

ontario election 2007

Poll shows voters prefer Tory to McGuinty

Voters are more fond of Conservative leader John Tory than the current premier of Ontario, according to a new poll.

An online survey of nearly 1,400 voters conducted by Innovative Research Group Inc. ([click here for the full report](#)) in the days before the election found 43% of respondents have an unfavourable impression of Premier Dalton McGuinty. Only 33% of respondents reported having a favourable impression of the provincial Liberal leader.

Meanwhile, more respondents reported having a favourable impression of John Tory, leader of the Progressive Conservatives (33%) than an unfavourable impression (31%).

"Leaders are always a big factor, but they're particularly important in terms of swing voters. Because they're torn on policy, because they're torn on values, they often revert to voting for people," said Greg Lyle, managing director of Innovative Research Group, who presented the findings at a meeting of public affairs specialists Monday morning.

More voters also said Mr. Tory has the best plan for the future (23%) than Mr. McGuinty (20%) and stands for what they believe (Mr. Tory attracted 23, while Mr. McGuinty scored 22%).

Mr. Tory scored points for strong leadership (29%), while Mr. McGuinty received 19% and Howard Hampton, leader of the NDP, scored only 6%. One-third of respondents (33%) told the pollsters that none of the political leaders stand out.

"There is a general tendency to pick 'none of the above' for these questions, but it's particularly strong early in the campaign, when the swing voters haven't really tuned in," Mr. Lyle said.

Indeed, only a third of respondents said they were interested in the election (32%), only slightly more than those who reported they are not interested (29%).

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It is unusual for an opposition leader to be ahead of a premier on such key questions, Mr. Lyle added. Mr. McGuinty was also severely criticized for his "flip flops" - nearly half of voters accused him of flip-flopping (48%) and making unrealistic promises (41%), while Mr. Tory scored 9% and 17% respectively on those points.

And while voters were evenly split over whether the current government's policies have made Ontario better or worse since the last election, 38% fear that Ontario will be worse off in five years if the Liberals are re-elected; only 27% believe Ontario will be better.

"This government clearly had a defining moment, and that defining moment was the first budget," Mr. Lyle said, referring to the Liberals' introduction of a controversial health tax despite promises not to raise taxes.

"Since then, things like the coal-fired plants and the autistic kids issue have reinforced the idea that this government doesn't keep its promises."

A majority of voters, 52%, agreed with the notion it is time for a change in Ontario. Only 27% of the poll's respondents disagreed. But Mr. Lyle pointed out that the election is still in its infancy; the Liberals have plenty of time to gain ground.

The online survey collected 1,377 responses from people in Ontario between Aug. 30 and Sept. 5, before the election officially began. The results are considered accurate to 2.6 percentage points, 19 times out of 20 overall.

— *Mary Vallis, National Post*

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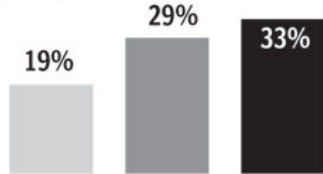
POLLING THE VOTERS' MOOD

Below is a list of different words and phrases that describe political leaders. Which politician does each word or phrase best describe?

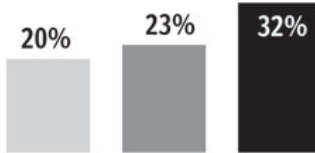
Dalton McGuinty
 John Tory
 Neither

POSITIVE ASPECTS

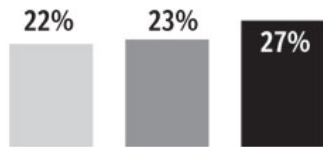
STRONG LEADERSHIP



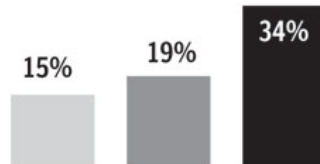
HAS THE BEST PLAN FOR THE FUTURE



STANDS FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE

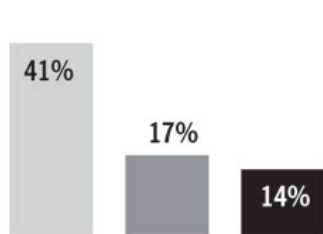


CARES ABOUT PEOPLE LIKE YOU

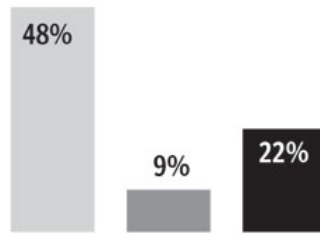


NEGATIVE ASPECTS

MAKES UNREALISTIC PROMISES

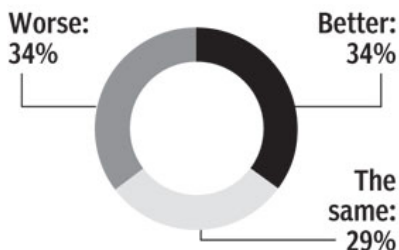


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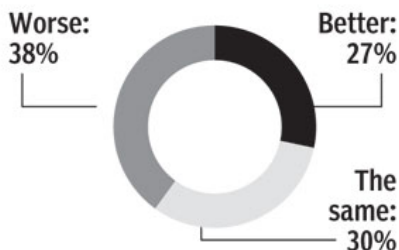


LIBERAL POLICIES

HAVE LIBERAL POLICIES MADE ONTARIO BETTER OR WORSE?



IF THE LIBERALS ARE REELECTED WILL WE BE BETTER OR WORSE OFF IN FIVE YEARS' TIME?



SOURCE: INNOVATIVE RESEARCH GROUP

RICHARD JOHNSON / NATIONAL POST

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