

Ontario Spotlight: Ford government faces skepticism, lack of consensus among Ontarians over lengthy to-do list

At least two-thirds pessimistic four more years of Ford will improve health care, cost of living

June 30, 2022 – As Doug Ford's Conservative government looks to signal its readiness to get back to work – appointing a new cabinet [June 24](#) – it does so facing significant skepticism from Ontarians over its ability to tackle the problems they are most concerned about.

The latest data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute indicates inflation (63%), health care (49%) and housing affordability (36%) are the issues people in Ontario are most seized by. But for each of these three issues, majorities express pessimism over the Ford government's ability to improve them.

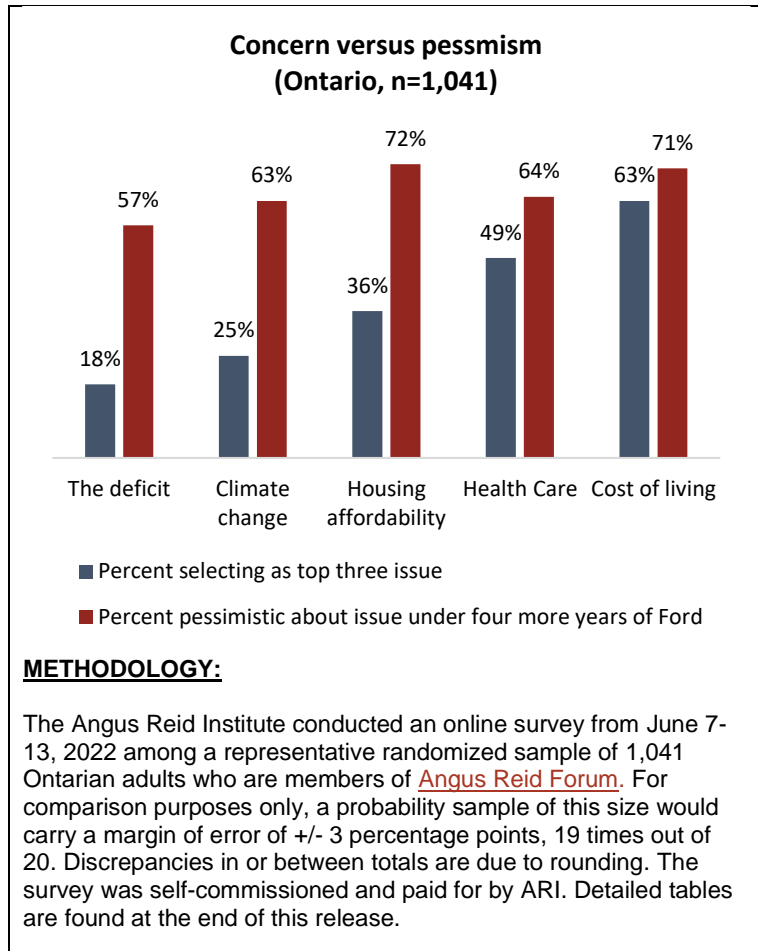
This cynicism is driven in part by now-firmly entrenched political divide in a province that had voters at the beginning of the month utterly underwhelmed by the political choices [in front of them](#). While the June 2 vote earned the PCPO a majority at Queen's Park with 40 per cent of the popular vote, it was also notable for the [lowest election turnout in Ontario history](#).

Little wonder then, that Ontarians are split over the election outcome, but tilting towards being more upset than pleased. Just over forty per cent (42%) say they are happy with the way the election went, slightly more (47%) say the opposite.

Ford and his government will try to ignite some good will next month. Ontario will implement a gas tax holiday starting on July 1. Presented with 12 potential policy priorities for the new government, this was the most popular option among Ontarians, chosen by 39 per cent.

More Key Findings:

- Nearly all (92%) of those who voted for the PCPO are pleased at the election result. The opposite is true of NDP and Liberal voters, but those who voted Liberal are more likely to be pleased (12%) than those who voted NDP (7%).
- There is some partisan consensus at least on the top issues facing the province. For NDP, Liberal and PCPO voters, the top two issues are cost of living and health care, though those who



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voted for the left-wing parties are more concerned about health care (62% NDP, 60% Liberal) than those who voted for Ford (43%).

- There isn't much consensus on what other PCPO pledges Ontarians want prioritized, but two cost-of-living-focused ones – help for medical expenses for low-income seniors (32%) and an income tax credit for low-income workers (27%) – are favoured by one-third and one-quarter respectively.

