



Media Release

Liberals lead but PCs narrow the gap McGuinty seriously trails his own party

Ottawa, September 23, 2002 - A provincial survey of Ontarians released by polling firm SES Research indicates that the McGuinty-Liberals lead has been cut from 16 to 8 percentage points over the past 12 months.

Current SES polling puts the Ontario Liberals at 47%, the Progressive Conservatives (PCs) at 39%, the NDP at 13% and the Green Party at 1% in Ontario. Support for both the PCs and the NDP has increased in the past four months while support for the Liberals has declined.

On the eve of Mike Harris' resignation in September 2001, SES polling data put the Liberals at 53%, while the PCs trailed at 37% followed by the NDP at 10%.

"Although the Liberals still lead, the downward trend must be worrisome," stated Nikita Nanos, of the polling firm SES Research. "Of greater concern for the provincial Liberals is the fact that their leader seriously trails his party."

38% of Ontarians believe that Ernie Eves would make the best premier, followed by Dalton McGuinty at 16% and Howard Hampton at 7%.

While 47% of Ontarians were inclined to support the Liberals, only 16% believed Dalton McGuinty would make the best premier of the province. "A 31% leadership shortfall is serious," noted Nanos. "For example, although Jean Chretien trailed his party by only 16% this summer (federal Liberals 46%, Chretien best PM – 30%) according to SES' national polling data, federal Liberals openly questioned their leader and his win-ability." Longitudinal tracking shows that the percentage of Ontarians who believe that McGuinty would make the best premier has actually declined over the past year from 20% in September 2001 to 16% in September 2002.

Tracking also indicates that education as the top unprompted issue of concern has increased from 22 to 31 percent over the past four months. This is likely driven by news stories related to the provincial take-over of school boards which ran deficit budgets. Considering the fact that women were more likely to be concerned about education (38%



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top issue) and that they have an above average tendency at the moment to be undecided (27%), education could emerge as a key battleground for the Liberals and Conservatives. “Without an increase in support among women, the PCs will be hard-pressed to win a third straight majority government,” stated Nanos. “Whereas, the 1995 election was fought on healthcare, it is quite possible that the new battleground will be education. The challenge for the governing Conservatives will be cast their cost-restraint measures in a light which appeals to women.”

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 September 10th and September 13th, 2002. 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.

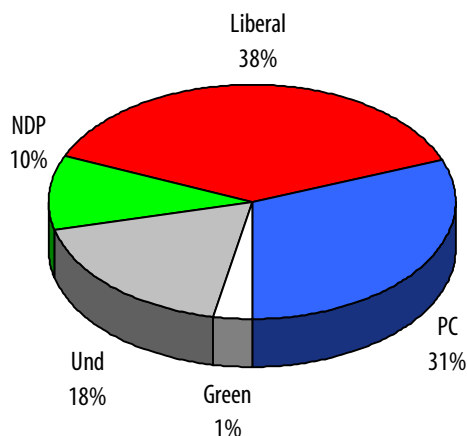
For a detailed review of the survey tables, please visit the SES Research website at <http://www.sesresearch.com>.

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THE BALLOT (committed and undecided)



Decided (%) Sep-02 1999* Change

PC	38.5	45.1	▼ 6.6
Liberal	47.1	39.9	▲ 7.2
NDP	12.7	12.6	▲ 0.1
Green	1.4	0.7	▲ 0.7

* Provincial Election

Commentary

The provincial PCs led by Ernie Eves have closed a 16 point gap from one year ago to 8 points in September 2002.

