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LIBERALS (50%, +1 POINT) CONTINUE TO HOLD
DECISIVE LEAD OVER CONSERVATIVES (33%, -2
POINTS) . . .**

*While NDP (12%, Unchanged) and Green Party (4%, +2 Points)
Continue to Trail*

*Eves (34%) and McGuinty (31%) Close As to Who Is Expected to
Win Debate*

*However, Six in Ten (60%) Continue to Desire Change in
Government As Liberals Appear Poised to Form Majority
Government Barring a Significant Gaffe Between Now and
Election Day*

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As Liberals Appear Poised to Form Majority Government Barring
Significant Gaffe Between Now and Election Day*

Toronto, ONTARIO – Heading into the leaders debate and with less than two weeks to go before election day, the Ontario Liberals (50%, +1 point) continue to hold a decisive lead over the governing Conservatives (33%, -2 points) in support among decided voters according to the latest Ipsos-Reid poll conducted between Thursday, September 18th and Saturday, September 20th, 2003 for CFTO, Newstalk 1010 CFRB and The Globe and Mail, and released today. The NDP (12%) remains far behind, while the Green Party (4%, +2) continues to receive some support among voters. Fifteen percent of the electorate is undecided in their support, down two points from the previous Ipsos-Reid election campaign poll, released last week. That poll showed the McGuinty Liberals with 49% support, the Eves’ Tories with 35% support and the Hampton NDP at 12% support.

It is common wisdom that the leaders performance in the debate can make or break the election campaign for their party. Heading into this election’s debate between the three main leaders, of which two-thirds (64%) of Ontarians say they are likely to watch all or part, the expectation of who will win is split between Mr. Eves and Mr. McGuinty. While, one in three

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(34%) feel that Ernie Eves of the Progressive Conservatives will win, just as many (31%) expect the winner of the debate to be Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty. Howard Hampton, leader of the NDP is thought by only 11% of Ontarians to be the expected winner of the debate, while one in five (18%) are unsure and 6% say that none of the leaders will emerge as the winner.

As for the overall election environment, it would appear that the Liberal's theme of 'Choose Change' is trumping the Conservative's theme of leadership and experience. While Ernie Eves (37% versus 30% for Dalton McGuinty and 13% for Howard Hampton) is still the top choice as the leader that would make the 'best Premier' (last week's poll showed 36% for Mr. Eves, 31% for Mr. McGuinty and 16% for Mr. Hampton), six in ten (60%, -1 point) Ontarians continue to feel that it is time for another party to take over and run the province. Just 32%, down one point from last week's sounding, feel that the Conservative government has done a good job and deserves to be re-elected.

Turning to the future, asked if Ontario would be better off, worse off, or about the same, after four years, one in four (27%) feel that the province would be better off with Dalton McGuinty of the Liberals as Premier. This compares to the view regarding Ernie Eves of the Progressive Conservatives (19%) and the 17% who hold this view if the Howard Hampton of the NDP were elected. On the flip side, just 21% say that the province would be worse off in four years time with Dalton McGuinty as Premier, compared to 30% for Ernie Eves and 36% for Howard Hampton. These findings indicate the Liberals have a net positive score of +6, whereas the Tories have a net negative score of -11 and the NDP have a net negative score of -19. In short, there is modest optimism about a future Liberal government compared to a much more pronounced negative view for either a Conservatives or NDP government.

Looking at the general impression of the leaders and their parties during the past couple of weeks, Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals receive a positive net impression (net +10;



improved impression 25% - worsened impression 15%), as does Howard Hampton and the NDP (net +4; improved impression 15% - worsened impression 11%), while Ernie Eves and the Progressive Conservatives receive a net negative impression of -19 (improved impression 12% - worsened impression 31%).

And finally, on the issue of a majority or minority government, most Ontarians (56%) indicate they would prefer a majority government be elected on October 2nd, while 37% opt for a minority government.

