

ONTARIO POLITICS

DECEMBER 2000

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Healthcare (62%) and Education (48%) Continue as Top Issues for Ontarians



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Toronto, ON – Heading into the New Year, a poll conducted by Ipsos-Reid and the Globe and Mail shows that the glow from the Federal Liberals has dimmed somewhat as the provincial Liberals slip 5 points to 45 percent. Support for the Tories (34%) and the NDP (13%) has remained relatively stable since October. Only 5 percent of Ontarians say they are undecided or would not vote. Even though a majority (55%) of Ontarians say they approve of the provincial Tories but only 42 percent say they "deserve to be re-elected" -- the lowest level since tracking began. Regardless of party, a plurality (43%- down 7 points since October) of Ontarians say that Mike Harris would make the best Premier. This compares with 26 percent who say Dalton McGuinty would make the best Premier and 14 percent who say Howard Hampton would make the best Premier. Almost one in five (17%) say they "don't know" who would make the best Premier. Despite suggestions to the contrary during

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the 1999 election, a plurality of Ontarians (43%) say that Dalton McGuinty is up to the job of being Premier. In the minds of Ontarians, healthcare (62%) and education (48%) continue as the issues which should receive the greatest attention from Ontario's leaders.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/Globe and Mail poll conducted between December 8th and December 20th, 2000. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 1,000 adult Ontarians. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Ontario 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 Ontario population according to the 1996 Census data.

As Federal Election Glow Dims, Provincial Liberals (45%) Continue to Lead Tories (34%) and NDP (13%)

If a provincial election were held tomorrow, 45 percent of Ontarians say they would support the Liberals. This is down slightly from a high of 50 percent in October 2000. Support for the Progressive Conservatives (34%) and the NDP (13%) has remained essentially unchanged since October. Only 5 percent say they are undecided or would not vote.

At 20 percent "getting rid of Mike Harris" is the major reason Liberal supporters offer for supporting the Liberals, while Tory supporters say the primary reason for their support is because "they have done a good job so far" (35%). For NDP supporters, "like the policies/issues they support" (31%) is the major reason they cite for their support.

When it comes to which of the three following factors: a party's stand on the issues, the party leader or the quality of individual candidates is most important to Ontarians in making up their minds, 63 percent say the party's stand on the issues is the most important. For one in five (19%) Ontarians the ability of party leaders is the most important consideration, while



16 percent say the qualities of individual candidates in their constituency is the most important consideration.

- Support for the Liberals is highest (49%) in the eastern parts of the province and lowest (40%) in the southwest.
- Support for the PCs is highest in the southwest (37%) and lowest in the north (23%).
- PC support continues to be high in the 905 region (40%) and much lower in the 416 region (29%).
- Men (42%) are much more likely than women (26%) to say they would vote for the Tories, while women (51%) are more likely than men (39%) to say they would vote for the Liberals.

While a Majority (55%) Approve of Harris Government's Performance, Only 42% Say They "Deserve to be Re-elected"- Plunges to Lowest Level Ever

A majority (55%) of Ontario residents say they approve of the performance of the Mike Harris government. This includes one in five (22%) who say they "strongly approve" and one-third (33%) who say they "somewhat approve". A total of 41 percent of residents say they disapprove of the Harris government with the bulk of these respondents saying they "strongly disapprove" (13% "somewhat disapprove" and 28% "strongly disapprove"). These numbers are virtually unchanged since the last tracking in February 2000.

Although Ontarians generally approve of the Harris government's performance, only 42 percent say the government "has accomplished a lot of good for the province - have stayed true to their word and deserve to be re-elected". This is down from 47 percent in June 1999. In contrast, 56 percent (up from 51% in June 1999) say "the Harris government has done all it

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can do and it is time for another provincial party to take over and run the province". The percentage of Ontarians saying that the government "deserves to be re-elected" is now at the lowest level since tracking began.

- Approval of the Harris government is considerably higher among men (61%) as opposed to women (49%) and men (50%) are much more likely than women (34%) to say the PCs "deserve to be re-elected".
- Two-thirds (66%) of residents in the 905 region approve of the provincial government compared with 49 percent of those in the 416 region.
- Similarly, 52 percent of 905 residents say the government "deserves to be re-elected" compared with only 38 percent of 416 residents.

Harris (43%) Still Seen as Leader Who Would Make Best Premier over McGuinty (26%) and Hampton (14%) - A Plurality (43%) Say McGuinty is "Up To the Job of Being Premier"

Mike Harris is still seen as the leader who would make the best Premier (43%), compared with 26 percent for Dalton McGuinty and 14 percent for Howard Hampton. Almost one in five (17%) say they "don't know" who would make the best Premier. Although Mike Harris' numbers continue to be strong, the percentage who say he would make the best Premier has dropped 7 points since October 2000 when 50 percent of Ontarians said that Harris would make the best Premier. Meanwhile, the percentage who say that McGuinty or Hampton would make the best Premier has remained unchanged.

In the June 1999 election, the PCs suggested that Dalton McGuinty was not up to the job of being Premier of Ontario. The results of this poll indicate that Ontarians do not agree with this suggestion. A plurality (43%) say that based on what they have seen so far they feel that



Dalton McGuinty is up to the job of Premier. In contrast, 37 percent say that he is not up to the job while one in five (20%) say they "don't know".

Healthcare (62%) and Education (48%) Continue as Top Issues for Ontarians

Despite increased spending, healthcare (62%) continues to be the issue which Ontarians feel should receive the greatest attention from Ontario's leaders -- up 4 points since October 2000. Education (48%) continues as the second-most important issue but has dropped 5 points over the same time. Poverty (18%) places a distant third followed by taxes (15%). Three issues are tied for fifth place: environment (9%), social services (9%), and jobs (9%).

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