

Premiers' Performance: Three premiers face re-election in 2023; others spring forward, a few fall back

One-third approve of Ford in Ontario (33%); Furey, Moe hold the approval of three-in-five

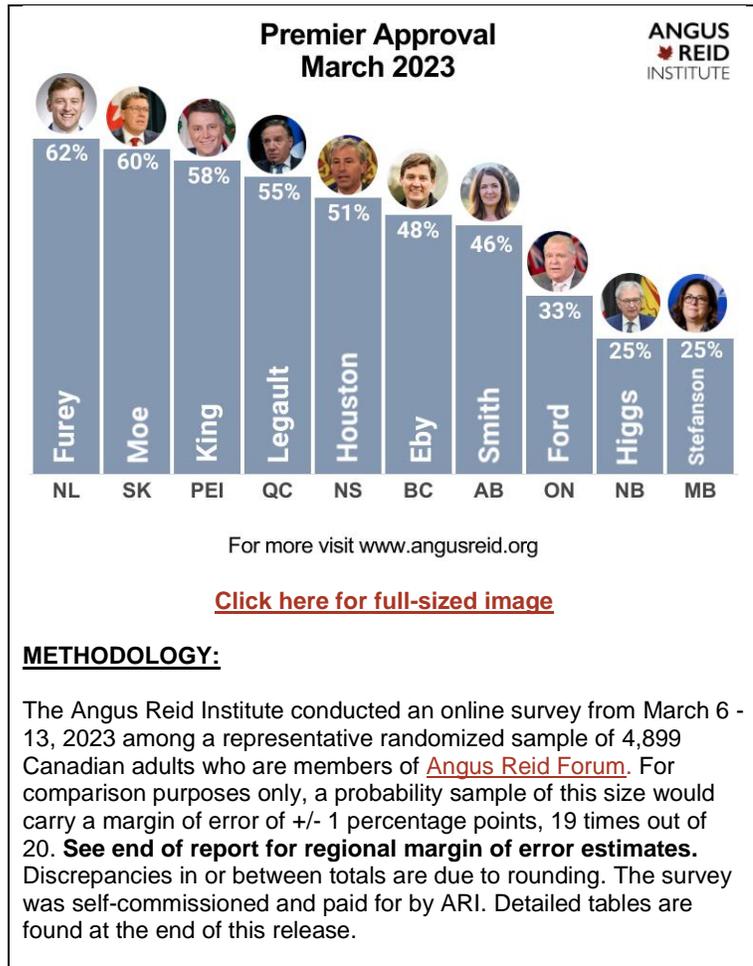
March 15, 2023 – Three of Canada's premiers will be particularly focused on renewal of mandate, growth in population, and rejuvenation of their political fortunes this spring. But while one appears to be establishing the roots for a sympathetic election campaign, another has more soil to till.

The latest data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds P.E.I. Premier Dennis King and Manitoba Premier Heather Stefanson at opposite ends of the approval spectrum as both leaders seek re-election this year. King is approved by approaching three-in-five (58%) of his constituents as the island heads to the polls in April; Stefanson by one-quarter (25%) as Manitoba will vote on her future this fall. In between lies another premier in an election year, Alberta's Danielle Smith, with approval of 46 per cent of Albertans.

Stefanson is not alone at the low end of the approval landscape. She's joined this quarter by New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs, who also is approved-of by one-quarter of his constituents as positivity towards him continues to decline. As well, Ontario's Premier Doug Ford finds himself at the edge of the approval valley (33%) as his government [weathers a scandal](#) over Greenbelt development in that province.

Enjoying life among the approval peaks alongside P.E.I.'s King are Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Andrew Furey (62%), who climbs to the top after a more negative 2022; Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe (60%); and Quebec Premier François Legault (55%).

The middle of the pack – Nova Scotia's Tim Houston (51%) and B.C.'s David Eby (48%) – can hang their hats on the fact that more people approve of them than disapprove (42% and 33% respectively).



