

Landing with a 'thud': Royal Museum rebuild causes political mess for NDP government, but BC Liberals yet to capitalize

BCNDP holds 11-point vote intention advantage over opposition BC Liberals (42% to 31%)

June 16, 2022 – If there was ever a museum of political gaffes built in British Columbia, the rollout of the Royal BC Museum's rebuild could occupy a gallery of its own.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds most British Columbians oppose the \$789-million project (69%) while one-in-five support it (22%).

The backlash comes as the NDP government under Premier John Horgan faces other political headwinds from inflation and cost of living increases.

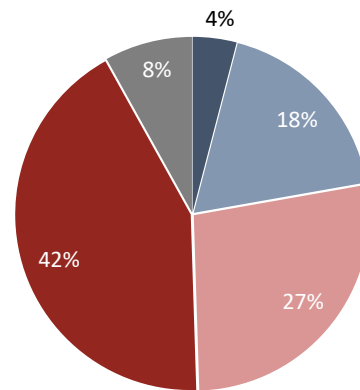
And while those issues are to an extent due to [external factors](#), the museum rebuild represents an unforced error.

Presented with the five options the government reportedly explored for the museum, most (62%) would have proceeded with the status quo and not undertaken a rebuild of the famed museum in Victoria. One-in-five (18%) would have pursued the plan chosen by the government – building a new museum on-site, plus another facility off-site for artifacts at the cost of \$789 million.

While the preservation of B.C.'s historical artifacts and displays resonates with some, the decision to proceed with the rebuild of the Royal BC Museum comes as many have criticized the [lack of staffing](#) in B.C. health care, and the [skyrocketing cost of living](#) in the province. Indeed, asked to identify their top priorities, cost of living (61%), health care (47%), and housing affordability (43%) dominate.

The performance of the B.C. government on many of those issues is heavily criticized. At least seven-in-ten say the government is performing poorly when it comes to each of these top three issues, with 87 per cent saying the BCNDP are doing a poor job on housing affordability, the highest mark in the country.

**Do you support or oppose the plan to rebuild the Royal BC Museum?
(B.C., n=615)**



■ Strongly support ■ Support ■ Oppose
■ Strongly oppose ■ Not sure/Can't say

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from June 7-13, 2022 among a representative randomized sample of 615 B.C. adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 4 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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More Key Findings:

- While Premier John Horgan's approval has [dropped seven points this quarter to 48 per cent](#) the BCNDP still holds an 11-point advantage in vote intention (42% to 31% over the opposition BC Liberals). The BC Green Party is currently supported by 15 per cent of would-be voters.
- BC Liberal leader Kevin Falcon is viewed favourably by 23 per cent of British Columbians and unfavourably by 44 per cent. Many remain uncertain (32%).

About ARI

*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.*

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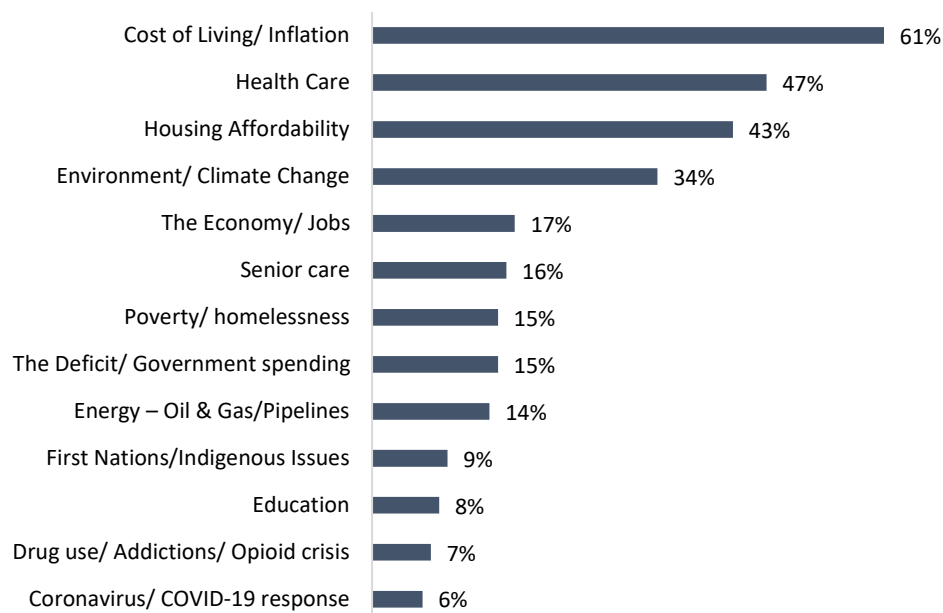
Part One: Issues and management

