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## **CFRB/ Angus Reid Group Pulse of Toronto Poll**

### **-- METRO TORONTO VIEWS ON THE TEACHERS STRIKE --**

- -- **Support for Teachers Going on Strike** --
- -- **Ordering the Teachers Back to Work** --
  - -- **Defying the Court Order** --
- -- **Who is Being More Fair and Reasonable in this Dispute?** --



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This CFRB/Angus Reid Group Pulse of Toronto Poll was conducted by telephone between October 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, 1997 among a representative cross-section of 400 Metro Toronto residents.

These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Metro Toronto adult population according to the 1991 and 1996 Census data.

With a sample of 400, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results are within  $\pm 4.9$  percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult Metro Toronto population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population.

## **METRO TORONTO VIEWS ON THE TEACHERS STRIKE**

**-- PUBLIC SUPPORTS TEACHERS STRIKE IN OPPOSITION TO HARRIS GOVERNMENT BUT WANT THEM BACK TO WORK --**

**-- Majority believes Harris Tories are more interested in cuts than the classroom --**

**-- Teachers viewed as more fair and reasonable than government --**

While , the majority (54%) report that they support the teachers going on strike – even those with children show 59% support for strike, the majority (55%) of Metro Toronto residents support the government using a court injunction to order the teachers back to work. Teachers (46%) are seen to be more fair and reasonable in this dispute than is the government (31%).

In particular, the government is perceived by over six in ten (62%) to be more concerned about making cuts to the system than they are about improving the quality of education, reinforced by a smaller majority (55%) who disagree that the changes made to the education system in Ontario proposed by the government will mean that the quality of education will be better for our children.

On the other hand, the majority (53%) of Metro Toronto residents feel that the teachers are more concerned about the cuts and quality of education in the province than they are about their own job benefits and salaries, complemented by a majority (56%) who disagree that unions just want to fight the government no matter what the government does.

These findings emerged from a CFRB/Angus Reid Group Pulse of Toronto Poll conducted among a representative cross-section of 400 Metro Toronto residents aged 18 years and older between October 28th and 30th, 1997.

## **SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS GOING ON STRIKE**

The majority (54%) of Metro Toronto residents either “strongly” (38%) or “somewhat” (16%) support the teachers going on strike. In comparison, opposition to the teachers going on strike is found among over four in ten (43%) Metro Toronto residents, including three in ten (30%) who “strongly” oppose the teachers going on strike and over one in ten (13%) “somewhat” opposing the strike. Three percent (3%) are undecided. (Table 1)

- ◆ Support for the teachers going on strike is more likely to be found among females (60%), those aged 35 to 54 (60%), supporters of the Provincial New Democrats (78%) and Liberals (71%), as well as among those who feel that the Harris Government is on the “wrong track” (80%). Further, support for the teachers going on strike is somewhat higher among those with children under the age of 18 years (59% support the strike, versus 52% among those without children).
- ◆ Opposition to the teachers going on strike is predominantly more likely to appear among those aged 55 and older (56%), those with some post-secondary education (50%), supporters of the Provincial Progressive Conservatives (83%) and among those who feel that the Harris Government is on the “right track” (68%).

Further, not only does the majority of Metro Toronto residents support the teachers going on strike, but an even larger majority (67%) agrees that “teachers should continue to have the right to strike”. The Metro Toronto public has grown stronger on its views (increase of 15 percentage points) on this issue since September, 1996 when a smaller majority (52%) indicated that teachers should continue to have the right to strike. Just over three in ten (31%, down from 46% in September, 1996) disagree with this statement and two percent (2%) are undecided.

- ◆ Metro Toronto residents aged between 35 and 54 years (73%), supporters of the Provincial New Democrats (90%) and Liberals (76%), as well as those who feel that the Harris Government is on the “wrong track” (86%) are disproportionately more likely to feel that teachers should continue to have the right to strike.
- ◆ Conversely, those aged 55 and older (41%), Metro Toronto residents with some post-secondary education (41%), supporters of the Provincial Progressive Conservatives (61%) and those who feel that the Harris Government is on the “right track” (51%) are predominantly more likely to disagree that the teachers should continue to have the right to strike.