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About ARI

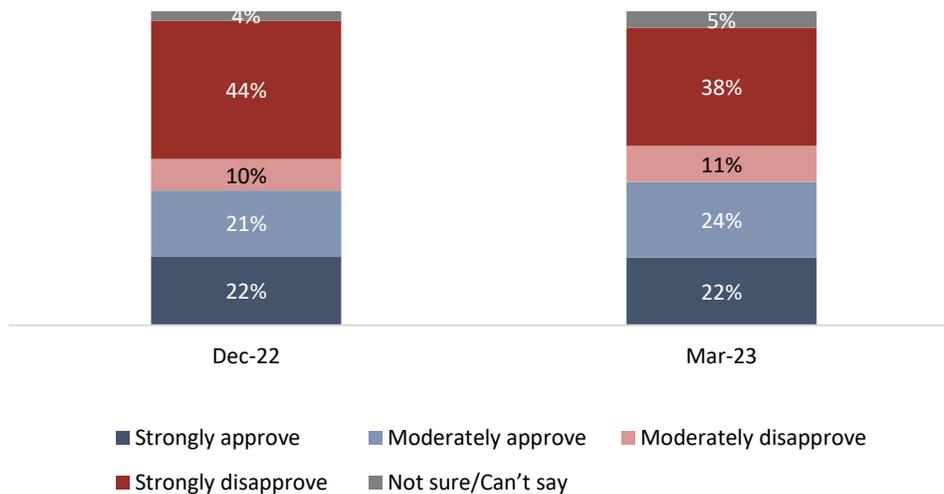
The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial 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.

Smith, Stefanson, King – elections and approval

Residents of three provinces will head to the polls this year for a general election. In Alberta, Premier Danielle Smith will look to extend her mandate after taking over from Jason Kenney as United Conservative Party leader in 2022. Smith heads into the campaign with a significant benefit in the form of the province’s massive resource revenues, allowing for increased spending alongside a projection of more years of black ink to come, including a [\\$2.4-billion surplus](#) for 2023/24.

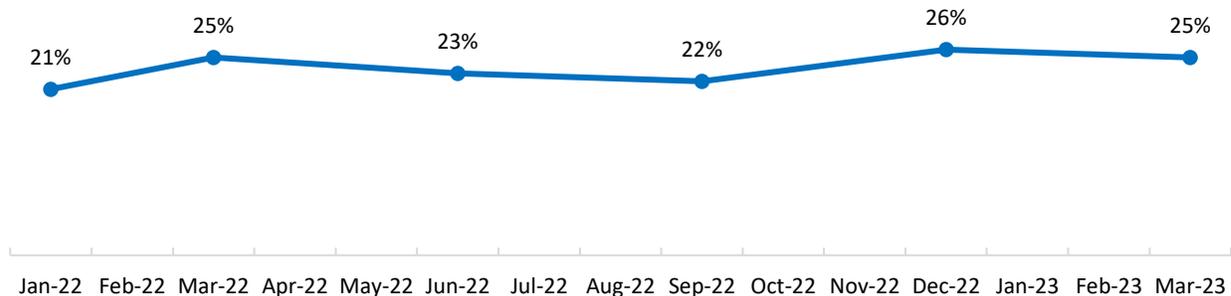
Smith announced a fiscal plan of [\\$68.3 billion](#) alongside [future legislation](#) to mandate a balanced budget. The provincial election will pit Smith against former premier and NDP leader Rachel Notley. Smith’s approval stands at 46 per cent this quarter. However, there remains a significant segment of Albertans – 38 per cent – that strongly disapprove of her, as she deals with criticism over her [plan to incentivize oil companies to clean up inactive oil wells](#), and allegations [someone in her office contacted crown prosecutors](#) to discuss cases related to the blockade at Coutts, Alta. in early 2022.

**Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of Premier Danielle Smith?
(Alberta, n=827)**



In Manitoba, Premier Heather Stefanson continues to rate among the lowest approved-of leaders in the country at 25 per cent. Fortunately for Stefanson and the Progressive Conservative government, the provincial election is not expected until October. As time ticks along on a potential political turnaround, Stefanson has announced [a reduction in personal income tax](#), alongside billions in health-care spending in her government’s [election-year budget](#).

