

Report

Housing, healthcare, and more: Decoding the 2022 Ontario general election

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Abstract

The 2022 Ontario election resulted in the re-election of the Progressive Conservative (PC) party. Despite a turbulent four years marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare challenges, inflation, and skyrocketing housing costs, Premier Doug Ford and his PCs secured another term, even though Ford's popularity had fluctuated before the pandemic. This article examines some factors that shaped the outcome. While low voter turnout suggests voter apathy or malaise, voters did appear concerned with housing, which emerged as a prominent issue, but its centrality for voters is challenged by concerns about inflation, health, and the overall economy. The article also examines the media's coverage of the election, shedding light on which issues received the most attention and how party leaders were portrayed.

Résumé

Les élections générales de 2022 en Ontario ont abouti à la réélection du Parti progressiste-conservateur (PC). Malgré quatre années turbulentes marquées par la pandémie de COVID-19, la crise de la système de santé publique, l'inflation et la hausse des coûts du logement, le premier ministre Doug Ford et son PC ont obtenu un autre mandat, même si la popularité de Ford avait fluctué avant la pandémie. Cet article examine certains facteurs qui ont influencé le résultat. Alors que le faible taux de participation électorale suggère de l'apathie ou du mécontentement, les électeurs semblaient préoccupés par le logement, qui est devenu une question importante, bien que sa centralité pour les électeurs soit contestée par des préoccupations concernant l'inflation, la santé et l'économie générale. L'article examine également la couverture médiatique de l'élection, mettant en lumière les questions qui ont retenu le plus l'attention et la manière dont les dirigeants des partis ont été représentés.

Keywords: Doug Ford; Progressive Conservative (PC) Party of Ontario; 2022 Ontario general election

Mots-clés : Doug Ford; Parti Ontario progressiste-conservateur (PC); Élections générales de 2022 en Ontario

Introduction

The re-election of the Progressive Conservative party in Ontario's election on June 2, 2022, suggests an electorate generally happy with the status quo. However, with voter turnout at 44%, the result more likely reflects apathy. It is not as if the previous four years were boring. Several high-profile issues pressed for attention, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, the associated impacts to healthcare, the subsequent inflationary pressures, and the rising cost of housing, among others.

Table 1. Regional Seat Distribution

	PCP	NDP	LIB	Green	Other
Toronto (416)	12	9	4		
Greater Toronto Area	28	2			
Hamilton-Niagara	3	5			
Southwest	14	6		1	1
East	11	2	4		
Central	9				
North	6	7			
Total	83	31	8	1	1

But turnout, alone, is not necessarily a condition to re-elect an incumbent (see, for example, Frank et al., 2023). There likely were other factors. The pandemic, itself, may have helped. The public-health crisis appears to have cleansed public opinion towards their leaders given that Premier Doug Ford and his PC government was re-elected, despite Ford having consistently ranked among the least popular provincial leaders until the pandemic hit. Furthermore, it is not obvious Ford and the PCs benefited from support so much as from an effective split among the Liberal and New Democratic parties. Media coverage of the two opposition parties was fairly even and coverage of all three main parties was generally neutral in tone.

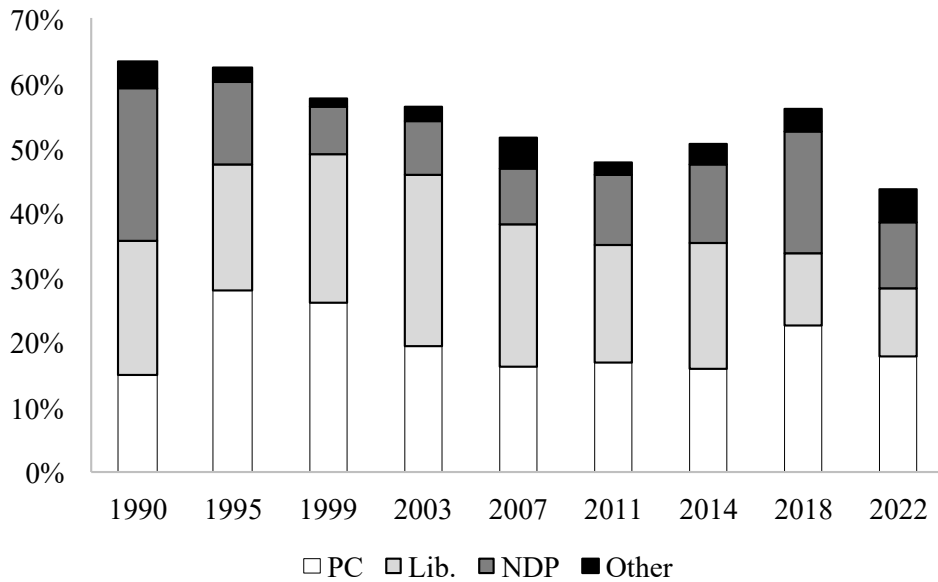
In sum, there is lots to consider. The election suggests a need to examine leadership evaluation, the parties' positions, media coverage, issue concerns, and voter views. Each of these dimensions will be analyzed, but this election review of the 2022 Ontario election begins with a general overview of the results.