## **ORDERING THE TEACHERS BACK TO WORK**

Although the majority of Metro Toronto residents support the teachers going on strike, a majority (55%) feels that the “government is right to use a court injunction and order the teachers back to work”. Disagreement with this statement is found among over four in ten (42%) and three percent (3%) are undecided. (Table 3)

- ◆ Those more likely to agree that government should use a court injunction to get the teachers back to work tend to be males (62%), Metro Toronto residents aged 55 and older (64%), supporters of the Provincial Progressive Conservatives (91%), and those who feel the Harris Government is on the “right track” (83%).
- ◆ Conversely, Metro Toronto residents predominantly more likely to disagree that the government should use a court injunction and order the teachers back to work are females (47%), those aged 35 to 53 (48%), the least affluent (52% among those with annual household incomes of less than \$30,000), supporters of the Provincial New Democrats (75%), and those who feel that the Harris Government is on the “wrong track” (68%).

And, although the majority feels that the government is right to order the teachers back to work, two-thirds (66%) of Metro Toronto residents agree that “while [they are] uncomfortable with an illegal strike, [they] support the teachers for standing up to the Harris government”. One-third (33%) disagree with this statement and two percent (2%) are undecided.

- ◆ Agreement with this statement is more likely to be found among females (75%), those aged between 18 and 34 years (75%), supporters of the Provincial New Democrats (90%) and Liberals (82%), as well as among those who feel that the Harris Government is on the “wrong track” (91%).
- ◆ Disagreement with this statement is disproportionately more likely to be reported by males (43%), Metro Toronto residents aged 55 and older (43%), supporters of the Provincial Progressive Conservatives (74%) and by those who feel that the Harris Government is on the “right track” (58%).

## **DEFYING THE COURT ORDER**

If the teachers and their union leaders decide to ignore the court order that the Ontario Government has been seeking, and continue their strike, the majority (56%) of Metro Toronto residents feels that it would be acceptable (compared to 41% who would find it unacceptable) to impose a major fine on the unions. However, a minority reports that it would be acceptable to “arrest the union leaders and have them put in jail (24%, compared to 73% who would find it unacceptable), “fire the individual teachers who stay off the job” (27%, compared to 71% who would find it unacceptable) or “fine individual teachers who stay off the job \$1,000 a day” (30%, compared to 67% who would find it unacceptable). (Table 4)

- ◆ Those most likely to feel that it would be acceptable to impose a major fine on the unions are disproportionately more likely to include males (61%), Metro Toronto residents aged 55 and older (62%), the most affluent (61% among those with annual

household incomes of \$60,000 or more), and supporters of the Provincial Progressive Conservatives (81%).

- ◆ In addition, those most likely to feel that it would be unacceptable to arrest the union leaders and have them put in jail tend to be females (81%), those aged 18 to 34 years (82%), and supporters of the Provincial Liberals (83%) and New Democrats (83%).
- ◆ As well, Metro Toronto residents predominantly more likely to find it unacceptable to fire the individual teachers who stay off the job include females (80%), middle income earners (77% among those with annual household incomes of between \$30,000 and \$59,999), and supporters of the Provincial New Democrats (87%) and Liberals (85%).
- ◆ Further, those more likely to find it unacceptable to fine individual teachers who stay off the job \$1,000 a day tend to be females (73%), and supporters of the Provincial New Democrats (89%) and Liberals (74%).