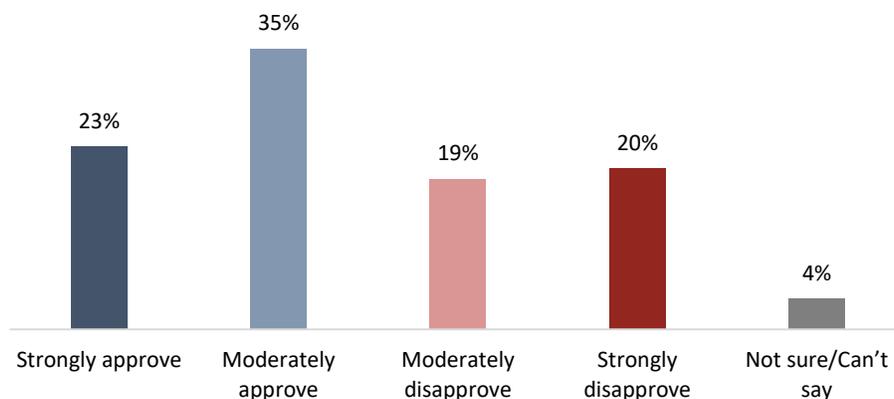
Approval of Manitoba Premier Heather Stefanson



The first province to head to the polls this year will be Prince Edward Island. Election Day is scheduled for April 3 and incumbent Premier Dennis King enters the campaign with a solid approval rating of 58 per cent. The Progressive Conservative Party leader has faced [some criticism](#) for an early election call, having previously pledged to stick to the fixed election schedule which would have seen the date pushed to this summer. King [has promised](#) a host of investments and improvements to health care in the province, as well as a four-year basic personal exemption for income tax up to \$15,000.

While the Angus Reid Institute typically does not report data from Prince Edward Island due to its small population making it difficult to draw discrete samples over multiple waves, ARI has made an exception to provide insight into Islanders' feelings towards the premier as they head towards voting time:

Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of Premier Dennis King? (PEI, n=203)



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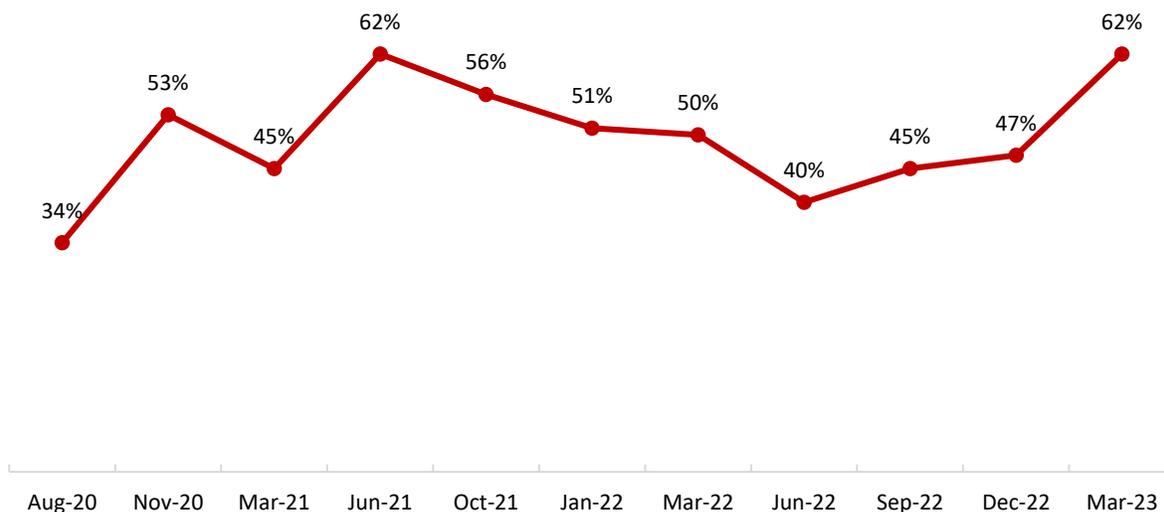
Four more above the majority mark

The popularity of Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Andrew Furey has rebounded back to majority levels. Three-in-five (62%) in Canada's easternmost province say they approve of Furey, a fifteen-point increase from December.

