

Focus Saskatchewan: Premier Brad Wall faces budget fallout, but his party leads over opposition

Saskatchewan Party holds seven-point advantage in vote intention

June 19, 2017 – Brad Wall has referred to the past few months the most difficult of his career: declining resource revenues have led his government to pursue an unpopular austerity program in search of a balanced budget – reportedly expected three years down the road.

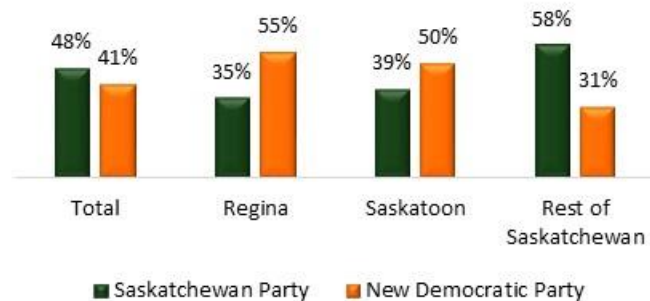
The pain has been palpable. While the yearly deficit has been cut from \$1.3B to \$685 million, difficult spending cuts and \$900 million in additional taxation were necessary.

As a result, the people of Saskatchewan haven't been shy voicing their anxiety and displeasure. But if the premier and the Saskatchewan Party hold any advantage, it is that the electorate still sees them as the best to handle the economy and the province's finances, while holding a seven-point advantage in vote intention over the opposition New Democratic Party.

Key Findings:

- Four-in-ten (42%) Saskatchewan residents say that the economy is the number one issues facing their province today. Health care is chosen by just over one-in-ten (12%).
- While the government has faced voter wrath over spending cuts and an increase in the PST, Brad Wall is still seen as best leader on the economy by a substantial margin
- A look at current vote intention finds Wall's Saskatchewan Party up seven points provincially. Regionally, the NDP lead in Saskatoon and Regina, but trail by a wide margin in the rest of the province

If a provincial election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute analyzed the results of an online survey conducted from June 5 - 12, 2017, among a representative randomized sample of 1,053 Saskatchewan residents who are members of the Angus Reid Forum. The survey data were donated by MARU/Matchbox. The sample plan included large over-samples in many provinces, weighted back to provide a national snapshot. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size with this sample plan would carry a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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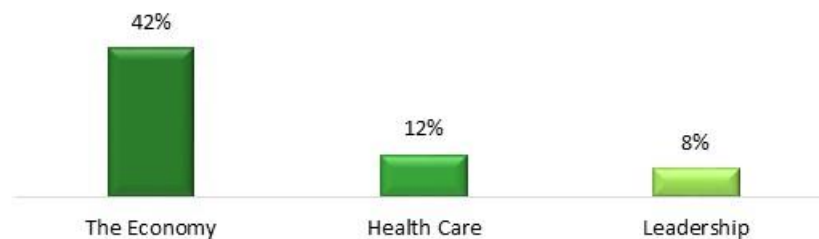
- Part 1 – Mood of Saskatchewan**
- Part 2 – Political Preferences**

Part 1:

Residents most concerned about economy

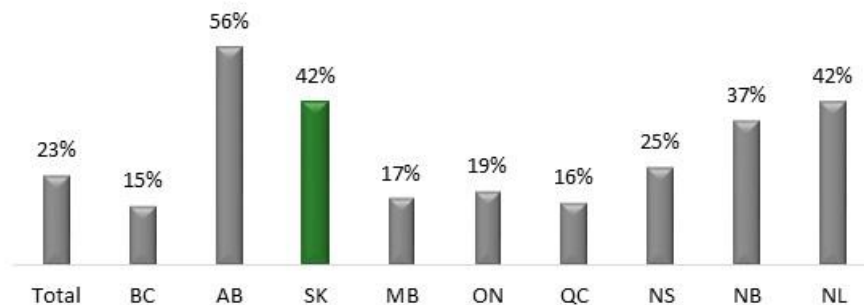
There is one key topic weighing on the minds of most Saskatchewan residents, and it's the one the government has historically been lauded for its stewardship of – the economy. More than four-in-ten (42%) say this is the top issue facing the province, with healthcare (12%) and leadership (8%) the other most pressing concerns.

