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Liberals Seen As Best Party in Five of Twelve Areas, While Tories Tops in Four, NDP in One



Public Release Date: Friday, February 28th, 2003 - 11:30 p.m. (EST)

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Toronto, ONTARIO (Friday, February 28th, 2003) – On the heels of a poll released on Thursday, February 27th, 2003 that found the ruling Conservatives at 36%, the opposition Liberals at 43%, the NDP at 15% and the Green Party at 5% in voter support, this poll takes a further look at Ontario politics in the run-up to an anticipated provincial election, and examines the three main political parties in term of how the public views them on key policy matters.

Four in ten (39%) Ontarians say that Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals are the party that would provide “the best possible overall government for Ontario” according to this latest Ipsos-Reid/CFTO/CFRB/Globe and Mail poll released today. Ernie Eves and the Progressive Conservatives are the choice of one in three (35%) Ontarians, while 12% view Howard Hampton and the NDP in this role. Just over one in ten (14%) say they ‘don’t know’ which party would provide the best overall government for the province.

Asked further which of the three main provincial parties would be the best choice in a number of policy areas, the Liberals come out on top in five of twelve areas. The Liberals lead at “ensuring quality education” (43%), “promoting economic growth and creating jobs” (38%), “representing Ontario’s interest on national issues” (38%), “protecting the quality and

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accessibility of healthcare services” (35%) and “providing honest and trustworthy government” (30%). In addition the Liberals are statistically tied with the NDP regarding “protecting the environment” (NDP 33%; Liberals 31%), and are tied with the Conservatives in “keeping their promises” (28% each).

The governing Conservatives are viewed as the best choice at “reducing Ontario’s deficit” (46%), “cutting taxes” (42%), “reducing the number of things that government is involved in” (38%) and “dealing with crime” (37%), while the NDP are viewed as the best at “ensuring that we have compassionate social programs” (36%).

For further context, in a separate poll conducted in late December 2002/early January 2003 and release on January 10th, 2003, Ernie Eves (42%) topped the list as to which party leader that would make the best Premier for the province. Dalton McGuinty followed with the support of 26% and Howard Hampton was the choice of 12% of Ontarians.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/CFTO/CFRB/Globe and Mail poll conducted between February 13th and February 20th, 2003. 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 2003 Census data.

Asked which of the three main provincial parties would provide the best and which would provide the worst overall government for Ontario, the Liberals (net +26; best 39% - worst 13%) come out on top, followed by the Progressive Conservatives (net +8; best 35% - worst 27%), while the NDP receive a negative net score (net -33; best 12% - worst 45%).



The following chart provides tracking for “providing the best overall government for Ontario” as well as “providing the worst overall government for Ontario” and the resulting net scores.

Providing the Best overall government for Ontario	June '99	Oct '00	Feb '03
PC's and Ernie Eves/Mike Harris	44	45	35
Liberals and Dalton McGuinty	39	37	39
NDP and Howard Hampton	12	13	12
Don't know	5	6	14
Providing the worst overall government for Ontario	June '99	Oct '00	Feb '03
PC's and Ernie Eves/Mike Harris	36	35	27
Liberals and Dalton McGuinty	9	11	13
NDP and Howard Hampton	48	44	45
Don't know	7	9	16

NET (Best Government - Worst Government)	June '99	Oct '00	Feb '03
PC's and Ernie Eves/Mike Harris	+8	+10	+8
Liberals and Dalton McGuinty	+30	+26	+26
NDP and Howard Hampton	-36	-31	-33

While the proportion of Ontarians that select the governing Conservatives as the best party in each of the policy areas has declined generally from previous tracking, the difference does not appear to break in favour of the Liberals or NDP, but instead to an increasing number of Ontarians who say they ‘don't know’.



The following charts track the results for each of the policy areas back to April 1999 or June 1999. If a column is shaded it indicates that this item was not asked at that time. Bolding indicates which party 'won' each policy area.

Ensuring Quality Education	April '99	June '99	Oct '00	Feb '03
PC's and Ernie Eves/Mike Harris	31	35	32	25
Liberals and Dalton McGuinty	40	42	41	43
NDP and Howard Hampton	13	16	19	16
Don't know	16	6	8	16
Protecting the quality and accessibility of healthcare services		June '99	Oct '00	Feb '03
PC's and Ernie Eves/Mike Harris		28	28	24
Liberals and Dalton McGuinty		44	40	35
NDP and Howard Hampton		22	22	24
Don't know		5	10	16
Promoting economic growth and creating jobs	April '99	June '99	Oct '00	Feb '03
PC's and Ernie Eves/Mike Harris	39	54	55	32
Liberals and Dalton McGuinty	33	32	30	38
NDP and Howard Hampton	12	10	8	17
Don't know	16	5	7	13
Dealing with crime	April '99	June '99	Oct '00	Feb '03
PC's and Ernie Eves/Mike Harris	38	49	49	37
Liberals and Dalton McGuinty	28	29	25	29
NDP and Howard Hampton	8	10	11	11
Don't know	26	13	16	23
Reducing Ontario's deficit		June '99	Oct '00	Feb '03
PC's and Ernie Eves/Mike Harris		61	65	46
Liberals and Dalton McGuinty		26	21	28
NDP and Howard Hampton		7	6	8
Don't know		6	8	18



Cutting Taxes		June '99	Oct '00	Feb '03
PC's and Ernie Eves/Mike Harris		63	58	42
Liberals and Dalton McGuinty		21	22	24
NDP and Howard Hampton		7	8	12
Don't know		9	12	22
Providing honest and trustworthy government	April '99		Oct '00	Feb '03
PC's and Ernie Eves/Mike Harris	30		39	26
Liberals and Dalton McGuinty	29		31	30
NDP and Howard Hampton	13		17	18
Don't know	27		14	27
Representing Ontario's interests on national issues		June '99	Oct '00	Feb '03
PC's and Ernie Eves/Mike Harris		46	48	34
Liberals and Dalton McGuinty		37	34	38
NDP and Howard Hampton		9	9	11
Don't know		8	8	17
Ensuring that we have compassionate social programs		June '99	Oct '00	Feb '03
PC's and Ernie Eves/Mike Harris		20	23	17
Liberals and Dalton McGuinty		35	35	32
NDP and Howard Hampton		39	34	36
Don't know		7	8	15
Protecting the environment		June '99	Oct '00	Feb '03
PC's and Ernie Eves/Mike Harris		22	22	18
Liberals and Dalton McGuinty		30	31	31
NDP and Howard Hampton		33	32	33
Don't know		14	15	18



Reducing the number of things that government is involved in		June '99	Oct '00	Feb '03
PC's and Ernie Eves/Mike Harris		52	54	38
Liberals and Dalton McGuinty		22	21	25
NDP and Howard Hampton		11	8	12
Don't know		15	17	25
Keeping their promises	April '99	June '99	Oct '00	Feb '03
PC's and Ernie Eves/Mike Harris	42	44	44	28
Liberals and Dalton McGuinty	23	31	26	28
NDP and Howard Hampton	9	13	15	14
Don't know	25	11	15	30

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