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However they Continue To Trail Liberals (49%, +1) by 13 Points*

But Public Mixed on Eves Leadership

*And Six in Ten (60%) Still Say it is Time for a Change in
Government*



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Toronto, ONTARIO – When the lights went out across Ontario last Thursday as part of the largest electricity blackout in North America, many political pundits felt that the governing Tories would take a major political hit as a result. However, it would appear from new polling conducted by Ipsos-Reid for CFTO/CFRB/Globe and Mail, that at least in terms of voter support, the Tories have not suffered any immediate fallout with voters.

Polling conducted in the days before, during and after the blackout indicates that the governing Conservatives currently hold support of 36% of decided voters, up one point from June's sounding. However, while they have not slipped as a result of the blackout, the Tories continue to trail the opposition Liberals (49%, up 1 point) by 13 points with the NDP (12%, -2 points) and the Green Party (1%, unchanged) remaining far behind.

It should be noted that this polling is just an initial sounding recorded partially after the blackout. The full effect of the event and its aftermath on the government will need to be measured again in its run-up to a potential fall election campaign. These numbers do not suggest that the option for a fall vote is closed. In fact, with Mr. Eves being as visible as he is at the moment, his leadership numbers may move up and give the lagging Tories a boost.

In this sounding on two key leadership measures the Ontario public sends some mixed signals. When asked to choose which of the three main party leaders would make the 'best

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Premier', despite a slight slip of four points since June, Ernie Eves (35%) continues to lead Dalton McGuinty (30%, up 2 points) and Howard Hampton (13%, down 2 points) as the leader that would make the 'best Premier'.

Meanwhile, in rating the type of job each leader would do as Premier if elected, the number who feel that Ernie Eves (54%) would do a 'good job' if his party won the election, increases five points since the last sounding in June and is now in a virtual tie with Dalton McGuinty (56%, up 1 point). Howard Hampton (41%, up 1 point) continues to trail the two other leaders.

On the impression momentum indicator the Conservatives continue to be headed in the wrong direction, with a net impression momentum of -18 (improved impression 14% - worsened impression 32%), while the Liberals (net +4; improved impression 16% - worsened impression 12%) and the NDP (net +3; improved impression 12% - worsened impression 9%) receive net positive impressions. However, given the recent events, the Tories do not receive a significantly worse score than they did in June when they received a net -17, while the Liberals were a net +8 and the NDP a net +5.

And finally, six in ten (60%, up 1 point) Ontarians believe that it is time for a change in government, while one in three (32%, down 4 points) say that the Conservatives deserve to be re-elected.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/CFTO/CFRB/Globe and Mail poll conducted between August 11th and August 17th, 2003. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 1,000 adult Ontarians. 409 interviews were conducted between August 11th and August 13th, before the blackout with the remaining 591 interviews conducted after the blackout between August 14th and August 17th, 2003. With a total provincial sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.1

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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 2001 Census data.

Polling conducted in the days before, during and after the blackout indicate that the governing Conservatives currently hold the support of 36% of decided voters, up one point from June's sounding. However, the Tories continue to trail the opposition Liberals (49%, up 1 point) by 13 points while the NDP (12%, -2 points) and the Green Party (1%, unchanged) remain far behind. One-fifth (22%) of Ontarians are undecided or indicate they will not vote. This compares to 19% in June.

- The Liberals are selected by at least half of decided voters in Northern Ontario (56%), Eastern Ontario (53%), and the City of Toronto (51%). This compares to the numbers in Hamilton/Niagara (48%), Southwestern Ontario (47%) and the '905' Belt (43%). Among socio-demographic groups, support for the Liberals is highest among young adult (56%) voters, university graduates (55%) and women (54%).
- Close to half (47%) of the decided voters in the crucial '905' Belt support the Conservatives, followed by the numbers in the Southwest (39%), Eastern Ontario (39%), the City of Toronto (32%), Hamilton/Niagara (29%) and Northern Ontario (18%). Among socio-demographic groups, the Tories are strongest among older Ontarians (44% versus 29% of young adults), Ontarians with a high school diploma or less education (41% versus 31% of university graduates), men (40% versus 31% of women) and Ontarians in the highest income households (40% versus 28% of those in the lowest income households.)
- Regionally, support for the NDP is highest among residents of Northern Ontario (22%), where they are in second spot behind the Liberals, and Hamilton/Niagara (20%). This



compares to their support numbers in the Southwest (11%), the GTA (11%) and Eastern Ontario (7%). Among socio-demographic groups, support for the NDP is significantly higher among Ontarians in the lowest income households (19% versus 11% in middle income households and 10% in upper income households.) NDP support is consistent across gender, age and education groups.