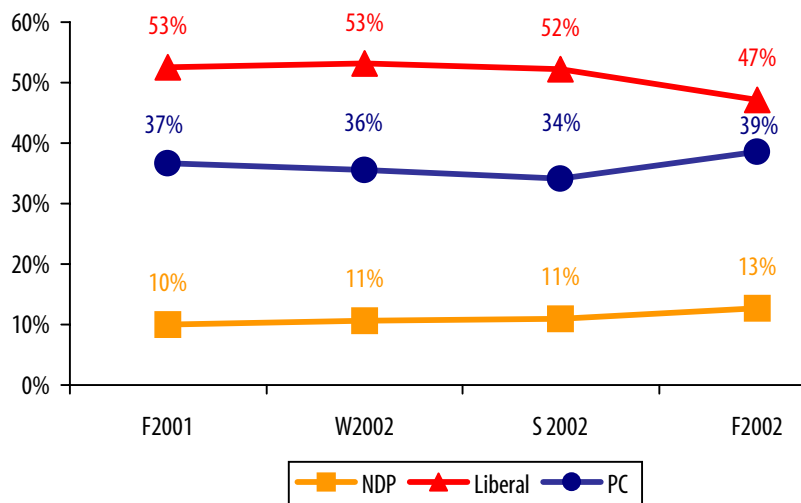
Over the past four months, education as the most important provincial issue has increased 9% (Education #1 Issue --31% - see – The Issues). 38% of women cite education as their top issue. Negative perceptions related to the handling of the education file could emerge as a key Conservative vulnerability effectively handicapping the Eves government.

THE METHODOLOGY

Between September 10th and 13th, 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.

Validation of the demographic profile of respondents indicates that the poll is a fair representation of the voters of Ontario.

LONGITUDINAL BALLOT TRACKING (committed only)



Target Groups (+/- index)

	PC	LIB	NDP	Und
Men	+10	-2	0	-7
Women	-9	+3	0	+8
18 to 29 years of age	+3	+4	+2	-9
30 to 39 years of age	+4	-1	-1	+1
40 to 49 years of age	-4	-5	+5	+6
50 to 59 years of age	+2	+1	-2	+1
60 plus	-5	+2	-1	+6
Homeowners	+1	+1	0	+1
Renters	-1	-1	+2	0
Urban Postal Code	0	+1	+1	-1
Rural Postal Code	+3	-3	-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.

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

QUESTION

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

Commentary

Ernie Eves currently holds a 22 point lead over his nearest rival. Support for both opposition leaders has declined over the past year.

Readers should note that two of every five Ontarians is currently unsure as to who would make the best premier. Women, Ontarians under 40, and renters are most likely to be unsure.

Although SES polling shows the Liberals ahead of the PCs with the support of 47% of the Ontario electorate, Dalton McGuinty trails his party by 31 points. Indeed, over the past year McGuinty has dropped four points as "best premier" while Eves has managed to score at a level comparable to Mike Harris just before his resignation.

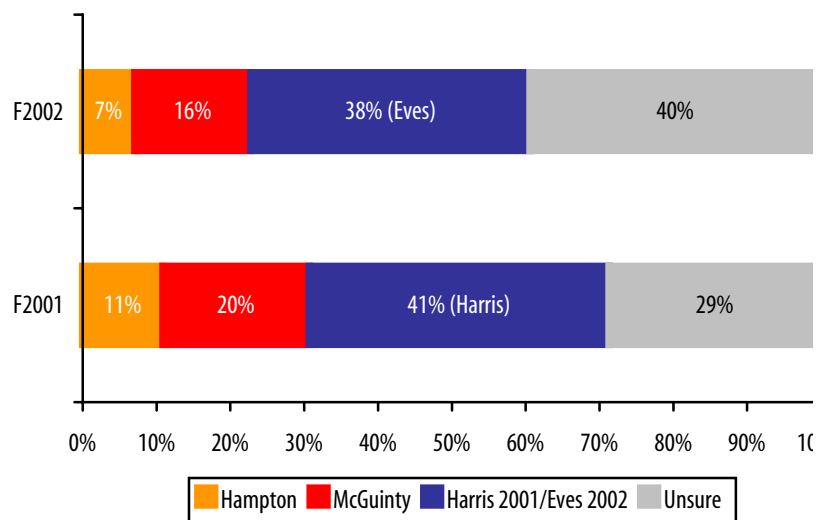
Ironically, SES' federal polling data over the summer had Prime Minister Chretien trailing the federal Liberal Party by only 16% (Liberals – 46%, Chretien best PM – 30%).

Chretien comparatively fairs much better than Ontario's Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty.

