

**Provincial Grit Fortress Ontario Cracks:
McGuinty Liberals Tumble (-6) to 39% Support While
Hudak PCs in the Hunt (+5) at 36%, Horwath NDP
Engaged (+4) at 16%
But While Ontarians (58%) Expect More in Responding to Recent
Problems, Government Sidesteps Most Scandal Blame (35%)**

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Toronto, ON - The Liberal Fortress of Dalton McGuinty is beginning to crack under the relentless assault of the economy and opposition outcry over government scandal and financial mismanagement, according to a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted exclusively on behalf of Canwest News Service, Global Television and CFRB Radio.

Having been bombarded from all sides - the eHealth, Lotto and Cancer Care Ontario scandals, ministerial, directorship and management resignations, untendered contracts with expenses run amok, a scathing auditor's reporting highlighting "no value" for money paid, engorged consultants and now the largest projected deficit in Ontario's history - the armour that has been to this point protecting the Majority McGuinty Liberals is beginning to wear thin.

In a poll taken during the week of Finance Minister Dwight Duncan's Economic Update showing an almost \$25 Billion deficit on the books and a pretty-much flat-lined provincial economy, if an election were to be held tomorrow the Liberals under Premier Dalton McGuinty would likely receive 39% of the vote among decided voters, a decline of 6 points since Ipsos Reid's last poll in July.



By contrast, 36% of voters would support new Opposition Leader Tim Hudak and his Progressive Conservative party (an increase of 5 points since July), and NDP Leader Andrea Horwath and her party would receive 16% support (up 4 points). The Green Party under Frank de Jong would garner 9% of the vote (down 2 points).

The next provincial election is almost exactly two years from now, so despite the closing of the gap between the two major parties, this really is just at the mid-point of the McGuinty second-majority reign.

In this regard, it's instructive to note that when asked who they blame most for the recent scandals, Ontarians point mainly at the Board of Directors and Management (44%) of the individual provincial agencies and 13% more say the civil servants who work in the line ministries and agencies associated with these issues are most to blame. Further, that leaves 8% who don't know who is most to blame.

So, by moving early to head the scandals "off at the pass" –imposing strict expense and contract rules and dispatching management and a Health Minister to boot– only one in three (35%) Ontarians point the blame finger directly at the Premier and his Ministers and their offices.

Perhaps it may be comforting to the Premier and his operatives that when a party needs between 41% and 43% for a majority government in the province, half (48%) think his government has handled these matters in the 'right way' (48%) compared with the minority who think it's been handled the 'wrong way' (42%). One in ten are not sure (10%).

But they are clearly not out of the woods.



A majority (58%) of Ontarians believe the McGuinty government has 'not done enough' to deal with these circumstances. This compares with roughly four in ten (38%) who believe that 'just enough' (32%) or 'more than enough' (6%) measures have been taken to deal with what's been happening down at Queens Park.

Couple this with the biggest deficit in Ontario's history, warnings of "tough decisions" that lie ahead, and an HST to be brought in next year, it will be anything but a pleasant walk through the political forest.

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted exclusively for Canwest News Service, Global Television and CFRB Radio from October 20 to 25, 2009. 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 ± 3.1 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 Ontario population according to Census data.

For more information on this news release, please contact:

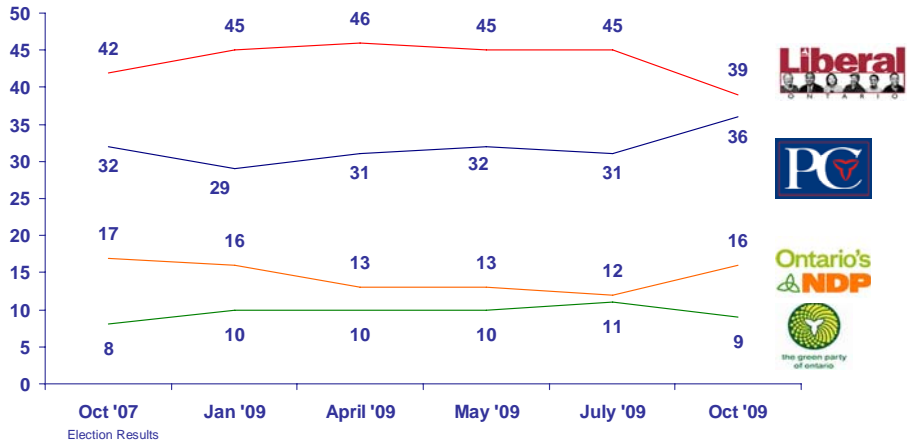
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Provincial Vote Support (Decided Voters, Leanners Included)

Party Support in Ontario (TRACKING to 2009),
October 26, 2009



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?