

Ontario Politics: Tory, Mulroney, Elliott, and Baird hold greatest appeal to soft PC voters

Doug Ford has a strong base, but is unlikely to woo those in the “maybe PC” column

January 31, 2018 – Following an unprecedented week in Ontario politics that saw the ouster of Ontario Progressive Conservative leader Patrick Brown over [allegations of sexual misconduct](#), trailed by a series of will-they, won't-they announcements from potential successors, a new public opinion poll from the Angus Reid Institute suggests a handful of potential candidates hold significant appeal to all-important “soft” PC voters just outside the committed base.

Toronto Mayor John Tory, former MPP Christine Elliot (widow of former federal finance minister Jim Flaherty), and current MPP candidate Caroline Mulroney (daughter of former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney) are among the would-be PC leaders Ontarians say would make them more likely to support the party.

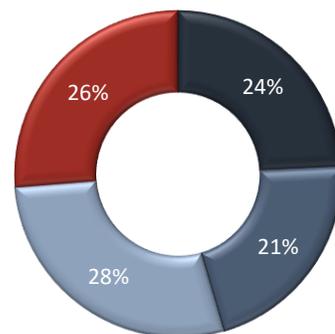
Former Toronto city councillor Doug Ford (brother of the city's former mayor Rob Ford) also holds motivational appeal for many Ontarians, but is a polarizing figure, with more people outside the PC base saying he would make them less likely to vote for the Tories in the June election.

The stakes are high: whoever wins the party's [leadership contest in March](#) will be the [odds-on favourite](#) to become the next premier of Ontario – despite the scandal that brought a sudden end to Brown's political career.

More Key Findings:

- Five potential PC leaders would make at least one-in-six Ontarians more likely to vote for the PCs: John Tory, Caroline Mulroney, Doug Ford, Christine Elliott, and John Baird
- Of this group, Tory and Elliott fare best among “soft” PC voters – people who may consider the party in the future but are not decided – while Ford's negatives strongly outweigh his positives with this key demographic

Likelihood of Ontario residents to vote for Progressive Conservative party



- Definitely support them
- Certainly consider them
- Maybe consider them
- Definitely NOT even consider them

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from January 30 – 31, 2018, among a representative randomized sample of 697 adult Ontario residents who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 3.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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- Mulroney's strength is her ability to appeal to younger voters, most of whom are not part of the party's base, but many of whom say they would be more likely to vote PC with Mulroney as leader

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The Progressive Conservative Universe

The days since the announcement that the Progressive Conservatives would hold a leadership contest to select Brown's successor have been filled with speculation over who's running, who's not, and how they might fare if they became the leader.

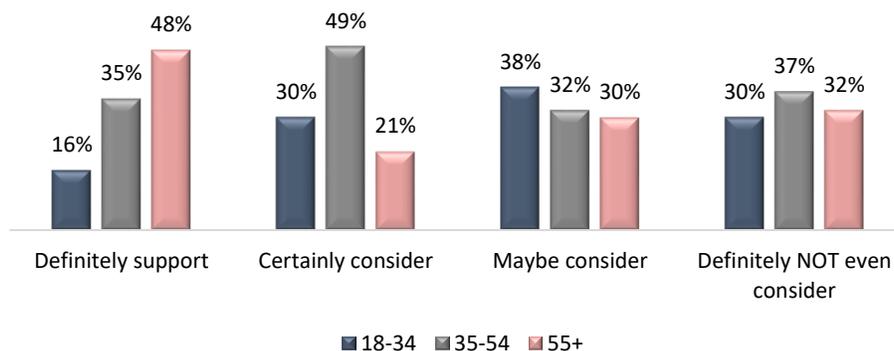
This survey asked about 12 potential candidates, some of whom have since removed themselves from consideration and one of whom – Doug Ford – has formally declared his candidacy. For each one, respondents were asked whether that person as leader would make them more or less likely to cast a ballot for the PCs come June.

Of course, not everyone in Ontario is open to being swayed by the new leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. Roughly one-in-four residents (26%) say they cannot see themselves supporting the PCs in a future election, while nearly the same number (24%) say they will definitely support the party going forward. These two groups – roughly half of all Ontarians – have strong enough feelings about the party to make a change in PC leader unlikely to sway their vote.

