



Media Release

Voters Ambivalent About Ontario Party Leaders “None of the above” scores well

Ottawa, February 6, 2003 - A provincial survey of Ontarians released by polling firm SES Canada Research Inc. indicates that there exists a fundamental disconnect between Ontario Party Leaders and the voting populace.

Ontarians were asked to provide opinions on each of the three provincial party leaders on variables ranging from sharing similar views through to trust. Surprisingly, on all of image measures one of every two Ontarians opted for none of the leaders or were unsure.

Question

Thinking of the current provincial party leaders [rotate order] Ernie Eves, Dalton McGuinty and Howard Hampton...which of these leaders...

Do you trust most

Has views like your own

Is a strong leader

Has your confidence

For example, when asked which of the provincial party leaders had their confidence 28% of Ontarians said none of them, 22% said Ernie Eves, 21% were unsure, 20% Dalton McGuinty and 9% Howard Hampton.

Eves and McGuinty are, in effect tied on a number of the image measures tested. The only measure where Eves has a noticeable advantage is as a strong leader. 25% of Ontarians considered Eves a strong leader compared to 19% who considered Dalton McGuinty a strong leader. Still, 27% were unsure who was a strong leader and another 20% of Ontarians said none of the choices were strong leaders.

Even with the close results between Eves and McGuinty, McGuinty does very marginally nudge ahead of Eves as the party leader with views like the average Ontario (McGuinty 21%, Eves 18%).

“This ambivalence has serious strategic implications for all three provincial parties,” noted Nikita Nanos, President of polling firm SES Canada Research Inc. “For local candidates, placing their leader front and centre may not necessarily boost ones electoral



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chances. We may see a shift to more localized battles, where candidates focus on themselves as the best local choice rather than their party leader.”

A consolation to the governing provincial Tories is that Ernie Eves is still comparatively considered to be the best choice as Premier of Ontario at 32% compared to Dalton McGuinty at 23% and Howard Hampton at 11%. Since the last wave of polling conducted by SES, however, the Eves-McGuinty leadership gap has narrowed from 22 points in the fall of 2002 to nine points in the winter of 2003.

“Leading up to the next provincial election, we should see the provincial parties battling to positively define their leader. The recent Liberal Party ads featuring Dalton McGuinty are an example of this,” noted Nanos. “The Progressive Conservatives should not take too much comfort in the advantage Eves enjoys over McGuinty, since it has dwindled in the last four months.”

Current SES polling puts the Ontario Liberals at 44% (down 3 points since the fall of 2002), the Progressive Conservatives (PCs) at 34% (down 5 points), the NDP at 19% (up 6 points) and the Green Party at 3% in Ontario (up 2 points).

SES’s Ontario Omnibus Survey is conducted every four months. It is based on a random telephone sample of 500 Ontarians, 18 years of age and older and was conducted between January 23rd and January 27th, 2003. The margin of accuracy for the survey is 4.5 percentage points, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20. Validation of the demographic profile of respondents indicates that the poll is a fair representation of the Ontario voting populace.

Established in 1987, SES Canada Research Inc. is a full service marketing and public opinion research firm with offices in Toronto and Ottawa. For a detailed review of the survey tables, please visit the SES Research website at <http://www.sesresearch.com>.

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Media inquiries:

Nikita Nanos, President
SES Canada Research Inc.
100 Sparks Street, Suite 1001
Ottawa, Ontario

(613) 234-4666
nnanos@sesresearch.com

QUESTION

Thinking of the current provincial party leaders [rotate order] Ernie Eves (2002/3 wave)/Mike Harris (2001 wave), Dalton McGuinty and Howard Hampton...who, in your opinion, would make the best Premier of Ontario?

Commentary

Ernie Eves continues to be considered the leader who would make the best Premier. Since the fall however, his 22 point lead over Dalton McGuinty has narrowed to 9 points. Over the past four months NDP leader Howard Hampton has also registered an improvement.

