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Poll finds Opposition marginally ahead



By Sam Strangeways

A poll commissioned by the United Bermuda Party shows that the Opposition may be marginally ahead in the race to become the next Government.

The survey of 408 registered voters - representing just under one percent of the voting population of 42,337 - asked who respondents would vote for if the General Election was held tomorrow.

Thirty nine percent said the UBP and 37 percent said the Progressive Labour Party, with 17 percent undecided and six percent refusing to answer.

The poll's margin of error is plus or minus 4.9 percent - meaning that the likely range of accuracy is anywhere between 34.1 and 43.9 percent for the UBP and 32.1 and 41.9 percent for the PLP.

UBP chairman Shawn Crockwell claimed last night that the results showed growing support for his party.

But David Burt, his counterpart in the PLP, said: "The fact that we are in a statistical tie in the UBP's own poll is an indication that the PLP is in a very strong position."

The research.bm poll was carried out for the UBP last week on a random sample of interviewees who said they were definitely or most likely going to vote on December 18. The sample was weighted to be representative of the Island's population.

A survey conducted at the end of October by Research Innovations - PLP candidate Walton Brown's market research company - asked the same question of 345 registered voters.

In that poll, 45.5 percent said they would vote PLP and 37.7 percent said UBP, with two people saying they'd vote for neither and 16.2 percent refusing to answer.

The margin of error for that poll was the same - giving a likely range of accuracy for the PLP between 40.6 and 50.4 percent and for the UBP between 32.8 and 42.6 percent. Comparing the two surveys it appears that support for the UBP remained fairly constant in the month separating the two surveys, but support for the PLP dropped.

Premier Ewart Brown derided the results at a PLP meeting in Smith's last night. "Tomorrow you should know that the UBP is going to release a story that says that their poll says they are ahead," he told supporters.

"How many in this room were in Bermuda in 1998? Do you remember two or three days before the election in 1998 the UBP had a poll that showed that it was four points ahead and Walton Brown had one that showed us

winning and his was accurate."

Mr. Crockwell told *The Royal Gazette*: "We're pleased with these results because they reflect growing support for our team and our plans for change.

"Over the next three weeks we will continue to talk about real solutions with voters who more and more are telling us it's time for a change."

Mr. Burt said: "During the next three weeks the press will be fed a steady diet of polls, but the only poll that really matters is the poll on Election Day and the PLP remains confident that the voters will once again elect a government that puts Bermudians first.

"Our candidates are out canvassing every day and we're receiving very positive feedback on the doorsteps across Bermuda."

The UBP-commissioned poll asked interviewees to rate how favourably they viewed Premier Ewart Brown and Opposition Leader Michael Dunkley on a scale of one to five, with five being very favourable.

Sixty two percent of people chose either a four or five for Mr. Dunkley and 53 percent picked four or five for Dr. Brown.

Those polled were asked if they supported or opposed Independence. Sixty seven percent said they were against it, 22 percent supported it and 11 percent were uncertain.