So far in 2023, Furey and the Liberal government [extended a tax break](#) on gas and diesel as a measure to fight the high cost of living and taken steps to address [that province's health-care crisis](#). The government also convened on an emergency basis to pass legislation sending striking ambulance workers back to work and the bargaining table as [private ambulance operators](#) look for improved wages and working conditions.

[There is also hope](#) that Furey's government can improve the infamous Churchill Falls power deal, which has seen Newfoundland and Labrador provide power at a low fixed price to Quebec since 1969. Quebec has earned more than \$28 billion in profits from the deal as it goes on to sell the power at a mark up. Furey has been [in discussions](#) with Quebec Premier François Legault in recent weeks about the deal, which does not expire until 2041.

Approval of Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Andrew Furey



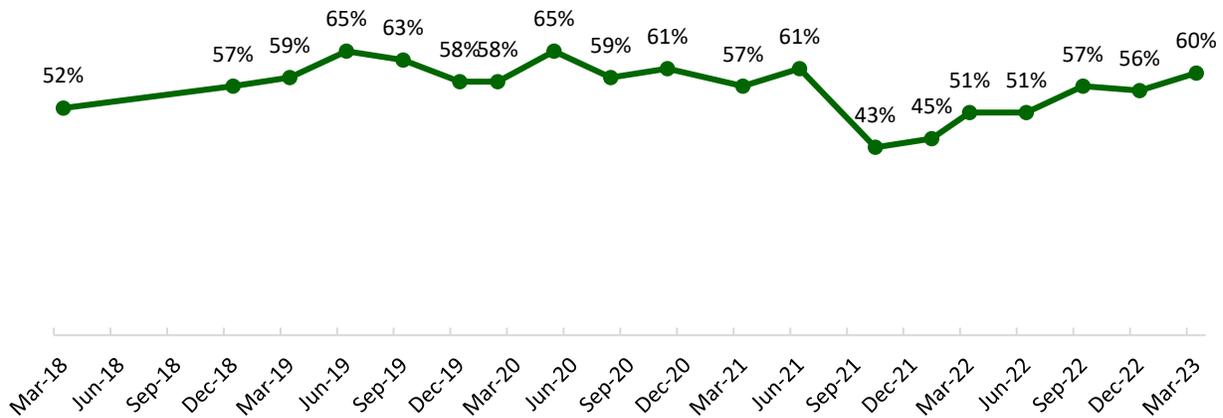
Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe's approval has returned to levels he consistently enjoyed throughout his first term. Three-in-five in Saskatchewan approve of Moe.

Though Moe and the Saskatchewan Party government often put themselves at odds with the federal government and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, cooperation between the two levels of government has brought significant gains to the province in recent months. As part of the new health-care funding deal arranged [in February](#), Saskatchewan will receive a one-time payment of \$61 million as well as \$111 million more annually from the federal government over the next decade. The two governments also worked together to [bring \\$10-a-day child care](#) to the province starting in April. The economic picture in the province is also bright, as the [Conference Board of Canada predicts](#) it will lead the country in GDP growth in 2023 as Saskatchewan also enjoys the [second lowest unemployment](#) in the country.

