



# Media Release

## Debate Critical to Ontario Election Ontarians Think PCs Will Win

Ottawa, September 10, 2003 - A provincial survey of Ontarians released by polling firm SES Research indicates that the election is up for grabs and that the momentum has shifted decidedly in favour of the Eves-led PCs.

Current SES polling puts the Ontario Liberals at 45% (down eight points), the Progressive Conservatives (PC) at 43% (up eleven points), and the NDP at 12% (down three). Forty one percent of Ontarian believe Ernie Eves would make the best Premier (up seven points) followed by Dalton McGuinty at 24% (down 12 points) and Howard Hampton at 10% (unchanged).

“Once again, the electorate may buck a four year Liberal polling trend as they head to the polls on October 2<sup>nd</sup>,” said SES President and CEO Nik Nanos. “The 120 day shift in opinion has moved in the governing Tories favour on all major public opinion measures.”

The percentage of Ontarians who think the PCs deserve to be elected has increased from 32% to 41% in the past 120 days. Asked who would win the provincial election, 41% choose the governing PCs compared to 33% who choose the Liberals and 2% who chose the NDP (25% did not know who would win).

“Regardless of the positive trends for the Eves-led PCs, the leaders debate will have a critical impact on the outcome of the election,” according to Nanos. Forty two percent of Ontarians said it will have an impact. Among undecided voters the debate impact increases to 57%.

One of every four Ontarians said they were either very likely (5%) or somewhat likely (19%) to change their vote.

“Although the election is still up for grabs - polling results indicate that Eves recent media profile through the power black-out and the launch of the election have worked to both his and the PCs benefit,” noted Nanos. “Recent shifts in voter support should be considered volatile. The next two weeks will witness either a Tory consolidation of momentum or the McGuinty Liberals fighting back an Eves-led Tory surge.”



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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 on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 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 Canadian 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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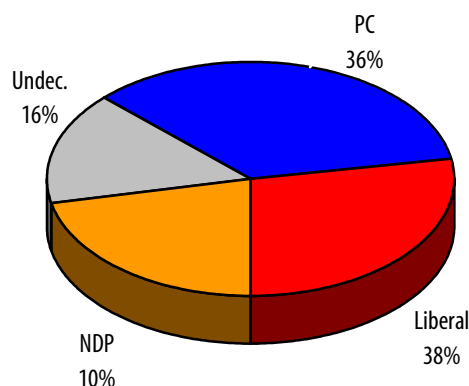
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# Ontario Provincial Politics – The Ballot

## THE BALLOT (committed and undecided)



### Decided (%) Aug-03 1999\* Change

PC	42.8	45.1	▼ 2.3
Liberal	44.9	39.9	▲ 5.0
NDP	12.4	12.6	▼ 0.2
Green	0.0	0.7	▼ 0.7

\* Provincial Election

### Commentary

Over the past 120 days the Conservatives have closed the gap on the Liberals and are in a virtual tie. Core PC areas continue to be rural voters, home owners, men and middle aged voters.

New Democrats do better among female voters as well as renters.

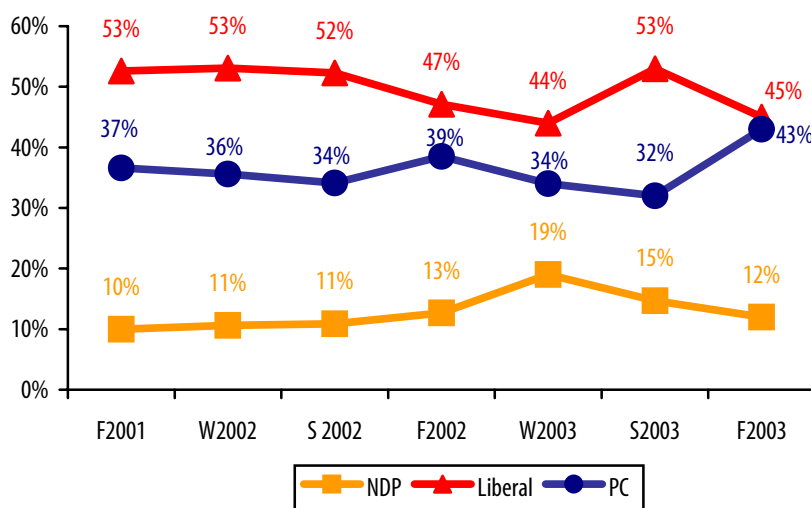
The Liberals however, do well among younger voters under the age of forty as well as renters.

