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# News Canada

Sun, December 17, 2006

## Leaders 'shades of beige': Pollster says

By **ANTONELLA ARTUSO**, QUEEN'S PARK  
BUREAU CHIEF

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All three of Ontario's major political party leaders -- Premier Dalton McGuinty, the Conservatives' John Tory and the NDP's Howard Hampton -- are trailing their parties in popularity, a new SES Research poll has found.

The survey, provided to Sun Media, shows the Ontario Liberals are holding firm with 42% of decided voters, the Conservatives are sitting at 35%, the NDP have slipped to 16% and the Green party is at 7%.

SES asked voters who they thought would make the best premier and "unsure" was the second most popular choice -- less than a percentage point behind McGuinty, who came in at 30.6%.

Tory would make the best premier for 23.5% of voters, while 13.4% believe Hampton is the man for the job.

"None of the leaders really turned on voters," SES pollster Nikita Nanos said. "We're looking at different shades of beige."

The poll looked at voters' preferences in depth, breaking them down by gender and age.

McGuinty's Liberals had strong support with women, and with voters in general aged 18 to 49 years old.

The Grits should take considerable comfort from knowing they dominate in much-sought-after voting



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constituencies like those aged 30 to 39 -- the so-called "working families" cohort -- Nanos said.

Voters also appear less inclined to identify the Liberals with broken promises, he said.

The Conservatives were tops with men and voters 40 to 59 years old, but were 14 points behind the Liberals with female voters.

"They need a platform, style and tone that can potentially appeal to more women," Nanos said.

He said that the NDP is down in support. The poll found NDP support highest among voters aged 18 to 29.

"That's got to be very worrisome for the New Democrats," Nanos said. "The only group they do the best in are the least likely to vote."

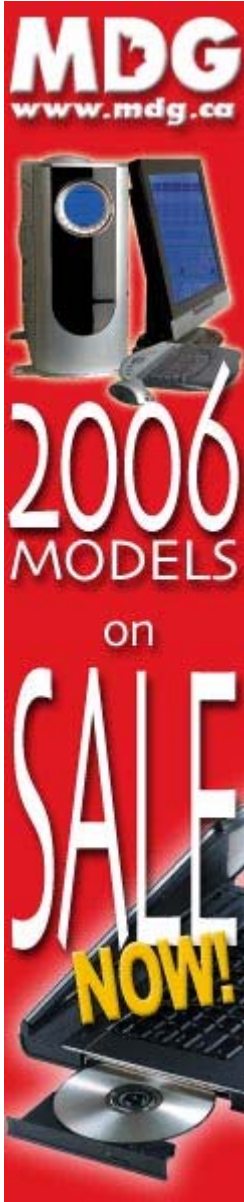
SES also asked voters about McGuinty's performance as premier and found most voters -- 50.9% -- judged him to be "average." Even the majority of voters who identified themselves as Liberals gave him the same rating.

Asked if the McGuinty government is heading in the right direction, 38.1% said yes and 38.5% said no. Another 23.5% were unsure if the government is on the right track.

"One-quarter of voters are basically up for grabs," Nanos said.

SES polled 500 Ontarians from Nov. 25-27, and the results are considered accurate to within 4.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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