Overview

The 2022, Ontario general election officially began on May 3. At that time, the Ontario Legislature was composed of: 67 members from the PCs (down from 76 at the 2018 election); 38 from the New Democratic Party, which served as the official opposition under the leadership of Andrea Horwath; seven members of the Liberal party, led by Steven Del Duca, who became party leader in March 2020. Nine others were either independents or members of minor parties.¹

The election returned the PCs with a strengthened caucus of 83 seats, from a vote share of 41%. The NDP, which secured 24% of the vote, returned as official opposition with 31 seats. The Liberals also secured 24% of the vote, but this resulted in only one additional seat and a total of eight elected members, still insufficient to qualify as an official party. Regionally, the PCs did well in the seat-rich Greater Toronto Area and in Southwestern Ontario (see Table 1). The PCs also performed well in metropolitan Toronto, winning nearly half of the city's 25 seats. Toronto is normally safe for the Liberals, who only managed to win four of its seats, with another four seats won in Eastern Ontario, mainly in and around Ottawa. The NDP also did reasonably well in Toronto, winning nine seats, with the rest of its caucus drawn mainly from Hamilton-Niagara, where it normally does well, and in urban areas of Southwestern Ontario (i.e., Kitchener-Waterloo and London).

Figure 1. Voter Turnout by Party, 1990-2022

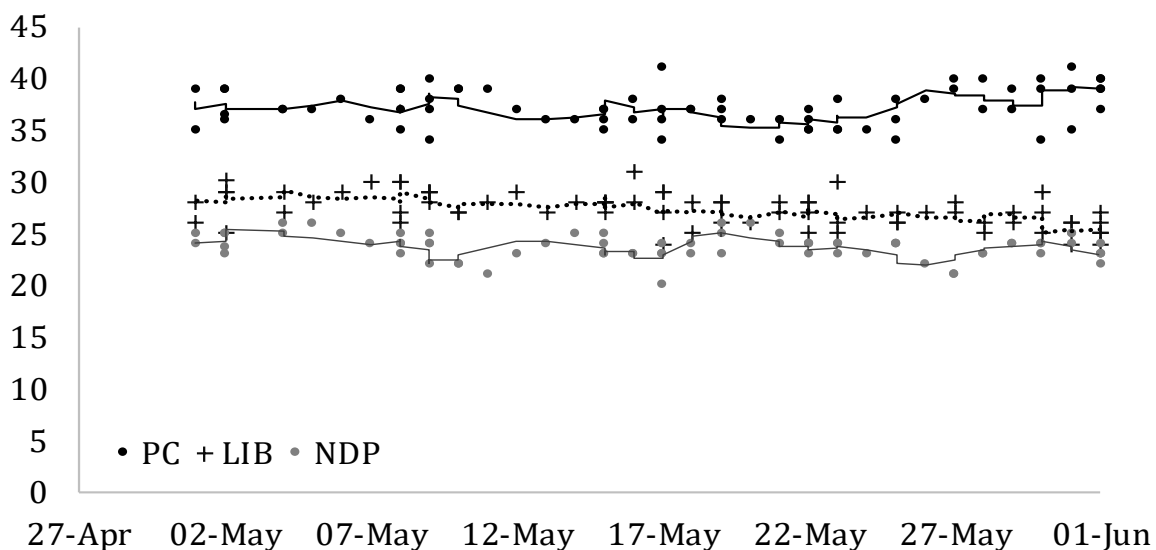


Source: Elections Ontario

As noted, the election saw voter turnout at 44%, a 12-point drop from 2018, and a low point in Ontario’s electoral history. A close second was the 2011 election with turnout at 48% (see Figure 1). All 124 constituencies saw a decline, ranging from a drop of almost five points in Timmins (won by Gilles Bisson of the PCs) to a 25-point drop in the Toronto district of Spadina-Fort York (won by Chris Glover of the NDP). In total, more than 4.7 million ballots were cast in 2022, a sizeable drop from the nearly 5.7 million cast in 2018. The three major parties lost votes. In contrast, the Green Party gained more than 15,000 votes. Smaller parties or independent candidates also saw gains of nearly 28,000 votes. One interpretation is that voters were clearly unhappy with the status quo, and results reflect general disaffection in the aftermath of economic upheaval (Bélanger, 2004; Perrella, 2005; 2009). Also, the re-election of the PCs amid this context suggests low voter turnout can favour right-wing parties (see Martins and Veiga, 2014).

For the most part, voting intentions remained stable throughout the campaign. Figure 2 shows more than 70 polls published from May to June, 2022. The incumbent PCs always ranked ahead of the other parties, with voting intentions ranging 34 to 41%, with support edging higher closer to Election Day. Support for the Liberals ranged from 24 to 31%, while the NDP’s support ranged from 20 to 26%.