As British Columbia creeps out of the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic – [slower than many had hoped](#) – other issues are preoccupying British Columbians heading into summer. For many, attention has understandably turned to the price of feeding their families, filling their vehicle with gas, paying their rent or mortgage, or getting an appointment with a doctor. Overall, three core issues – the cost of living, health care, and housing affordability – now take up much of the oxygen in the room, as inflation [hits 30-year highs](#) in Canada and health care [staffing woes](#) continue:

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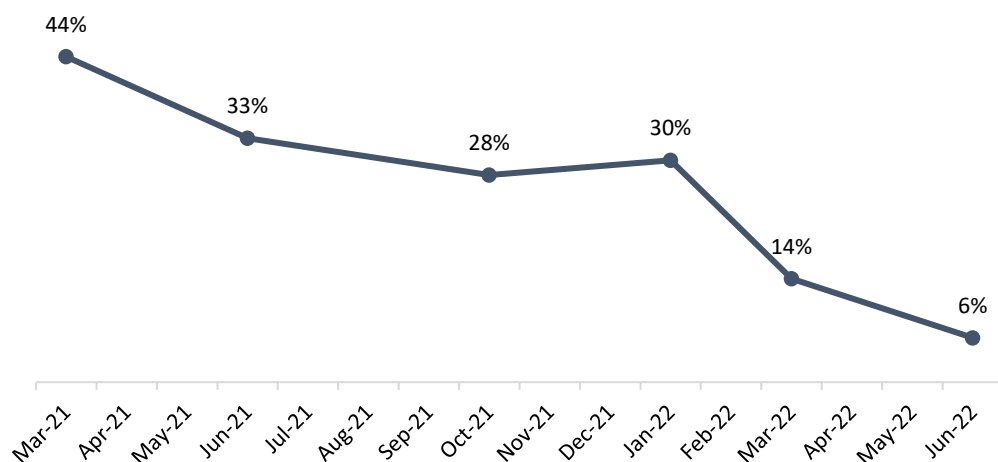
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**And which of those issues would you say are the most important to you, personally. Please select up to three:
(B.C., n=615)**



The brief good news for the B.C. government is that it receives the highest marks in the country – outside of Atlantic Canada – for its handling of the pandemic (63% say it has done a good job). That, however, is the only issue of 13 presented where a majority of residents give the government praise. It is also only a top issue for six per cent of British Columbians:

Percentage of BC residents choosing management of COVID-19 as a top priority:

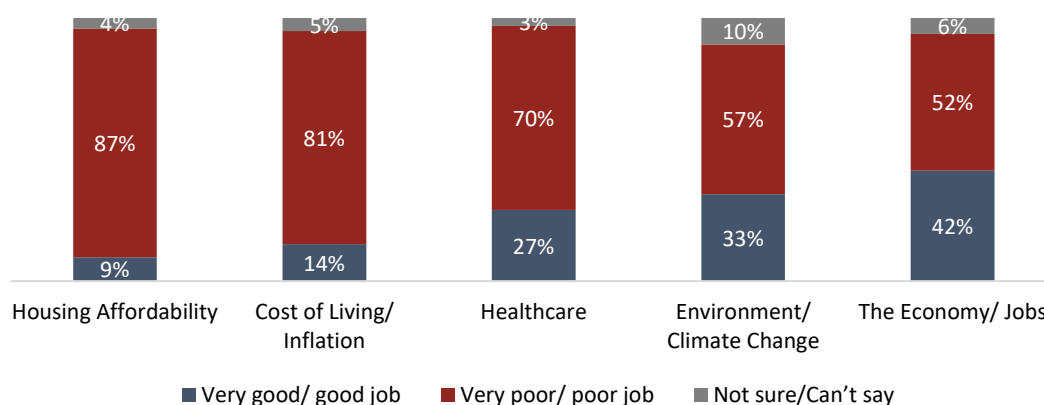


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On each of the top five issues as chosen by British Columbians, the government is overwhelmingly panned:

**Do you think the current government of British Columbia is doing a good job or a poor job in each of the following areas?
(B.C., n=615; top five issues shown)**



Those who continue to support the BCNDP in vote intention (see part three) are less critical than would-be BC Liberal voters. That said, the negative sentiment abounds regardless of provincial party affiliation:

Percentage saying the BC government has done <u>a poor or very poor job</u> on each issue:			
	Total (n=615)	Provincial Vote Intent	
		NDP (n=242)	BC Liberal (n=174)
Housing Affordability	87%	80%	91%
Cost of living/ Inflation	81%	65%	91%
Poverty/ homelessness	80%	70%	86%
Drug Use/ Addictions/ Opioid crisis	71%	56%	85%
Health Care	70%	53%	80%
Energy – Oil & Gas/ Pipelines	65%	48%	79%
Senior Care	63%	48%	72%

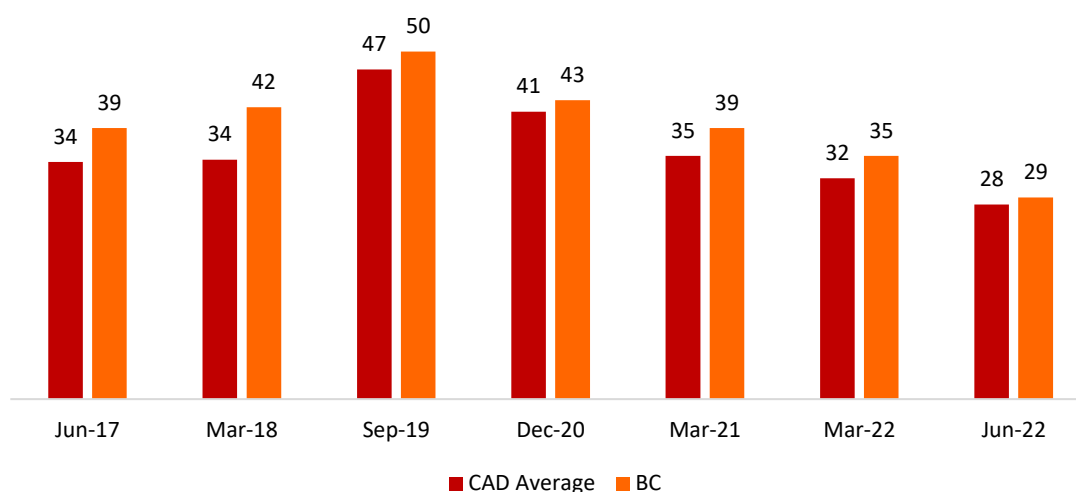
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The Deficit/ Government Spending	59%	31%	84%
Environment/ Climate Change	57%	46%	63%
The Economy/ Jobs	52%	26%	74%
Education	45%	25%	62%
First Nations/ Indigenous Issues	44%	32%	52%
Coronavirus/ COVID-19 response	34%	9%	49%

