

ONTARIO POLITICAL SCENE

# Tories Edging Liberals But Ontario Race Could Turn in Final Hours

*The Progressive Conservatives keep the largest number of committed voters, but strategic voting could end up hindering their chances.*

[TORONTO – Oct. 4, 2011] – The Progressive Conservative Party has recovered some ground, but Ontario’s provincial ballot remain close as election day looms, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll conducted in partnership with the *Toronto Star* has found.

In the online survey of a representative sample of 2,223 Ontario adults, 36 per cent of decided voters and leaners would cast a ballot for the Tory candidate in their riding this Thursday, while 33 per cent would back the governing Liberal Party. The provincial New Democratic Party (NDP) is third with 26 per cent, followed by the Green Party with five per cent.

The Progressive Conservatives continue to boast the best retention rate of all contending parties (84%), followed by the NDP (79%). In contrast, the Liberals are holding on to 66 per cent of their voters in 2007, and the Greens to 48 per cent.

The level of commitment is also highest for Tory supporters (77% of them say they will not change their mind before the election takes place), compared to 71 per cent for the Liberals, 65 per cent for the NDP, and 45 per cent for the Greens.

## Issues, Approval and Momentum

The economy (30%) remains the most important issue for Ontarians, followed by unemployment (13%), health care (13%), tax relief (10%) and government spending (9%). In addition, 55 per cent of

### KEY FINDINGS

- **Voting Intention: Progressive Conservatives 36%, Liberals 33%, New Democrats 26%, Greens 5%, Other 1%**
- **43% of both Liberals and New Democrats say they would consider voting for a candidate they dislike to reduce the chances of a specific party forming the government**

*Full topline results are at the end of this release.*

*From October 3 to October 4, 2011, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 2,223 randomly selected Ontario adults who are Angus Reid Forum panellists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 2.1%, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of Ontario. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.*

### CONTACT:

Jaideep Mukerji, Vice President, Angus Reid Public Opinion, 613-691-0948, [jaideep.mukerji@angus-reid.com](mailto:jaideep.mukerji@angus-reid.com)

respondents believe it is time for a different provincial party to form the government, while 28 per cent think the Liberals should be re-elected.

NDP leader Andrea Horwath maintains the highest approval rating (48%), followed by Premier and Liberal Party leader Dalton McGuinty (36%), Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak (35%), and Green Party leader Mike Schreiner (18%). Horwath also keeps a positive momentum score (+29) along with Schreiner (+2), while McGuinty (-19) and Hudak (-22) post lower numbers. On the Best Premier question, McGuinty (24%) and Hudak (23%) are virtually tied, followed by Horwath (19%).

### **Promises**

Most Ontarians have little trouble identifying some of the pledges that the parties have made throughout the course of the campaign, but some discrepancies were observed. For instance, the Tory promise of an increased investment in health care by \$6.1 million over the next five years was regarded by half of respondents (50%) as a Liberal pledge. In a similar fashion, the Liberal plan to reduce the cost of electricity bills by 10 per cent was regarded as a Tory idea by 45 per cent of respondents.

### **Strategic Voting**

There is little fluctuation in the importance that both Liberal voters and Progressive Conservative voters place on the party's proposals, leader, and the candidate in their riding. Party allegiance and aversion to other parties are not the main deciding factors for these electors.

However, Progressive Conservative voters are the least likely to vote for a party they dislike to force the defeat of a specific candidate in their riding (27%, compared to 34% of Liberals and 35% of New Democrats) and also the least likely to vote for a candidate they dislike to reduce the chances of a specific party forming the government (32%, compared to 43% of both Liberals and New Democrats). This finding shows that strategic voting will play a larger role for centre-left voters on Thursday.

### **Possible Outcomes**

More than half of Ontarians say they would be dissatisfied if the election leads to a Progressive Conservative majority (53%), a Liberal majority (51%) or a Progressive Conservative majority with the support of the NDP (51%). The public is less reluctant to the idea of a Liberal minority with the support of the NDP (Satisfied 43%, Dissatisfied 45%).

### **Analysis**

Ontario's Progressive Conservative voters have been steadfast throughout the campaign, consistently posting a high retention rate and being the least likely to change their minds before election day. Most members of the Tory base are also not considering any strategic voting scenarios. There has been little

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Jaideep Mukerji, Vice President, Angus Reid Public Opinion, 613-691-0948, [jaideep.mukerji@angus-reid.com](mailto:jaideep.mukerji@angus-reid.com)

change in the perception of Tim Hudak, and while Andrea Horwath has kept her lead on the approval question, the NDP has been unable to get closer to the 30 per cent mark.