About ARI

*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.*

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Part One: Ontarians divided on election result, approval of Ford

As many pleased as upset with Ford majority

After an election that [failed to inspire people to turn out to their polling stations](#), Doug Ford and the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario returned to power with a larger majority than they won in 2018. With participation historically low, the electorate is split – nearly as many (42%) say they are pleased with the result as are upset (47%) – though it's worth noting that one-quarter (26%) say they are very upset, higher than the number who say they are instead very pleased (18%).

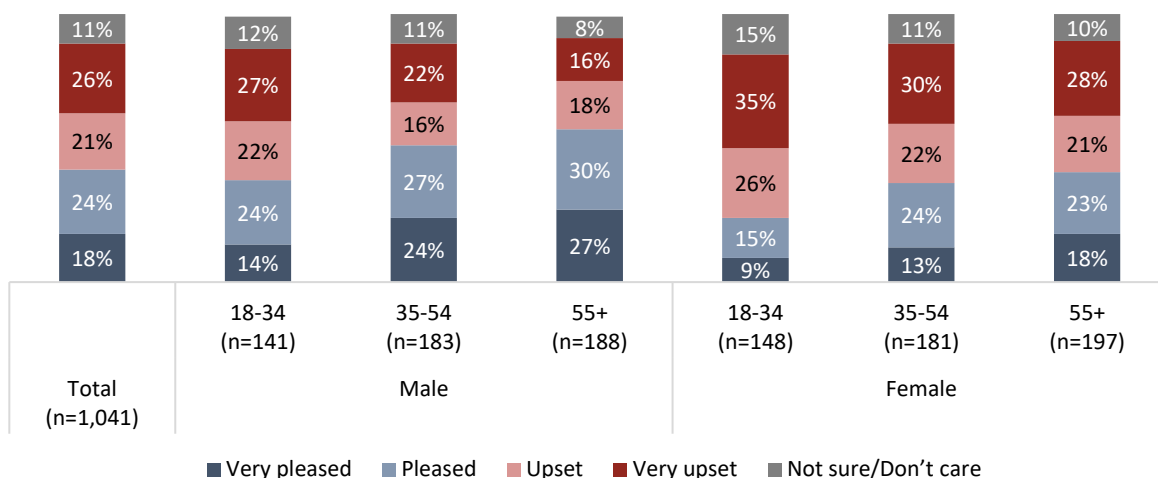
Men are more satisfied with the results than women, while younger Ontarians are more likely to be upset than older ones:

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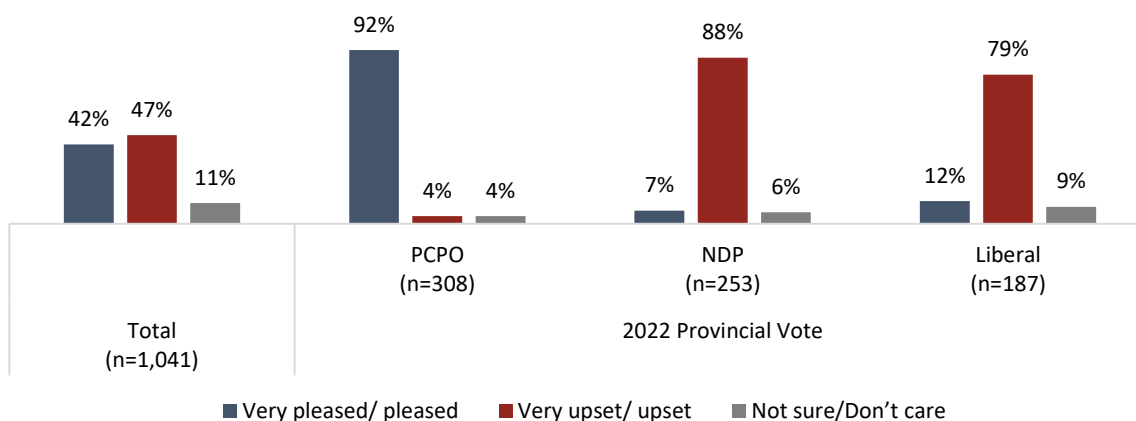
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As you may know, the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario led by Doug Ford won a majority government in the June 2 provincial election. What best describes how you feel about this result?



The political divide is evident in Ontario on this matter. Those who voted for Ford and the PCPO are nearly all pleased with the result. That isn't the case for those who voted for the parties who finished second and third in the final seat count. Still, there are some NDP (7%) and Liberal voters (12%) who are not upset at the outcome:

As you may know, the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario led by Doug Ford won a majority government in the June 2 provincial election. What best describes how you feel about this result?