### **WHO IS BEING MORE FAIR AND REASONABLE IN THIS DISPUTE?**

Metro Toronto residents are more likely to side with the teachers than they are with the government when it comes to which party is being more fair and reasonable in this dispute. Overall, just under one-half (46%) of Metro Toronto residents feel that the teachers have been more fair and reasonable in this dispute. A smaller proportion (31%) of Metro Toronto residents believe that the government has been more fair and reasonable and over one in six (16%) choose neither side. Seven percent (7%) are undecided. (Table 2)

- ◆ Those particularly more likely to feel that the teachers are being more fair and reasonable are Metro Toronto residents with children under the age of 18 years (50%), those aged between 18 and 34 (50%) as well as between 35 and 54 (50%), as well as supporters of the Provincial New Democrats (68%) and Liberals (64%).
- ◆ On the other hand, those disproportionately more likely to feel that the government is being more fair and reasonable in this dispute tend to be males (40%), and supporters of the Provincial Progressive Conservatives (67%).

As well, over six in ten (62%) Metro Toronto residents agree that “the government is more concerned about making cuts to the system than they are about improving the quality of education in the province. One-third (34%), on the other hand, disagree with this statement and five percent (5%) are undecided.

- ◆ Metro Toronto residents more likely to agree that the government is in it for the cuts over the quality of education tend to be females (68%), those aged 35 to 54 (69%), those with children under the age of 18 years (67%), supporters of the Provincial New Democrats (76%) and Liberals (75%), as well as those who feel that the Harris Government is on the “wrong track” (86%).
- ◆ Disagreement with this statement is more likely to be found among males (40%), those aged 55 and older (44%), supporters of the Provincial Progressive Conservatives (71%) and among those who feel that the Harris Government is on the “right track” (58%).

In addition, support for teachers is again endorsed by the majority (53%) of Metro Toronto residents agreeing that the “teachers are more concerned with about the cuts and quality of education in the province than they are about their own job benefits and salaries”. In comparison, four in ten (40%) disagree with this statement. Seven percent (7%) are undecided.

- ◆ Metro Toronto residents more likely to agree that with this statement include females (62%), supporters of the Provincial Liberals (70%) and New Democrats (67%), as well as those who feel that the Harris Government is on the “wrong track” (78%).
- ◆ Disagreement with this statement, on the other hand, is disproportionately more likely to occur among males (53%), those with some post-secondary education (48%), supporters of the Provincial Progressive Conservatives (78%), and among those who feel that the Harris Government is on the “right track” (66%).

When looking specifically at the larger issue of unions versus the government, the majority (56%) of Metro Toronto residents disagree that “unions just want to fight the government no matter what the government does”. In comparison, just under four in ten (39%) agree with this statement and five percent (5%) are undecided.

- ◆ Disagreement with this statement is more likely to appear among females (61%), those aged 18 to 34 years (64%), the university educated (61%), the most affluent (61% among those with annual household incomes of \$60,000 or more), supporters of the Provincial New Democrats (74%) and Liberals (61%), as well as among those who feel that the Harris Government is on the “wrong track” (66%).
- ◆ Agreement with this statement is disproportionately more likely to be found among males (46%), those aged 55 years and older (48%), Metro Toronto residents with a



highschool education or less (46%), supporters of the Provincial Progressive Conservatives (58%) and among those who feel that the Harris Government is on the “right track” (52%).

As well, the majority (55%) of Metro Toronto residents disagree that “the changes made to the education system in Ontario proposed by the government will mean that the quality of education will be better for our children”. In comparison, just over one-third (35%) agree with this statement and one in ten (10%) are undecided.

- ◆ Disagreement with this statement is predominantly more likely to appear among females (62%), those aged 18 to 34 years (62%), middle income earners (63% among those with annual household incomes of between \$30,000 and \$60,000), those with children under the age of 18 years (66%), supporters of the Provincial New Democrats (78%) and Liberals (70%), as well as among those who feel that the Harris Government is on the “wrong track” (84%).
- ◆ Those more likely to agree with this statement tend to be males (41%), Metro Toronto residents aged 55 years and older (46%), those with some post-secondary education (43%), the least affluent (42% among those with annual household incomes of less than \$30,000), supporters of the Provincial Progressive Conservatives (68%) and those who feel that the Harris Government is on the “right track” (57%).

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