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ONE YEAR COMPARISON

Target Groups (+/- index)	Eves	McGui	Hamp	Und
Men	+6	-1	+3	-9
Women	-7	+1	-3	+8
18 to 29 years of age	-4	-6	+3	+5
30 to 39 years of age	+1	-6	-1	+4
40 to 49 years of age	+3	-2	0	-2
50 to 59 years of age	-2	+5	0	-3
60 plus	0	+12	-2	-11
Homeowners	+5	+2	-3	-5
Renters	-10	-3	+5	+7
Urban Postal Code	0	-1	+1	-1
Rural Postal Code	-3	+3	-3	+3

Note: Plus/minus index scores are based on the difference between the sub-group and the sample average. For example a +6 score for Eves among men would indicate that the subgrouping is 6% more likely to consider Eves the best premier compared to the average voter.

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QUESTION

What is your most important provincial issue of concern (unprompted)?

Commentary

Over the past four months, education as the most important provincial issue of concern, has increased nine percentage points. 38% of women cite education as their top issue. This compares to only 23% of men who cite education as their top issue.

Review of the data related to the ballot question indicates that women are less likely to currently support the provincial PCs and are also more likely to be undecided.

Negative perceptions related to the handling of the education file could emerge as a key Conservative vulnerability effectively handicapping growth for the Eves government. Statistically, the PCs can only form a third straight majority government if they increase their appeal to women.

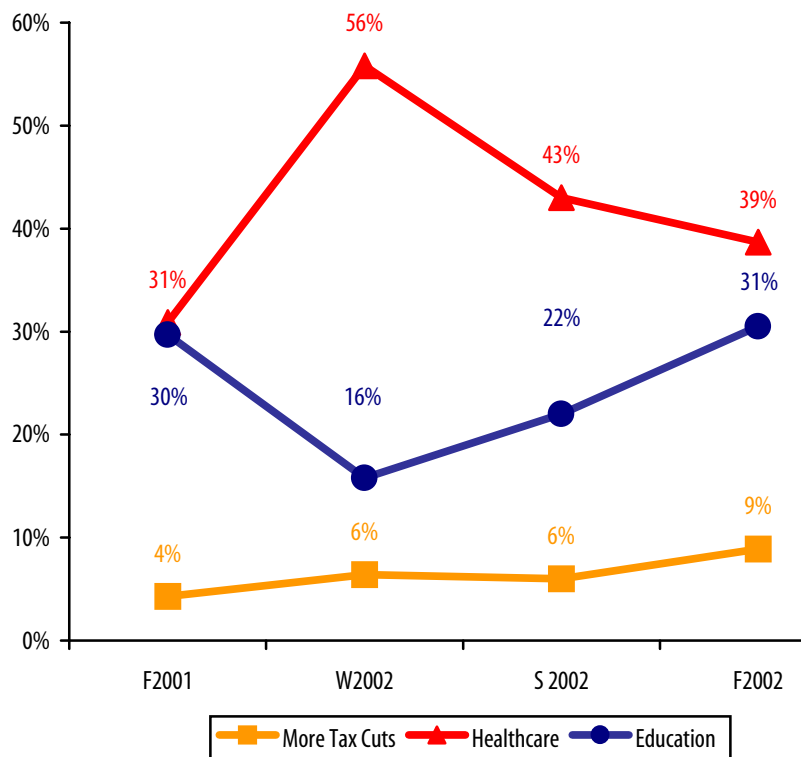
Education could emerge as a key Liberal wedge issue for the next election. The take-over of school boards which run a deficit is fiscally driven and most likely appealing to core conservative male voters. Alternatively, polling data shows that women are more “outcome” driven on the education file. For example, women in general supported PC initiatives for student and teacher testing because of the likely long term benefits and outcomes. These initiatives also conveyed a sense of vision for the system.

This contrasts with current PC activities which are cost-control measures and not necessarily focused on educational outcomes or vision.

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LONGITUDINAL TRACKING OF MAJOR ISSUES**Provincial Issue – F2002 (%)**

	Men	Women
Healthcare	37	41
Education	23	38
More tax cuts	12	5
Environment	6	4
Crime	5	3
Highway construction	5	0
Jobs	3	1
Other issues	10	8

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