Ford approval high among PCPO voters, low elsewhere

The approval picture for Ford might give the returning premier a sense of déjà vu. He has the approval of more than two-in-five (45%) Ontarians, [a similar level](#) to when he was first elected.

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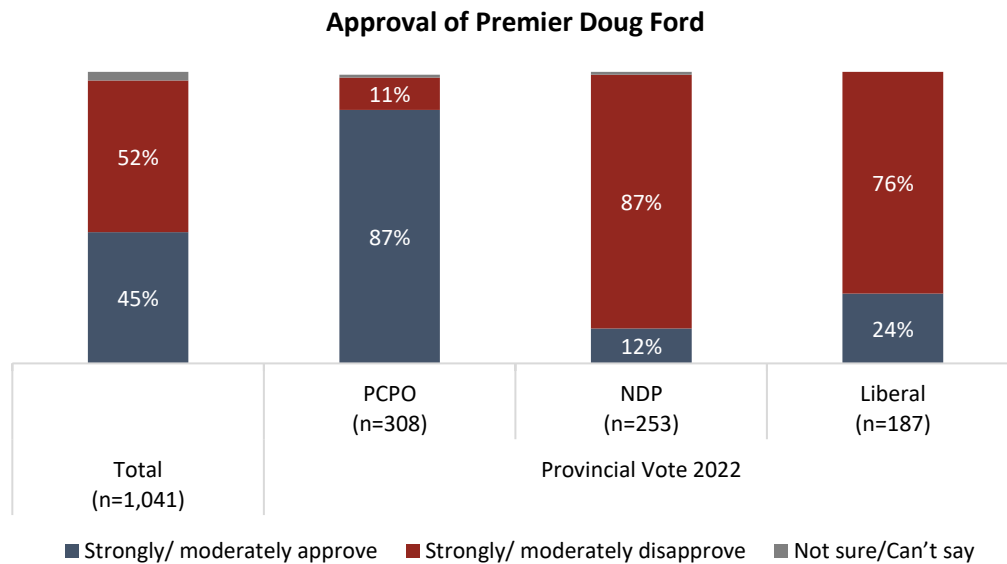
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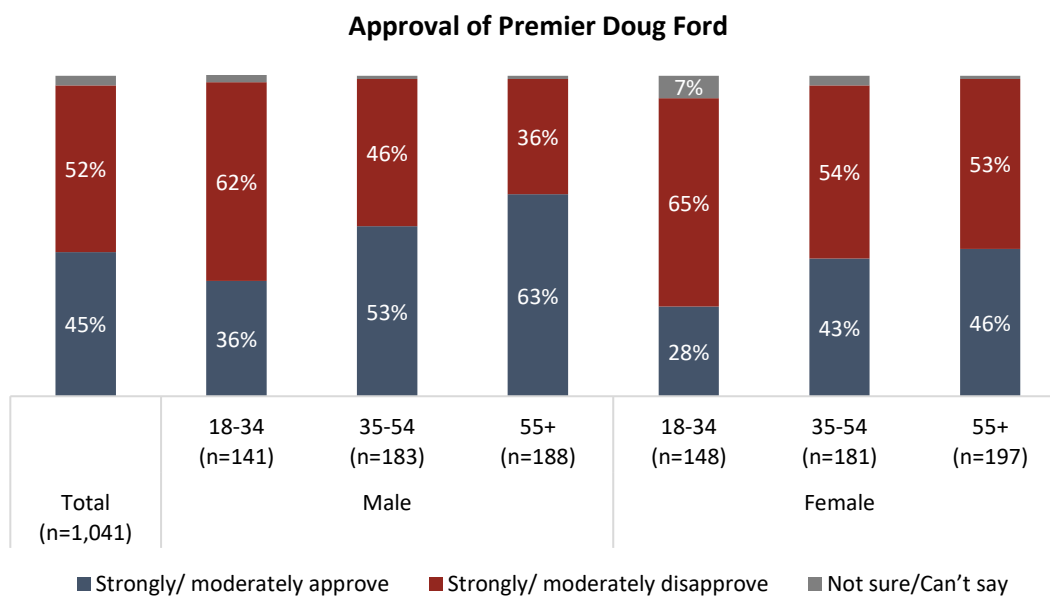
Related: Ford's next four begin with little change in approval

Approval is high among those who just voted for his party. Few (11%) of those who cast their ballot for the PCPO at the beginning of the month say they disapprove of Ford. For NDP voters, the inverse is true.

