

Will Hot Debate Thaw Frozen Voters?

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Ontarians Split on Whether McGuinty (33%) or Tory (32%)
Would Make Best Premier;
Voters' Second Choice Critical to Outcome of Swing Voters*

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Will Hot Debate Thaw Frozen Voters?

Liberals (40%) and Tories (37%) Hold Steady, NDP (16%) and Green (6%) Trail Behind;

Ontarians Split on Whether McGuinty (33%) or Tory (32%) Would Make Best Premier;

Voters' Second Choice Critical to Outcome of Swing Voters

Toronto, ON – As the party leaders focus their attention on preparing for the debate on September 20th, a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted exclusively for CanWest News Service and Global Television finds that Ontario voters remain virtually unmoved since Ipsos Reid's last poll. In what promises to be a critical debate in defining the platforms and ideas of parties, Tory's Progressive Conservatives at 37% support remain in close striking distance of McGuinty's Liberals who lead at 40% support. However, with the Liberals still in the lead, it appears as though the Liberals are in reach, but just out of grasp of trailing Tories. The NDP under Howard Hampton are holding steady at 16% support, while the Green Party is standing pat at 6% support. Nine percent of voters remain undecided.

With Ipsos Reid's polling since May showing virtually no change in support for all parties over the past four months, the leader's debate is likely to be the event which frames the context for the rest of the campaign. The fallout from the debate could also break the stagnant level of support that all parties have been receiving in the last few months.

The debate will also give the party leaders a chance to convey to Ontarians their ideas, and to distinguish themselves from each other in terms of policies and leadership attributes. Going into the debate, Ontarians are split on who they believe would make the best Premier of Ontario. One in three (33%) Ontarians believe that Dalton McGuinty would make the best Premier of Ontario, while a similar proportion (32%) believe that John Tory would make the best Premier of Ontario. Further, 15% of Ontarians believe that Howard Hampton would make the best Premier of Ontario, while just 2% indicate that they believe Frank de Jong would be the best man for the role.

The debate is also an opportunity for the party leaders to sway voters who have, up to this point, been essentially intransigent. Supposing that voters were not able to vote for their first-choice party, it appears that the New Democratic Party would be second choice of 21% of Ontarians, while the Liberals (18%), Progressive Conservatives (17%) and Green Party (17%) are the second choice of slightly fewer Ontarians. However, the largest cohort of second-choice voters is among NDP supporters who choose the Liberal Party as their backup, with nearly four in ten (36%) indicating that this is the case.

With 107 seats in the Legislature, the seat model done exclusively by DemocraticSPACE for Ipsos Reid is currently *projecting a slim Liberal majority (54 needed) of 55 seats government* if the polling numbers were an actual vote percentage on Election Day, October 10, 2007.

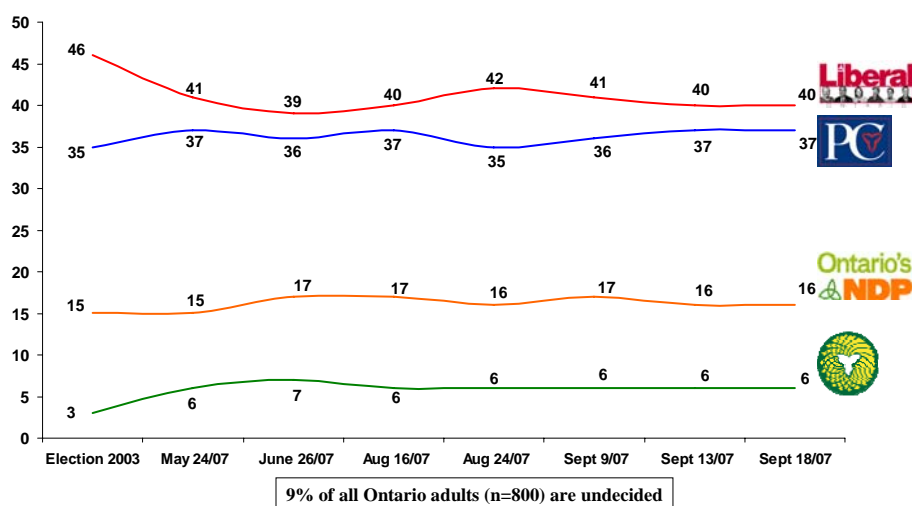
Even the seat model remains virtually unchanged, further demonstrating that voters remain unmoved. Using an aggregate of five recently publicly released polls, including today's result, the model shows the McGuinty Liberals with a potential *majority* government with 55 seats (39 solid and 16 leaning), Tory's Progressive Conservatives with 40 seats (28 solid and 12 leaning) and Hampton's NDP with 12 seats (8 solid and 4 leaning).