The final day will be crucial to assess the commitment of the Liberal base. The level of support for the governing party is lower than what was registered in the 2007 election. However, two-in-five Liberals and New Democrats are considering voting strategically—a fact that could drastically alter the race.

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**About Angus Reid Public Opinion**

*Angus Reid Public Opinion is a public affairs practice headed by Dr. Angus Reid: an industry visionary who has spent more than four decades asking questions to figure out what people feel, how they think and who they will vote for. A team of talented and experienced practitioners with a unique and profound understanding of global issues conduct high quality research throughout the world on a daily basis for corporations, governments, academic researchers, and non-profit organizations.*

**About Vision Critical®**

*Vision Critical is a global research and technology firm that creates software and services solutions for over 600 clients, including one third of the world's top 100 brands. The company has offices across North America, Europe and Australia as well as a Global Partner Program that provides other research companies and consultants with access to top-of-the-line technology. Its Sparq™ product is the most widely adopted community panel platform on the planet.*

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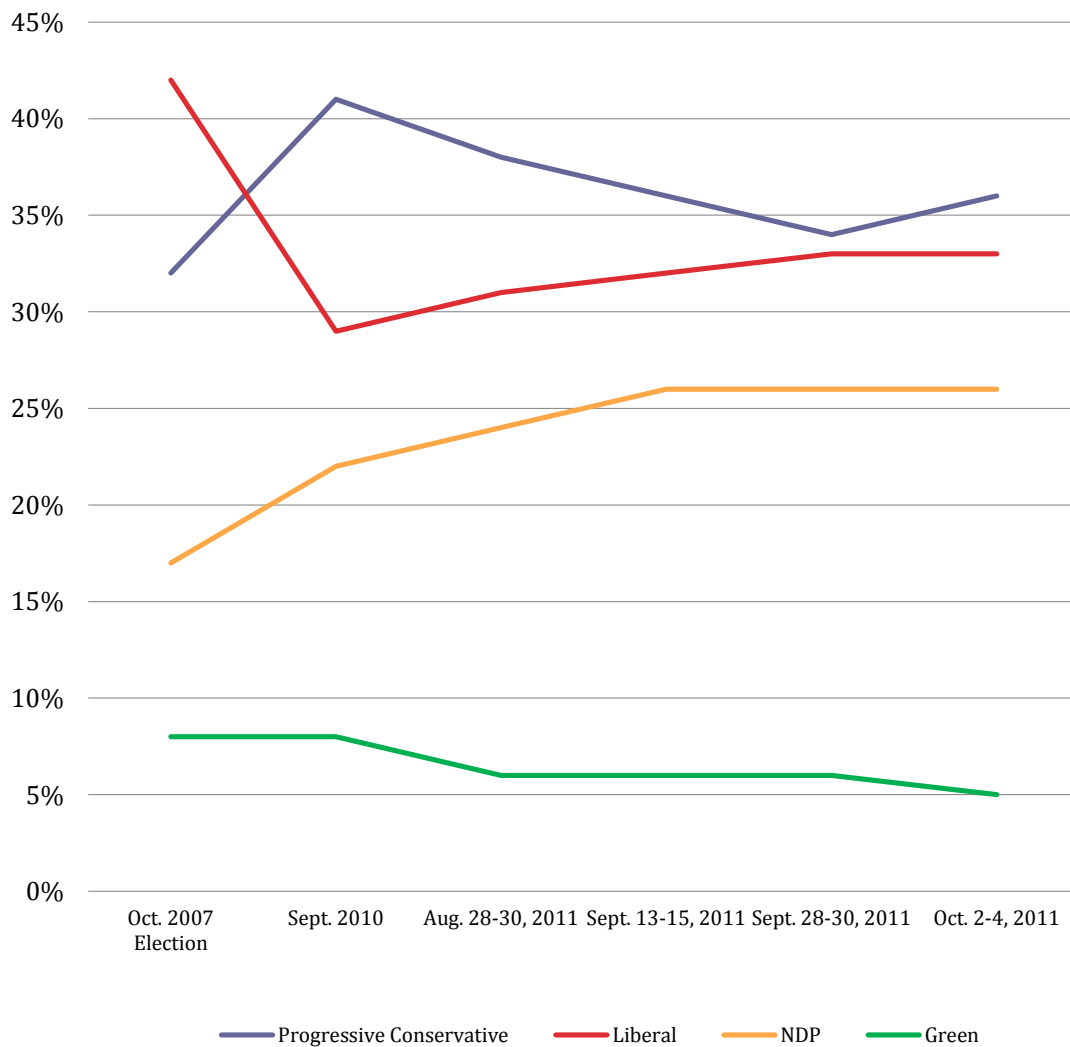
**For more information, please contact  
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