Past Liberal voters are twice as likely than those who voted NDP to approve of Ford, but still three-quarters (76%) give him a thumb's down:



Nearly two-thirds (63%) of men over the age of 54 approve of Ford, the highest approval among any demographic. Ontarians aged 18- to 34-years-old are the least likely to approve of premier starting his second term:



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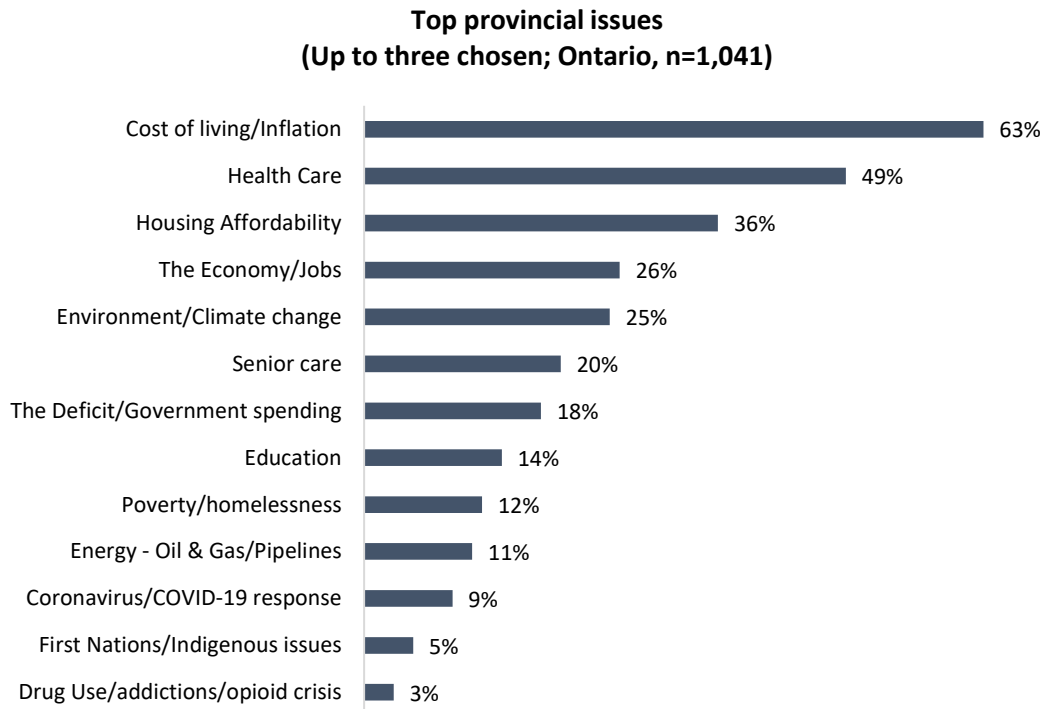
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Part Two: The next four years

Cost of living, health care dominate top concerns

For Ford and his [newly minted cabinet](#) – controversially featuring the latest Ford political scion, [nephew Michael](#) – there are three issues that Ontarians find more pressing than others: the cost of living, health care, and housing affordability. Those three are selected as a top-three concern for the province by two-thirds, half, and one-third of Ontarians respectively:



There is some political consensus on which issues are most pressing. For partisans of all of the three main political parties, health and cost of living are the top two issues – though those who voted PCPO are less inclined to select health care as a top concern than those who voted NDP or Liberal.

PCPO voters are much more concerned about the deficit (35%) than either NDP (1%) or Liberal voters (6%), and much less worried over the matters of education (8%) and climate change (8%). The province’s deficit in 2022 is projected to be \$19.9 billion, after Ford’s government [passed the largest budget in Ontario’s history](#) in April. Meanwhile, Ontario’s net debt is expected to rise to [\\$395 billion](#), up \$71 billion from five years ago.