Next, we look at some plausible explanations for how the 2022 campaign unfolded. First, we examine party platforms, which outline what the parties offered. Second, we examine media coverage, the issues, and the how the leaders were portrayed. Finally, we use survey data to examine voter behaviour including issue concerns, leadership, and other dimensions.

Figure 2. Voting Intentions, April to June, 2022

Party positions

Attempts at directing the narrative of an election typically begins with a party's platform, or similar manifesto of promises and this election was no different. The PCs ran with the slogan "Get It Done" with their platform largely drawn from their April 2022 budget. The slogan was selected with care and purpose and highlighted the PCs' commitment to building infrastructure and houses. Some of its highlights include: a reduction of the fuel tax; increasing capacity at hospitals and long-term care facilities; expanding mining in the "Ring of Fire" area of Northern Ontario; and highway expansion, including the construction of Highway 413, which was somewhat controversial as there was speculation that property developers may have known about this plan and proceeded to purchase parcels of land on the expectation of rising real estate values in areas near the newly developed highway (Powers, 2022).

The NDP outlined its platform in a document titled: "Strong. Ready. Working For You." Historically, the NDP under Andrea Horwath's leadership used its platform as a key element in campaign strategy. In 2014, the party famously appealed to NDP-PC swing voters with a platform that promised to "Respect your tax dollars" and establish a Minister of Savings and Accountability. At the same time, the platform promised a tax cut for small business but failed to match a Liberal proposal to increase the minimum wage (Ontario New Democratic Party, 2014). Party loyalists were appalled and 34 high-profile members publicly criticized the party for its tactics (CBC News, 2014). The experience left Horwath and the party scarred. In 2018, the party returned to a more traditional platform that opened with a clear statement: "Public services make life better for all Ontarians" (Ontario New Democratic Party, 2018).

This election, the party again stuck closer to home with some notable additions. First, the party opened its platform with a clear tactical appeal that Horwath was "running for premier", reflecting the party's status as the Official Opposition and its goal of winning an outright majority. Moreover, the first section in the platform focussed less on public services and more on affordability, presumably reflecting public concerns with inflation. Beyond this,

the party re-emphasized traditional promises, namely expanding social services, reducing carbon emissions, protecting Indigenous rights, hiring more healthcare workers, raising the minimum wage, lowering taxes on people with lower incomes and raising them on the rich.

The Liberal platform was released in a 16-page document titled, “A Place To Grow.” Overall, one is left with the impression that in 2022 the Ontario Liberals competed for NDP voters, which is a far cry from the centrist Liberals of Dalton McGuinty. Many items overlap with the NDP’s plan, including those that concern minimum wage, rent control, and hiring more healthcare workers. It also included a plan to cap transit fares across Ontario to \$1 a ride and more fanciful promises such as increasing seniors’ pensions (traditionally a federal program) by \$1,000 a year.

Housing was one of the most important issues in the provincial election and it is worth briefly reconstructing how the issue was dealt with by the parties. The background for this issue was the continual rise in home prices that started in 2014, but accelerated during the pandemic. Average home prices in Ontario grew from \$329,000 in 2011 to \$923,000 in 2021 (Housing Affordability Task Force, 2022). This 180% increase over a 10-year period, occurred while average incomes during this period grew only by 38%. Presumably sensing the issue’s potential to anger voters, the Ford government announced an expert panel in December 2021 to make recommendations to address the issue. The panel reported in February 2022, just three months before an election, with recommendations that focused primarily on the need to build more homes in the province to meet demand and reduce prices. Perhaps its most eye-catching recommendation was for Ontario to construct 1.5 million new homes over the next 10 years (Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force, 2022).

The panel was the subject of political controversy right from the start. Both the Green Party and the NDP criticized the panel for being too developer-friendly (Gibson, 2021). However, the core commitment of the panel – to build 1.5 million homes in 10 years – proved extraordinarily popular. That specific promise was mentioned in *all three opposition party platforms*. Each party’s platform also included a number of proposals addressing housing affordability and criticizing each other for not having bold enough plans (Dantzler and Urban Policy Collective, 2022).

This offers an interesting case study in how parties agree and disagree with each other. Ostensibly, there is unanimity among all Ontario political parties that an increase in housing supply is necessary. And yet, the disagreements continue. For example, in the recent Kanata-Carleton byelection, a local golf course proposed to convert itself into a housing development with public parks. Neighbours were outraged and generated such vociferous opposition that the local Green, NDP and Liberal candidates all lined up to oppose the development (Duffy, 2023; Lilley, 2023).

The next section examines whether parties have been able to drive any narrative favourable to their electoral prospects. As noted, housing was a key issue. Whether this favoured one party over another is a pertinent question, as is whether parties were able to help drive the narrative over other issues.

