

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **LISPOP offers guide for translating polls into electoral seats**

*On-line guide projects likely outcome based on polls, historical data and proven model*

**For Immediate Release**

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WATERLOO – The Laurier Institute for the Study of Public Opinion and Policy (LISPOP) is offering the media and the public an easy way to convert polling data from the Ontario election into seat projections.

LISPOP has posted to its Web site [[wlu.ca/lispop](http://wlu.ca/lispop)] a do-it-yourself guide to projecting the results of the 2003 Ontario election. The guide is based on current polling data, trend data from previous elections and a highly accurate regional-swing model developed by Barry Kay, a political science professor at Wilfrid Laurier University.

“We wanted to offer an easy way for people to understand and interpret the meaning of various polls released over the course of the election,” says Steven Brown, director of LISPOP and political science professor at Laurier. “The information on the site is based on a simplified version of Barry Kay’s model, a model that has proven accurate to within two seats in three recent Ontario elections, based on pre-election polls.

The projection table found on the site is based on the vote differential between the Progressive Conservative and Liberal parties at the time of a poll. It assumes that support for the New Democratic Party will remain at 10 to 15 percent and ignores incumbency and by-election effects. The projections cover the range of party differentials that seem likely, given recent polls.

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The model behind the table is based on the 1999 Ontario provincial election results, adjusted for apparent shifts in party support levels since then. To illustrate, if the 2003 support levels in the province revert to their 1999 election levels (that is, a five percent PC lead over the Liberals), the seat distribution would be the same as the 1999 results – 59 PC seats and 35 seats for the Liberals. If the Liberals lead the PCs by five percent on October 2, that shift in support would lead to a projection of 52 Liberal seats and 43 seats for PCs.

Kay is careful to qualify that “the model is not a prediction. Rather it’s a projection based on the best data available at the time that a poll is taken.”

During the 1999 Ontario election, Kay’s model projected that the PCs would capture 58 seats, the Liberals would win 37 and the NDP would take 8 seats. The actual seat distribution was, respectively, 59, 35 and 9.

The Laurier Institute for the Study of Public Opinion and Policy studies issues pertaining to the creation, use and representation of public opinion in the policy process. It seeks to promote individual and collaborative research on these issues. It also monitors the practices and claims of the public opinion and interest group industries, and serves as an educational resource on questions and issues pertaining to those claims and practices.