The Angus Reid Institute’s Government Performance Index compiles an average score across all issues presented in the survey. As seen in the graphic below, there has been a steady downward trend in government satisfaction, after steady improvement in the first two years of BCNDP governance. Further, the eminence of B.C. over the national average has dissipated:

Government Performance Index (Average number of respondents saying provincial government has done a "good job" across all issues)



Part Two: The Royal BC Museum Rebuild

The Royal BC Museum in Victoria is one of the [top tourist attractions](#) in the province, and home to countless treasures from British Columbia’s history. In May, the [B.C. government announced](#) it would rebuild the museum – which is says is at catastrophic risk from a moderate earthquake or flooding – at a cost of \$789 million. Nearly [seven million](#) artifacts are housed in the facility. The museum opened in 1968.

The announcement was met with near-immediate criticism from the opposition, as “[tone deaf](#)” and a “[vanity project](#)” in a time of immense financial challenges for many residents. Premier John Horgan himself admitted that the announcement had “[landed with a thud](#)”.

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Respondents were given the five options for the Royal BC Museum that the government reportedly considered. From doing nothing and simply maintaining the current situation at a cost of \$89 million over the coming decade, to retaining and repairing the existing complex at an estimated price tag of \$1.1 billion.

Three-in-five (62%) say they would not have changed the approach and stuck with the status quo, regardless of the reported risks to artifacts. One-in-five (18%) say the government’s chosen option is the right policy choice, while a handful of B.C. residents support other avenues. Notably, 18- to 34-year-olds are twice as likely as those over the age of 54 to support the BCNDP position:

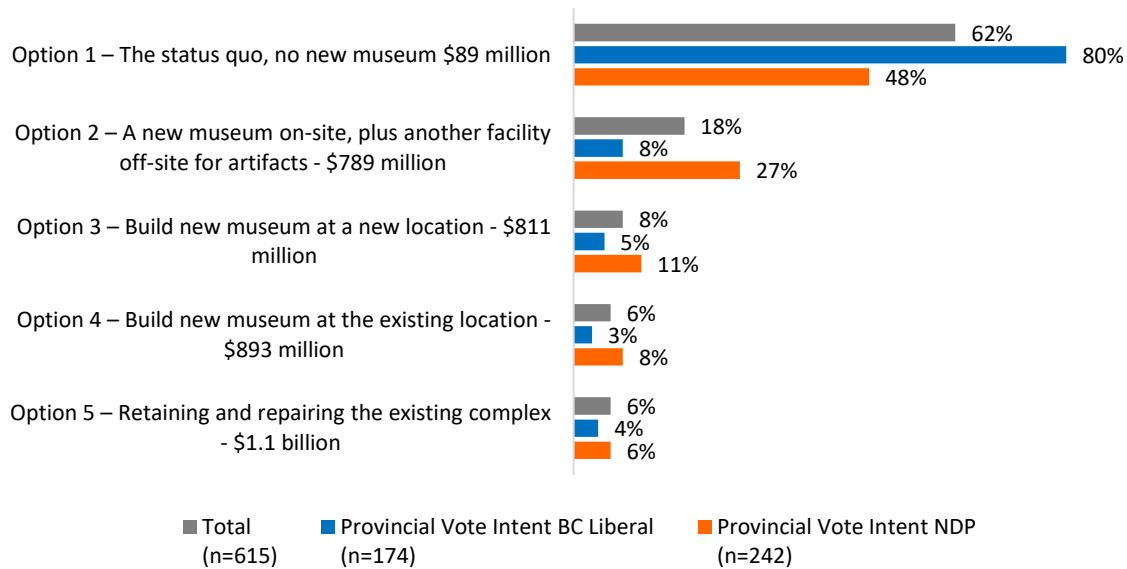
The BC government says there had been five options for the museum. Regardless of what the government decided, which of the following would you have chosen?						
	Total (n=615)	Gender		Age		
		Male (n=323)	Female (n=329)	18-34 (n=165)	35-54 (n=217)	55+ (n=276)
Option 1 – The status quo, no new museum \$89 million	62%	62%	63%	56%	59%	69%
Option 2 – A new museum on-site, plus another facility off-site for artifacts - \$789 million	18%	18%	17%	25%	19%	12%
Option 3 – Build new museum at a new location - \$811 million	8%	10%	6%	8%	9%	8%
Option 4 – Build new museum at the existing location - \$893 million	6%	7%	5%	5%	7%	5%
Option 5 – Retaining and repairing the existing complex - \$1.1 billion	6%	3%	9%	6%	6%	6%