Readers should note that one of every three voters are unsure who would make the best premier.

Of concern to all the party leaders should be the fact that a fundamental disconnect exists between them and the average Ontario voter. Clearly one of every two voters does not identify with the provincial party leaders or is unsure.

Eves and McGuinty are, in effect, tied on a number of variables. The only variable where Eves has a noticeable advantage is as a strong leader.

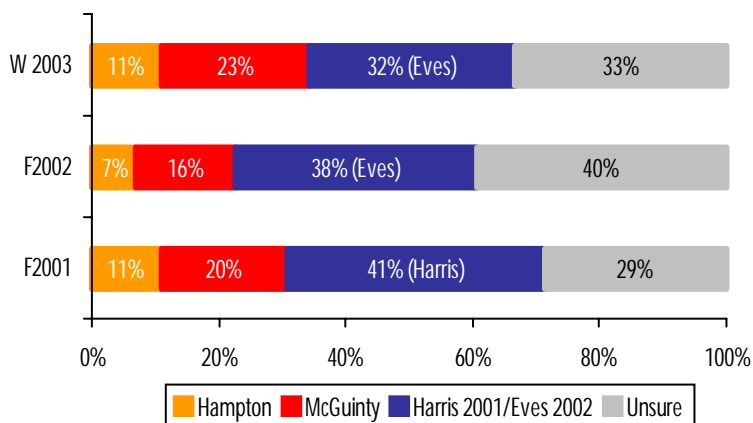
Even with the close results between Eves and McGuinty, McGuinty does very marginally nudge ahead of Eves as the party leader with views like the average Ontarian.

Although Howard Hampton trails both McGuinty and Eves on all four measures, he does best on trust and his views.

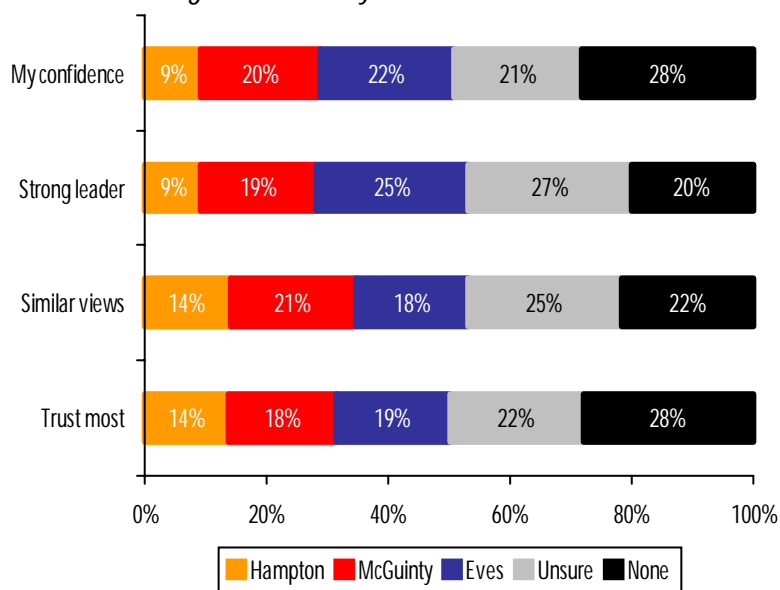
THE METHODOLOGY

Between January 23rd and 27th, 2002, SES conducted a total of 500 telephone interviews across Ontario with eligible voters. Aggregate results of the survey are accurate to within 4.5 percentage points, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20.

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BEST PREMIER TRACKING**LEADER IMAGE COMPARISON**

Thinking of the current provincial party leaders [rotate order] Ernie Eves, Dalton McGuinty and Howard Hampton...which of these leaders...[rotate questions] do you trust most...has views like your own...is a strong leader...has your confidence?