Media analysis

A political party’s attempt to drive the election narrative is contingent on choices made by the media. What they choose to cover, and how often, determines what an election was “about.” Despite politicians’ attempts to drive elections and “own” certain issues (Petrocik,

1996), the media plays an important role in setting the public agenda (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Therefore, we devote a considerable amount of attention to a media analysis to determine what issues were more prominent during the 2022 campaign.

Articles were drawn from the ProQuest Canadian newspapers database using a series of search terms to find items covering the provincial election.² Content analysis included 6,245 articles published in 28 newspapers between January 1, 2022, and election day on June 2, 2022. Nine issues were examined to determine their salience, namely: health care, COVID-19, housing, inflation, education, debt, economy, jobs, and the environment (see Appendix 1 and 2). These issues were chosen for consistency with previous election studies (Perrella et al., 2020), and issues that seemed especially important during the 2022 election.

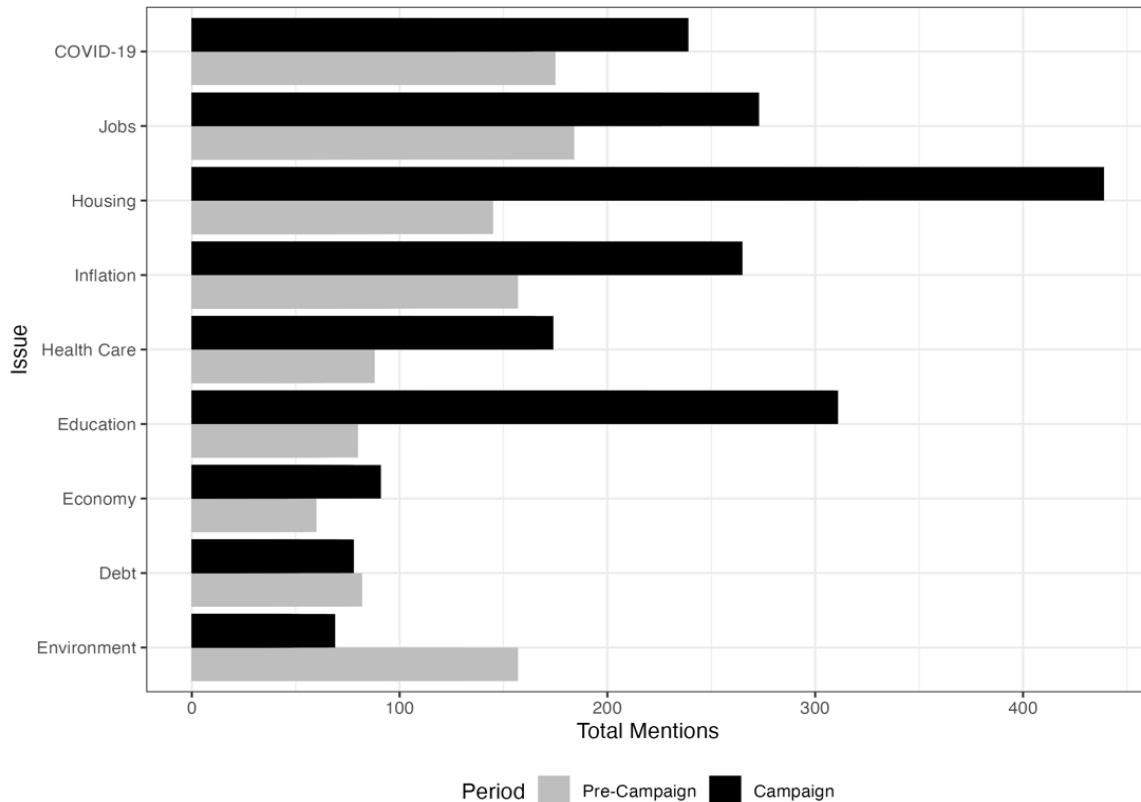
Surprisingly, COVID-19 was not a very important issue during the campaign period (see Figure 3). The 2022 Ontario election was the first provincial election since the start of the pandemic and there was an expectation for COVID-19 to rank as an important issue (Woodward, 2022). The lack of media coverage of COVID-19 during the campaign period is especially surprising because Ford's pandemic strategy was reactive, and Ontario experienced higher case numbers, mortality rates and longer lockdowns than other regions in Canada (Rocha et al., 2020). Additionally, Ford pursued a mitigation strategy and Ontario's COVID-19 response was largely the result of Ford's personal leadership style (Broschek, 2022). Nonetheless, COVID-19 was not the most important media issue during the campaign period. The media did continue to cover COVID-19 during the campaign, but also provided space to more "traditional" bread-and-butter issues (e.g., economy, jobs).

Related to economy, housing was by far the most important issue during the campaign. As noted previously, housing prices skyrocketed in the last decade and all the parties presented bold plans to reduce housing costs in Ontario. Therefore, the media dedicated significant time to covering housing and made it an important campaign issue.