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*As you may know, the Ontario provincial election is scheduled for October 6th. If the provincial election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency? – Decided voters including leaners.*



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### Ontario Political Scene

As you may know, the Ontario provincial election is scheduled for October 6<sup>th</sup>. If the provincial election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency? – *Decided voters including leaners*

		Ontario Region						
	TOTAL	416	905	Hamilton/ Niagara	Southwest Ontario	Eastern Ontario	Northern Ontario	2007 Election
Progressive Conservative	36%	24%	41%	35%	38%	43%	21%	32%
Liberal	33%	46%	29%	36%	29%	30%	36%	42%
NDP	26%	27%	24%	26%	27%	21%	39%	17%
Green Party	5%	2%	6%	3%	5%	5%	4%	8%
Other / Independent	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%

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		Gender		Age			Household Income		
	TOTAL	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	<\$50K	\$50-99K	\$100K+
Progressive Conservative	36%	40%	31%	23%	39%	41%	34%	38%	35%
Liberal	33%	33%	34%	37%	29%	36%	29%	32%	41%
NDP	26%	22%	30%	33%	26%	20%	32%	24%	19%
Green Party	5%	4%	5%	7%	5%	2%	5%	5%	4%
Other / Independent	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%

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	Party Support in 2007 Ontario Election				
	TOTAL	PC	Liberal	NDP	Green
Progressive Conservative	36%	84%	16%	5%	7%
Liberal	33%	7%	66%	12%	21%
NDP	26%	7%	17%	79%	21%
Green Party	5%	1%	1%	2%	48%
Other / Independent	1%	0%	0%	1%	3%

### Ontario Political Scene

And how certain are you that you will vote for this party?

	Voting Intention in 2011 Ontario Election			
	PC	Liberal	NDP	Green
I will definitely vote for this party	77%	71%	65%	45%
I could change my mind before the election takes place	23%	29%	35%	55%

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**Ontario Political Pulse**

What do you think is the most important issue facing Ontario today?

	<b>Sept. 28-30</b>	<b>Oct. 2-4</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>Economy</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>=</b>
<b>Unemployment</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>+4</b>
<b>Health Care</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>-4</b>
<b>Tax Relief</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>+1</b>
<b>Government Spending</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>-1</b>
<b>Poverty</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>=</b>
<b>Environment</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>+1</b>
<b>Ethics / Accountability</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>=</b>
<b>Energy / Electricity</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>=</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>-2</b>
<b>Crime</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>=</b>
<b>Other issue</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>+1</b>

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### Ontario Political Pulse

Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of each of the following people? –  
*Change since Sept. 28-30 survey*

	Premier and Liberal Party leader Dalton McGuinty	Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak	New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Andrea Horwath	Green Party leader Mike Schreiner
<b>Approve</b>	36% (-1)	35% (=)	48% (-2)	18% (-1)
<b>Disapprove</b>	55% (=)	51% (-1)	28% (-2)	23% (=)
<b>Not sure</b>	8% (=)	14% (+1)	24% (+4)	59% (=)

### Ontario Political Pulse

Since the start of the campaign, would you say your opinion of [Party Leader] has . . .

	Premier and Liberal Party leader Dalton McGuinty	Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak	New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Andrea Horwath	Green Party leader Mike Schreiner
<b>Improved</b>	13%	17%	37%	7%
<b>Stayed the same</b>	48%	34%	42%	40%
<b>Worsened</b>	32%	39%	8%	5%
<b>Not sure</b>	7%	10%	13%	48%
<b>Momentum Score</b>	-19	-22	+29	+2

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**Ontario Political Pulse**

Which of these leaders would make the best Premier of Ontario?