It would appear that failing a major gaffe in either the debate or post-debate timeframe, the Liberals are headed toward a majority government that could exceed the 1987 campaign of David Peterson which swept the Liberals into office with 70% of the seats at Queen's Park.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/CFTO/CFRB/Globe and Mail poll conducted between Thursday, September 18th and Saturday, September 20th, 2003. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 800 adult Ontarians. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.5 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.

Heading into the crucial leaders debate and with less than two weeks to go before election day, the Ontario Liberals (50%, +1 point from last sounding) continue to hold a decisive lead over the governing Conservatives (33%, -2 points) in support among decided voters, while the NDP (12%, unchanged) and the Green Party (4%, +2) remain far behind. One percent say they will support another party, while 15% of the electorate is undecided in their support, down from 17% last week, and one percent indicate they will not vote.



- Regionally, the Liberals are the top choice among decided voters in all regions of the province. Their highest level of support is found among residents of Eastern Ontario (54%), followed by the '905' Belt (52%), the City of Toronto (50%), Northern Ontario (50%), the Southwest (50%) and Hamilton/Niagara (47%). Liberal support is stronger among women (57%) than among men (44%). There is no statistical difference between support for the Liberals across age, education or household income groups.
- Conservative support is strongest in the '905' Belt (40%) followed by Southwestern Ontario (36%), Hamilton/Niagara (31%), Northern Ontario (31%), Eastern Ontario (30%) and the City of Toronto (29%). Among socio-economic groups, the Conservatives receive significantly higher support among Ontarians that have a high school or less education (40% versus 30% with higher levels of education), older Ontarians (39% versus 27% of young adult Ontarians), Ontarians with household incomes of \$60,000 or more (38% versus 26% with lower household incomes) and men (38% versus 28% of women).
- Regionally, the NDP receive higher support in Northern Ontario (18%), Hamilton/Niagara (17%) and the City of Toronto (15%), while their support is lower in the Southwest (9%), Eastern Ontario (8%) and '905' Belt (7%). The NDP receive significantly higher levels of support among middle-aged (15%) and young adult (14%) voters than among their older (5%) counterparts.
- The Green Party receive their highest level of support in Eastern Ontario (7%), while their lowest support is recorded in the '905' Belt (1%). Decided voters between 18 and 34 years of age (8%) are also significantly more likely to support the Green Party than are their counterparts who are 35 and older (2%).



- Among the 78% of Ontarians who are absolutely certain (58%) or very likely (20%) to actually go out and vote during this election, the standings do not change significantly (Liberals 50%, Conservative 34%, NDP 11%).

It is common wisdom that the leaders performance in the debate can make or break the election campaign for their party. Heading into this election's debate between the three main leaders, of which two-thirds (64%) of Ontarians say they are likely to watch, the expectation of who will win is split between Mr. Eves and Mr. McGuinty. While, one in three (34%) feel that Ernie Eves of the Progressive Conservatives will win, just slightly less (31%) expect the winner of the debate to be Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty. Howard Hampton, leader of the NDP, is thought by only 11% of Ontarians to be the expected winner of the debate, while one in five (18%) are unsure and 6% say that none of the leaders will emerge as the winner.

- As for who is likely to be watching the debate, residents of the City of Toronto (73%), older voters (73%), middle-aged (66%) voters and university graduates (70%) are significantly more likely to say they are very or somewhat likely to watch the leaders debate. As well, 70% of those who are absolutely certain/very likely to cast a ballot say they are likely to tune into the debate. This compares to just under half (46%) of those who are not very or not at all likely to cast a ballot in this election campaign (14% of Ontarians) who say they are likely to watch the leaders debate.
- Regionally, Premier Eves is selected to win the debate by a plurality of residents of the '905' Belt (43% versus 26% for Mr. McGuinty and 7% for Mr. Hampton) and in Hamilton/Niagara (40% versus 20% for Mr. McGuinty and 15% for Mr. Hampton). Mr. McGuinty is selected by a plurality of residents of the City of Toronto (38% versus 26% for Mr. Eves and 12% for Mr. Hampton) to be the winner of the debate. In all other regions it appears to be a toss-up between Mr. Eves and Mr. McGuinty (Eastern Ontario: Eves 38%, McGuinty 34%, Hampton 10%, none 7%; Southwestern Ontario: Eves 34%, McGuinty



32%, Hampton 8%, none 4%; Northern Ontario: Eves 29%, McGuinty 28%, Hampton 17%, none 8%).