## THE METHODOLOGY

On September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2003, 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	+4	-1	-1	-2
Women	-5	0	+2	+2
18 to 29 years of age	-8	+10	0	-2
30 to 39 years of age	0	+1	+1	-1
40 to 49 years of age	+6	-8	+1	+1
50 to 59 years of age	+9	-7	+4	-6
60 plus	-3	0	-3	+6
Homeowners	+6	-4	-2	+1
Renters	-11	+8	+5	-2
Urban Postal Code	-1	+1	0	+1
Rural Postal Code	+6	-5	+2	-3

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 Liberals would indicate that the subgrouping is 10% more likely to vote Liberal 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](http://www.sesresearch.com) or contact:

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

SES' longitudinal tracking indicates a steady increase in the number of Ontarians who believe Ernie Eves would make the best Premier with levels returning to those observed for Mike Harris in the Fall 2001.

Dalton McGuinty's year long gains on this measure have been erased with only one in four Ontarians considering him the best choice for Premier. Currently, Ernie Eves leads McGuinty by seventeen percentage points – a 19 point swing in Ernie Eves favour over the past 120 days.

Research indicates that the upcoming party leaders debate will be a key ballot driver. Asked if the upcoming debate will have an effect on their vote more than four in ten (42%) stated it 'will have an effect on their vote'.

Half (52%) indicated the debate will not have an effect on their vote with a further six per cent undecided.

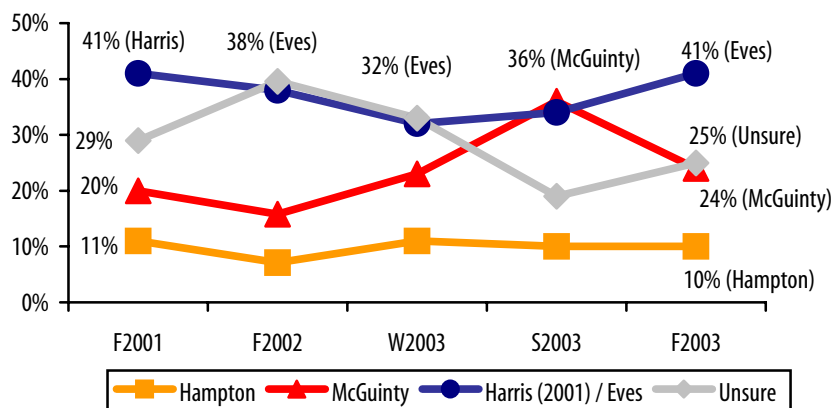
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### BEST PREMIER TRACKING



### DEBATE IMPACT

*Thinking about the upcoming debate between the three party leaders, do you think their performance in that debate will have an effect on your voting decision or will it have no effect on your voting decision?*

Target Groups (+/- index)	Will have effect	No effect	Unsure
<b>Total</b>	42%	52%	6%
<b>Men</b>	-2	+2	0
<b>Women</b>	+2	-4	+1
<b>18 to 29 years of age</b>	+22	-17	-4
<b>30 to 39 years of age</b>	-6	+1	+5
<b>40 to 49 years of age</b>	-1	+2	-1
<b>50 to 59 years of age</b>	-15	+19	-4
<b>60 plus</b>	-6	+1	+5
<b>Homeowners</b>	-3	+3	0
<b>Renters</b>	+6	-6	+1
<b>Urban Postal Code</b>	+2	-2	0
<b>Rural Postal Code</b>	-8	+7	+1
<b>PC</b>	-8	+12	-4
<b>Liberal</b>	+2	-5	+3
<b>NDP</b>	-5	+6	0
<b>Undecided</b>	+15	-20	+5

Note: Plus/minus index scores are based on the difference between the sub-group and the sample average. For example a +22 score for Ontarians 10 to 29 would indicate that the subgrouping is 22% more likely to be influenced by the debate.

### THE METHODOLOGY

On September 7<sup>th</sup> 2003, 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.