The rest of the population is more open to being convinced. Nearly three-in-ten (28%) say they would "maybe consider" voting for PC in a future election, and another one-in-five (21%) say they will "certainly consider" the party going forward.

These soft PC supporters are more likely to be women and younger voters, as seen in the following graphs. They represent a key constituency from which the party will likely need to draw significant votes if it is going to win decisively in June.

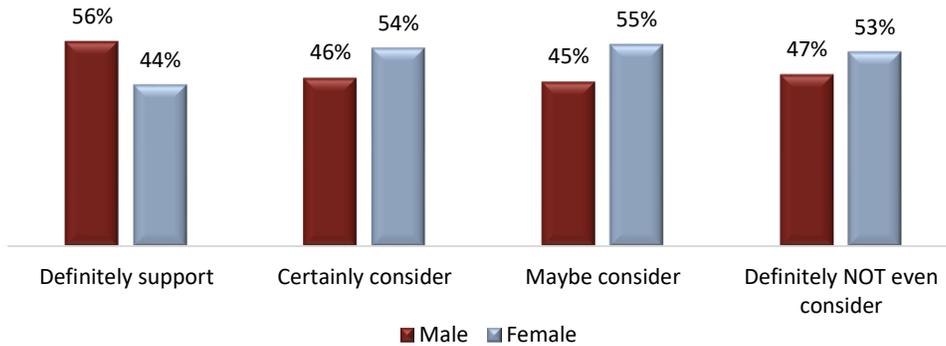
Ontario Progressive Conservative party vote likelihood by age



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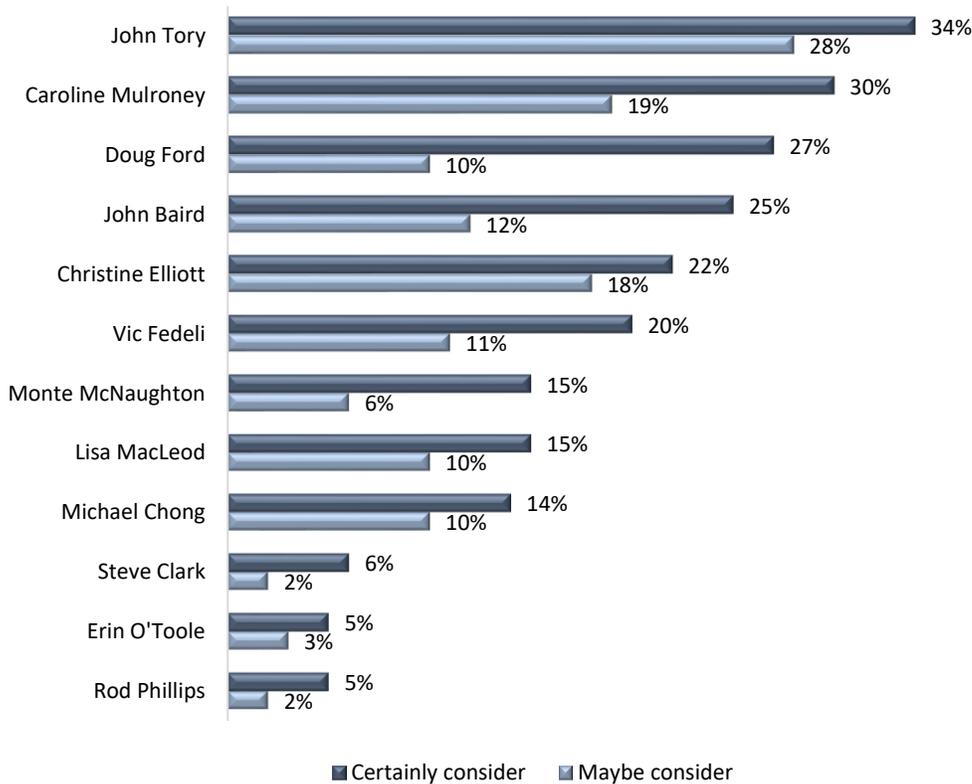
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Ontario Progressive Conservative party vote likelihood by gender



So, which of the 12 potential candidates – a list evolving, it would appear, by the day, if not the hour - canvassed in this survey is best positioned to woo Ontarians who may lean towards, but aren't committed to the party? Toronto Mayor John Tory and Caroline Mulroney top the list:

Would make respondent "more likely" to support the Ontario PC in upcoming provincial election



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Which candidates would broaden the base?