- Among socio-economic groups, Premier Eves is the top choice of Ontarians with a high school or less education (39% versus 29% for Mr. McGuinty and 9% for Mr. Hampton), those in upper income households (39% versus 32% for Mr. McGuinty and 11% for Mr. Hampton), older Ontarians (37% versus 23% for Mr. McGuinty and 11% for Mr. Hampton) and among men (37% versus 30% for Mr. McGuinty and 13% for Mr. Hampton). In all other socio-economic groups, the views on who will likely win the leaders debate is statistically split between Premier Eves and Liberal leader, Dalton McGuinty.
- Among decided Conservative voters, 69% feel that Premier Eves will triumph in the leaders debate, compared to the views of decided Liberal voters on the chances of Dalton McGuinty (52%) and the views of decided NDP voters on the chances of Howard Hampton (45%).

Ernie Eves (37%) continues to be viewed by a plurality of Ontarians as the leader that would make the 'best Premier'. This compares to the number who choose Dalton McGuinty (30%) or Howard Hampton (13%) on this measure. This is only slightly different from the poll findings of last week, which showed Mr. Eves as the choice of 36%, Mr. McGuinty the choice of 31% and Mr. Hampton the choice of 16% of Ontarians.

- Regionally, those most likely to feel that Ernie Eves would make the 'best Premier' are located in the '905' Belt (43%), followed by Eastern Ontario (38%), the City of Toronto (37%), Southwestern Ontario (36%), Northern Ontario (35%) and Hamilton/Niagara (30%). In addition, men (44% versus 31% of women) and Ontarians in upper household income group (43% versus 33% in the middle group and 29% in the lower household



income group) are statistically more likely to feel that Ernie Eves would make the ‘best Premier’.

- There are no statistical differences across regions, age, or household income groups in support for Mr. McGuinty as ‘best Premier’. However, university graduates (35%) and those with a post-secondary education/some university (32%) are significantly more likely than those with a high school or less education (24%) to select Mr. McGuinty as ‘best Premier’.
- Residents of Hamilton/Niagara (22%) are significantly more likely than their counterparts in the Southwest (11%), Eastern Ontario (10%) or the ‘905’ Belt (9%) to feel that Mr. Hampton would make the ‘best Premier’. Seventeen percent of residents of Northern Ontario and the City of Toronto also share this view. There are no significant differences between age, gender, education or household income groups regarding Mr. Hampton as ‘best Premier’.

Six in ten (60%, -1 point) Ontarians continue to feel that it is time for another party to take over and run the province. Just 32%, down one point from last week’s sounding, feel that the Conservative government has done a good job and deserves to be re-elected.

- The sentiment that it is time for a change is strongest in Hamilton/Niagara (67%), while it is lowest in Eastern Ontario (57%) and the ‘905’ Belt (55%).
- Women (66%) are significantly more likely than are men (55%) to say that it is time for a change in government, while men (40%) are significantly more likely than women (26%) to say that the Conservatives deserve to be re-elected.
- University graduates (65%) are significantly more likely than Ontarians with a high school or less education (56%) to say that it is time for a change.



- There are no significant differences on this question between age and household income groups.

Turning to the future, asked if Ontario would be better off, worse off, or about the same, after four years, one in four (27%) feel that the province would be better off with Dalton McGuinty of the Liberals as Premier. This compares to the view regarding Ernie Eves of the Progressive Conservatives (19%) and Howard Hampton of the NDP (17%). On the flip side, just 21% say that the province would be worse off in four years time with Dalton McGuinty as Premier, compared to 30% for Ernie Eves and 36% for Howard Hampton. These findings indicate the Liberals have a net positive score of +6, whereas the Tories have a net negative score of -11 and the NDP have a net negative score of -19. In short, there is modest optimism about a future Liberal government compared to a much more pronounced negative view for either the Conservatives or the NDP.

