

## ONTARIO POLITICAL SCENE – JANUARY 2002

*Opposition Liberals (51%) Maintain Majority Support in Province, While the Governing Tories (32%) and the NDP (14%) Trail*

*However, a Majority (54%) in the Province Approve of the Conservative Government's Performance as Six-in-Ten (58%) Give Thumbs Up to Economic Conditions, and Only 16% Say Things will Worsen Over Next Two Years*

*Healthcare (68%) and Education (52%) Dominate As Top Priorities*



Ipsos Reid



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*Healthcare (68%) and Education (52%) Dominate As Top Priorities*

**Toronto, ONTARIO** – The prospect of a new Premier does not appear to have changed the level of support for the governing Conservatives according to a new poll conducted by Ipsos-Reid, released today. The opposition Liberals (51%; down one point since August 2001) continue to maintain majority support among decided voters in the province. The Conservatives (32%; down two points since August 2001) retain the backing of one-third of decided voters, while the NDP trail with 14% (up one point since August 2001) support. Overall, the level of support for each party has not changed significantly since the last poll released in August 2001, when Liberal support stood at 52%, the Tories at 34% and the NDP at 13%.

While only one-third of decided voters say they would support the Conservatives in an election, a majority (54%) of Ontarians express approval of the job that the Conservatives have done governing the province. A reason for this approval may be that on the economic front, six-in-ten (58%) Ontarians believe that Ontario's economy is currently in good shape, and only 16% say conditions will worsen over the next couple of years.

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When asked to identify the top issues for the province's leaders, health care (68%) and education (52%) remain the top priorities according to Ontarians. With the on-going threat of recession hovering over the Canadian economy, the second rung of issues consist of a group of economic based concerns – unemployment (11%), poverty (11%) and the economy (10%).

*These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/Globe and Mail/CFTO/CFRB poll conducted between December 12<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>rd</sup>, 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  $\pm 3.1$  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.*

## ***Opposition Liberals (51%) Maintain Majority Support in Province, While the Governing Tories (32%) and the NDP (14%) Trail***

With the attention paid to the contenders in the Tory leadership race, the prospect of a new Premier does not appear to have changed the level of support for the governing Conservatives. The opposition Liberals (51%) continue to maintain the backing of a majority of decided voters in the province. Support for the Conservatives (32%) remains at one-third of decided voters, while the NDP trail with 14% support.

- Liberal backing is strongest in the East (57%) and the City of Toronto (57%), but is weakest in the '905' Belt (44%). While the PC's are strongest in the '905' region (48%)



where they out-poll the Liberals. NDP strength is the Hamilton/Niagara region (20%), Northern Ontario (19%) and the City of Toronto (18%).

- Demographically, Liberals strength is found among younger (58%) voters, women (56% versus 47% of men), and those in the middle household income (56%) group. The Conservatives' strength is with voters 35 and older (38%), men (39% versus 26% of women) and those in the highest household income (39%) bracket. NDP strength is with those in the lowest household income group (23%), women (16% versus 12% of men) and voters between 18 and 34 years of age (17%).

***However, a Majority (54%) in the Province Approve of the Conservative Government's Performance as Six-in-Ten (58%) Give Thumbs Up to Economic Conditions, and Only 16% Say Things will Worsen Over Next Two Years***

While only one-third of decided voters say they would support the Conservatives in an election, a majority (54%) of Ontarians express approval of the job that the Conservatives have done governing the province.

- Approval for the government is strongest in the '905' region (62%), but is weakest in the neighbouring City of Toronto (47%) and in Northern Ontario (48%).
- Ontarians in the highest household income bracket (62%) are more likely than those in the middle (49%) or lowest (47%) brackets to express approval.
- Men (58%), in comparison to women (50%), in the province are more likely to say that they approve of the governments performance.



While, six-in-ten (58%) Ontarians believe that the provincial economy is in good shape and only 16% feel economic conditions will worsen over the next couple of years.

- Regionally, those in Eastern Ontario (62%) and the '905' Belt (62%) are more likely to feel that economic conditions are good, while residents of Northern Ontario (52%) and the City of Toronto (51%) are less likely to express this view.
- Men (62% versus 54% of women) and those in the highest household income bracket (63% versus 49% in the lowest) are more likely to believe conditions are good.
- As for the future, those who say the economy will worsen are more likely to be women (21% versus 11% of men), those in the lower (19%) and middle (19%) household income brackets and in Northern Ontario (25%).

### ***Healthcare (68%) and Education (52%) Dominate As Top Priorities According to Ontarians***

When asked to identify the top issues for the province's leaders, health care (68%) and education (52%) remain the top priorities according to Ontarians\*. The second rung of issues, while of a lower priority, reflect the concern of the on-going threat of recession hovering over the Canadian economy - unemployment (11%), poverty (11%) and the economy (10%).

- Regionally, health care as a concern is strongest among those in the East (76%), but less so for those in the Hamilton/Niagara (63%) and GTA (63%) regions. Education as an issue is consistent across the regions in province, with the exception of the North (42%).

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\* Totals more than 100% since respondents were asked to identify their first and second issue choices



- Health care as an issue is stronger among middle aged (73%) and older (71%) Ontarians when compared to younger (61%) Ontarians. Women (72% versus 63% of men) are also more likely to mention health care as an issue.
- Education is more likely cited by women (61% versus 42% of men), those between 18 and 54 (55%) than those 55 and over (44%). Ontarians from households with incomes of over \$30,000 (54%) are more likely than those with household incomes of less than \$30,000 (43%) to make this a priority.

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