Asked to consider the possibility for change at Queens Park, one half (50%) of Ontarians more closely associate with the sentiment that it is 'time for another provincial party to take over', while 39% believe that the 'McGuinty government has done a good job and deserves re-election'.

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted exclusively for CanWest News Service and Global Television from September 11 to September 18, 2007. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 800 adults living in Ontario was interviewed by telephone. 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 population living in Ontario been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure that the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Ontarian population according to Census data.

Party Support in Ontario (Tracking)

Q: I would like you to focus on the Ontario provincial government, not the federal government. As you may know, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and his Provincial Liberal Party formed a majority government in the last provincial election. Thinking of how you feel right now, if a PROVINCIAL election were held tomorrow, which of the following parties' candidates would you, yourself, be most likely to support?



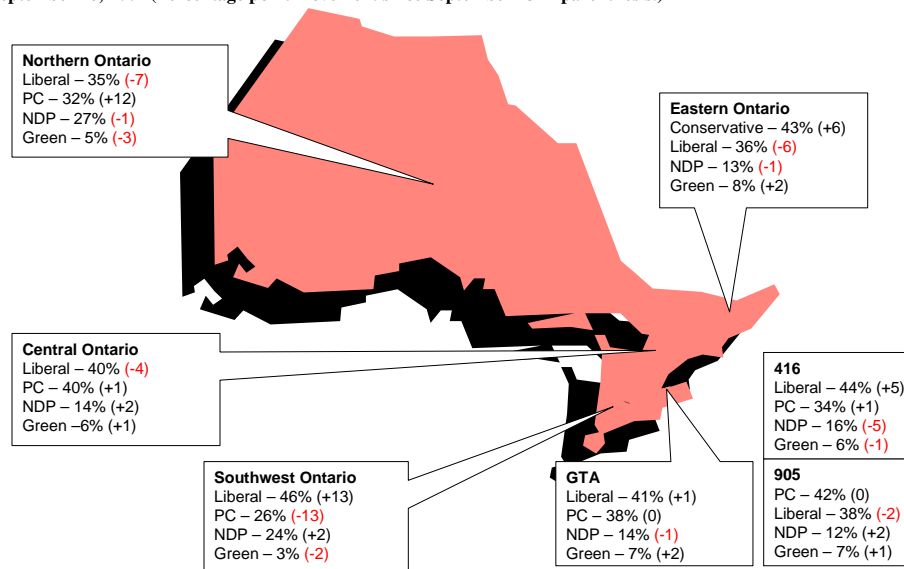
CanWest News Service/ Global News IpsosReid Survey, September 11-18, 2007. Decided voters including leaners (n=689).

In Vote-rich GTA...

In the Greater Toronto Area, the Liberals (41%) continue to have a slight lead over the Progressive Conservatives (38%), while the NDP (14%) and Green Party (7%) trail significantly. Voters in the GTA *as a whole* are generally unmoved in the past week with the Progressive Conservatives holding steady while the Liberals have gained one point. Support for the NDP and Green Party has not moved.

Regional Party Support in Ontario

September 18, 2007 (Percentage point movement since September 13 in parenthesis.)



CanWest News Service/ Global News IpsosReid Survey, September 11-18, 2007. Decided voters including leaners (n=689).

- **Examining the 416 area code** (Toronto proper) yields a slightly different picture. The Progressive Conservatives at 34% support (up 1 point since last week) have lost some ground to the Liberals at 44% support (up 5 points since last week). The NDP have dipped five points to 16% support in the past week while the Green Party has dropped one point to 6% support.