In contrast to the predictions of many scholars, the environment (2,462 mentions) did not become more important following the COVID-19 pandemic and ranked as one of the least mentioned issues (Dupont et al., 2020; Johnstone, 2021). These results indicate that despite claims the COVID-19 pandemic would lead to important changes in politics, provincial elections continue to focus on traditional economic issues.

Next, we examine views of the leaders. As stated earlier, Ontario Premier Doug Ford saw his approval ratings sink soon after being elected in 2018. According to Angus Reid (2018), which regularly tracks approval ratings for all Canadian premiers, Ford's fortunes began to decline early into his mandate. A December 2018 poll showed 42% of Ontario respondents approving of how Ford was handling his job. That put Ford in the top tier of premiers, behind Quebec's Francois Legault, Saskatchewan's Scott Moe, and British Columbia's John Horgan. That steadily declined to 31% by February 2020, one month before the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic over the COVID-19 virus, just ahead Nova Scotia's Stephen McNeil and Dwight Ball of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Figure 3. Total Issue Mentions, Pre-Campaign and During Campaign



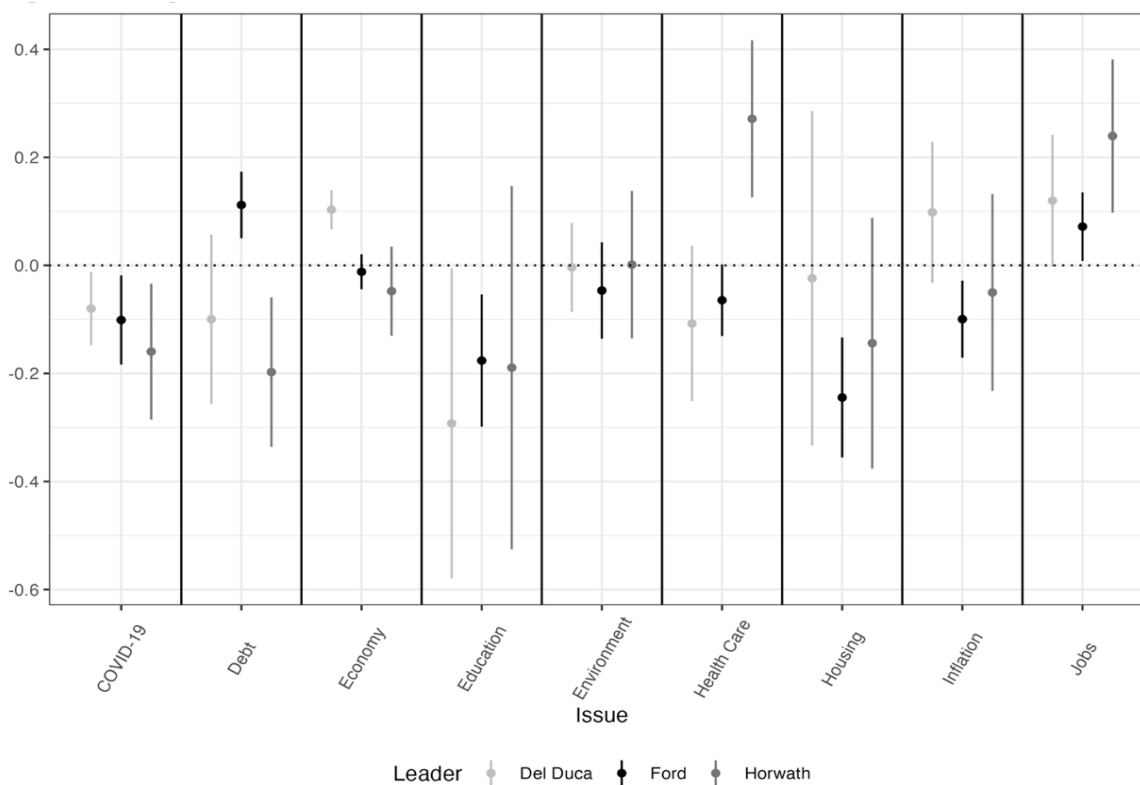
Then, as occurred widely for all leaders, especially those who were not viewed favourably, the pandemic helped reverse misfortunes. Ford’s approval jumped to nearly 70% by June 2020 (Angus Reid, 2020). His numbers declined over time, and even declined below his previous low when, in January 2022, six months before the election, his approval was at 30%.