**ABOUT SES**

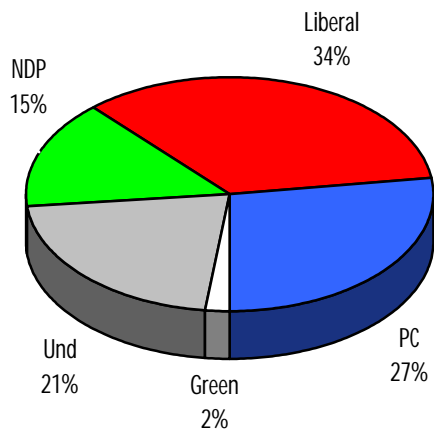
Established in 1987, SES Canada Research Inc. is a full service public opinion research and management consulting firm.

In order to maximize turn-around time and increase efficiency, SES has a 110-line call centre complete with a predictive dialer. SES is regularly called upon by corporate, government and para-public clients in Canada and the United States to conduct research and provide strategic advice.

For more information on our full range of services please visit our website www.sesresearch.com or contact:

Mr. Nikita Nanos at (613) 234-4666 ext. 400 or nnanos@sesresearch.com

THE BALLOT (committed and undecided)



Decided (%) Jan-03 1999* Change

PC	34.4	45.1	▼ 10.7
Liberal	43.8	39.9	▲ 3.9
NDP	19.1	12.6	▲ 6.5
Green	2.8	0.7	▲ 2.1

* Provincial Election

Commentary

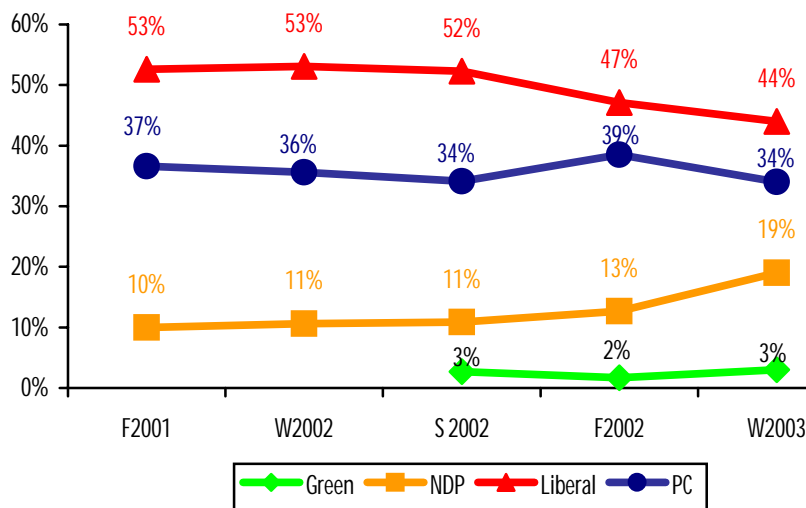
Since the fall, the PCs have lost ground first gained following the provincial PC leadership race. The Liberals have also experienced a net drop in their support while the New Democrats have realized marginal gains. Commensurate with the drop in PC support is the drop in the number of Ontarians who believe Ernie Eves would make the best premier. Although he is still the first choice, his 22 point margin over Dalton McGuinty in the fall has shrunk to 9 points (see Ontario Provincial Politics – Best Premier January 2003).

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LONGITUDINAL BALLOT TRACKING (committed only)



Target Groups (+/- index)

	PC	LIB	NDP	Und
Men	+6	+2	-2	-2
Women	-5	-1	+2	+3
18 to 29 years of age	-4	+7	-3	+2
30 to 39 years of age	-8	0	+6	+2
40 to 49 years of age	+4	-3	+2	-2
50 to 59 years of age	-2	+14	-5	-7
60 plus	+15	-16	-2	+5
Homeowners	+3	-4	0	+2
Renters	-5	+8	0	-2
Urban Postal Code	-1	0	+1	+2
Rural Postal Code	+3	+4	-3	-5

Note: Plus/minus index scores are based on the difference between the sub-group and the sample average. For example a +10 score for the PCs would indicate that the subgrouping is 10% more likely to vote PC than the average voter.

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