



Factum

Ontario Premier Ford's Honeymoon in Rearview Mirror as Liberals (32%), PCs (30%) and NDP (29%) Locked in a Three-Way Tie

While Slim Majority (52%) Supports Cuts to Government Spending to Move Towards Balanced Budget, No Agreement on Where to Cut

Toronto, ON, May 24, 2019 — Less than a year after the Ontario election, the honeymoon for the new Ontario government is in the rearview mirror as all three major parties are tied in popular support. While Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was still enjoying sunny ways a year after his victory in 2015, Ontario Premier Doug Ford is already navigating choppy waters.

If a provincial election were held tomorrow, the Ontario Liberals would receive 32% of the decided popular vote, up 12 points from their election tally in June of last year. The incumbent Progressive Conservatives would receive 30% of the vote, down 11 points, while the NDP would receive 29% of the vote down 5 points. Other parties, including the Green Party, would receive 10% of the vote – doubling their support from a year ago. Two in ten Ontarians say they don't know (14%) who they would vote for or simply wouldn't vote (7%).

Looking at the results within the key regions of Ontario:

- Within the **GTA**, the Liberals (40%) have a significant lead over the PCs (28%), NDP (26%) and others (6%).
- In **Southwestern** Ontario, the PCs (33%) have a narrow lead over the NDP (30%), Liberals (22%) and others (15%).
- In **Central** Ontario, the Tories (44%) hold a commanding lead over the NDP (24%), Liberals (22%) and others (10%).
- In **Eastern** Ontario, the race among the NDP (32%), Liberals (31%) and PCs (25%) is tight, while other parties (13%) are performing relatively well.
- In **Northern** Ontario, the NDP (44%) leads the Liberals (27%), NDP (20%) and other parties (9%).

Underscoring the PC government's difficulties in this early going, only three in ten (30%) approve (8% strongly/22% somewhat) of the performance of the government under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford. Seven in ten (70%) oppose (44% strongly/25% somewhat). Approval ratings are much stronger among men (40%) than women (22%).

The Tories appear to be ripping off the band-aid early in their mandate, which in theory gives them three years for the chance to recover before facing the electorate once again. It is clear that the Tories interpreted their electoral victory as a mandate to make cuts and balance the books, and a slim majority (52%) of Ontarians continue to support (16% strongly/36% somewhat) cuts to government spending, in general, in an effort to move towards a balanced budget.

But when cuts to specific ministries or programs are presented to Ontarians, most do not support the spending cuts, which helps to explain the opposition the government is facing in reaction to some of their announced cuts. The chart below outlines areas for cuts, and the proportion of Ontarians who support or oppose cuts to these programs.

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Area to cut...	% support cuts (strongly/somewhat)	% oppose cuts (strongly/somewhat)
<i>Government spending, in general</i>	52% (16%/36%)	48% (20%/28%)
Programs that support arts and culture	50% (15%/35%)	50% (17%/33%)
Support for indigenous issues	47% (15%/31%)	53% (24%/29%)
Canceling tax cuts	46% (14%/32%)	54% (20%/34%)
Money for cities	46% (12%/34%)	54% (18%/36%)
Ontario police services	42% (13%/29%)	58% (23%/36%)
Transit and infrastructure	42% (11%/31%)	58% (22%/35%)
Environment and climate change	40% (14%/26%)	60% (34%/26%)
Post-secondary education (colleges/universities)	39% (14%/25%)	61% (30%/30%)
Primary/secondary education	38% (15%/23%)	62% (38%/24%)
Homelessness, poverty, welfare	37% (12%/25%)	63% (33%/30%)
Support for seniors	35% (14%/21%)	65% (37%/27%)
Healthcare	32% (17%/16%)	68% (19%/48%)

At the top end, one half (50%) supports cuts to arts and culture programs. On the bottom end, only 32% support cuts to healthcare. Given a decent amount of support for cuts in general, but decidedly negative reaction to specific cuts, it remains to be seen whether the Tories will regain support for their agenda if it is shown that they are indeed moving towards a balanced budget and not just cutting without a purpose.

When Ontarians were asked to choose just one area of government spending to cut to help balance the budget, there was no consensus but certainly some areas were identified as higher priorities for cuts. At the top end, 21% would cut arts and culture funding, while 13% would reduce tax cuts. Others say their focus for cuts would be: reducing money for cities (9%), reducing support for indigenous issues (8%), cutting funding for the environment and fighting climate change (7%), provincial police services (7%), money for transit or other infrastructure (5%), homelessness/poverty/welfare (4%), post-secondary education (4%), primary/secondary education (3%), healthcare (3%), or reducing support for seniors (1%).

One in ten (9%) say they'd rather pay more taxes than reduce government spending in any area, while 6% say they'd just rather add to the government's debt than raise taxes or cut costs.

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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between May 17 to 21, 2019, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a sample of 1,000 adults living in Ontario was polled. 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 ± 3.5 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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