But low scores for Ford clearly did not translate into an election loss. One contributing factor may have been failure of the opposition parties to capitalize on Ford’s personal unpopularity. NDP leader Andrea Horwath, who held that role since 2009, failed to emerge as a viable alternative among voters. While some evidence suggests public opinion towards Ford worsened overall, views of Horwath were not much better. A May 2022 report from Leger Marketing shows 31% of respondents believed Ford would be best as premier, compared to 22% for Horwath. The same Leger poll shows 12% of respondents believed Liberal Leader Steven Del Duca, who became leader in 2019, would be best as premier. Both Horwath and Del Duca resigned following the 2022 election, setting the stage for new leadership for their respective parties during the 2025 Ontario general election.³

Another potential factor in how the leaders were viewed is their profile in the media. We begin by examining the impact of the leaders’ debates on the coverage of certain issues. Following the first English language debate on May 10, healthcare and the economy became important media issues for a few days. However, the second English language debate on May 16 had a greater media impact on two specific issues: housing and COVID-19 (Rushowy et al., 2022).⁴ Both issues experienced a spike in mentions following the debate and continued

to be regularly mentioned in the media until election day. Additionally, we performed a series of ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions to determine whether certain issues were associated with a specific leader. Leader mention was set as the dependent variable and issue mention was set as the independent variable. Figure 4 shows regression coefficients for these models along with 95% confidence intervals. Most issues were not positively associated with a specific leader, with the notable exceptions of healthcare, the economy, and debt. Healthcare was positively related to concurrent mentions of the NDP and Horwath, the economy was positively associated with the Liberals and leader Del Duca and mentions of debt related words were positively associated with mentions of Ford.

Figure 4. Regression Coefficients for Leader-Issue Mentions

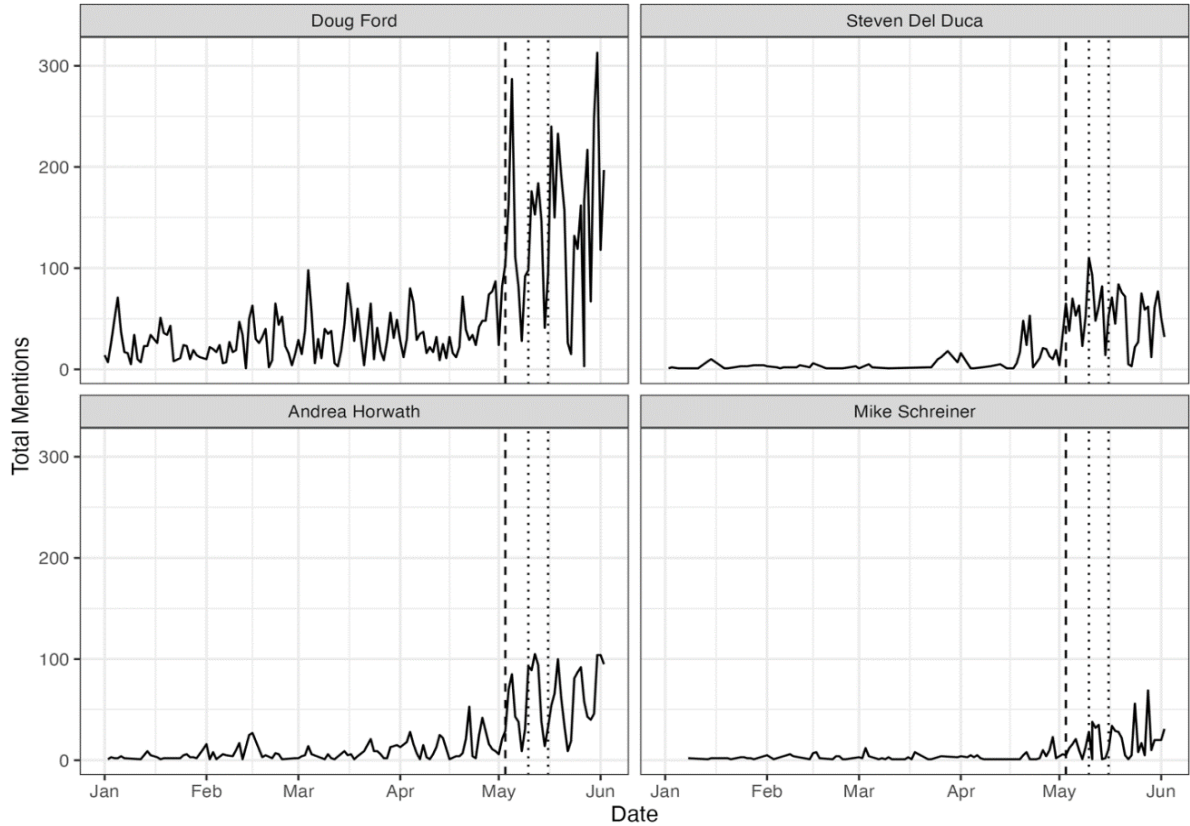


Interestingly, Ford was negatively associated with mentions of housing. These results indicate that for every mention of a housing-related word, a newspaper article was less likely to mention Ford. Therefore, despite housing's prominence as a media issue, it may not have played into the electoral decisions of Ontarians who voted in favour of Ford.

Next, we examined mentions of Ontario's four major political parties and their leaders in the media coverage of the election during our time-period. Doug Ford and the Progressive Conservative Party (9,873 mentions) were mentioned most, followed by Andrea Horwath and the NDP (2,687 mentions), Steven Del Duca and the Liberal Party (2,102 mentions), and then Mike Schreiner and the Green Party (826 mentions). These results indicate Ford dominated coverage. As shown in Figure 5, Ford and the PCs were mentioned in coverage prior to the election period, whereas other party leaders were rarely mentioned until the

start of the campaign. Given that Ford was the incumbent premier, it makes sense for him to be the most mentioned leader prior to the election. However, following the start of the campaign, Ford continued to dominate election coverage.