- While, the interviews in the pre- and post-blackout periods were not equally distributed across the province, looking at the numbers between these two periods gives a directional sense of how the event effected voters perceptions. While the Conservatives held their voter support (36% in polling conducted both between August 11 and August 13, and 36% in polling between August 14 and August 17), during these two periods the Liberals moved from 47% (August 11 – 13) to 51% (August 14 – 17) support among decided voters and the NDP went from 14% (August 11-13) to 11% (August 14-17).

Ernie Eves (35%, down 4 points) continuing to lead Dalton McGuinty (30%, up 2 points) and Howard Hampton (13%, down 2 points) as the leader that would make the ‘best Premier’. One in five (22%, up 4 points) say they do not know which leader would make the ‘best Premier’.

- Overall, Mr. Eves is the top choice in the ‘905’ Belt (Eves 44%, McGuinty 29%, Hampton 8%), and is in a virtual tie in Eastern Ontario (Eves 34%, McGuinty 29%, Hampton 11%), Hamilton/Niagara (Eves 33%, McGuinty 32%, Hampton 16%) and the City of Toronto (Eves 31%, McGuinty 31%, Hampton 16%). Mr. McGuinty is the top choice as ‘best Premier’ in Northern Ontario (McGuinty 31%, Eves 22%, Hampton 21%).
- Mr. Eves is more likely to be selected by ‘best Premier’ by older (41% versus 30% of young adult) Ontarians, men (40% versus 30% of women) and those in from highest income household (40% versus 28% in the lowest income households).



- There is no significant difference between socio-demographic groups regarding selected Mr. McGuinty as 'best Premier'.
- University graduates (16%) are significantly more likely than are Ontarians who have a high school diploma or less education (9%) to opt for Mr. Hampton, while men (16%) are significantly more likely than women (11%) to also select Mr. Hampton as 'best Premier'.
- When viewing the results of the 'best Premier' indicator during polling conducted in the pre- and post-blackout time periods, the results are virtually unchanged for Mr. Eves (pre-blackout 34%, post-blackout 35%) and Mr. McGuinty (pre-blackout 31%, post-blackout 29%) while Mr. Hampton moves from 11% in pre-blackout polling to 15% in post-blackout polling.

Meanwhile, in rating the type of job each leader would do as Premier if elected, Ernie Eves (54%, up 5 points) and Dalton McGuinty (56%, up 1 point) are now in a virtual tie as likely to do a 'good job'. Howard Hampton (41%, up 1 point) continues to trail.

- Regionally, the proportion that believe Mr. McGuinty would do a 'good job' if elected is highest among residents of the City of Toronto (65%) and lowest in the '905' Belt (51%). Meanwhile, university graduates (66%) are significantly more likely to feel that Dalton McGuinty would do a 'good job' than are Ontarians with a post-secondary/some university education (54%) or a high school diploma or less education (48%). Young adults (62% versus 54% of middle aged and 52% of older Ontarians) and men (62% versus 51% of women) are significantly more likely to say that Dalton McGuinty would do a 'good job' if elected Premier.
- Regionally, Mr. Eves is viewed as likely to do a 'good job' by a majority in the Southwest (59%), Eastern Ontario (57%) and the GTA (54%). This compares to the views of residents



of Hamilton/Niagara (44%) and Northern Ontario (44%). Men (59%) are significantly more likely to feel Mr. Eves would do a 'good job' than are women (49%), while this is also the case with Ontarians with a post-secondary education/some university (58%) compared to university graduates (49%).