What do you think is the most important issue facing Saskatchewan today?



For perspective, only Alberta voices more concern on economic issues across the country, while Newfoundland and Labrador, which holds the highest unemployment rate in the country, reaches the same level as Saskatchewan:

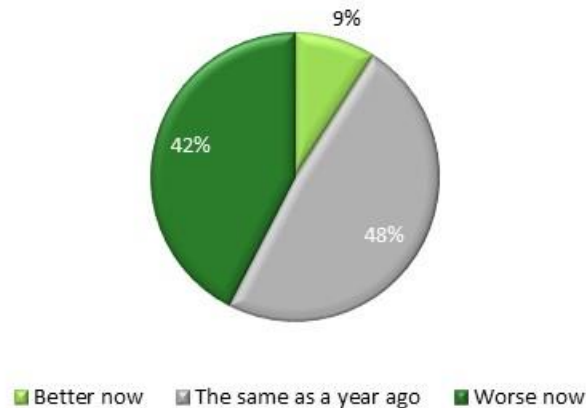
Percentage of residents saying 'The Economy' is the top issue facing their province right now



Most of Brad Wall's tenure has been characterized by strong economic growth and a low-tax environment. The province has maintained the [lowest net debt per person](#) ratio in the country outside of Alberta since he was elected in 2007. As resource revenues have dropped however, the picture has changed. Gone are the days of 2009's "budget that potash made", where government spending was increased 12 per cent and taxes were reduced.

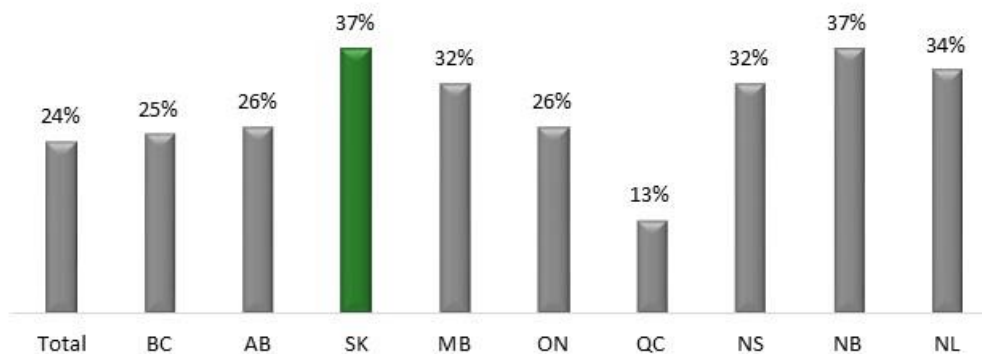
Today, the picture emerging in the province is one of frustration. Just over four-in-ten are saying that they're worse off now than they were last year at this time. Just one-in-ten (9%) say their standard of living has improved, while close to half (48%) haven't noticed a change:

All things considered, do you think your current standard of living is better or worse now than it was a year ago?



And what about next year? With a gloomy budgetary forecast on the horizon, almost four-in-ten (37%) say that they expect a worsening in their standard of living by this time in 2018. This is the largest number of people who hold that opinion in a province, alongside New Brunswickers:

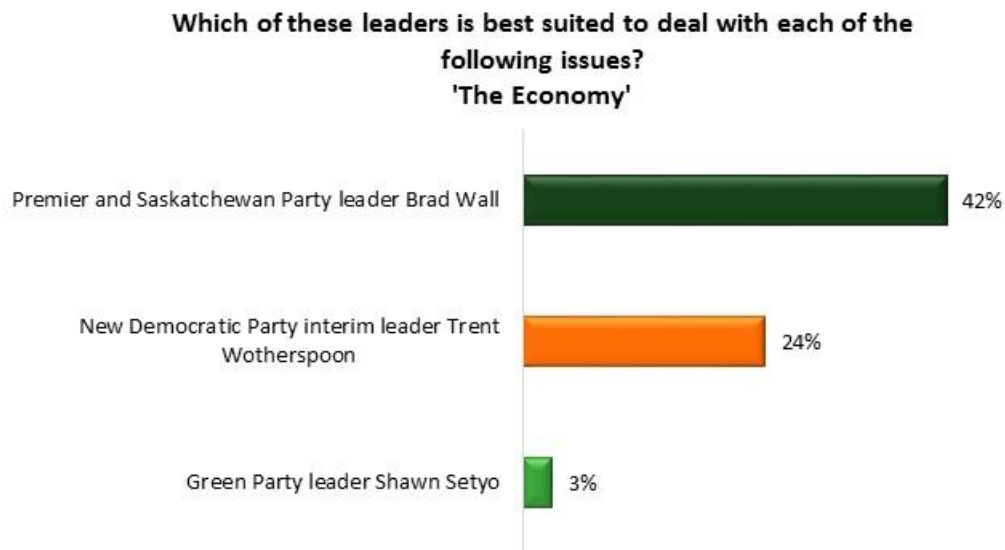
Percentage of residents saying their standard of living will be 'worse off a year from now'



