
MAJORITY (55%) OF ONTARIANS AGAINST ANOTHER TEACHERS' STRIKE

**Public Believes Financial Matters not Quality Education Motivating Both Teachers
and Government**



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This province wide poll was conducted by telephone between August 5th and 13th, 1998, 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 provincial population according to the 1996 Census data.

With a total sample of 1000, 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.

MAJORITY (55%) OF ONTARIANS AGAINST ANOTHER TEACHERS' STRIKE

Public Believes Financial Matters not Quality Education Motivating Both Teachers and Government

While parents are preparing their children for “back to school”, the spectre of another teachers’ strike has been raised. This latest Angus Reid Group poll was conducted between August 5th and 13th among a representative cross section of 1,000 Ontarians and measures public opinion on the possibility of another strike.

While public sympathies on this issue are virtually unchanged since last fall, this issue continues to polarize the Ontario population. The teachers’ support is firmly ensconced among younger and less affluent Ontarians while the government’s constituency of supporters tends to be older and more affluent.

Majority (55%) oppose another teachers’ strike

Strong opposition persists against the possibility of another strike. Based on what Ontarians have seen, read or heard a majority (55%) continues to oppose the province’s teachers going on strike (identical to data gathered last fall). Forty-three percent support a strike.

In fact, more than four in ten (44%) are *strongly* opposed to a strike – virtually equal to the proportion of Ontarians who either somewhat (15%) or strongly (28%) support a strike.

- Similar to a sounding of public opinion taken by the Angus Reid Group in the days leading up to the teacher’s strike last fall, opposition levels increase significantly by age. In particular, opposition ranges from a minority (44%) among those aged 18 to 34 to a strong majority (64%) among Ontarians over the age of 55.
- Opposition is higher among more affluent respondents (63% among those with household incomes over \$60K; 54% among those with household incomes between \$30K-60K; 41% among those with incomes under \$30K).

Public believes money-matters motivate both teachers and government

Three-fifths (62%) believe government's chief concern is "finding the cheapest way to deal with public education"

Over half (55%) believe teachers are most concerned with "protecting salaries, benefits, pensions and power"

Respondents were told to think about the role of Premier Mike Harris and the Ontario government in reforming Ontario's education system and asked to indicate whether they believe that the government is most concerned about trying to improve the quality of education for Ontario's school children or most concerned about finding the cheapest way to deal with public education in the province. Three in five (62%) Ontarians believe that the Harris government's role is mostly concerned about finding the "cheapest way". One-third (34%) indicate that the government is primarily trying to improve the "quality of education".

Similarly, respondents were told to think about the role of teachers in reforming Ontario's education system and asked to indicate whether they believe that the teachers are most concerned about trying to improve the quality of education for Ontario's school children or that they are most concerned about protecting their own salaries, benefits, pensions and power. A majority, 55 percent, believes that teachers are most concerned about protecting salaries, benefits, pensions and power. An additional 41 percent believe the teachers are concerned with the quality of education.

In event of strike, unions would be blamed

Should the teachers go on strike again, a majority of Ontarians (51%) will place most of the blame at the teachers' unions' doorstep. An additional two-fifths (41%) would blame the government.

- Once again, younger (51% among those 18-34)) and less affluent (49% among those with household incomes under \$30K) Ontarians tend to blame the government while older (59% among those over 55 years) and more affluent (58% among those with household incomes over \$60K) Ontarians tend to blame the teachers' unions.

Public opinion has solidified since last year ... but nobody emerges as a clear winner

When it came to determining who was being “fair and reasonable” regarding this dispute last fall, one-fifth (21%) of Ontarians were sitting on the fence (that is they indicated that either “both” or “neither teachers nor government” were being fair and reasonable). Today, almost all Ontarians have “picked” sides (only 11% select “both” or “neither”). In spite of this, when respondents were asked, to indicate who is being “more fair and reasonable” about the changes being made in education – the government or the teachers, neither emerges as a clear winner. Public opinion is split on this issue -- 40 percent indicate that the government is being “more fair and reasonable” and 42 percent indicate that the teachers are being “more fair and reasonable”.

Significant variances exist across generation lines and income levels. In particular,

- Ontarians over 55 years (47%) and those with household incomes over \$60K (48%) are more likely to side with the government compared to those between 18 and 34 years (34%) and those with household incomes under \$30K (27%).
- Conversely, support for the teachers is stronger among younger (47% among those 18-34) and less affluent (55% among those with household incomes under \$30K) Ontarians compared to older (37% among those over 55 years) and the more affluent (39% among those with household incomes over \$60K).

Nine in ten (87%) indicate issues are “unresolved”

Ontarians were reminded that last year many of Ontario’s teachers went on strike to protest changes to education being made by the provincial government. They were then asked to indicate whether they believe the issues the teachers raised were largely resolved when the strike ended or whether the teachers still have a lot of unresolved issues with the government. An overwhelming majority (87%) of adult Ontarians believes that teachers still have a lot of “unresolved issues”. Eight percent (8%) indicate that the issues were “resolved”.

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