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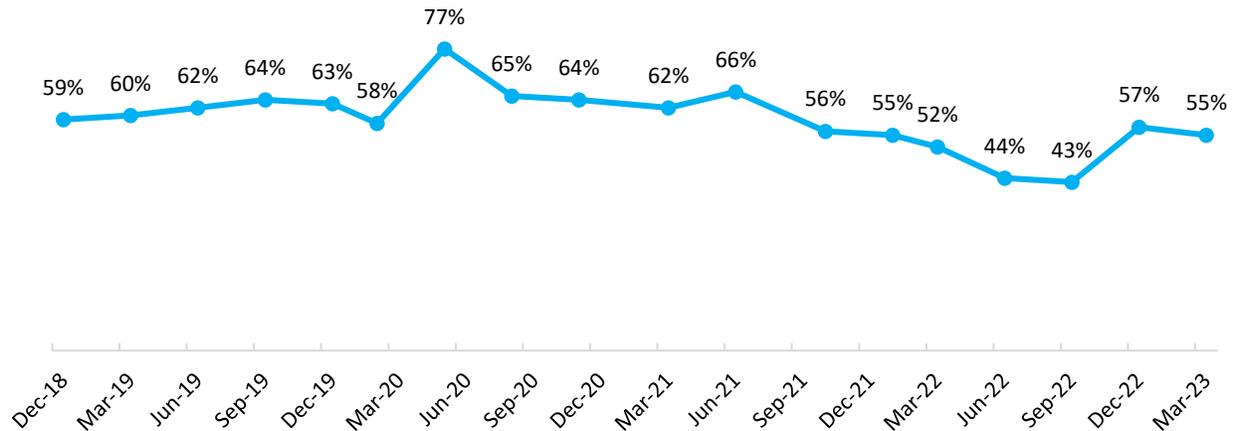
Approval of Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe



Though below the lofty highs of his first term, Quebec Premier François Legault has the approval of more than half (55%) of Quebecers. As Legault and the Coalition Avenir Québec government embark on a plan to reform the [health-care system by 2025](#), it does so with additional federal money in its pocket – [though not as much as it hoped for](#).

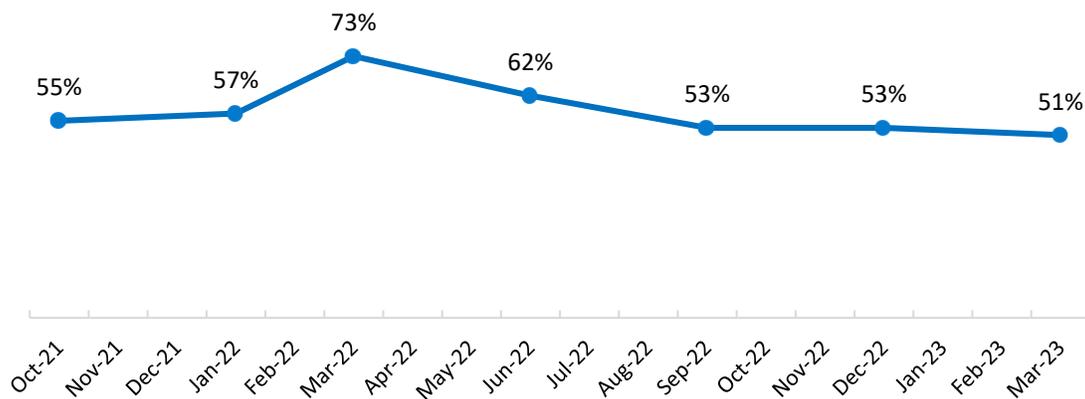
Much attention has been paid to issues between Quebec and Trudeau and the federal government – [on the notwithstanding clause](#), and [Roxham Road](#) – but there is a rocky road ahead on the home front for Legault. Public-sector union contracts with nurses, health professionals, teachers and others expire on March 31 and there has been [little progress in contract negotiations](#).

Approval of Quebec Premier François Legault



Half of Nova Scotia residents (51%) approve of Premier Tim Houston this quarter. Houston is scheduled to table a budget in the coming days, but announced [\\$152 million](#) in spending on medical facilities early in March. The government has faced criticism from the auditor general over Nova Scotia’s budgeting process which allows for spending to be approved without approval from the legislature. Finance Minister Allan MacMaster [rejected](#) calls for more oversight.

