



Political shakeup in Niagara

Local News

Poll finds increase in Liberal support, Tory support drops

By James Wallace Osprey News Network

Monday, September 22, 2003 - 02:00

Local News - NIAGARA – An electoral shakeup is brewing in Niagara Region, an exclusive Osprey Media/SES Research poll has found.

Support for Dalton McGuinty's Liberal Party has climbed to 45 per cent of decided voters in the region, up from the 39 per cent who backed the Grits in the 1999 election.

Conservative support, meanwhile, has fallen to 40 per cent from 45 per cent while the NDP has picked up a couple of points and sits at 14 per cent.

"We are going to see change in Niagara," said Nic Nanos, president and CEO of SES Research Inc.

Public concern over centralized ambulance service in Niagara may play a role in the results and 82 per cent of voters feel it's an important issue that will affect their voting decision.

However, the top two issues driving the vote in the region are education and health care.

"Voters want to hear about health care and education but they're being fed hot button issues," Nanos said.

Premier Ernie Eves' Conservatives hold three of seven ridings in Osprey Media communities in the region, three are Liberal and one is NDP.

In two of the Conservative ridings, the outcomes were decided by a few thousand votes.

The drop in Tory support in the region combined with a flat performance by the NDP will rule out a split that allowed Conservative candidates to squeak up the middle in the last race.

Inside the Review

[Local News](#)
[Sports](#)
[Editorial](#)

About the Review

[Newsroom](#)
[Circulation](#)
[Advertising](#)
[Pre-Press](#)

Classified

[Classified Ads](#)
[Obituaries](#)

On-Line Sections

[Welcome Back](#)

FEEDBACK

[Read Feedback](#)
[Post Feedback](#)

[Political shakeup in Niagara](#)

[Saving Bay Beach](#)

**What's
the best
way to
get the
vacation
package
you want?**



Expedia.ca™

"We're going to see the Liberals pulling ahead in the really tight races," Nanos said. "The NDP haven't picked up enough support to make a difference.

"There are a couple of ridings on the cusp that could go either way," he said.

Ridings up for grabs include Niagara Falls and Stoney Creek. Tory cabinet minister Tim Hudak will have a battle in Erie-Lincoln while strong showings are expected by Liberals in Brant, Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot and veteran MPP Jim Bradley in St. Catharines. Peter Kormos is expected to continue to dominate for the NDP in Niagara Centre.

Other factors are eroding Conservative support in the region, the poll suggests.

More than half of voters surveyed, 53 per cent, think it's time for new leadership at Queen's Park.

Just 30 per cent think the Tories have done a good job and deserve to be re-elected.

Poll results from other parts of the province show a similar trend and suggest momentum is building for a Liberal majority government.

"The momentum is there (for the Liberals), a lot will depend on what happens in the leaders' debate," Nanos said.

The Osprey Media/SES poll found a large number of voters – 13 per cent in the region – remain undecided about how they will vote on Oct. 2.

All three leaders will participate in a televised leaders' debate tomorrow evening on the major provincial television networks and their performance is expected to make or break their campaigns.

Despite all the attention the three leading campaigns have devoted to political hot button issues such as auto insurance, hydro, same-sex marriage and immigration, voters overwhelmingly identify health care and education as their top concerns, the poll found.

When asked what top two issues would affect their vote, 25 per cent in the region said education and 24 per cent said health care. No other issues came close.

Little or no concern was expressed about teachers' strikes, native issues, terrorism, gun control, immigration, rent control, child care, homelessness or even, post-Walkerton, clean water.

Slight concern, ranging from less than one per cent to just under three per cent of voters, was expressed over seniors' issues, hydro, auto insurance, honesty of politicians, jobs and the economy, debt and the potential deficit, the environment and social programs. Jobs and the economy were a concern for nine per cent of voters in the region and six per cent had concerns about high taxes.

Party positions on auto insurance were important to 92 per cent of

voters in the region while 45 per cent said stances on same-sex marriage were important, however, 98 per cent in the region ranked access to health care as important or critical.

“That’s everybody,” Nanos said. “If politics was a buffet, health care would be the main course.”

To gain any further edge in this campaign, all three leaders will have to convince voters they can address health care concerns ranging from doctor shortages to overcrowded hospitals.

To score points in the debate and dying days of the campaign, Eves needs to convince voters he is up to the job, the very barb he’s used against McGuinty.

“He’s got to articulate his vision on health care and education and do it without being negative,” Nanos said.

Similarly, Hampton, who has made hydro and auto insurance his top issues, needs to refocus on health care and education.

“The NDP strategy to focus on a public power anger campaign is just yelling at the wind,” he said. “They might have done better to focus on health care and accessibility.”

McGuinty has made health care and education core issues in his campaign, needs to prove in the debate that he’s ready for the job

Poll numbers were determined through 250 telephone interviews on Sept. 17 and 19 among likely voters. The survey results for the region are accurate ± 6.3 per cent, 19 times out of 20. The random sample was drawn from Niagara’s seven ridings.

ID- 43869

 [Printable Version](#)

[Thank you for reading Niagara Falls Review online. Click here to order convenient home delivery.](#)