

NEWS RELEASE: Public Opinion Poll

Early Signs Positive for Wynne Sexuality Not a Major Concern

(30-Jan-2013 | Toronto)—Rumours of the death of the Ontario Liberal party appear to have been exaggerated. Innovative Research Group (INNOVATIVE) has surveyed 446 randomly selected Ontarians by telephone from Sunday through Tuesday night to assess the potential impact of the Ontario Liberal party's new Leader, Kathleen Wynne. Our key findings include the following:

Initial reactions to Wynne are positive

While many Ontarians remain on the fence about the new Liberal leader, those who have a view about Kathleen Wynne like what they see.

Wynne's positive-to-negative favourables are 3-to-1. Thirty-six (36%) have a favourable view of the new Liberal leader while just (12%) have an unfavourable view.

Seventy percent (70%) agree it is exciting to have a woman as Premier.

Wynne is already seen as the Best Premier with 24% choosing her over Tim Hudak (18%) and Andrea Horwath (13%).

The Liberal brand shows potential

We looked at the Liberal brand four different ways.

First, Liberals have the strongest brand. We asked the standard political "brand" question – political identification – and found more Ontarians feel closer to the Liberals (28%) than the PCs (23%) or the NDP (16%). The Liberal brand gives them a 5 point edge over the Tories and a 12 point edge over the NDP.

Second, Liberals have plenty of room to grow. When we look at past voting behavior, we find 16% say they always vote Liberal, 14% often support the Liberals and 27% sometimes support the Liberals, giving them a voting pool of 56%. This is more than twice as many voters as their initial support (24%) before factoring out the undecided.

Third, the Liberals have not burned their bridges. When we ask Ontarians whether they agree or disagree that "After the past few years, I am so angry at the Liberals I will never vote for them again", we find just 31% agree while 58% disagree.

Fourth, Liberals as 'the natural governing party' still holds true for many. When we ask Ontarians whether they agree or disagree that "The Ontario Liberal party may have its problems, but it's still the best party able to run the government", Ontarians are divided with 45% agreeing and 45% disagreeing. This gives the Liberals a great deal of room to grow. With their raw vote of 24% (before factoring out undecided), almost as many voters (21%) are prepared to vote for them as the lesser of evils as support them today.

Liberals edge Tories, in a statistical tie for first

Despite the initial positive views of Wynne and the large potential pool of Liberal supporters, the Ontario political horserace remains tight. Right now the Liberals are in a statistical tie for first with the Tories. On the decided vote, the Liberals lead with 31% support, the PCs are right behind with 30% while the NDP remain in contention at 27%.

The PC vote is somewhat more certain than the Liberal and NDP vote.

The Liberals are the top second choice of both the NDP and the PCs while Liberals are more likely to favour the NDP as their second choice (39%) over the PCs (27%).

Gay issue not a major concern

The Liberals had some reason for concern about a potential backlash over Ontario's first openly gay Premier. As Liberal insiders are well aware, the Liberal base includes a small but important group of social conservatives (SoCon).

We asked Ontarians to agree or disagree that "Sexual relations between two adults of the same sex are morally wrong." Eighteen (18%) of Ontarians agree with this statement including just over one-in-eight (14%) Liberal party identifiers.

We also asked Ontarians to agree or disagree that "It's a good thing Ontario has an openly lesbian Premier". While 49% of Ontarians agree with this statement, 16% disagree including, once again, just over one-in-eight (14%) Liberal party identifiers.

However, when we look at the political reaction of these SoCon Liberal, we see little sign of backlash. Sample sizes are small when we look at this group, but among the 18 SoCon Liberal identifiers in our sample only 3 have a negative view of Wynne. They are a little less likely to be voting Liberal or preferring Wynne as leader, so this is a group that bears watching. However, given the relatively small size of this group, the lack of negative views of Wynne within the SoCons and the large potential for Liberal gains in the rest of their voting pool, it seems like Wynne has been a good bet for the Liberals.

About this poll

INNOVATIVE conducted this poll by telephone among 446 randomly-selected eligible Ontario voters from Sunday, January 27th to Tuesday, January 29th 2013. The survey data was weighted by age, gender and region to reflect the actual demographic composition of Ontario according to the 2011 Census.

An unweighted sample of 446 has a margin of error of ± 4.6 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Margins of error are greater for sub-samples.

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