Figure 5. Leader Mentions by Date



As is clear, mentions for the leaders far outnumber mentions of the issues. Therefore, the media continued to employ a horserace frame of the election (Taras, 2001; Trimble and Sampert, 2004), which focuses on the leaders and political parties instead of issues and policy proposals (Cross et al., 2015). Figure 5 also shows that mentions of each leader increased following the leaders’ debates. The debates appear important events to help raise the profile of the leaders, especially those who are less well known by the public (Blais and Perrella, 2008). Consequently, the debates were especially important for Green Party leader Mike Schreiner, who was mostly absent from the media coverage of the election and only garnered attention following the debates. Schreiner and the Green Party only received 826 mentions during the entire observation period. Therefore, the media continues to underreport on the Green Party (Cross et al., 2015), and views the Green Party as not overly relevant during elections.

Finally, we used the Lexicoder sentiment dictionary to determine how Ontario’s major newspapers portrayed the party leaders. We used the net sentiment of each article to create a series of OLS regression models with net sentiment as the dependent variable and leader mentions as the independent variable (Young and Soroka, 2012). Results (not shown here) show that overall, the newspapers covered the leaders fairly neutrally,⁵ which contrast with Ford’s negative coverage in 2018 (Perrella et al., 2020).

Voter behaviour

Our final analysis takes a look at what may have contributed to how voters made their ballot choice. We rely on data from the Housing Affordability and the 2022 Ontario Provincial Election survey, an online survey commissioned by the Laurier Institute for the Study of Public Opinion and Policy administered by Dynata between May 18 to May 30, 2022.⁶ More than 1,900 respondents participated, which permits some look at the overall Ontario electorate.

Several key factors are considered. First among them is issue priority. Given the importance of housing and cost of living as both election issues for voters and as topics covered by the media, we examine whether housing, or any other issue, was important for voters. A second key factor is leadership evaluation measured by a survey item that asked respondents to rate each party leader from 0 (lowest) to 100 (highest).

An initial look at the survey results reports what party respondents stated to support. Among the survey participants, 39% indicated support for the PCs, 26% for the Liberals, 25% for the NDP, and 11% for other parties. This is fairly close to the actual results, with the survey showing a slight Liberal and NDP bias. However, it should be noted this survey was conducted during the campaign, so it does not capture the state of public opinion on Election Day. Nonetheless, the survey appears to reflect the electorate to a fairly serviceable degree.

Regardless of party preference, there are some similarities across all voters in what they consider to be important in this election. Respondents were asked in an open-ended question to indicate their most important election issue. A few results are worth noting. First, there is a considerable amount of diversity in responses. While some issues rank high, almost a quarter of all respondents noted a variety of other issues. Some, such as “energy, gas prices,” can relate to economy or cost/inflation. Nonetheless, the top issue was cost of living (i.e., inflation). This particular issue was more important for some voters over others, as shown in Table 2.⁷ Cost of living/inflation was a more dominant issue concern among PC voters, less so important among Green Party supporters. Healthcare was also important, although again there are some differences across parties. Housing was also a top tier issue, although it is curious that among PC supporters, housing ranks fourth.

Given that housing was much discussed during the election, it is worthwhile to focus on how this issue weighed on voters’ minds. The survey contained a question that asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they can afford a certain amount of monthly housing expenses (for rent/mortgage, utilities, etc.). Six monthly amounts were given, ranging from \$800 to \$2,800. For each amount, respondents assigned a score from 0, indicating “unable to afford,” to 10, indicating “able to comfortably afford.” While most respondents indicated comfort in being able to afford \$800 a month (median score was 10), about seven percent indicated 0, meaning even at that level they struggle. The median scores declined steadily for each level, reaching a low of 2 for \$2,800. Scores from the six levels were compiled into an index that scores 0 to 1, with 0 suggesting being able unable to afford even \$800 a month, and 1 to indicate comfort in affordability across all six levels. Overall, the average score is .5 respondents, but when examined by party choice, the lowest scores (i.e., those who struggle the most to afford housing) are found among NDP supporters (see Table 3). This is not overly surprising given the NDP’s traditional brand as a party that stands up for the working class and those with lower income. The highest score is found among PC supporters, consistent with previous media analysis that shows Ford receiving the fewest

mentions related to housing, compared to the other two major party leaders. Supporters of the Liberals fall somewhere in between.

