

PULSE OF TORONTO - PROVINCIAL POLITICS

Mike Harris Government Gets "C-" Grade for Issues Performance, With Healthcare (D+) and Education (D+) at Bottom of 9 Issue Ranking

Tory Rebate Cheques To be Spent (41%) or Saved (36%) More Than Given to Charity (18%)

While Two-Thirds (65%) Think Toronto Tap Water Safe, Almost as Many (61%) Think Tap Water Not Safe Outside GTA

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Toronto, ON – The Mike Harris Government gets a mere passing grade (C-) by Toronto respondents when it comes to their performance on key issues and services, according to a new Ipsos-Reid/CFRB/Globe & Mail poll released today. On specifics, the Harris Government gets its worst marks from residents on health care (D+), followed in ascending order (better) education (D+), community and social services (D+), environment (D+), and responding to the needs of Toronto (D+). The Harris Government gets slightly better marks on spending taxpayers' money wisely (C-), followed then by job creation (C+), law and order (C+), and finally reducing taxes (C+).

The poll also reveals that more Torontonians say their opinion of Mike Harris has worsened (35%) as opposed to improved (13%) during the last few months. Assessments of Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty (12% improved, 16% worsened) and NDP Leader Howard Hampton (9% improved, 13% worsened) are more balanced.

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Despite what respondents think about the government, it is clear that they will be using the tax rebate cheques of up to \$200 which are being sent out to each Ontario taxpayer. Forty-one percent indicate that they will spend the rebate, compared to 36% who indicate they will save it and another 18% who will give it to charity.

With the Walkerton issue fresh in the minds of residents, the poll reveals that two-thirds (65%) are confident that the tap water in Toronto is safe to drink, compared to a sizeable minority (35%) who are not confident that the water is safe. Respondents are far less likely to be confident that the tap water is safe to drink outside of the GTA (in rural Ontario or cottage country) with 61% not confident that the water is safe when they visit another area of the province, compared with 38% who are confident that the water is safe.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/CFRB/Globe and Mail poll conducted between October 13th and October 17th, 2000. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 404 adult Torontonians. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 4.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Toronto population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Toronto population according to the 1996 Census data.



Mike Harris Government Gets "C-" Grade for Issues Performance With Healthcare (D+) and Education (D+) at Bottom of 9 Issue Ranking

Torontonians give Premier Mike Harris a "C-" overall grade (based on an average of his grades on the specific issues) but the Premier barely avoids getting a failing grade on many issues. His grades on specific issues are as follows (calculated as an average of scores):

His highest grade is a "C+" for "reducing taxes"

"Law and order": C+

"Job creation": C+

"Spending taxpayers' money wisely": C-

"Responding to the needs of Toronto": D+

"Environment": D+

"Community and social services": D+

"Education": D+

His worse mark is for "Health care" where he receives a "D+"

Public opinion of Mike Harris over the last few weeks seems to be trending negative. 35% of Torontonians say their opinion of him has "worsened" over this time period compared with only 13% of residents who say their opinion has "improved". 52% say their opinion has stayed the same.

In contrast, public opinion of Dalton McGuinty and Howard Hampton seems to be remaining stable. 16% of residents say their opinion of the Liberal leader has "worsened" and a similar number (12%) say their opinion of him has improved, while 65% say it has



"stayed the same" over the last few months. For Howard Hampton, 13% say their opinion of him has "worsened" and 9% say their opinion of him has "improved" while 67% say it has "stayed the same" over the last few months.

More Tory Rebate Cheques To be Spent (41%) or Saved (36%) Than Given to Charity (18%)

Torontonians are most likely to say they will spend (41%) their \$200 provincial tax rebate cheque as opposed to saving it (36%) or giving it to charity (18%). Torontonians earning less than \$30,000 per year (46%) are more likely than those earning \$30,000 or more (36%) to say they will save the money. In contrast, middle income (\$30-\$60K) residents (53%) are most likely to say they will spend the cheque compared with 39% of high income residents (\$60K+) and only 23% of low income (less than \$30K) residents. Younger residents (46%) are more likely to save the money compared with middle aged (33%) or older (28%) residents.

While Two-Thirds (65%) Think Toronto Tap Water Safe, Almost as Many (61%) Think Tap Water Not Safe Outside GTA

Most Torontonians (65%) are confident that tap water in Toronto is safe to drink. A quarter (25%), say they are "very confident" that the tap water is safe to drink while four in ten (40%) say they are "somewhat confident". About a third (35%) say they are not confident that Toronto's tap water is safe to drink (23% "not very confident", 12% "not confident at all").

The situation is reversed when residents are asked if they are confident that the tap water in another area of the province -- in rural Ontario or cottage country -- is safe to drink. In this case a majority (61%) say they are not confident (38% "not very confident", 23% "not



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confident at all") that the water is safe to drink while less than four in ten (38%) say they are confident (9% "very confident", 29% "somewhat confident"). Women (69%), are much more likely than men (52%) to say they are not confident that tap water in other parts of the province is safe to drink.

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