Part 2:

Wall still favoured on key issues

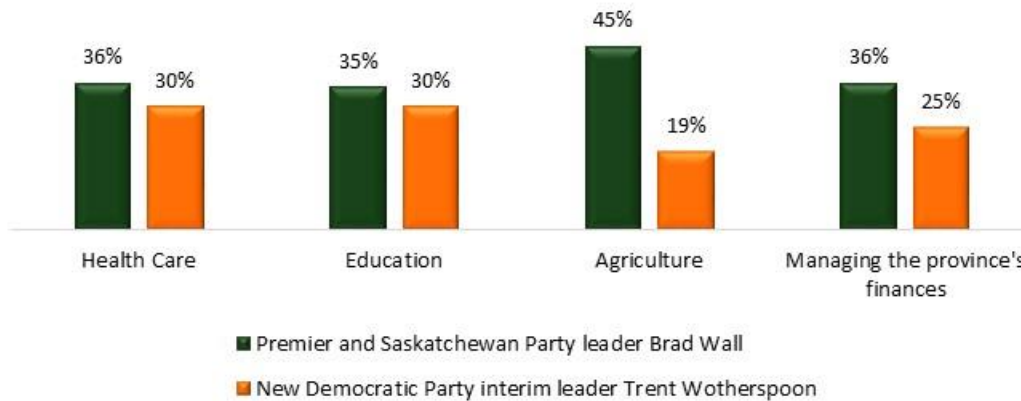
People in Saskatchewan have reason to see the future with a jaded eye: the 2017/18 budget now includes a one per cent hike to the PST, and reduces some [previous industry tax exemptions](#) in efforts to bolster government coffers. But from a political standpoint, while they may find the medicine bitter, they do not wholly blame the doctor administering it. People are significantly more likely to say that Brad Wall is the best leader to handle these key economic issues over the other main party leaders:



It should be noted that New Democratic Party and opposition leader Trent Wotherspoon stepped down from his position as interim leader shortly after this survey was fielded. He is expected by many to run for the official leader position during the party's official leadership race next May after being [urged by colleagues and residents](#) alike to consider the position.

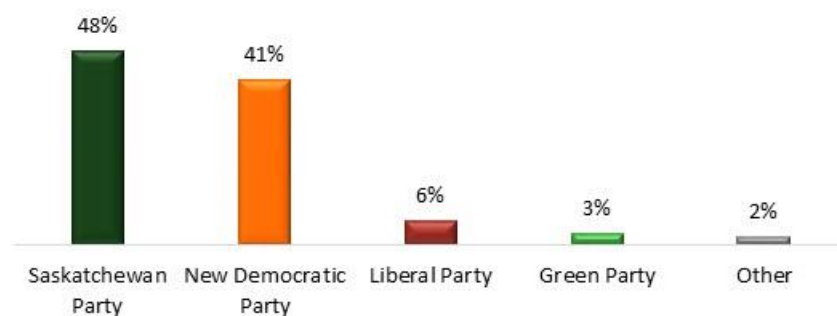
Wall and his government do face credible opposition from the NDP on two issues – health care and education. On both files three-in-ten residents prefer the New Democrat alternative to the incumbents. That said, a plurality of Saskatchewanians trust Wall's leadership on these issues. He also generates a high level of confidence when asked which leader is best to deal with agriculture in the province, and who will best manage the province's finances:

Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with each of the following issues?



