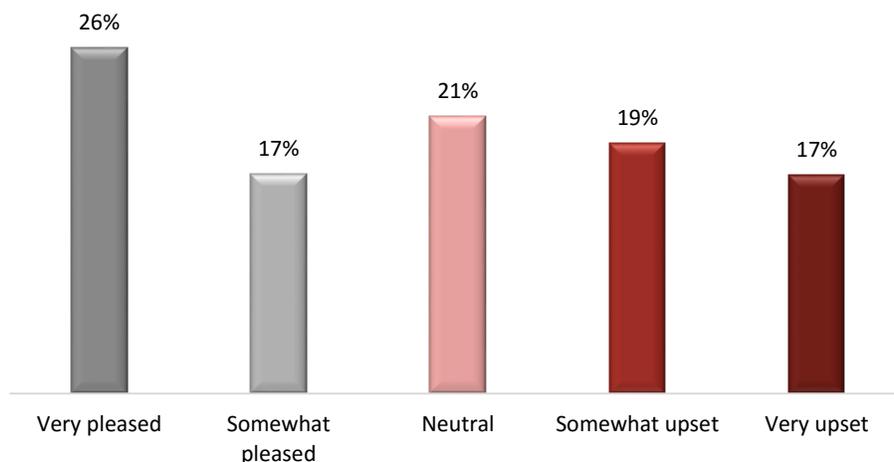
- Most (56%) think former premier Greg Selinger will go down in history as a below average (18%) or poor (38%) premier. Only one-in-ten (9%) think he will be remembered as above average

Election outcome: many remain skeptical of new government

The outcome of the April 19 provincial election was never especially in doubt. After 17 years in power, the Manitoba New Democratic Party – and its leader, premier Greg Selinger – were hugely unpopular with the electorate.

It should come as no surprise, then, that Manitobans are more likely to say they are pleased (43%) than upset (36%) with the outcome of the vote. This includes fully one-in-four (26%) who say they were “very pleased” by the result, as seen in the following graph:

Reaction to the Manitoba election outcome:

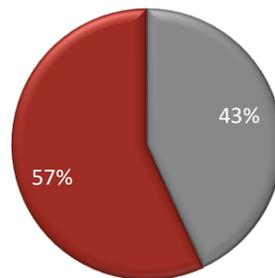


It should be noted, however, that the victory of Brian Pallister and the Manitoba Progressive Conservative Party is far from overwhelmingly popular with Manitobans. For example, after the Trudeau Liberals won the federal election in October of last year, a full majority of Canadians (57%) told ARI they were “pleased” with that result. In comparison, the PC’s Manitoba victory has been more tepidly received.

Similarly, in ARI’s most recent report on premier performance, Pallister debuts with the approval of 46 per cent of Manitoba residents – a number that makes him the second-most-popular provincial leader, but lags behind the first post-election approval ratings recently posted by Alberta’s Rachel Notley (53%), Newfoundland and Labrador’s Dwight Ball (60%), and Nova Scotia’s Stephen McNeil (66%).

A possible explanation for this: Asked whether they think Pallister and his party “have been generally open and honest about what they plan to do in government” or “have a ‘hidden agenda’ with some plans they have not talked about publicly yet,” a majority of Manitobans (57%) choose the latter:

Overall, whether or not you support their plans for government, do you think Brian Pallister and the PCs:



- Have been generally open and honest about what they plan to do in government
- Have a "hidden agenda" with some plans they have not talked about publicly yet

As might be expected, those who are pleased with the election outcome are considerably more likely to think their new government was “open and honest” about its plans (77% do so), while those who were upset by the election overwhelmingly believe the PCs are hiding some of their plans (95%).

Priorities for Pallister government

Hidden agenda or not, the Pallister government takes power with three key issues rising to the top of Manitoba voters’ minds.

