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Liberals poised to take local ridings, Laurier poll finds

If the federal election was held tomorrow, the Liberal party would win both the Kitchener and Waterloo ridings, according to a public opinion poll conducted by the department of political science at Wilfrid Laurier University.

In the survey conducted between Nov. 1 and 10, a total of 710 eligible voters in the Kitchener-Waterloo area were asked their opinions on a wide range of issues related to the federal campaign.

According to the results released today, popular vote in the area gives the Liberals 45.6 per cent of the support among decided voters, 35 per cent to the Progressive Conservatives, 17.7 per cent to the New Democratic Party and 1.7 per cent to other political parties.

Professor Lev Gonick said the breakdown by constituency suggests that both incumbents are currently running an uphill battle. In Kitchener, John Reimer is more than 14 points behind in his campaign. In a virtual reverse of the 1984 federal vote, Liberal candidate John English is ahead with 46 per cent of the

vote, followed by the PCs with 32 per cent of the vote and the NDP at 20 per cent.

In Waterloo, the race is much tighter. Walter McLean is in the fight of his life. After a commanding 30-percentage-point victory in the 1984 election and a narrow win in the 1980 election, McLean is currently trailing his Liberal rival, Steve Woodworth, by six points among decided voters. The Liberals are marginally ahead in the contest with 44.5 per cent of the vote. McLean is close behind with 38.2 per cent followed in third place by the NDP with 15.1 per cent of decided voters.

The poll found that 12 per cent of the local electorate was still undecided. Among those voters, the Liberals again held a commanding lead in potential growth as the campaign nears its close. A full 59 per cent of undecided voters were leaning towards voting Liberal while the PCs and NDP split the remaining uncommitted votes.

Like nationwide polls, the Kitchener-Waterloo election survey found that an overwhelming number of voters find the free trade deal the most important issue facing the electorate. A total of 62 per cent of those questioned identified it as the most important. Jobs and employment opportunities ranked second while environmental issues were mentioned by eight per cent of the voters.

The importance of the free trade debate to the election appears to be directly responsible for the Liberal surge. A total of 54 per cent of those surveyed indicated that they were opposed to the deal while only 37 per cent indicated that they supported

the Prime Minister's free trade initiative. Less than 10 per cent of voters remain undecided on this all important issue.

In an analysis of the results, Gonick argues that the surge of the Liberal vote is not related to the strength of the local Liberal candidates or in support of Liberal leader John Turner. Liberal support, according to Gonick, is coming at the direct expense of the Tories. Nearly a third of all those surveyed who voted PC in 1984 are now intending to vote Liberal on Nov. 21.

Even NDP strength seems to be eroding as voters decide to register a strong "no free trade" vote. Lost NDP votes are also finding their way to the Liberal party.

As the campaign culminates this week, the only window of opportunity open to the Conservatives is the strength of their leader. Brian Mulroney is seen by 33 per cent of those polled as the best leader for the job of Prime minister. Even though many of those asked acknowledged Turner's strong showing in the leaders debate, only 20 per cent of those surveyed felt that he was the best leader for the job. Like many national polls, the WLU poll suggests that Ed Broadbent remains the most popular and respected leader though his party seems firmly entrenched in third place.

In the last days of the campaign, it seems clear that local and national attention will be focused on John Turner as he becomes the target of the Tory and NDP attack.

The poll was based on 710 random telephone calls between Nov. 1 and 10. Telephone numbers used were randomly generated using a computer-assisted procedure. Surveys of this size within

the kitchener-waterloo area are calculated to be accurate within 3.65 percentage points 19 times out of 20.

#### Survey Results

	Kitchener	Waterloo
Liberal Party	46.5%	44.5%
PC	32.3%	38.2%
NDP	19.8%	15.1%
Other	1.4%	2.1%

Distribution of support among decided voters

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