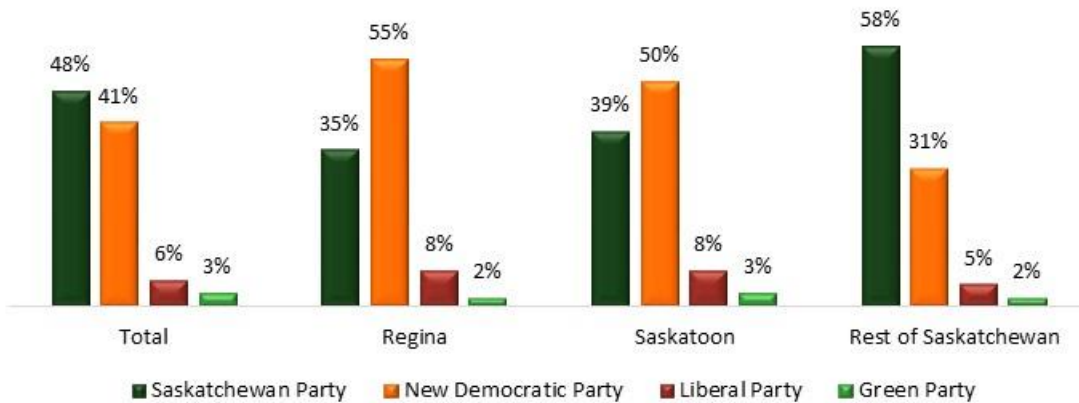
Asked to consider who they would vote for if an election were held tomorrow, the Saskatchewan Party still carries a seven-point advantage provincially over the NDP. The election will not be held for three more years, but this suggests a stronger opposition to contend with over that period – the NDP received just 30 per cent in the 2016 election, compared to 62 per cent for the Saskatchewan Party.

If a provincial election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency?



The provincial data suggests a competitive picture for the NDP. The regional breakdown provides more insight into their strong support in Regina and Saskatoon, where a majority say they would support the opposition party. As for the incumbent party, wide support is reported outside of those two major urban centres. Wall and his government hold a 27-point advantage in the rest of the province:

If a provincial election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency?



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 foundation 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

If a provincial election were held tomorrow in Saskatchewan, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency?				
	Total (1052)	Region		
		Regina (277)	Saskatoon (265)	Rest of Saskatchewan (384)
Saskatchewan Party	48%	35%	39%	58%
New Democratic Party	41%	55%	50%	31%
Liberal Party	6%	8%	8%	5%
Green Party	3%	2%	3%	2%
Other Party	2%	0%	1%	4%

What do you think is the most important issue facing your province today?										
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (5406)	Region								
		BC (600)	AB (599)	SK (1053)	MB (773)	ON (803)	QC (603)	NS (294)	NB (289)	NL (295)
The economy	23%	15%	56%	42%	17%	19%	16%	25%	37%	42%
Health Care	21%	16%	8%	12%	24%	12%	39%	37%	22%	16%
Leadership	9%	8%	11%	8%	5%	14%	4%	3%	8%	6%
Poverty	7%	5%	3%	3%	12%	6%	7%	16%	16%	10%
Energy/Electricity	6%	1%	1%	0	1%	15%	0	0	1%	2%
Housing	6%	23%	1%	1%	3%	7%	0	1%	0	1%

All things considered, do you think your current standard of living is better or worse now than it was a year ago?										
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (5406)	Region								
		BC (600)	AB (599)	SK (1053)	MB (773)	ON (803)	QC (603)	NS (294)	NB (289)	NL (295)
Better now	15%	17%	14%	9%	15%	17%	12%	17%	9%	9%
The same as a year ago	57%	53%	43%	48%	53%	55%	69%	53%	52%	61%
Worse now	26%	28%	41%	42%	31%	25%	16%	29%	37%	30%
Not sure	2%	2%	3%	1%	1%	3%	2%	1%	2%	0

Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with each of the following issues?				
	The Economy	Health Care	Education	Agriculture

Premier and Saskatchewan Party leader Brad Wall	42%	36%	35%	45%
New Democratic Party interim leader Trent Wotherspoon	24%	30%	30%	19%
Green Party leader Shawn Setyo	3%	2%	2%	4%
None of these	9%	9%	8%	7%
Not sure	23%	23%	25%	24%