
GLOBE AND MAIL/ANGUS REID GROUP POLL

-- THE ONTARIO POLITICAL SCENE --

**VOLATILE TORY SUPPORT UP SLIGHTLY AS MAJORITY SAY
TEACHERS WERE RIGHT TO GO BACK TO CLASSROOMS**

**- Gap Closes On Those Who Say Government Is On The Right Track
Versus The Wrong Track -**

- Pace Of Change Too Quick -

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This province-wide poll was conducted by telephone between December 2nd and 7th, 1997, among a representative cross-section of 1,000 adult Ontarians.

The data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's age composition reflects that of the actual Ontario population according to the 1996 Census data.

With a provincial sample of 1,000, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results are within ± 3.1 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult population of Ontario been polled. The margin of error will be larger within the various sub-groupings of the survey population.

VOLATILE TORY SUPPORT UP SLIGHTLY AS MAJORITY SAY TEACHERS WERE RIGHT TO GO BACK TO CLASSROOMS

- Gap Closes On Those Who Say Government Is On The Right Track Versus The Wrong Track - - Pace Of Change Too Quick -

Following the confrontation with Ontario's teachers and the passing of Bill 160, this latest Ontario Angus Reid Poll shows that, while Tory support is up slightly (due to more men and middle-income households who have increased support for the Harris government), the gap has narrowed on those who say the government is on the right track versus the wrong track. Further evidence of the fallout is evident in the seven in ten respondents who indicate that the government's pace of change is too quick.

This current sounding indicates volatile support for the provincial Progressive Conservative party at 38 percent of decided voters. However, the proportion of Ontarians who say that the Harris government has the province on the right track continues to decline. Currently, just over one half of Ontarians (53%) believe the Harris Tories have the province on the right track – this is the lowest number recorded since the Angus Reid Group began its bi-monthly provincial survey in October of 1996.

These are some of the findings of a Globe and Mail/Angus Reid Group Poll conducted among a representative sample of 1,000 adult Ontarians between December 2^d and 7th, 1997. A sample of this size has an associated margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points, nineteen times out of twenty.

Support for the Provincial Progressive Conservatives

Support appears to be volatile for the Harris Tories, increasing two percentage points (from 36%) since an Angus Reid Group study conducted in October – just prior to the provincial teachers' job action. Support for the other two provincial parties remains unchanged, with the Liberals at 43 percent and the provincial NDPs at 14 percent support among decided voters. (Table 1)

This increase in PC support can be attributed to two sub-groups of the population men and middle-income households. At 48 percent, Tory support among men has increase six percentage points since October (from 42%). Among households with an annual income for \$30K to \$60K, the increase has been even more dramatic – from 32 percent in October to 40 percent this month. There has been no significant change in any other demographic group. On a regional basis, support has increased five percentage points in Southwestern Ontario (from 33% in October to

38% this month), while decreasing in the Hamilton/Niagara region (from 39% to 32%). Support has remained steady in the GTA at 38 percent.

Provincial Government – Right Track?

Just over half (53%) of Ontarians believe that the provincial government of Mike Harris and the Progressive Conservatives has Ontario on the right track. This figure represents a decline of four percentage points over the last two months (from 57% in October). Furthermore, since tracking began fourteen months ago, this is the lowest proportion of “right trackers” recorded – lower even than in April of 1997 when plans for the ‘Mega-City’ were announced (55% right track at that time). (Table 2)

Since October, the most significant decline of those who feel the government has the province on the right track has occurred among respondents aged 55 and older (from 67% to 57%), less affluent respondents (from 50% to 40%) and women (from 52% to 44%). Though to a much lesser degree, all other demographic groups have also shown a slight decline. Regionally, the largest decline in “right trackers” has occurred in the Hamilton/Niagara region (from 57% in October to 44% this month), Eastern (63% to 53%) and Northern (56% to 48%) Ontario. There has also been a slight decline of three percentage points in the GTA (from 55% to 52%).

The Pace of Change

Two thirds (68%) of Ontarians believe that, in the last few years, the provincial government has acted too quickly in making its changes. In fact, more than half of this group (37% overall) says the government is moving “much too quickly”, with a further three in ten (31%) saying they are moving “somewhat too quickly”. Only about one in seven (16%) believe the Tories are acting too slowly (12% somewhat too slowly, 4% much too slowly), and about the same proportion (15%) feel the pace is “about right”. (Table 3)

Most likely to say the government is moving too quickly are women (75%), respondents aged 55 and over (74%) or between the ages of 35 to 54 (72%), less affluent households (73%) and university graduates (72%). Respondents aged 18 to 34 are significantly more likely than all other groups to say the government is moving too slowly (24%). Regionally, residents of the GTA (66%) are least likely to believe the provincial government is moving too quickly – compared to an average of 70 percent across the rest of the province.

THE DISPUTE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PROVINCE'S TEACHERS

Should the Teachers have Continued Striking?

Three quarters (76%) do not agree that the province's teachers should have continued striking until the government made the changes the teachers wanted – almost three in five (58%) *strongly* disagree with this notion, and another one in five (18%) *somewhat* disagree. Fewer than one quarter (23%) agree that the teachers should have continued to strike (13% *strongly* agree, 10% *somewhat* agree). (Table 4)

Most strongly opposed to a continued strike until the government made the changes the teachers wanted are respondents aged 55 and over (82%), men (79%) and those with an annual income of more than \$60K (79%). Most likely to say the teachers should have continued striking are those with an income of less than \$30K (30%) and respondents aged 18 to 34 (28%).

Impact of Missed School Days Due to Strike

A very slight majority (52%) believe that the number of missed school days because of the strike will *not* have a significant impact on the students, while less than half (46%) believe the missed days will have a significant impact. The population is in fact polarized on this question while three in ten (29%) *strongly* believe there will *not* be an impact, an equal number (27%) *strongly* believe there will be. (Table 4)

Most likely to predict a significant impact are respondents with no more than a high school education (53%), those between the ages of 18 and 34 (51%), less affluent households (51%) and women (49%).

Are Teachers Using Classrooms to Criticize Government?

Half (51%) of respondents believe (28% *strongly*, 24% *somewhat*) that teachers are using their classrooms as a platform to criticize the actions of the government. Four in ten (43%) disagree – 14% *somewhat*, 29% *strongly*. The equal proportions of those who *strongly* disagree and those who *strongly* agree is a further indication of the polarization in public opinion on this issue.

Most likely to feel that teachers are using their classrooms to air their criticisms are men (59%), middle-income earners (57%), those with some post-secondary education (54%) and respondents between the ages of 18 and 34 (54%). (Table 4)

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