Approval of Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston



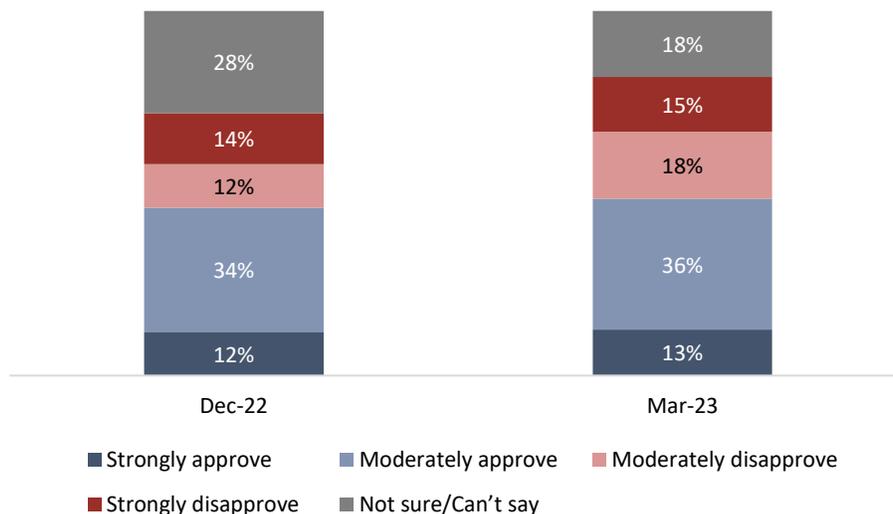
Eby inches toward majority approval

Premier and NDP leader David Eby spoke out against privatization promotion as he and Trudeau announced a new 10-year health care funding agreement early in March. Eby, on the job since being

sworn in to replace John Horgan in November, has announced a number of policies aimed at solving the province’s housing and cost-of-living crises, including a [standalone ministry](#) to tackle housing and the removal of some [age-related](#) rental restrictions.

The percentage of British Columbians holding no opinion of Eby has dropped 10-points since December and he is approved of by 48 per cent of British Columbians.

**Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of Premier David Eby?
(B.C., n=502)**



Ford in familiar territory

Ontario Premier Doug Ford is approved of by one-in-three provincial residents. Ford has faced [criticism](#) from the opposition and others after an investigation revealed that developers paid \$150 a ticket to attend his daughter’s “stag and doe” engagement party. Amid calls for a [formal investigation](#) from the Ontario NDP, Ford insisted that “[no one can influence the Fords.](#)”

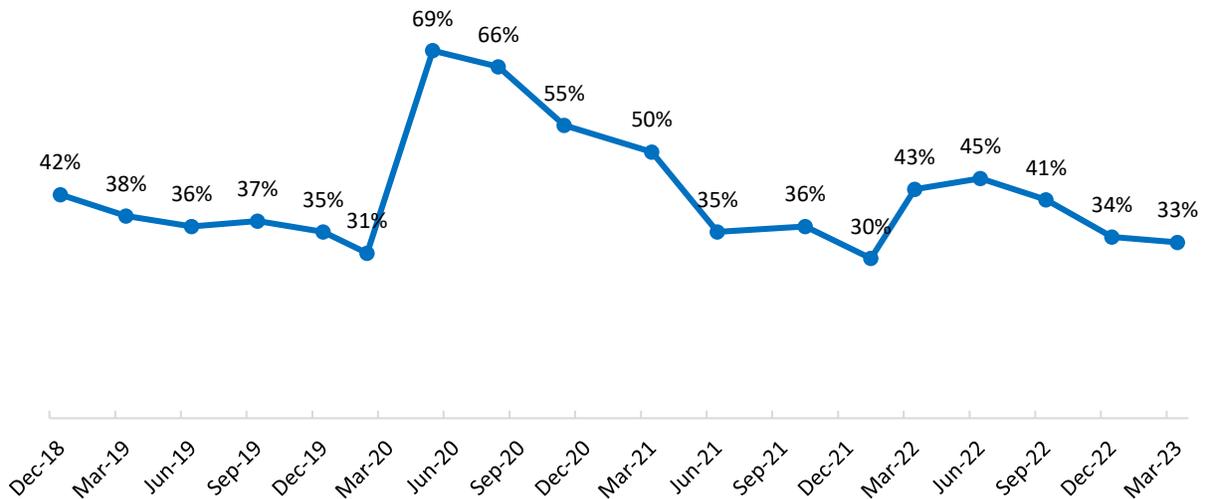
Ontario reached agreement with the federal government on health care funding in February, which Ford described as “[a good down payment](#)”. Reports of [underspending](#), [staffing shortages](#), and concerns about the implications of an [increase in privatization](#) continue to be discussed in the province.