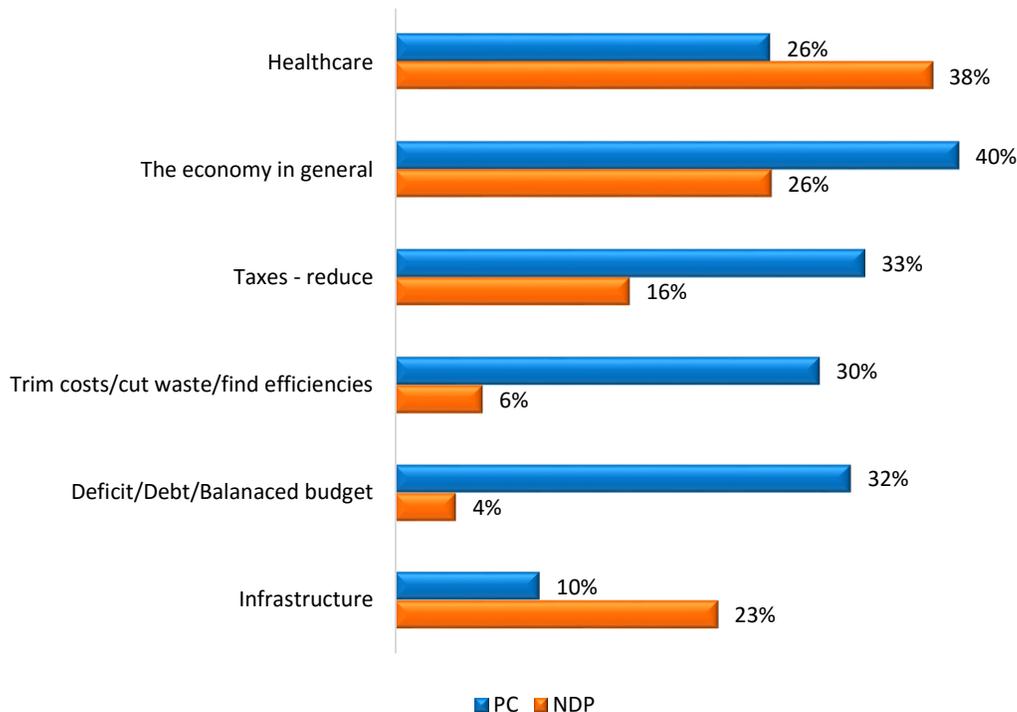
Asked to choose up to two priorities for their new government, roughly three-in-ten Manitobans each choose “healthcare” (32%), “the economy in general” (30%), and reducing taxes (29%) as top-two issues.

Two other economy-related issues – trimming costs (17%) and managing debt (17%) – as well as maintaining provincial infrastructure (16%) form a second tier of priorities that roughly one-in-six respondents rank highly.

When looking specifically at the people who put the new government in power, however, a different picture of voter priorities appears.

Among the slightly more than half (53%) of provincial voters who cast ballots for the PCs, the top four issues are all economic, with healthcare running a rather distant fifth, and only one-in-ten choosing infrastructure. For those who stuck with the ousted NDP, meanwhile, priorities for the new government are very different, as seen in the following graph:

What two priorities from the list below would you say the new Manitoba PC government should focus on as their top priorities?



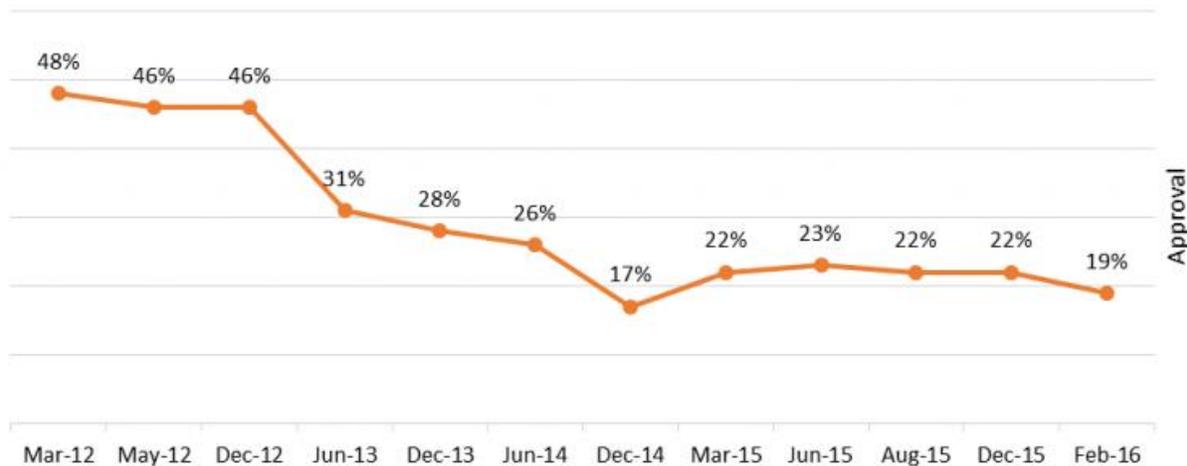
Little love for Selinger

For most of his last two years in government, former premier Greg Selinger was consistently Canada's least-popular premier, in terms of job approval. His approval ratings began to drop in 2013, after his government introduced a 1 per cent increase to the provincial sales tax, something Selinger had declared he would not do during the 2011 provincial election campaign.

The premier's sagging popularity led to calls for him to step down and – in late 2014 – the resignations of five of senior cabinet ministers. Selinger was forced to call for a leadership contest, which he only very narrowly won in March 2015.

