



Whack the piñata with the stick!



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Historic election

Get ready - here they come.

We could be in for a wild and entertaining election campaign this fall. Ontario's first fixed-date provincial election takes place Oct. 10. You'll be forgiven if you think the election has already started. The parties, their leaders, cabinet ministers and big-name candidates have been preparing for several months, crisscrossing the province, and getting their names and faces in the local news.

Despite a summer of pre-election promises - an almost-daily onslaught of new programs and spending announcements - the Liberals, led by Premier Dalton McGuinty, hold a slim lead over the Conservatives, led by John Tory.

The latest SES Research-Sun Media Poll found 40-per-cent support for the Liberals, 34 per cent for the Conservatives, 19 per cent for Howard Hampton's New Democrats and eight per cent for Frank De Jong and the Green Party.

Those numbers suggest that the Liberals may be faced with a minority government.

With the smell of power within his grasp, Tory will play hard to win.

The Greens are in growth mode. Electoral success at the national level has help raise the party's profile and credibility.

If the Liberals are facing a minority, they will look to the NDP to help stay in power.

We have the ingredients of a tough battle that could get nasty.

As if voters needed more to wade through, there is the referendum. Voters are faced with a major decision: should they adopt a new electoral system for the next election? In the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system, there would be one MPP for each riding, plus a number of MPPs selected by each party according to the proportion of votes they receive.

It's a once-in-a-lifetime decision, one that's had little public debate in recent months.

Expect that to change. Prepare for an onslaught of details on exactly what the MMP system is, its pros and cons and its possible impact on our way of life.

Readers of this newspaper will be treated - or at least served - with volumes of information not only on the referendum, but also the myriad of issues and promises by the four parties and their leaders. This will be an historic election and voters need to pay close attention.

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