However, the province scored a win when Volkswagen announced it would build a 185,000-square-metre electric vehicle battery plant in St. Thomas, Ont., [the automaker’s first North American electric vehicle plant](#). The plant is scheduled to be completed and operational by 2027.

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Approval of Ontario Premier Doug Ford



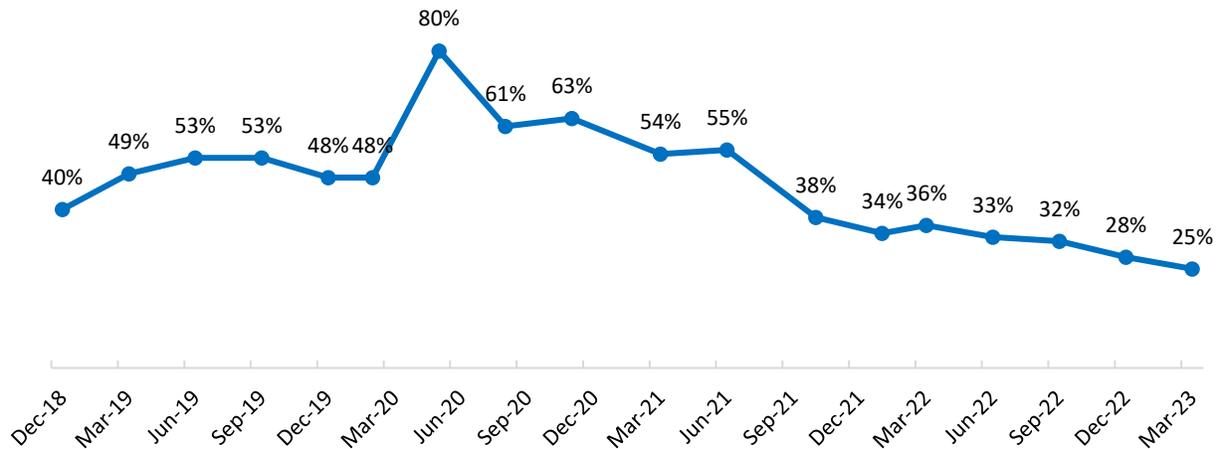
Hard times for Higgs

New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs finds himself near the bottom in approval again this quarter, down three more points compared to December to 25 per cent. In February, Higgs’ government **reversed** a controversial decision to replace French immersion in anglophone schools. That said, Higgs maintains that the plan to change the anglophone school system is “**not over**”. Higgs also voiced discontent with a health care funding agreement agreed to by the province and the federal government, suggesting that the deal was **better than nothing**, but would not solve the province’s challenges.

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Approval of New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs



Margins of error									
BC (502)	AB (827)	SK (410)	MB (532)	ON (861)	QC (717)	NB (288)	NS (381)	NL (178)	PEI (203)
+/- 4%	+/- 3%	+/- 5%	+/- 4%	+/- 3%	+/- 4%	+/- 6%	+/- 5%	+/- 7%	+/- 7%

Summary tables to follow

Approve/Disapprove by Province										
(Unweighted sample sizes)	Province									
	BC (502)	AB (827)	SK (410)	MB (532)	ON (861)	QC (717)	NB (288)	NS (381)	NL (178)	PEI (203)
Strongly Approve	13%	22%	23%	4%	6%	20%	7%	11%	14%	23%
Moderately approve	36%	24%	37%	21%	26%	35%	18%	41%	47%	35%
Moderately disapprove	18%	11%	11%	19%	21%	18%	26%	24%	11%	19%
Strongly disapprove	15%	38%	27%	45%	42%	22%	46%	18%	20%	20%
Not sure	18%	5%	2%	11%	5%	5%	2%	7%	7%	4%

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