Table 2. Top Election Concern and Vote Preference

	Liberal	PC	NDP	Green	Other	Total
Cost/inflation	17.6%	29.9%	22.2%	18.6%	30.8%	24.0%
Health	15.3%	10.5%	17.1%	3.5%		12.6%
Housing	13.4%	8.4%	16.7%	16.3%	3.8%	12.2%
Economy	9.9%	10.9%	8.2%	8.1%		9.5%
Environment	7.3%	1.7%	6.5%	16.3%		5.4%
Other	6.1%	3.1%	2.7%	9.3%		4.2%
Integrity of political leaders	3.2%	3.6%	3.1%	4.7%	15.4%	3.7%
Taxes	2.6%	5.9%	1.4%	3.5%		3.6%
Covid	5.1%	2.7%	4.1%	1.2%	3.8%	3.6%
Education	5.1%	0.6%	3.4%	1.2%	3.8%	2.6%
Government finances	1.3%	5.0%			7.7%	2.5%
Elder	2.2%	2.7%	2.4%	2.3%		2.4%
Stopping Ford/PCs	3.5%	0.8%	3.1%	2.3%	3.8%	2.3%
Freedom	0.6%	2.5%	0.3%	3.5%	23.1%	2.0%
Energy, gas prices	1.0%	2.5%	0.3%			1.3%
Crime	1.9%	2.1%	0.7%	1.2%		1.6%
Welfare/social	1.0%	0.2%	1.0%	2.3%		0.8%
References to federal politics	0.3%	0.2%	0.7%	2.3%	7.7%	0.7%
Care for the disabled (e.g., ODSP)	1.0%	0.8%	2.0%	1.2%		1.2%
Other	1.5%	5.8%	4.0%	2.4%		4.0%
N	313	478	293	86	26	1196

Table 3: Affordability Index Across Party Preferences

	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
Liberal	.50	.29	329
PC	.53	.29	497
NDP	.45	.27	320
Other	.48	.29	138
Total	.50	.29	1284

How respondents viewed leaders tends to correspond (unsurprisingly) to their party preferences. The survey data show no leader with any particularly high scores, that is, they all are below 50 (results not shown but available upon request). Perhaps this reflects any malaise that suppressed turnout. Among the leaders, Ford rates highest at 49.5, which is telling when you consider the survey’s anti-PC bias. He is more highly viewed among PC supporters, who rate Ford at an average of 73.1, the highest within the distribution. Horwath is a close second, and statistically tied at 72.3. Liberal respondents gave Del Duca a score of 67.8, which is nearly identical to what Green voters gave Schreiner. Those who indicated

support for another party gave all party leaders very low evaluations, but seem split in terms of favouring either Ford or Schreiner.

Conclusion

Despite a turbulent four years marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare challenges, inflation, and skyrocketing housing costs, Ford and his government managed to secure another term, even though Ford's popularity had been fluctuating prior to the pandemic. However, the re-election of the Progressive Conservative party suggests a level of voter satisfaction with the status quo. However, the low voter turnout suggests a result more indicative of voter apathy or malaise. Voters did not appear overly excited by any of the options.

And while housing emerged as an issue, at least for the parties and the media, it is not as obvious this issue was as central for voters. For certain, housing ranked towards the top, but more central to voters were inflation and health, and sometimes the economy. However, concerns about rising costs and the economy can blend in strains from the housing market.

Also, the housing issue will likely continue to fester. It will be a challenge for the Ontario government to reduce prices by building homes while simultaneously maintaining viable greenspace and protecting the province's architectural heritage. Meeting all three can imply ending single-family detached zoning in many Ontario neighbourhoods. And yet this remains a popular type of home for most families. This is why local opposition to developments is so powerful and why it is so tempting for opposition parties to cater to it, even though they entrenched the goal of increased housing supply in their platforms.

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Endnotes

¹ There was one member each from the Green party, the New Blue party, the Ontario party, six independents. Also, three seats remained vacant at the dissolution of the provincial parliament.

² The following search terms were used to locate relevant articles: (“Ontario New Democratic Party” OR “Ontario Liberals” OR “Ontario Liberal Party” OR “Progressive Conservative” OR “Green Party” OR “Tories” OR “PC” OR “Greens” OR “New Democrats” OR “Doug Ford” OR “Andrea Horwath” OR “Steven Del Duca” OR “Mike Schreiner”) AND (“election” OR “campaign” OR “vote”).

³ Marit Stiles, the Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) for Davenport, became the new NDP leader in February of 2023.

⁴ The May 10 debate, held in North Bay, was focused on issues pertinent to Northern Ontario. The May 16 debate, held in Toronto, was more widely broadcast and, consequently, received far more media coverage. A French-language debate took place on May 17, organized by Radio-Canada and Télévision française de l’Ontario (TFO), where parties were represented by French-speaking candidates and not the leaders.

⁵ Analysis available upon request.

⁶ The survey was supported by the Laurier Institute for the Study of Public Opinion and Policy (LISPOP), with Dr. Simon Kiss as the principal investigator.

⁷ The only issues displayed are those that received at least 2% for any party.

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Appendix 2: Frequency of the most common words within each dictionary