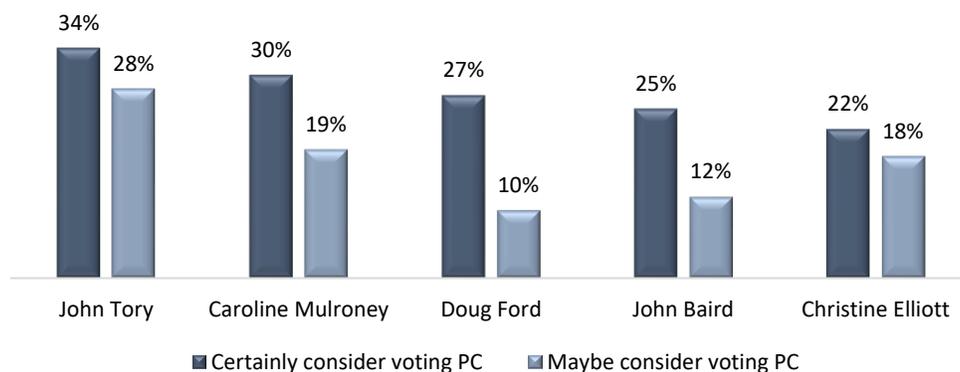
Further, five would-be candidates have the potential to broaden the PC base – with at least one-in-six Ontarians saying each one would make them more likely to vote for the PCs if he or she won the party leadership.

Leading the way is Toronto Mayor John Tory – who led the provincial party from 2004 to 2009 but has signaled his [intention to stay out](#) of the leadership contest this time around. One-in-four Ontario residents (26%) say they would be more likely to vote for the PCs if Tory were in charge.

The other four potential leadership candidates to move the needle significantly are former MPP and two-time PC leadership candidate Christine Elliott, current MPP candidate Caroline Mulroney, former Toronto city councillor and mayoral candidate Doug Ford, and former federal cabinet minister John Baird. Each of these individuals would make roughly one-in-five Ontarians more likely to vote Progressive Conservative ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

Among the half of the electorate that is open to voting for the Tories, but not certain to do so, each of these five possible leaders has even greater appeal:

Would make respondent "more likely" to support the Ontario PC



This metric alone doesn't tell the whole story, however. Each of these possible future PC leaders also motivates some Ontarians in the opposite direction, making them less likely to support the party going forward. Ford personifies this measure, with nearly half of provincial residents (49%) turned off by the prospect of his leadership.

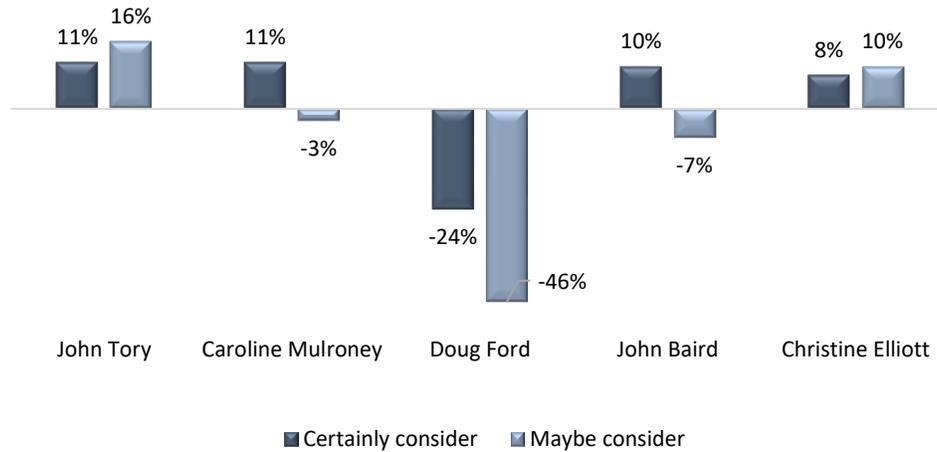
Ford doesn't fare much better among soft PC supporters either. The following graph shows a net support score for each of the five top leadership prospects. This score is derived by subtracting the number of soft PC supporters who say they would be less likely to vote for the party with a given leader from the number who say they would be more so. Negative scores indicate that more people would be turned off by a given leader than would be motivated by him or her.