- Regionally, those more likely to say that Ontario will be better off in four years time with Dalton McGuinty as Premier are located in the City of Toronto (35%). This compares to the views of those in the Southwest (23%) and Northern Ontario (18%). University graduates (32% versus 24% of those with lower levels of education) are also more likely to hold this position.
- Men (26%) are significantly more likely than women (12%) to feel the province would be better off in four years with Ernie Eves as Premier. There are no significant differences between age, education and household income groups on this view.
- Residents of the City of Toronto (24%) are significantly more likely than those in Southwestern Ontario (13%) or the '905' Belt (13%) to feel that the province would be better off in four years time than it is now with Howard Hampton as Premier. This view



is also more likely to be shared by those in the lowest income household group (27%) than by those in middle (18%) or upper (13%) income households.

- As for the flip side, those most likely to feel that the province would be worse off in four years time if Dalton McGuinty was Premier, are more likely to be men (28% versus 15% of women). Those most likely to feel this way about four more years under Tory rule are most likely to be from the City of Toronto (38%), Hamilton/Niagara (36%), university graduates (39%), those with a post-secondary education/some university (32%), and those from middle income households (38%). As for Mr. Hampton, those most likely to believe the province would be worse off in four years under NDP rule, are most likely to be from the '905' Belt (44%), are 35 years of age or older (44% versus 20% of 18 to 34 year olds), men (43% versus 30% of women), university graduates (42% versus 31% of those with a high school or less education) and those in upper income households (46% versus 32% in middle income and 21% in lower income households).

Looking at the general impression of the leaders and their parties during the past couple of weeks, Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals receive a positive net impression (net +10; improved impression 25% - worsened impression 11%), as does Howard Hampton and the NDP (net +4; improved impression 15% - worsened impression 15%), while Ernie Eves and the Progressive Conservatives receive a net negative impression of -19 (improved impression 12% - worsened impression 31%).

- Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals receive positive net impressions across all regions and socio-demographic groups. Their highest net impression is recorded among residents of the City of Toronto (net +14; improved 31% - worsened 17%) and the '905' Belt (net +13; improved 28% - worsened 15%), as well as among middle-income households (net +14; improved 25% - worsened 11%) and older Ontarians (net +14; improved 29% - worsened 15%).



- Mr. Hampton and the NDP receive positive net impressions from most, but not all regional and socio-economic groups. Their highest net impression is among residents of Northern Ontario (net +13; improved 20% - worsened 7%) and those who have a post-secondary education/some university (net +10; improved 18% - worsened 8%), while they receive negative net impression scores among those with a high school or less education (net -4; improved 10% - worsened 14%), those in the lowest income households (net -1; improved 15% - worsened 16%), and residents of the '905' Belt (net -1; improved 12% - worsened 13%) and those in Southwestern Ontario (net -2; improved 11% - worsened 13%).
- Mr. Eves and the Conservatives receive net negative impression scores across all regions and socio-economic groups. Their best score is recorded among those with a high school or less education (net -12; improved 13% - worsened 25%) and in the '905' Belt (net -12; improved 14% - worsened 26%), while their lowest net score is recorded among residents of Hamilton/Niagara (net -32; improved 9% - worsened 41%) and among university graduates (net -28; improved 12% - worsened 40%).

And finally, on the issue of a preference for either a majority or minority government, most Ontarians (56%) indicate they would prefer a majority government be elected on October 2nd, while 37% opt for a minority government.

- Middle-aged Ontarians (61%) are significantly more likely to say they would prefer a majority government than do older Ontarians (51%). Conversely, older Ontarians (42%) are significantly more likely than are their middle-aged (33%) counterparts to say they would prefer a minority government.
- Men (63%) are significantly more likely than are women (51%) to say they would prefer a majority government.



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- This is also more likely to be the position of those with a university degree (63%), compared to those with a post-secondary education/some university (52%). Those with a post-secondary education/some university (44%), on the other hand, are significantly more likely than either university graduates (34%) or those with a high school or less education (34%) to opt for a minority government situation.

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