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Campaigning, McGuinty Liberals (45%) Still Lead
Progressive Conservatives (32%) By Wide Margin**
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in Preference for Leadership*

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Preference for Leadership*

Toronto, ON – A new Ipsos Reid poll, conducted on behalf of Canwest News Service and Global Television, reveals that while the current leadership race for the Ontario Provincial Conservatives may have swelled its own membership ranks as well as the profiles of the four candidates in the media, it has so far failed to translate into support for the PC Party itself among the provincial electorate.

The new sounding indicates that Premier Dalton McGuinty's Liberals (45%, down 1 point) continue a wide margin (13 points) over the Progressive Conservatives (32%, up one point), with the NDP under its new leader Andrea Horwath also struggling to get traction with only 13% (unchanged) support among decided voters. Also, if an election were held tomorrow the Green Party would receive 10% of the vote (unchanged) – but they too will soon engage in a leadership race as long-time leader Frank de Jong has decided to "call it quits".

For the time being, all of the political action appears to be on the PC leadership hustings, as four sitting MPPs battle it out for party votes with the departure of former leader John Tory.

Ipsos Reid does not have access to those membership lists so no poll can be done that might be predictive of the actual member-only ballot outcome.

However, between April 21 and May 24, 2009 Ipsos Reid asked those decided voters in Ontario who indicated that if an election were held tomorrow they would vote for the provincial Progressive Conservatives, if they could vote for one of the four candidates to lead the party, who would be their first and second-ballot choices.

To begin with, nearly one half (43%) of PC voters are unsure of who they would vote for in the leadership contest. Further, of those who had a first choice, another one quarter (23%) didn't have a second choice. As such, if these PC supporters were actually member voters, there would still be a lot of room for all of the candidates to manoeuvre.

But if the PC supporters are any reflection of PC membership voters, it could be a very interesting race between membership-selling frontrunner Tim Hudak and Christine Elliott.

If they had a vote in the leadership race, 35% of PC supporters would select Christine Elliott in their top-two choices (19% among first-choice voters/28% among second-choice voters) putting her in the lead over her rivals--and 11 points up on Tim Hudak.

But the race among the other candidates shows a statistical tie.

One quarter (24%) of PC supporters would choose Tim Hudak in their top-two ballots (13% among first-choice voters/18% among second-choice voters), while only slightly fewer would choose Randy Hillier (22%) in their top-two ballots (14% among first-choice voters/14% among second-choice voters).



Finally, two in ten (20%) Tory supporters would choose Frank Klees as one of their top-two choices (11% among first-choice voters/17% among second-choice voters).

As indicated, this poll is not intended to be predictive of the actual voting PC membership for the new leader of the Party on June 27, 2009. But it is indicative of those who have already committed to vote for the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party if an election were held tomorrow. And that, in itself, should be worth something for voting members to reflect upon.

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted exclusively for Canwest News Service and Global Television from April 21 to May 24, 2009. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1660 adults living in Ontario was interviewed by telephone, of which 496 are PC voters. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 2.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population living in Ontario been polled, and ± 4.4 percentage points for the sample of PC voters. 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.

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