



Factum

Ontario PCs Hanging on to Lead as Three-Way Race Heats Up: PCs Still Ahead (36%, Down 3) while NDP Rallies (28%, Up 6) To Tie Incumbent Liberals (28%, Down 4)

Eight in Ten (81%, Up 5) Say It's Time for Someone Else to Take Over, but Ontarians Shun Opportunity to Have Beer or Coffee with any of the Major Party Leaders

Toronto, Ontario, December 20, 2017 — The Ontario Tories may be hanging on to a lead, but the Ontario NDP has all the momentum heading into an election year, according to a new poll conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs exclusively for Global News. If an election were held tomorrow, the NDP under Andrea Horwath would receive 28% of the vote among decided voters, up six points since September, and now tied with the incumbent Liberals under Premier Kathleen Wynne (28%), who have dipped 4 points since Ipsos' last sounding. Both parties remain behind, but within striking distance, of Patrick Brown and his Progressive Conservatives, who would receive the support of 36% of decided voters, down 3 points.

However, one in ten (9%) Ontarians say they'd vote for some other party (including the Green Party), which is historically quite high, suggesting a none-of-the-above sentiment might be at play early in the pre-election period. Further, nearly two in ten (17%) remain undecided meaning there is ample opportunity for these results to shift as the election draws nearer and Ontarians become more familiar with the candidates, leaders and platforms.

The key to winning the election is the 905 swing ridings around the GTA:

- In the **905** it's a tight race between the Tories and Grits: the Liberals (34%) and PCs (32%) are statistically tied, while the NDP (24%) is in third position ahead of other parties (10%).
- In the **416** it's a three-way race: the PCs (32%), Liberals (31%) and NDP (30%) are all statistically tied, while other parties (6%) trail. This has traditionally been the core stronghold for the Liberals.
- In **Southwest** Ontario, the PCs (36%) are ahead of the NDP (31%) and third-place Liberals (23%), while others trail (9%).
- In **Central** Ontario, the PCs (51%) have a massive lead over the Liberals (19%), NDP (16%) and other parties (13%).
- In **Eastern** Ontario, the PCs (42%) also lead the Liberals (26%) and NDP (26%) who are tied, ahead of other parties (6%).
- In **Northern** Ontario, the NDP (33%) has a narrow lead over the Tories (31%), Grits (24%) and others (12%).

Just one quarter (26%) 'approve' (4% strongly/22% somewhat) of the performance of the Liberal government in Ontario under the leadership of Premier Kathleen Wynne, down 6 points since September, while 74% disapprove (49% strongly/26% somewhat), up 6 points.

A growing majority (81%) of Ontarians believe it is time for another party to take over at Queen's Park, up 5 points since September, and up 13 points since 2014. In fact, nearly four in ten (36%) Liberal voters still believe it's time for another party to take up the government benches in Toronto. Conversely, two in ten (19%, down 5 points since September) Ontarians believe the Wynne

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government has done a good job and deserves re-election. It’s interesting to note, however, that although 19% believe it’s time for change, the Liberals still receive 28% of the popular decided vote, underscoring the resiliency of the Liberal Party in Ontario.

The wildcard for the NDP is the relative popularity of its leader, Andrea Horwath, given that Kathleen Wynne isn’t very popular, and Patrick Brown is still relatively unknown. On this point, four in ten (41%, down 1 point) believe that Andrea Horwath would make the best premier of Ontario, slightly ahead of Patrick Brown (37%, up 1 point) and well ahead of Kathleen Wynne (22%, unchanged).

By way of comparison, looking back to two other elections that ushered in a change in government:

- In the **summer of 1990**, the incumbent Peterson Liberals had nearly 50% of the popular vote, with Bob Rae’s NDP in the high-20s and Mike Harris’ PCs in the low 20s. The NDP won the fall election, winning the biggest upset in modern Ontario political history.
- In **January of 1995**, heading into an election year that saw the PCs under Mike Harris sweep to power, the incumbent NDP government under Premier Bob Rae had an approval rating of 29% (3 points higher than the current government) and vote support of just 20% (8 points lower than the current government). The Harris PCs in January, 1995, had 27% of the popular vote and went on to win the June election with a majority mandate; the Liberals had 45% and went on to lose the election by 14 points.

In other words, both examples demonstrate there is still plenty of time before E-Day for voting intentions to shift dramatically. While the Liberals look like they’re in trouble, and the NDP appears to be gaining steam, the die is far from being cast.

Leadership Attributes

Ontarians were asked to assess which of the party leaders were best described by various traits and attributes. The table below outlines what Ontarians think of the major party leaders. Of particular interest:

- A full majority (53%) of Ontarians wouldn’t want to have a coffee or beer with *any* of the party leaders.
- Incumbent Premier Kathleen Wynne’s scores range between 11% and 16% -- the worst of the three leaders.
- Patrick Brown’s scores range between 15% and 24%, only slightly better than Premier Wynne’s.
- Andrea Horwath’s scores range between 19% and 29%, the best scores among the three.

Trait (Someone who...)	% Kathleen Wynne	% Patrick Brown	% Andrea Horwath	% None of them
You can trust	12%	15%	22%	52%
Who will get things done	15%	24%	22%	39%
Has what it takes to lead Ontario	15%	23%	22%	40%
Best to manage during tough economic times	15%	24%	19%	42%
Will help improve healthcare	14%	19%	28%	39%
Will sort out the hydro price situation	11%	21%	22%	46%
Has a vision for Ontario that you can support	14%	24%	24%	38%
Will provide open, responsible and ethical government	13%	18%	27%	42%

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Values best represent my own	13%	21%	24%	42%
Will fight for the middle class	15%	21%	29%	35%
Make the lives of commuters better	15%	18%	20%	47%
Protect the interests of cultural, religious and other minorities in Ontario	16%	16%	28%	40%
Will spend taxpayers money wisely	12%	21%	20%	47%
You'd like to have a beer or coffee with	11%	15%	21%	53%

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between December 8 and 14, 2017, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a sample of 829 Ontarians aged 18+ from Ipsos' online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 4.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Ontarian adults been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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