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Top provincial issues (Up to three selected)			
Total (n=1,041)	2022 Provincial Vote		
	PCPO (n=308)	NDP (n=253)	Liberal (n=187)
Cost of living/ Inflation 63%	Cost of living/ Inflation 69%	Health Care 62%	Health Care 60%
Health Care 49%	Health Care 43%	Cost of living/Inflation 58%	Cost of living/ Inflation 52%
Housing Affordability 36%	The Deficit/ Government Spending 35%	Housing Affordability 39%	Environment/ Climate change 43%
The Economy/ Jobs 26%	The Economy/ Jobs 34%	Environment/ Climate change 38%	Housing Affordability 33%
Environment/ Climate change 25%	Housing Affordability 28%	Education 22%	Education 22%

Re-elected government receives among worst ratings in country on performance

Ford and the PCPO may have won an overwhelming majority government, but its performance over the last four years has left plenty to be desired by Ontarians. Majorities say the PCPO government has done poorly on nearly every issue surveyed short of the economy and response to the pandemic. The latter is the only file which more Ontarians say Ford's government has done well on than not.

By ARI's [Government Performance Index](#), which compiles an average score across all issues presented in the survey, Ontario's score of 24 is ahead of only Manitoba (21) and New Brunswick (23).

While there is much criticism from NDP and Liberal voters on all of these issues, at least three-in-five of those who voted PCPO in this election say the government they returned has performed poorly on housing affordability (68%) and cost of living (62%), the top two issues as chosen by Ontarians:

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Do you think the current government of Ontario is doing a good job or a poor job in each of the following areas? (Percent who select 'poor' or 'very poor' job shown)				
	Total (n=1,041)	2022 Provincial Vote		
		PCPO (n=308)	NDP (n=253)	Liberal (n=187)
Housing Affordability	83%	68%	97%	90%
Cost of living/ Inflation	80%	62%	94%	90%
Senior care	77%	59%	92%	89%
Poverty/ homelessness	75%	52%	96%	88%
Health Care	72%	50%	90%	86%
Drug use/ addictions/ opioid crisis	65%	47%	85%	75%
Education	62%	31%	88%	82%
Environment/ Climate change	61%	28%	90%	87%
Energy – Oil & Gas/ Pipelines	60%	48%	70%	69%
The Deficit/ Government spending	57%	38%	70%	66%
First Nations/ Indigenous issues	56%	27%	82%	78%
The Economy/ Jobs	51%	26%	73%	61%
Coronavirus/ COVID-19 response	44%	21%	69%	56%

Pessimism about on key issues

There is little optimism for potential improvement by the government on key issues among NDP and Liberal voters. Most in those two partisan groups say they are pessimistic about how the government will handle housing affordability, cost of living, health care and climate change. There is more optimism among NDP and Liberal voters about the PCPO tackling the deficit, but still at least seven-in-ten believe that matter won't improve in the next term.

PCPO voters, on the other hand, are more likely to be optimistic than not that the government they voted in will address these issues. Still, there are significant proportions even among the government's backers that are skeptical Ford and Co. can improve housing affordability (44%) and the cost of living (44%):

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Thinking about things going forward now in Ontario, are you optimistic or pessimistic about next four years under the Progressive Conservatives when it comes to each of the following? (Percent who select 'moderately' or 'very' pessimistic shown)				
	Total (n=1,041)	2022 Provincial Vote		
		PCPO (n=308)	NDP (n=253)	Liberal (n=187)
Housing Affordability	72%	44%	95%	88%
Bringing down the cost of living	71%	44%	94%	86%
Health Care	64%	30%	92%	86%
Climate change	63%	28%	91%	90%
Paying down Ontario's debt	57%	34%	74%	70%

Pessimism outweighs optimism among all demographics. Men are more likely to be optimistic than women that the PCPO majority can handle the province's debt and health care. But even on those issues the glass-half-full crowd rises to at most two-in-five:

Thinking about things going forward now in Ontario, are you optimistic or pessimistic about next four years under the Progressive Conservatives when it comes to each of the following? (Percent who select 'moderately' or 'very' pessimistic shown)							
	Total (n=1,041)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=141)	35-54 (n=183)	55+ (n=188)	18-34 (n=148)	35-54 (n=181)	55+ (n=197)
Housing Affordability	72%	66%	69%	75%	73%	77%	71%
Bringing down the cost of living	71%	64%	67%	72%	71%	79%	74%
Health Care	64%	69%	57%	55%	64%	69%	67%
Climate change	63%	66%	53%	61%	67%	68%	64%
Paying down Ontario's debt	57%	51%	54%	57%	56%	58%	64%

Where should Ford and Co. start?

As the major levers to curb rampant inflation are out of the hands of provincial governments, the PCPO have a limited toolbox to address cost of living despite it being a pressing concern to many Ontarians.

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Ford can bring out the shears and trim some taxes, as the government will do to gas and fuel taxes for a [six-month period starting July 1](#).

