

ONTARIO THIS MONTH

ONTARIO THIS MONTH IS ONTARIO'S LEADING MONTHLY RESEARCH-BASED REPORT FOCUSING ON THE ISSUES AND TRENDS THAT CONCERN CORPORATE AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS.

October 2012

Ontarians Give Liberals Second Look

Ontario This Month, a monthly province-wide telephone poll of 600 Ontarians conducted by Innovative Research Group, shows that Ontarians appear to be prepared to give the new Premier and the governing Liberal Party a second look.

We don't have a crystal ball, but in our survey we were able to create an experience to mimic the effect of exposure to a leadership campaign. After we asked our core tracking questions, we asked respondents how likely they are to vote Liberal. We then asked how much change they are looking for and how the potential leadership candidates might impact their vote if that candidate won. After asking which candidate they preferred, we then asked if their preferred candidate won, how likely are they to vote Liberal.

Two things stand out. First, the number of people who say they will probably or certainly vote Liberal goes up six points. Second, those who are probably or definitely not voting Liberal drops by a third.

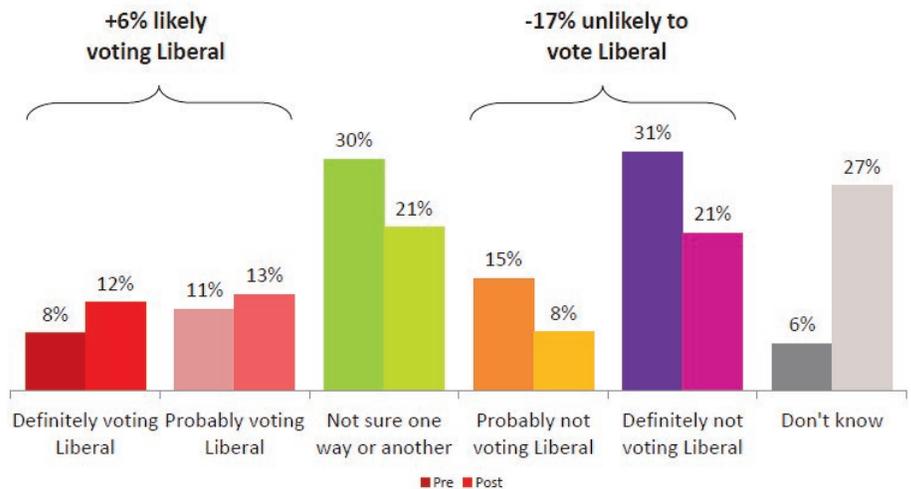
When we stop 100 people on the street, no party enjoys much more than 25 percent support in most recent months. So a 6 point gain is a 25% increase in supporters, a pretty significant impact.

Add to that the 48% who are unsure how likely they are to vote Liberal after thinking about the leadership race, and you see a huge potential upside for the new leader at the end of this race.

While core Liberals tend to be men and have higher incomes, those most open to moving towards the Liberals are women and those with

Pre-to-post test: Leadership race moves non-Liberals to reconsider OLP

Q And if your preferred candidate becomes their leader, how likely is it that you would vote for the Ontario Liberal party in the next election?



lower incomes. Both "core" and "potential" Liberals are centered in the GTA.

Voters who initially indicated they were unlikely to vote Liberal in the next provincial election are, in fact, willing to consider the Ontario Liberal Party if their preferred candidate becomes the next leader. However, the leadership candidates need to give these potential voters a reason to believe things will be better before the Liberals will be able to return to their previous levels of support.

McGuinty's Legacy

How much change are people looking for?

Initially, only 18% of Ontarians say they would vote Liberal, but 42% say the government needs only *minor* changes.

The takeaway? Ontario Liberals can double their vote by delivering minor change. That's one thing Dalton McGuinty can be proud of.





Many Ontarians Only Looking for Minor Changes

With the right new leader, many swing and undecided voters would consider voting Liberal.

Readers may be surprised to find that “time for a change” is not sweeping the land. In fact, many voters remain connected to the Liberal core agenda and are only looking for minor changes from a new Premier.