Those who say they would support the BC Liberals if an election were held are significantly more likely than would-be BCNDP voters to support the status quo. That said, half of the latter group (48%) would also pursue this path:

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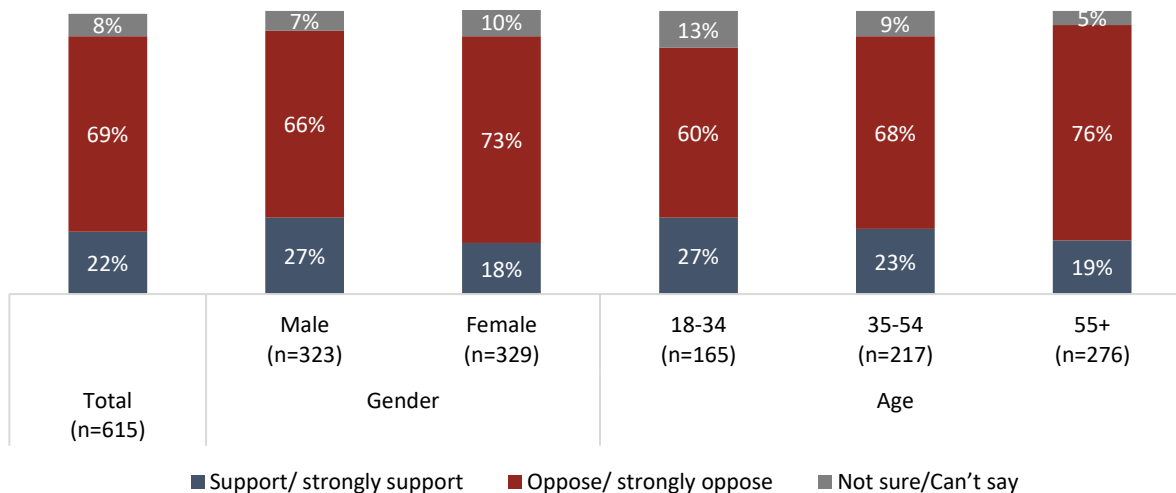
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**The BC government says there had been five options for the museum.
Regardless of what the government decided, which of the following would
you have chosen?**



When asked for their overall views on the reconstruction of the museum, regardless of these specific details, British Columbians are overwhelmingly opposed across all age and gender categories:

**Overall, based on what you’ve seen read or heard, including in this survey, do
you support or oppose the plan to rebuild the Royal BC Museum?**