- The number who believe Mr. Hampton would do a 'good job' if elected is highest among residents of Northern Ontario (49%), the City of Toronto (48%) and Hamilton/Niagara (47%), compared to the views of residents of the '905' Belt (37%), Southwestern Ontario (37%) and Eastern Ontario (34%). Young adults (46%) are significantly more likely to believe this to be the case than are their middle aged counterparts (36%).
- Looking only at the position of decided voters for each of the parties, 92% of decided Conservative voters feel that Mr. Eves would do a 'good job' as Premier, while the conviction among decided Liberals (86% feel that Mr. McGuinty would do a 'good job') and decided NDP (82% feel Mr. Hampton would do a 'good job') voters about their own leader is lower.
- Looking at these numbers in the light of the blackout, each leader receives a bump, with the largest going to Mr. McGuinty between pre- and post-blackout polling. In the pre-blackout polling, Mr. Eves (52%) and Mr. McGuinty (51%) were viewed by approximately half of Ontarians as likely to do a 'good job' as Premier if elected, with this being said of Mr. Hampton by 38%. In post-blackout polling, Mr. McGuinty 'good job' rating jumps 9 points to 60%, while Mr. Eves moves up 3 points to 55%, and Mr. Hampton moves from 38% to 42%.

On the impression momentum indicator the Conservatives continue to be headed in the wrong direction, with a net impression momentum of -18 (improved impression 14% - worsened impression 32%), while the Liberals (net +4; improved impression 16% - worsened

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impression 12%) and the NDP (net +3; improved impression 12% - worsened impression 9%) receive net positive impressions. In comparison, in June, the Conservatives scored a net -17, while the Liberals were a net +8 and the NDP a net +5.

- The Conservatives receive their highest net negative impression score in the GTA (net -25; City of Toronto -26, '905' Belt -24) and in Northern Ontario (net -21). This compares to their scores in the Southwest (net -15), Hamilton/Niagara (net -13), and Eastern Ontario (net -11). Among socio-demographic groups the highest net negative score is found among university graduates (net -23), Ontarians from the highest income households (net -22) and women (net -21).
- The Liberals receive their highest net positive impression score in Northern Ontario (net +13) and the City of Toronto (net +11), but do receive a net negative score in Southwestern Ontario (net -3). Among socio-demographic groups, the Liberals highest net score is recorded among Ontarians with a post-secondary education (net +9), men (net +6) and middle aged (net +6) Ontarians, while they receive a net negative score among Ontarians with a high school diploma or less education (net -2).
- The NDP receives their highest net positive impression score in Northern Ontario (net +10) and in Hamilton/Niagara (net +9), while they receive a net negative score among residents in Southwestern Ontario (net -2). Interestingly, the NDP receives a significantly higher net positive impression score among resident so the '905' Belt (net +6) than they do among residents of the City of Toronto (net +2). Among socio-demographic groups the NDP's highest net positive impression score is recorded among young adults (net +6), university graduates (net +5) and among lower (net +5) and middle (net +5) income households. They receive net negative scores among those with a high school diploma or less education (net -1) and among older (net -2) Ontarians.



And finally, six in ten (60%, up 1 point) Ontarians believe that it is time for a change in government, while one in three (32%, down 4 points) say that the Conservatives deserve to be re-elected. Seven percent indicate they 'don't know'.

- Residents of Hamilton/Niagara (71%), Northern Ontario (68%) and the City of Toronto (65%) are the most likely to feel that it is time for a change, followed by those in Southwestern Ontario (57%), Eastern Ontario (56%) and the '905' Belt (54%). Meanwhile, residents of the '905' Belt (42%) are the most likely to believe that the Conservatives deserve to be re-elected.
- Women (64%) are significantly more likely to believe that it is time for a change in government than are men (57%), while men (38%) are significantly more likely than women (27%) to say the Conservatives deserve to be re-elected.
- Ontarians in the lowest income households (69%) are significantly more likely than are their counterparts in the highest income households (59%) to believe that it is time for a change. Conversely, Ontarians in upper (35%) and middle (34%) income households are significantly more likely than are their counterparts in lower income households (24%) to believe that the Tories deserve to be re-elected.
- There is no significant difference between age or education groups regarding this question.



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