Slightly less than half (43%) of the electorate says Ontario Liberal policies and programs only need minor changes. Not surprisingly, Liberal voters believe this most strongly (83% saying policies need only minor changes). However, at 42%, undecided voters are the second most-likely to say Liberal policies need only minor changes.

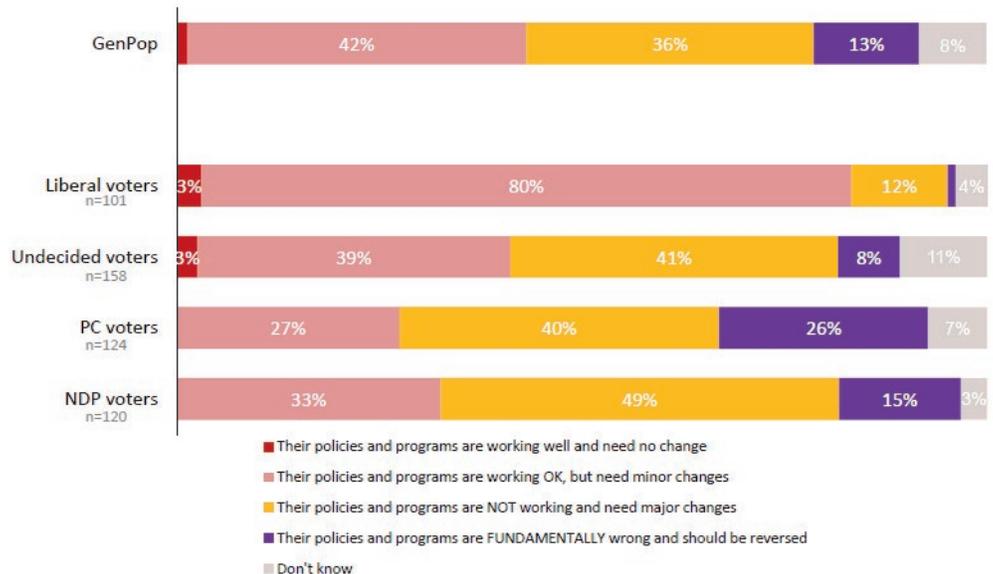
One challenge for a new leader is that the agenda for change is fragmented. While economic issues top the list, honesty and accountability, taxes and fiscal issues, and health improvements all enjoy similar levels of support.

In terms of electoral math, the pool of people looking for no more than minor changes is a huge opportunity for the Liberal Party. That 42% looking for minor change is more than double their current vote of 19%. As they define themselves to the electorate, whoever replaces Mr. McGuinty as leader of the Ontario Liberal Party and Premier of Ontario has the opportunity to build on McGuinty’s policy agenda while moving beyond the majority of McGuinty’s negatives.



Ontario Liberal Policies: Four-in-ten Ontarians believe policies work well or only need minor changes

Q Which of the following statements regarding the policies and programs of the Ontario Liberal Party come closest to your own views?
[asked of all 600 respondents]



INNOVATIVE conducted 605 telephone interviews with a random, proportionate Ontario-wide sample of eligible voters. Results from this study were collected Oct. 17 - 22, 2012 and are accurate within ±4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Innovative Research Group is a national public opinion research and strategy firm with offices in Toronto and Vancouver. We provide critical information needed to assess and overcome public affairs and corporate communications challenges, identify and evaluate potential solutions, and monitor success.

Ontario This Month is Ontario’s only monthly syndicated study of major issues and trends of concern to corporate affairs professionals.

LIBERAL POLICIES

- ⇒ Four-in-ten (42%) Ontarians believe the policies and programs of the Ontario Liberal Party work well or only need minor changes.
- ⇒ As expected, Liberal voters are overwhelmingly (83%) supportive of Ontario Liberal policies.
- ⇒ Four-in-ten (42%) undecided voters—who hold the keys to a Liberal victory in the next election—also only believe Liberal policies need minor tweaks, at best.
- ⇒ Even some NDP and PC voters are willing to acknowledge Liberal policies aren’t all bad: One-third (33%) of NDP voters and just over one-quarter (27%) of PC voters say Liberal policies and programs are “working OK, but need minor changes.”

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