		Ontario Region					
	TOTAL	416	905	Hamilton/ Niagara	Southwest Ontario	Eastern Ontario	Northern Ontario
Dalton McGuinty	24%	31%	19%	22%	24%	25%	27%
Tim Hudak	23%	17%	25%	25%	22%	31%	11%
Andrea Horwath	19%	19%	17%	27%	20%	16%	22%
Mike Schreiner	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%
None of them	15%	13%	18%	11%	14%	13%	17%
Not sure	17%	18%	20%	14%	18%	13%	20%

**Ontario Political Pulse**

Which of these statements comes closer to your own point of view?

	Sept. 28-30	Sept. 28-30	Change
It is time for a change in government in Ontario—a different provincial party should be elected into power	57%	55%	-2
It is not time for a change in government in Ontario—the Liberal Party should be re-elected	27%	28%	+1
Not sure	16%	17%	+1

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### Ontario Political Pulse

Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with each of the following issues?

	Crime	Health Care	Economy	Environment	Education	Job Creation	Managing the Deficit	Federal/ Provincial Relations
<b>Dalton McGuinty</b>	18%	25%	27%	15%	29%	25%	22%	26%
<b>Tim Hudak</b>	28%	19%	28%	12%	19%	24%	27%	27%
<b>Andrea Horwath</b>	9%	24%	11%	18%	20%	17%	11%	11%
<b>Mike Schreiner</b>	2%	3%	2%	22%	3%	2%	3%	2%
<b>None of them</b>	9%	7%	9%	7%	6%	7%	12%	8%
<b>Not sure</b>	33%	22%	23%	25%	22%	24%	25%	27%

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### Ontario Political Pulse

Below is a select list of policies that have been proposed in this election by various political parties. Please slide the various policy proposals below over to the party you think made the promise over the course of this election.

	Progressive Conservative	Liberal	NDP
Reducing the cost of post-secondary tuition by 30% for middle income families	21%	40%	39%
Providing a 15% tax credits to seniors for home renovations	26%	48%	26%
Reducing the cost of electricity bills by 10%	45%	27%	28%
Capping government CEO salaries in order to save \$80 million dollars	28%	15%	57%
Taking the HST off home heating and hydro	55%	9%	36%
Implementing a four year transit fare freeze	25%	21%	55%
Investing \$6.1 billion in health care over 5 years	25%	50%	25%
Creating 60 000 new post-secondary spaces in Ontario	20%	55%	25%
Changing the tax system to allow couples to share up to \$50,000 of their income for tax purposes	51%	24%	25%
Removing the HST from gasoline by one percentage point a year	51%	10%	39%
Give business tax credits of up to \$10,000 for training programs for 1,200 recent Canadian citizens in high skill sectors like engineering and architecture	20%	60%	20%

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### Ontario Political Scene

We'd like to ask you some questions about the way you vote. How important is each of these factors to you when deciding who to vote for in the provincial election? –  
***“Very important” and “Moderately important” listed***

	Voting Intention in 2011 Ontario Election				
	Ontario	PC	Liberal	NDP	Green
The party's proposals	89%	95%	94%	95%	87%
The party's leader	86%	93%	92%	89%	81%
The party's candidate in my riding	71%	78%	77%	74%	63%
Allegiance to a specific party	48%	57%	54%	49%	44%
Aversion to other parties	52%	55%	56%	57%	54%

### Ontario Political Scene

There has been a lot of talk in recent elections about the concept of “strategic voting”, which entails a voter supporting a candidate other than his or her true preference in order to avoid a specific outcome. Would you consider any of the following scenarios with your vote on Oct. 6? –  
***“Definitely consider” and “Probably consider” listed***

	Voting Intention in 2011 Ontario Election				
	Ontario	PC	Liberal	NDP	Green
Voting for a party you dislike to force the defeat of a specific candidate in your riding	31%	27%	34%	35%	36%
Voting for a candidate you dislike to reduce the chances of a specific party forming the government	37%	32%	43%	43%	40%

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### Ontario Political Pulse

Here are a few possible scenarios that could materialize after the provincial election. Would you personally be satisfied or dissatisfied with each one of these outcomes?

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Not sure
A Liberal majority	39%	51%	10%
A Progressive Conservative majority	36%	53%	12%
A Liberal minority with the support of the NDP	43%	45%	12%
A Progressive Conservative minority with the support of the NDP	36%	51%	13%

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