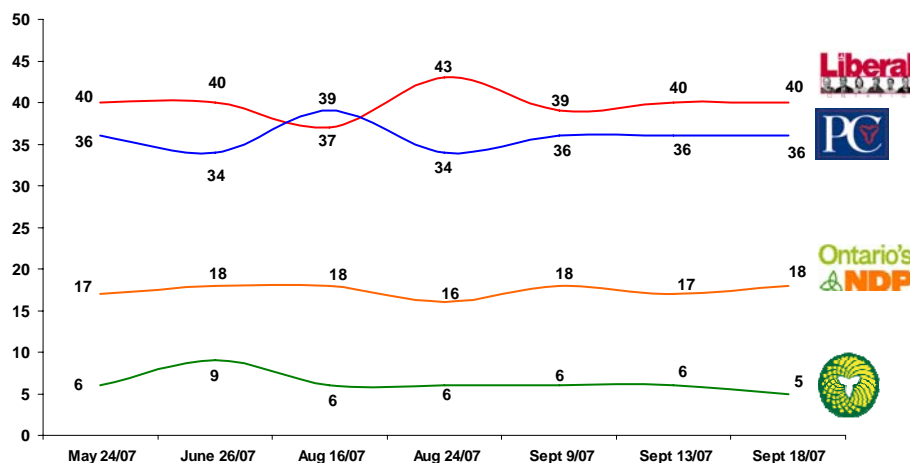
- In the 905 the race between the two front runners is tighter: the Tories held steady at 42% support while the Liberals have dipped slightly to 38% support. Support for the NDP (12%) has increased by two points and support for the Green Party (7%) has increased by 1 point.

Outside of the GTA...

- Outside of the GTA the Liberal lead (40%) over the Conservatives (36%) has not changed. The NDP have the support of 18% of Ontarians outside of the GTA (a rise of one point) while the Green Party has the support of 5% of Ontarians (a decline of one point).

Party Support Outside the GTA (Tracking)

Q: I would like you to focus on the Ontario provincial government, not the federal government. As you may know, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and his Provincial Liberal Party formed a majority government in the last provincial election. Thinking of how you feel right now, if a PROVINCIAL election were held tomorrow, which of the following parties' candidates would you, yourself, be most likely to support?



CanWest News Service/ Global News IpsosReid Survey, September 11-18, 2007. Decided voters outside GTA including leaners (n=387).

- In Central Ontario the Liberals and the Conservatives are tied at 40% support. This represents a decline of 4 points for the Liberals, and a modest increase of 1 point for

the Tories. The NDP are at 14% support (an increase of 2 points), and the Greens are at 6% support (an increase of 1 point).

- **In Eastern Ontario** the Tories have pulled ahead of the Liberals, gaining six points (43% support), while the Grits have slipped 6 points (36% support). The NDP have dropped 1 point at 13% support, and the Green party has gained 2 points and now sits at 8% support.
- **In South-western Ontario** the Liberals have surged 13 points to 46% support, while the Tories have dipped 13 points to 26% support. The NDP are not far behind at 24% support (an increase of two points), while the Green Party has the support of only 3% of south-western Ontarians, a decrease of two points.
- **In Northern Ontario** the Tories have gained 12 points and are now at 32% support, while the Liberals at 35% support (a dip of 7 points) still maintain a lead. The NDP are at 27% support (a decline of 1 point), while the Green Party is at 5% support (a decline of 3 points).

Examining Second-Choice Vote...

In more detail, the following is an analysis of second-choice preferences by party support:

- Progressive Conservative supporters are most likely to mention the Liberal Party (28%) as their second choice, followed by the Green Party (18%) and the NDP (16%). One in ten (10%) voters say, unaided, that they would not support any other party.



- Liberal supporters are most likely to mention the Progressive Conservative Party as their second choice (33%), followed by the NDP (32%) and the Green Party (16%). Seven percent of Liberals say, unaided, that they would not support any other party.
- NDP supporters are most likely to mention the Liberals as their second choice (36%), followed by the Green (23%) and the PCs (16%). Eleven percent of NDP supporters say, unaided, that they would not vote for any other party.
- Green Party supporters are most likely to mention the NDP as their second choice (35%), followed by the Liberals (27%) and the Progressive Conservatives (23%). Ten percent of Green Party supporters say, unaided, that they would not vote for any other party.

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