Ford's scores are overwhelmingly negative, while Tory and Elliott are the only two with positive scores among both those who would "maybe consider" and "certainly consider" voting Progressive Conservative in the future:

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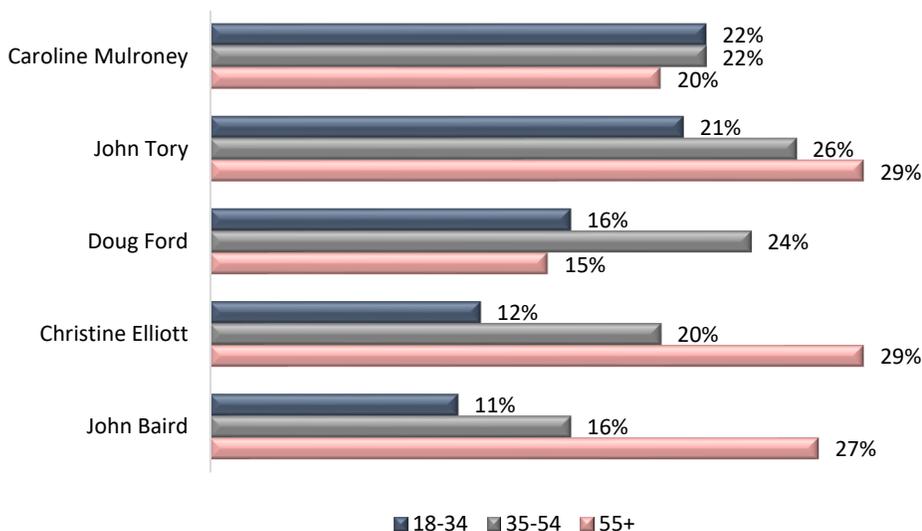
More likely minus less likely = net score for each:



The generational story

Looking at the appeal of each of these top five candidates by the age of respondents yields a notable finding: While Tory and Elliott hold the greatest appeal to soft PC voters, much of this appeal comes from older respondents – an age group that, as previously mentioned, is already overrepresented among decided PC voters. When looking at younger respondents who are more likely to find themselves in the soft PC groups - particularly those 18-34 – it is Caroline Mulroney who is most well-liked:

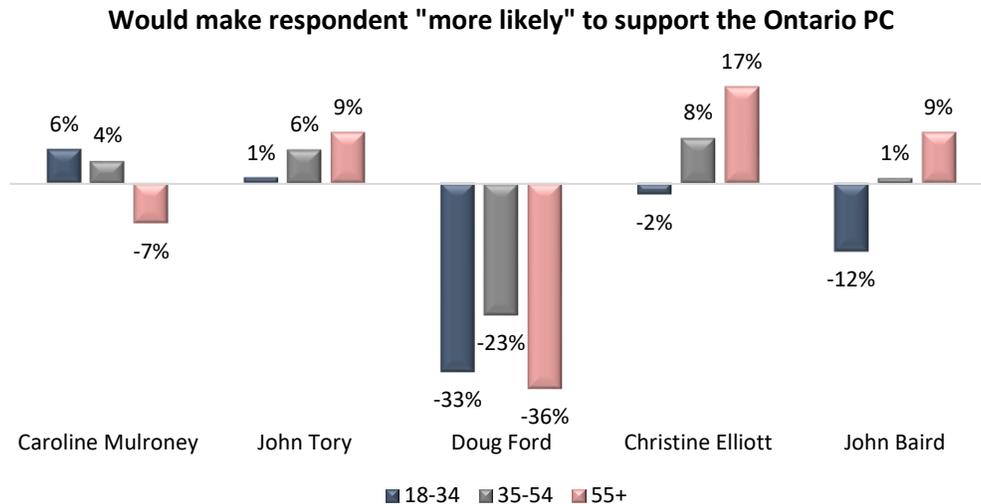
Would make respondent "more likely" to support the Ontario PC



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Mulroney's advantage among younger respondents is even more pronounced when looking at net likelihood scores. While roughly the same number of 18-34-year-olds say Tory would make them more likely to vote Progressive Conservative as say Mulroney would, Tory's net score on this question is +1, while Mulroney's is +6. Indeed, Mulroney is the only potential candidate who fares better among younger age groups than older ones:



*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

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