Still, though he managed to retain the party leadership, he never regained the approval of the provincial electorate, as seen in the following graph:

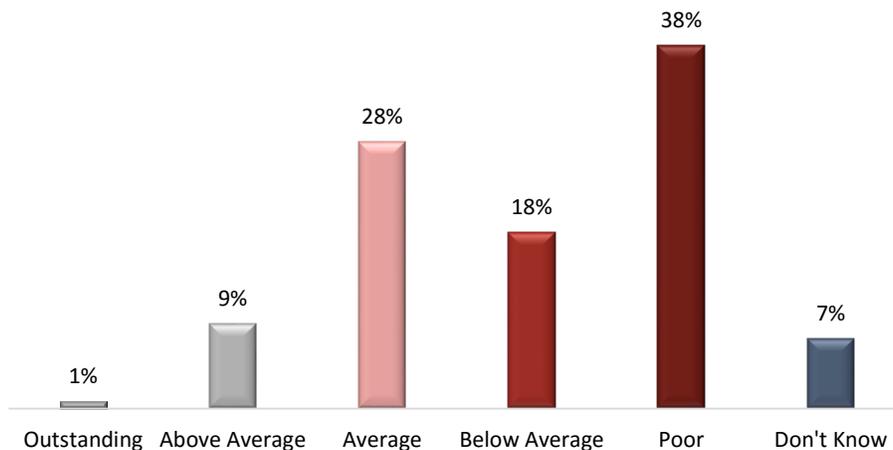
Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger (NDP)



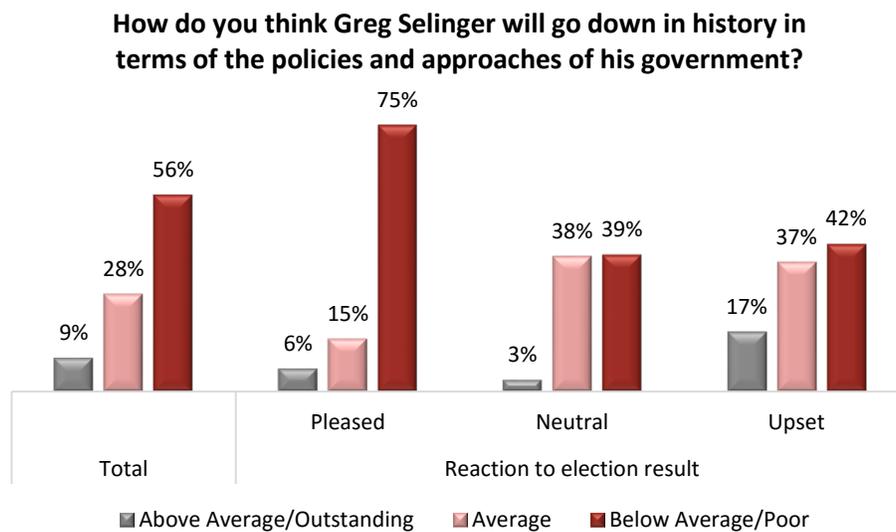
Now that Selinger’s time as premier has ended, most Manitobans (56%) think he will be remembered as a “below average” or “poor” leader of the province. That number is more than six times as many as believe he will go down in history as an “above average” or “outstanding” premier (9%).

Indeed, a two-in-five plurality (38%) choose the most negative option in response to this question:

How do you think Greg Selinger will go down in history in terms of the policies and approaches of his government?



Even among those who describe themselves as “upset” that the election resulted in the end of Selinger’s government, the view that Selinger will be remembered as a sub-par premier predominates, as seen in the following graph:



*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

Summary tables follow. For detailed results by age, gender, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

What two priorities from the list below would you say the new Manitoba PC government should focus on as their top priorities? (select up to two)			
	Total (450)	2016 Provincial Vote	
		PC	NDP
Healthcare	32%	26%	38%
The economy in general	30%	40%	26%
Taxes -- reduce	29%	33%	16%
Trim costs/cut waste/find efficiencies	17%	30%	6%
Deficit/Debt/Balanced budget	17%	32%	4%
Infrastructure	16%	10%	23%
Jobs/unemployment	12%	6%	17%
Environment	9%	3%	14%
Poverty	9%	3%	14%
Education	8%	6%	12%
Child and Family services	6%	0%	16%
Crime/Justice	6%	6%	2%
Indigenous/Aboriginal issues	6%	1%	10%
Hydro	3%	4%	0%

Overall, whether or not you support their plans for government, do you think Brian Pallister and the PCs:

(weighted sample sizes)	Total (450)	Reaction to 2016 election result		
		Pleased (194)	Neutral (95)	Upset (161)
Have been generally open and honest about what they plan to do in government	43%	77%	39%	5%
Have a "hidden agenda" with some plans they have not talked about publicly yet	57%	23%	61%	95%

How do you think Greg Selinger, the outgoing NDP premier of Manitoba, will go down in history in terms of the policies and approaches of his government?

(weighted sample sizes)	Total (450)	Reaction to 2016 election result		
		Pleased (194)	Neutral (95)	Upset (161)
Outstanding	1%	1%	0%	0%
Above Average	9%	5%	3%	16%
Average	28%	15%	38%	37%
Below Average	18%	18%	16%	19%
Poor	38%	57%	23%	23%
Don't know	7%	3%	20%	5%