

IMPRESSIONS OF ONTARIO CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP CONTENDERS

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Receives Highest Positive Impression Among Conservative
Supporters in Race to Succeed Premier Mike Harris
As Well, the Positive Impression of Ernie Eves Among All
Ontarians is Far Ahead of Others in Race*



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*Former Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Ernie Eves Receives
Highest Positive Impression Among Conservative Supporters in Race
to Succeed Premier Mike Harris*

*As Well, the Positive Impression of Ernie Eves Among All Ontarians
is Far Ahead of Others in Race*

Toronto, ONTARIO - With the battle to replace resigning Ontario Premier Mike Harris heating up, an Ipsos-Reid poll released today indicates that former Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Ernie Eves (Net +60) far out distances the others candidates in the race among decided Conservative supporters, based on overall "net impression".

The poll asked respondents whether they had an overall positive or negative impression of each candidate. The overall net score was calculated by subtracting the negative impression from the positive impression. "No opinion" or "neutral" responses were not included. The names of the candidates were read to respondents without any portfolio identification. When asked which party they would support, 304 identified themselves as likely to vote Conservative if a provincial election were held today. Respondents were not asked if they intended to buy or have a membership in the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party and vote in the upcoming leadership race.

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Jim Flaherty (+10) trails in second spot, followed by Chris Stockwell (+8) and Tony Clement (+2). The only candidate that receives a negative net impression among Conservative supporters is Environment Minister Elizabeth Witmer (-5).

This is in comparison to a similar Ipsos-Reid poll released in August 2001 which included, with the exception of Mr. Eves, each of the current leadership contenders. At that time, among decided Conservative supporters, the net impressions were Mr. Clement (+30), Mr. Stockwell (+29), Mr. Flarety (+27), Ms. Witmer (+25). The largest declines in net impressions are recorded by Elizabeth Witmer, down 30 points, and Tony Clement, down 28 points.

Among all voters, Ernie Eves (+25) also heads the list. In this instance, Environment Minister Elizabeth Witmer (-2) and current Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Jim Flarety (-2) follow in second place, while Minister of Labour, Chris Stockwell (-8) and Minister of Health, Tony Clement (-8) trail further behind. In the August poll, Mr. Flarety (+8), Ms. Witmer (+8) and Mr. Clement (+7) lead the list of potential candidates, with Chris Stockwell (+3) further down the list.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/Globe and Mail/CFTO/CFRB poll conducted between December 12th and 22rd, 2001. 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.



Within the sample of 1,000 respondents, there were 304 who identified themselves as Progressive Conservative decided voters (associated margin of error $\pm 5.7\%$). Among this group the results are as follows:

Decided PC Voters	Dec '01 +ive	Aug '01 +ive	Dec '01 -ive	Aug '01 -ive	Dec. '01 Net	Aug. '01 Net	No Opinion
Ernie Eves	69%	n/a	9%	n/a	+60	n/a	10%
Jim Flaherty	29%	33%	19%	6%	+10	+27	19%
Chris Stockwell	29%	36%	21%	7%	+8	+29	8%
Tony Clement	28%	39%	26%	9%	+2	+30	19%
Elizabeth Witmer	23%	33%	28%	8%	-5	+25	15%

In comparison to the August 2001 poll, each of the candidates included in both soundings received lower positive impressions, and increased negative impressions. The smallest decline in positive impression was recorded by Jim Flaherty, dropping only 4 points. Mr. Flaherty also received the smallest increase in negative impression, increasing 13 points. Elizabeth Witmer's net impression has been hurt by an increase of 20 points in her negative impression rating coupled with a ten point drop in her positive impression among decided PC voters.



The overall Ontario results of 1,000 respondents are as follows:

All Respondents	Dec '01 +ive	Aug '01 +ive	Dec '01 -ive	Aug '01 -ive	Dec. '01 Net	Aug. '01 Net	No Opinion
Ernie Eves	44%	n/a	19%	n/a	+25	n/a	11%
Jim Flaherty	22%	21%	24%	13%	-2	+8	17%
Elizabeth Witmer	23%	23%	25%	15%	-2	+8	14%
Chris Stockwell	19%	23%	27%	20%	-8	+3	17%
Tony Clement	19%	23%	27%	16%	-8	+7	16%

Among the entire Ontario population, increases in negative impressions (ranging from a low of 7 points for Chris Stockwell to 11 points for Jim Flaherty and Tony Clement) coupled with static or minor decreases in positive impressions result in overall net decreases for each of the candidates included in both studies.

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