With that top priority addressed, there are other cost-of-living related matters that Ontarians select above other PCPO promises for prioritization. One-third (32%) would expediate helping seniors with medical expenses, while one-quarter (27%) want the government to help out low-income workers with a tax credit in short order.

Though health care is a top issue for many Ontarians, there appears to be less urgency to implement two PCPO promises directed towards nurses – paying for tuition of nursing graduates who work in underserved areas (16%) and a \$5,000 pay out for nurses that stay in the job for at least two years (15%).

Younger Ontarians are much more likely to want measures to address housing affordability – an expansion of the foreign speculator tax and funding for municipalities to build more homes – implemented sooner than later. Those over the age of 54 want the government to put their pledges on the senior care file at the top of the docket:

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The PCPO ran on a number of promises in this campaign. Which would you say should be the top priorities going forward? (Up to three selected)							
	Total (n=1,041)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=141)	35-54 (n=183)	55+ (n=188)	18-34 (n=148)	35-54 (n=181)	55+ (n=197)
Temporarily cut the gas tax by 5.7 cents per litre	39%	38%	51%	27%	44%	43%	35%
Help low- to moderate-income seniors with eligible medical expenses	32%	14%	25%	41%	20%	34%	48%
Increase and expand the low-income workers income tax credit	27%	25%	25%	18%	34%	28%	33%
\$1 billion to expand and improve at home care	25%	13%	21%	39%	18%	18%	37%
Increase foreign speculator tax and expand it beyond GTA and Hamilton areas	22%	43%	28%	22%	15%	17%	12%
Building more long-term care homes	19%	8%	14%	26%	15%	22%	25%
New funding to the largest municipalities to help get more homes built	17%	38%	18%	7%	24%	13%	6%
Pay for tuition of nursing graduates who commit to working in underserved areas	16%	9%	13%	23%	16%	21%	16%
Spend \$42.5 million to expand medical education	15%	15%	11%	15%	17%	16%	15%
Incentive of up to \$5,000 to nurses who stay in the job over the next two years	15%	9%	13%	18%	13%	14%	18%
\$14 billion to build more schools in the province	15%	18%	19%	12%	15%	15%	11%
End licence-plate renewal fees	10%	14%	17%	9%	13%	8%	2%
None of these	10%	11%	8%	10%	9%	13%	10%

Those living in the dense and transit-served Toronto core in the 416 area code are less concerned over the measures addressed towards drivers. One-quarter (26%) would have prioritized the gas tax cut and two per cent the end of licence plate renewal fees, both the lowest of any region in Ontario. One-quarter (23%) in the Six want to see funding for home construction sent to the province's big cities sooner rather than later.

Approaching half (46%) in Central Ontario and fully half in Hamilton and Niagara will be pleased to see the gas tax relief coming on Canada Day:

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The PCPO ran on a number of promises in this campaign. Which would you say should be the top priorities going forward? (Up to three selected)							
	Total (n=1,041)	Region					
		416 (n=105)	905 (n=295)	Central Ontario (n=151)	Hamilton Niagara (n=108)	Ottawa and East (n=142)	Southwest Ontario (n=210)
Temporarily cut the gas tax by 5.7 cents per litre	39%	26%	37%	46%	50%	41%	38%
Help low- to moderate-income seniors with eligible medical expenses	32%	35%	30%	34%	30%	31%	32%
Increase and expand the low-income workers income tax credit	27%	30%	24%	32%	31%	24%	28%
\$1 billion to expand and improve at home care	25%	28%	22%	22%	24%	26%	32%
Increase foreign speculator tax and expand it beyond GTA and Hamilton areas	22%	28%	24%	19%	28%	16%	20%
Building more long-term care homes	19%	24%	17%	22%	19%	18%	20%
New funding to the largest municipalities to help get more homes built	17%	23%	16%	14%	8%	21%	19%
Pay for tuition of nursing graduates who commit to working in underserved areas	16%	15%	17%	15%	12%	18%	18%
Spend \$42.5 million to expand medical education	15%	11%	13%	14%	12%	21%	18%
Incentive of up to \$5,000 to nurses who stay in the job over the next two years	15%	14%	16%	13%	17%	13%	14%
\$14 billion to build more schools in the province	15%	18%	16%	13%	10%	16%	13%
End licence-plate renewal fees	10%	2%	10%	12%	16%	11%	7%
None of these	10%	10%	12%	11%	9%	8%	7%

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

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