

# ONTARIO LIBERALS (44%) AND TORIES (42%) MOVE INTO VIRTUAL TIE RANGE AS APPROVAL RATINGS FOR LEADERS EVES AND MCGUINITY PUSH AHEAD WHILE NDP (13%), HAMPTON FALTER

*Voters say Eves' Tories have Ontario on the Right Track (59%)  
Up from 54% in February, 2002*



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## **ONTARIO LIBERALS (44%) AND TORIES (42%) MOVE INTO VIRTUAL TIE RANGE AS APPROVAL RATINGS FOR LEADERS EVES AND MCGUINTY PUSH AHEAD WHILE NDP (13%), HAMPTON FALTER**

*Voters say Eves' Tories have Ontario on the Right Track (59%) Up from 54% in February, 2002*

**Toronto, ONTARIO-** A new Ipsos-Reid/Globe & Mail/CFTO/CFRB poll released today shows that the Ontario Liberals (44%; up 2 points since June) and Tories (42%; up 2 points June) have moved into a virtual dead heat when it comes to voters' preference as the provincial NDP (13%; down 4 points) falters.

Further, it would appear that the leader approval ratings, the first for new Tory Premier Eves since his election as party leader and return to the Ontario Legislature, and opposition Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty have moved up among the electorate, while NDP leader Howard Hampton's performance approval has dropped.

On Premier Eves' performance rating, at 61% of Ontarians approving and 38% disapproving, he is now receiving a higher approval rating than his predecessor, former Premier Mike Harris. Mr. Harris received his highest approval performance ratings in October 1998 (58%), October 1999 (57%), June 1998 (56%) and February and June 1997 (55%).

For Mr. McGuinty, this poll sees him at his personal best at 54% approval – his previous high marks were in August 2000 (49%) and February 1999 (49%). NDP leader Howard Hampton (38%) falls four points back from his highest marker recorded in August 2000 (42%).

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On the vote count, the Liberals still lead the Tories at 44% (up 2 points since June 2002) with the Tories at 42% (up 2 points since June) and the NDP are the preference of 13% of decided voters (down 4 points since June). But within the margin of error of the poll, it is close to a dead heat.

A total of 59% of Ontarians say that the Provincial Government of Ernie Eves and the Progressive Conservatives have Ontario on the “right track” versus 30% who say that it is on the “wrong track”. This “right track” group is up five points (from 54% in February 2002) whereas disapproval has dropped 11 points (down from 41% during the same timeframe). Putting the numbers in perspective, the highest approval rating that the Harris Government achieved in terms of being on the “right track” was in August 1998 (65%). In August of 2001, the Harris Tories were at 54% “right track” and 43% “wrong track”.

As for voter preference, the Liberals hold a substantial lead in Eastern Ontario (48% versus 38% PC and 12% NDP) and in Northern Ontario (45% versus 34% PC and 22% NDP). All of the other regions of the province would be considered contestable by either party within a few percentage points – except in the ‘905’ Belt where Eves’ Tories have vaulted into a commanding lead of 60% support versus 32% for the Liberals and 7% for the NDP. It should be pointed out that over the last 2 years, the Liberals have held a majority of support numerous times in a seesaw of public opinion in the ‘905’ Belt.

The Liberals have the support of younger (46%) Ontarians whereas the Conservatives have the support among older (48%) Ontarians with middle-aged group splitting down the middle (Liberals 45%; Conservatives 44%). As for gender, 48% of men and 36% of women would support the Tories in an election if it were held tomorrow versus 48% of women and 39% of men who would support the Liberals. Higher household income (50%) individuals are more



likely to support the Tories, whereas lower (49%) and middle (44%) income household are more likely to express support for the Liberals.

As for those believing that the Government is on the “right track”, the ‘905’ Belt leads the way with 74%, followed by Northern Ontario at 61%. Those who believe the Government is on the “wrong track” are most likely to be found in the City of Toronto (37%), the North (33%) and Hamilton/Niagara (33%). Majorities of both men (65%) and women (53%) hold the “right track” view as well as every other socio and economic demographic.

Among committed Liberal voters, 43% say the Government is on the “right track”, as well as 42% of committed NDP supporters who believe this to be the case, while committed Conservative voters virtually double the combined proportion of the two opposition parties, with 86% of them indicating the Government is on the “right track”.

*These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/Globe and Mail/CFTO/CFRB poll conducted between August 8<sup>th</sup> and August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2002. 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.*



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