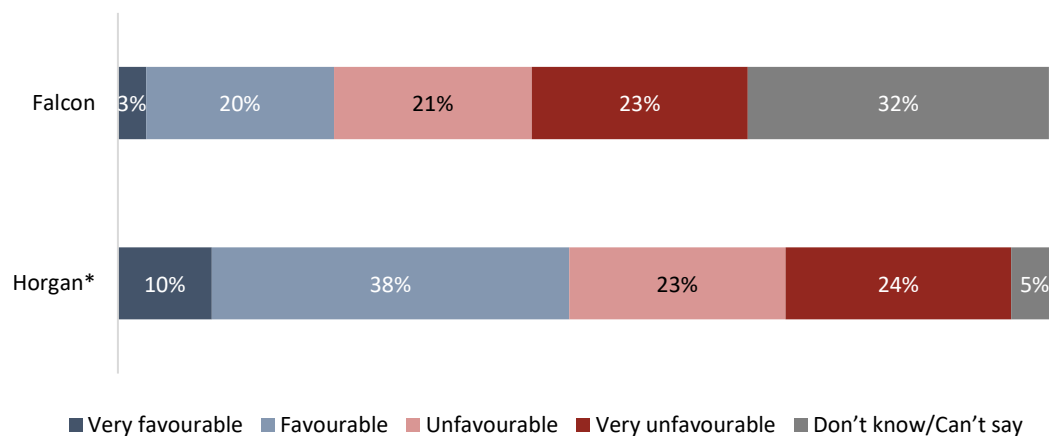


Part Three: Political Landscape

Falcon’s moment? Few view him favourably thus far

B.C. politicians have pointed to this moment as a potential turning point for the struggling BC Liberals. Some have likened it to the infamous “Fast Ferries” fiasco of the 1990s. To this point, however, while Horgan has taken a personal hit, BC Liberal leader Kevin Falcon has not received a countervailing boost. Currently one-in-four (23%) British Columbians view the opposition leader favourably, while one-in-three still have no opinion of him:

**Falcon favourability vs. Horgan approval
(B.C., n=615)**

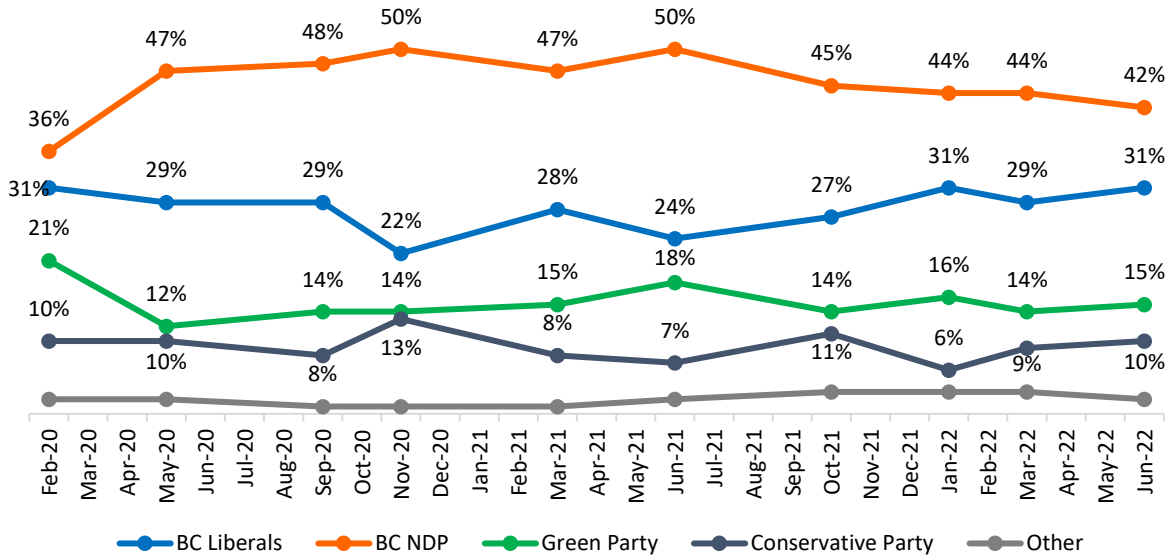


**Horgan is measured by approval instead of favourability*

NDP comfortably ahead on vote intent

The political fallout from economic challenges and the unpopular Royal BC Museum funding decision may indeed be felt in the coming months, but the evidence thus far is that B.C. residents would still offer the BCNDP a considerable advantage if an election were held. An election is not scheduled to take place in the province until 2024:

**Vote Intent - British Columbia
(Decided voters)**



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